

Arthur Koestler's Critique of D. T. Suzuki's Interpretation of Zen

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ONE OF THE most outspoken critics of D. T. Suzuki's interpretation of Zen was philosopher, journalist, novelist Arthur Koestler (b. 1905). Although hardly a scholar of Asian religions, Koestler's interest in the East brought him to India and Japan during 1958–1959. As a result of this journey "in the mood of a Pilgrim," Koestler published a scathing critique of Hinduism and Zen entitled *The Lotus and the Robot*.¹ Koestler's incisive intellect pierced to the core of the matter, and he began to grapple with the problems which bother many seasoned scholars in the area. Thus, his book, though now some twenty years old, is interesting in that it contains some of the points of contention still current with regard to Zen. Koestler's critique of Suzuki's interpretation of Zen, therefore, is a productive starting point for 1) airing some of the major objections to the Japanese scholar's work, 2) restating and defending Suzuki's position, and therefore, 3) continuing the work of establishing the legitimacy of a philosophical approach to Zen, and of D. T. Suzuki as a philosopher.²

Koestler describes his motivation for traveling to the Orient:

Like countless others before, I wondered whether the East had any answer to offer our perplexities and deadlocked problems. I chose the two countries (India and Japan) because they are at opposite ends of the spectrum: one the most tradition-bound, the other the most "modern" of the great countries of Asia. I did not

¹ Arthur Koestler, *The Lotus and the Robot* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1960); hereafter referred to as LR.

² This has recently been emphasized by Sakamoto Hiroshi in his article "D. T. Suzuki as a Philosopher," *The Eastern Buddhist* XI, 2 (October 1978), pp. 33–42.

hope for any ready-made answer, but was anxious to look at the predicament of the West from a different perspective, a different spiritual latitude. [LR 11]

Koestler's "pilgrimage" was further motivated by his belief that the world is in a desperate state. Atomic war and the annihilation of humanity loom as everpresent threats, creating deep-seated feelings of insecurity. He concluded, however, that the East has no adequate answer: "Mankind is facing its most deadly predicament since it climbed down from the trees: but one is reluctantly brought to the conclusion that neither Yoga, Zen, nor any other Asian form of mysticism has any significant advice to offer" (LR 282).

Instead, the European should understand the strength of his own history and mode of thinking. "Thus, in a sense, I came back impoverished rather than enriched. I felt that I had been put in my place—and that my place was Europe" (LR 282–283).

Koestler writes that the opinion held by many Westerners that the West is materialistic, whereas the East is spiritualistic and contemplative, is fallacious. Rather, the contrast should be made

between two basically different philosophies; so different, in fact, that Haas, the German Orientalist, who wrote a thoughtful and stimulating book on the question, suggested a new word for the Eastern approach to life: "philousia" as opposed to "philosophy." For all the historical evidence goes to show that the East is less interested in factual knowledge—*sophia*—of the external world than in *ousia*—essential Being; that it prefers intuition to reason, symbols to concepts, self-realization through the annihilation of the ego to self-realization through the unfolding of individuality. [LR 281]

That philosophy and "philousia" are not reconciled in the East is one of its basic problems, according to Koestler. Only Taoism, with its *yin* and *yang* representing the masculine trait of logic in harmony with feminine intuition, is an exception. Thus, Asian cultures may be characterized as emphasizing mysticism, intuition, subjectivity and the rejection of logic. This, in turn, Koestler ascribes to the East's unwillingness to admit the reality of the external world. Attempts to reconcile the two opposites have failed:

“As a result, conceptual thinking could not develop, and *yin* had it all to herself against *yang*. When she occasionally tried to pose as *yang*—as in the pseudo-reasoning of, say, Krishna Menon about the seer and the seen, or of Dr. Suzuki about tea which is no-tea—the result was confusion” (LR 282). European history, on the other hand, represents for Koestler a superior dynamic of the mutual complementation of reason and intuition.³

Koestler criticizes modern Japanese culture, and sees its ambiguities as a result of its inability to modernize thoroughly. This applies to Zen as well, which he sees as anachronistic and divorced from the moral rigor which demands clear definitions of good and evil. Zen is no more integrated into Japanese life than the other aspects of traditional Japanese culture, which is religiously “dead.”

Zen, according to Koestler, is “as ambiguous as the pebbles in the rock garden which symbolize now a mountain, now a fleeing tiger.” Koestler also applies this objection to Suzuki, whom he honors (sarcastically) with the title, “the Master.”

And why must the Master and his pupils write book after book to explain that Zen cannot be explained, that it is “literally beyond the reach of thought, beyond the limits of the finest and most subtle thinking,” in a word, that it cannot be put into words. We know that not only mystical thinking defies verbalization; there is a whole range of intuitions, visual impressions, bodily sensations which also refuse to be converted into verbal currency. Painters paint, dancers dance, musicians make music, instead of explaining that they are practising no-thought in their no-minds. Inarticulateness is not a monopoly of Zen; but it is the only school which made a philosophy out of it, whose exponents burst into verbal diarrhoea to prove constipation.⁴

Similarly, Koestler argues that “satori” is a “rubber term,” one to which Suzuki ascribes different meanings and which he applies to varying situations:

Satori is a wonderfully rubbery concept. There are small satoris

³ LR 284–285.

⁴ Arthur Koestler, “Neither Lotus nor Robot,” *Encounter* 16 (February 1960), p. 58; hereafter as NLR.

and big satoris. They occur when one solves a koan, or in meditation, but also through looking at a peach-blossom or watching a pebble hit a bamboo. The mondos, in which a disciple who asked a too rational question is whacked on the head, usually end with the line: "at that moment he had his satori." Facing two famous Zen abbots in the Daitokuji Temple in Kyoto, I asked them how long a satori lasts. The first answered promptly: "One second." The second added as promptly: "It might go on for days."
[LR 243]

Indeed, the only common understanding Koestler derives from the use of "satori" in Zen writings is that it is not cognitive, but rather intuitional: "Satori could simply be translated by the word 'intuition' which is equally elastic and covers the same range of phenomena. There is not more to it, but also not less. The rest is pseudo-mystical verbiage" (LR 245).

To exemplify how Suzuki uses the term "satori" ambiguously, Koestler brings four quotes from *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1959):

. . . Satori finds a meaning hitherto hidden in our daily concrete particular experiences, such as eating, drinking, or business of all kinds.

. . . Satori is emancipation, moral, spiritual, as well as intellectual. When I am in my isness, thoroughly purged of all intellectual sediments, I have my freedom in its primary sense.

. . . When the mind, now abiding in its isness—which, to use Zen verbalism, is not isness—and thus free from intellectual complexities and moralistic attachments of every description, surveys the world of the senses in all its multiplicities, it discovers in it all sorts of values hitherto hidden from sight.

. . . This supreme moment in the life of an artist, when expressed in Zen terms, is the experience of satori. To experience satori is to become conscious of the unconscious (*mushin*, no-mind), psychologically speaking. Art has always something of the Unconscious about it.⁵

⁵ Suzuki as quoted in LR 243–244. In *Zen and Japanese Culture*, these quotations appear on pp. 16, 17, and 220.

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Koestler concludes that "satori" has lost its meaning to the extent that "By modern Zen standards I would be quite justified to claim that I have a satori on each of the rare occasions when I manage to write down a sentence which says exactly what I mean" (LR 244).

Human beings have a need for a "transcendental belief" as well as religious or aesthetic "peak experiences," according to Koestler. Without these we become selfish and act cruelly. On the other hand, the institutionalization of these moments as part of a collective vocabulary or as the central dogma through which a group defines itself, is always degenerate. Our emotional response is translated by the intellect into forms which the intellect cannot fully express, resulting in an internal "dissonance." In turn, the intellect often attempts to overcome this problem by resorting to illogical or non-logical categories which Koestler characterizes as "double-think:"

To eliminate the dissonance, various forms of double-think have been designed at different times—powerful techniques of self-deception, some crude, some extremely sophisticated. Secular religions—political ideologies—too, have their ancient origins in the utopian craving for an ideal society; but when they crystallize into a movement or party, they can be distorted to such an extent that the actual policy pursued is the direct opposite of the professed ideal. The reason why idealistic movements—whether religious or secular—show this apparently inevitable tendency to degenerate into their own caricatures can be derived from the peculiarities of the group mind: its tendency towards intellectual oversimplification combined with emotional arousal, and its quasi-hypnotic suggestibility by leader-figures or belief systems.⁶

Double-think is therefore a comfortable way to deal with the discrepancy or "dissonance" between the illogical and the logical.

Koestler finds Zen to be like Communism in its use of ambiguity. And, since Koestler had at one time in his life been seduced by Communist rhetoric, he wants to avoid being fooled again by ambiguous language:

Behind the curtain there is the magic world of double-think.

⁶ Arthur Koestler, *The Ghost in the Machine* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1967), p. 261.

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“Ugly is beautiful, false is true and also conversely.” This is not Orwell; it was written in all seriousness, by the late Professor Suzuki, the foremost propounder of modern Zen, to illustrate the principle of the identity of opposites. The perversions of Pop-Zen are based on juggling with the dialectics of history, the Schoolman's on a combination of Holy Scripture with Aristotelian logic. The axioms differ, but the delusional process follows much the same pattern. Facts and arguments which succeed in penetrating the outer defences are processed by the dialectical method until “false” becomes “true,” tyranny the true democracy, and a herring a racehorse. . . .⁷

The practical result of this “double-think,” according to Koestler, is a dangerous moral relativism which may be applied to many situations capriciously. This is especially true of Zen, he believes, given the teaching that good and evil must be “transcended.”

Koestler traces the non-moral quality of Zen back to the Third Patriarch of China, Seng-ts'an, who, according to Koestler, eschews concern for right and wrong. A translation of Seng-ts'an's Sutra taken from Alan Watts' *The Way of Zen* (1957) is brought in to exemplify Koestler's point:

If you want to get to the plain truth,
Be not concerned with right and wrong.
The conflict between right and wrong
Is the sickness of the mind.⁸

This a-morality has continued to the present, according to Koestler, resulting in a tradition which is knowingly “rude,” “abrupt,” “direct,” and “sarcastic.” Bodhidharma, the monk who brought Zen to China and who is considered the founder of Zen Buddhism, is the archetype of this attitude. In Koestler's words,

From its earliest beginnings—supposedly in sixth-century China—the great masters of Zen denied that it aimed at moral improvement: “If a man seeks the Buddha, that man loses the Buddha.” According to tradition, it was a fierce-looking Indian monk,

⁷ Ibid., p. 262.

⁸ Quoted in LR 233.

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Bodhidharma, who brought Buddhism to China in the sixth century. When the emperor asked him how much merit he, the Emperor, had acquired by supporting the new creed, Bodhidharma shouted at him: "None whatsoever." The Emperor, rather shaken in his enthusiasm, then wanted to know just what the sacred doctrine of the creed was. Again Bodhidharma shouted, "It is empty, there is nothing sacred." [LR 233-234]

Koestler brings other examples of this "cruelty," citing cases of disciples who are hit over the head with stones, whacked with staffs across the shoulder blades, and who are forced to meditate with only short periods allowed for food and sleep. He is left wondering about the ruthlessness with which Master Nansen kills a defenseless kitten just to make a point.

According to Koestler's understanding of Zen, students are taught to put away reason and morality, and to act instead as an automaton, a "robot." The mind and will are to be subjugated to the authority of the master. The "one unforgivable sin in a Zen monastery" is to be too logical. It is consequently possible for acts of cruelty on the master's part to be "justified" as a response to the student's logical questions or answers. T'ang master Tōsu is an example of this. According to a story which Suzuki quotes, the master strikes his disciple. Koestler reiterates Suzuki's justification for this act:

The masterful Tōsu knew, as all Zen masters do, the uselessness of making any verbal demonstration against such a "logician." For verbalism leads from one complication to another; there is no end to it. The only effective way, perhaps, to make such a monk as this realize the falsehood of his conceptual understanding is to strike him and so let him experience within himself the meaning of the statement, "One in All and All in One." The monk was to be awakened from his logical somnambulism. Hence Tōsu's drastic measure. [LR 235]

From Koestler's perspective, Zen admits of no coherent set of principles by which to check one's conduct, making all permissible through the ambiguity of "double-think." At the same time, it is possible to be an adherent of this potentially cruel religion, and ardently to defend the beliefs which support otherwise repugnant modes of behavior. Since a disciple of

Zen must act "automatically" and uncritically (criticism, of course, being a rational faculty which must therefore be avoided), the adherent falls prey to masters who are themselves less than paragons of moral virtue. The student may be asked to "apply" himself through activities which are often militaristic or cruel.

Koestler brings two examples of how a "master" may be morally bankrupt without facing the logical criticism which would allow his disciples to judge his claim to "mastership." Double-think reasoning allows the masters to act in certain ways which would otherwise be problematic. Because of the ambiguity of Zen, the master would be seen as acting, nevertheless, freely. Koestler shows how the two masters in question are granted "absolution."

I was reminded of a talk with an . . . amiable Zen abbot in Kyoto, who, having passed through his final satori and graduated as a Buddha "living like one already dead," had just bought himself a television set. In Mishima's novel there is another abbot, whom his devoted pupil catches out leaving a cinema, dressed in European clothes, in the company of a geisha. Their attitude to the vanities of the world seem to be like that of the alcoholic who affirms that he is cured, and that he no longer drinks because he needs it, but just for fun. [LR 256]

Lacking a spiritual center with God serving as the absolute authority and, therefore, the font of morality, Zen becomes ethically relativistic. It may be appropriated for morally noble as well as ignoble purposes. Koestler again quotes Suzuki, whom he calls "the last Patriarch," to exemplify this weakness: "Zen [is] extremely flexible in adapting itself to almost any philosophy and moral doctrine as long as its intuitive teaching is not interfered with. It may be found wedded to anarchism or fascism, communism or democracy, atheism or idealism" (LR 271). In another place, responding to criticisms by John Strachey and Christmas Humphreys of his article "The Stink of Zen," Koestler puts it into even stronger terms. Not only has Zen the potential to serve morally repugnant causes. In fact, it does so serve. In Koestler's words, ". . . its moral detachment has degenerated into complacency towards, *and complacency with, evil.*"⁹

⁹ NLR 58; italics mine.

Zen, Koestler maintains, encourages people to feel they needn't confront the moral consequences of their deeds. It therefore attracts people of ethically questionable character. In Koestler's terms, "By virtue of its anti-rationality and amorality, Zen always held a fascination for a category of people in whom brutishness combines with pseudo-mysticism, from Samurai to Kamikaze to Beatnik."¹⁰ Koestler thus castigates Suzuki for endorsing both Eugen and Gustie Herrigel's books on Zen, and for not even attempting to apologize for their role in the Nazi holocaust. He tells us that Eugen Herrigel, author of *Zen in the Art of Archery* (1953), "... was the star Zen pupil among Western converts both before and after his Nazi career. In Dr. Suzuki's preface written in 1953, to 'this wonderful little book by a German philosopher,' there is no mention of that past and no word of apology." Suzuki instead talks about the "childlikeness" which is the result of becoming "a Zen artist of life," to which Koestler adds "and the gas chambers."¹¹ Suzuki writes a similar preface to Gustie Herrigel's book, *Zen in the Art of Flower Arrangement* (1957), in which her Nazi affiliation is not mentioned. These serve as examples of why Koestler feels that Suzuki, together with the amoral Zen he teaches, should be severely criticized for refusing to address issues which are so important.

This same topic came up at a round-table talk which included Zen Buddhist expert, Professor N. (as Koestler refers to him). Someone asked Dr. N. " 'You favor tolerance towards all religions and all political systems. What about Hitler's gas chambers?' 'That was very silly of him.' 'Just silly, not evil?' 'Evil is a Christian concept. Good and evil exist only on a relative scale.' 'Should not tolerance, too, be applied on a relative scale? Should it include those who deny tolerance?' 'That is thinking in opposite categories, which is alien to our thought' " (LR 273-274).

Koestler claims that it is because of the lack of rigor characterizing Zen that it was possible for Buddhism to become the creed of the Samurai warriors, swordsmanship, Judo, wrestling and archery while at the same time undergirding the gentle arts of painting, landscape gardening, the tea ceremony, flower arranging, etc. Zen requires no justification for this apparent contradiction.¹²

¹⁰ Ibid., 59.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² LR 242.

In order to understand the vitality of Japanese Zen in the past, according to Koestler, Zen must be seen as a counterbalance to the rigidly conservative Confucianism. More a statute of social conduct and law than a religion, Confucianism determined the culture's "law, order, book-learning and convention."¹³ It created in the Japanese a culture that represses emotionalism, maintains sanctions on the basis of shame rather than guilt,¹⁴ and teaches self-control as its supreme virtue.¹⁵ It is easy to see, therefore, how Zen, with its teaching of "spontaneity," would provide an important antidote to Confucian rigor. According to Koestler's understanding of Zen, "The secret is not in the Buddha's smile but in a simple formula applicable to all these diverse activities, the panacea of Zen: trust your intuition, short-circuit reflection, discard caution, act spontaneously. It is amazing what wonders this prescription can achieve, especially in a people tied in knots, conditioned to the reverse set of principles" (LR 242).

Koestler explicates the elements of Zen which stand as direct confrontations with elements of traditional Japanese culture:

The whole teaching of Zen seems to be directed against the inhibitions and restraints imposed by the Japanese code of behavior. Against the Spartan self-discipline demanded by the code, stands Po-chang's famous definition of Zen: "When hungry, eat, when tired, sleep." The traditional dread of unforeseen situations is neutralized by springing surprises and shocks on the disciple and encouraging him to reciprocate in equally eccentric fashion: the koan technique is designed to bring out just that side of a person which the social code condemns: "the unexpected man." In the social code, "self-respect" is practically synonymous with cautious and circumspect behavior, designed to avoid adverse comment; Zen bullies the pupil into throwing caution to the wind, and teaching him to respond spontaneously, "without even the thickness of a hair between impulse and act." Social conditioning leads to numbness of self-consciousness and blushing homophobia; Zen aims at the annihilation of the "self-observing self." [LR 240]

¹³ LR 242.

¹⁴ LR 231-232. Koestler follows Ruth Benedict in this analysis.

¹⁵ LR 260.

In a similar fashion, Koestler sets about juxtaposing the Confucian emphasis on ancestor worship with the Zen insistence that one rid oneself of all objects blocking the path to enlightenment, including relatives. He quotes Mishima Yukio's version of a well-known Zen story:

Clear every obstacle out of your way If on your way you meet the Buddha, kill the Buddha. When you meet your ancestor, kill your ancestor. When you meet your father and mother, kill your father and mother. When you meet your kin, kill your kin. Only thus will you achieve deliverance. Only thus will you escape the trammels and become free.¹⁶

Although originally Japanese Zen emphasized a kind of spontaneity which was creative in nature and which complemented Confucianism, Koestler believes that this spontaneity quickly became an "automatic" and mechanistic spontaneity which in turn drained Japanese culture of its vitality. Similarly, the spiritual core of Zen declined with its de-emphasis on monastic life. The result is that modern Zen—which Koestler calls "Pop-Zen" and which he identifies with Suzuki's writings—has left Japan more removed from spirituality than any other nation.

Finally, Koestler suggests one possible way to understand Zen as interpreted by D. T. Suzuki which would make it defensible: to see it as a hoax. Koestler expresses this point:

There is one redeeming possibility: that all this drivel is deliberately intended to confuse the reader, since one of the avowed aims of Zen is to perplex and unhinge the rational mind. If this hypothesis were correct, Professor Suzuki's voluminous *oeuvre* of at least a million pages, especially written for this purpose, would represent a hoax of truly heroic dimensions, and the laugh would be on the Western intellectuals who fell for it. [LR 255]

In short, Koestler asserts, "It is time for the Professor to shut up and for Western intelligentsia to recognize contemporary Zen as one of the 'sick' jokes, slightly gangrened, which are always fashionable in ages of anxiety" (NLR 58).

Suzuki himself replied to Koestler's critique. This was unusual for Suzu-

¹⁶ Quoted in LR 241.

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ki who rarely participated in such debates, and indicates Suzuki's assessment of the significance of Koestler's criticisms. In an article also published in *Encounter*, Suzuki attempts to show Koestler how the criticisms he brings to Zen are based upon misinterpretations, and how Koestler "unfortunately, seems not to be cognisant of 'the stink' radiating from his own 'Zen.'" ¹⁷ An examination of Suzuki's response to Koestler will provide a good starting point for a critical analysis of Koestler's position.

Suzuki begins by asserting that Koestler has missed the important points with regard to Zen, and that this has reminded him again of the difficulty in attempting to teach Zen to Westerners who have no Zen tradition in their cultural history. Suzuki does not "blame" Koestler for his misunderstanding Zen: Zen is difficult to comprehend even for the Easterner who has grown up in the midst of an Oriental religious heritage. Indeed, Suzuki asserts that "there are Eastern writers who claim to be followers of Zen who miss the same points" (R 55).

Suzuki addresses himself to the question of writing about Zen which is beyond words. He puts Koestler's criticisms in his own terms: "When Zen professes to be 'above word,' why then this amassing of literature?" Quotes from Buddhist philosopher Asvaghosha and Confucius are then brought to explain this apparent contradiction:

When we wish to say that no words are needed, words are needed to prove it. We are so made and we cannot escape this fatality. Zen is not alone in this. Though Zen appeals to direct action, words are needed to explain why. So, says Asvaghosha, the great Buddhist philosopher, "A wedge is needed in order to extract another wedge, and words are required to prove the uselessness of words." Thus we go on forever, and books after books are written for posterity's sake to fill more libraries. It was more than two thousand years ago that Confucius said, "I wish to be silent. What does heaven say? Do not the four seasons go on and all the ten thousand things grow?" [R 55]

Buddha himself is said to have declared, "I have been talking and talking to you for the last forty-nine years but in truth I have not spoken a word."

¹⁷ D. T. Suzuki, "A Reply from D. T. Suzuki," *Encounter* 17 (October 1961), p. 58; hereafter as R.

This, according to Suzuki, must be understood as a caution not to take words for more than they actually are—words. Like anything else which is regarded to be “indispensable,” words “are not to be overestimated beyond the real use for which they were produced. Symbolisation has its limits. Even ‘God’ requires judicious handling” (R 55). Thus, the problem is not with the words, *per se*; rather, the manner in which persons mistake words for the reality they “symbolize” is what Zen voluminously cautions us against. Being free from the “entanglements” of reason is therefore not the same as eschewing reason altogether.

Suzuki continues: in the history of thought, there are no better examples than Zen of a system which is free from being “entangled” in reason. This freedom is exhibited by the Zen master’s ability to use either logical forms or actions such as sudden vocalization, a slap (for which, Suzuki asserts, disciples are often most grateful), “or anything that comes handy at the moment.”¹⁸

Suzuki’s own mode of expression, on the other hand, is one of logic. He does not employ the actional approach of Zen masters as described above. Rather, he asserts that it is possible to be reasonable even though the form of reason is different from (but not “indifferent to”) logic based upon the laws of non-contradiction and excluded middle. The non-Aristotelian logic Suzuki uses is not based upon the distinction between subject and object or the distance which is usually asserted between a seer and that which is seen. Suzuki argues for what he calls “the Zen way of reasoning”:

According to the Zen way of reasoning which is not the Aristotelian form of logic, “A” is “A” because “A” is “not-A,” or “A” is at once “A” and “not-A.” Zen tells us this from his [*sic*] own experience because experience or fact comes first and then follows the talking or thinking about it, and not the reverse. According to this form of logic, when one talks about “A,” “A” is “A” just because of the presence of “not-A.” “A” cannot be “A” all by itself, it always implies or presupposes “not-A.” Subject is subject because of object, and vice-versa. The identification of “A” as “A” is possible only because of its being distinct from “not-A.” But “A” alone is non-existent. If it exists at all, it is in our thought

¹⁸ R 56.

which is not always dichotomous. We posit it for the convenience of our utilitarian thinking. [R 56]

In other words, Suzuki is attempting to establish the non-dualistic basis for reason. The law of non-contradiction, which states that something cannot be both itself and not itself at the same time, depends upon that thing's being itself. But, according to Suzuki's logic, something cannot be itself without being not-itself. When we say that we know a thing as distinct from other things, we are only employing a convention of understanding for our convenience. In other words, nothing is known until everything is known. All dichotomies are therefore *a posteriori* and imply the unity of reality "before" dualistic reasoning, before the knower is separated from what is known.

It should be understood that Suzuki's pre-dichotomous basis for reason is not equivalent to an outright rejection of logic. Indeed, the pragmatic efficacy of reasonable analysis is aptly demonstrated by Suzuki's ability to reason quite logically in order to point beyond logic.

"Definitions" and "explanations" can never exhaust phenomena, according to Suzuki. Thus, we can never totally know a thing in the dichotomous manner. Yet, phenomena stand over and against us and demand complete understanding, "understanding in its truest sense." That is, we never rest content until a thing is known in its fullness and nothing of its characteristics is left out of our understanding. Standing apart from an object, one can never attain this level of perception. Suzuki continues, "The only way to realize this understanding is to plunge ourselves into the object itself and be one with it. Philosophers of Mr. Koestler's standing will laugh at me and declare here is another case of absurdity or ambiguity. They may say: how can a man as subject become one with object? I answer: this is applying your yardstick of logic where it does not avail." No matter how clearly and logically something is understood, the subject-object mode of knowledge can never be exhaustive. Arguing logically about non-dualistic reason is the same as a concept confronting another concept. Reality, which can only be known by "jumping in," is left untouched.¹⁹

Just as a portrait is not the actual person being portrayed, so concepts,

¹⁹ R 57.

though helpful within their own scope, are not the reality they symbolize. For Suzuki,

Philosophers and logicians are generally satisfied with the images that symbolize Reality. It is the Zen man who goes around performing deeds in this most original fashion. His creativity oozes out of every pore of his skin. He is "the most honoured individual in the whole world." He follows no pattern of tradition, he is his own master and every behaviour of his is fresh and exhilarating. He is the real "aristocrat" of Meister Eckhart. He is the one who is behind all the stimulating writings produced by "Mr. Arthur Koestler."
[R 57-58]

Suzuki gives a clue to the importance of a logical approach to Zen. He maintains that at times the urge to go beyond the anxiety-ridden, limited life of ego-existence manifests itself as intellectual "doubt." That is, we intellectually question the foundations of our existence, and this questioning takes us beyond the point where intellection is adequate to answer the question it poses. The "inner urge" which is the source of the logical questioning is a form of "doubt." In Suzuki's words, "the 'doubt' must take possession of one's whole being which finally becomes a non-being, and this non-being must be an actual experience and not a concept" (R 57).

The question which remains is whether or not Suzuki's response to Koestler is adequate from Koestler's point of view. Can Suzuki's position be explained in terms of logic which Koestler will accept? If not, do we have a case of two views of the world which share no common basis for comparison? Suzuki maintains that there is such a basis, that his is a "logical" presentation of Zen. How then can he make statements such as "'A' is 'A' because 'A' is 'not-A'" or "Zero equals infinity," and still claim to be "logical"?

This task is tantamount to attempting to convince someone through Aristotelian, dichotomous logic of the existence of another, non-subject-object mode of thinking. If it is logic itself which breaks things down into "A" and "not-A" and one can reasonably demonstrate that "A" is non-existent without "not-A," then the logical approach which depends upon "A" being other than "not-A" turns in on itself as a contradiction. Reality would therefore evade logical analysis to the extent that any

object "A" can never be known apart from its negation "not-A." Although we posit an object as a limited, finite thing, as Suzuki says, "If it exists at all, it is in our thought which is always dichotomous. We posit it for the convenience of our utilitarian thinking."

The consequence of the line of reasoning that Suzuki is pursuing is that reality must be understood as beyond the grasp of logical analysis. The apparent ambiguities in Suzuki's presentation of Zen may be seen not as evasions of a consistent formulation, but rather reflections of the non-definite nature of reality before the occurrence of the subject-object split which betokens dichotomous reason.

But how could Suzuki's logic of illogic ever be evaluated? Clearly, without some criterion of truth it would be impossible to know the hoaxter from the Zen master, the manipulator from the compassionate teacher. All one need do in order to pose as a master is speak nonsense and combine it with an emotional appeal.

While Suzuki does not address himself to this point, there is a criterion which may be extrapolated from his position. If logic in the form Suzuki espouses claims to be "prior" to dichotomies or (to use another of Suzuki's oft-repeated words) ratiocination, then the thought which follows and grows from out of the "experience" of reality in this "pre-rational" sense should indicate the non-dichotomous state of reality without in any way making such a dichotomy itself. Thus, the criterion for truth that would follow consistently with the "Zen way of reasoning" is its refusal to make dichotomies. Reality must be expressed in terms of "A" being "not-A," and this must be consistent and thorough-going.

Just as reason of the Zen kind may be said to "follow" experience and not vice versa, so its refusal to accept dichotomous understanding by that token confronts one with the inadequacy of subject-object knowledge. One is therefore brought to understand the poverty of logic through the vehicle of Zen philosophy, and left on the threshold of direct experience. Following experience, then, the Zen philosophy, when it is "true to itself," can also bring one to experience that which is unmediated by reason.

The potential to bring one to direct, unmediated experience is derived from the necessity for dualistic, or dichotomous logic to know objects in terms of their negation. Since the Zen way is prior to the split, there are no definitions which limit a thing in terms of what it is not. The intellect can never take hold of something which is unlimited. To do so, it would have to

grasp everything, which is, by virtue of its lack of definition, nothing. Through Zen philosophy the intellect is therefore confronted not by another object to be acquisitioned as a datum of knowledge; but rather with its own limitation. It comes to "know," in a sense, that reality is beyond its grasp.

In short, a statement of Zen philosophy would have to be all-inclusive, breaking through the dichotomizing tendency of ordinary reason. Once the intellect is confronted with its inability to know reality through ratiocination, it is at the same time confronted with its own inadequacies. And this type of understanding, as Suzuki's argument (and indeed his interpretation of Zen in general) demonstrate, may be put in logical terms. Whether or not Arthur Koestler finds Suzuki's argument cohesive, it seems that Suzuki has succeeded in formulating a response in Koestler's own terms. Koestler's claim of "ambiguity," when applied to statements like "'A' is 'A' because it is 'not-A'" or "Zero equals infinity" are therefore ill-founded. It is not Suzuki's interpretation of reality which is ambiguous, but rather the nature of reality which itself demands this sort of expression.

Suzuki's position may be used to criticize Koestler, as well. For if reality demands to be understood fully, and if dichotomous reason can never bring one to this level of complete knowledge, then the accrual of factual data is never-ending, never-fulfilling or fulfilled occupation. Again, nothing is known completely until everything (and, therefore too its negation, nothing) is known. Yet, as Suzuki points out, reality demands that we know it fully. At best, through dichotomous reason one may be brought to the limits of dualistic understanding. The knower is then confronted with the disquiet inherent in incomplete knowledge, and this in turn may point him to the problematic source which motivates the search in the first place. At this point, logic of the Aristotelian type must end and "logic" of the Zen type which Suzuki presents begins.²⁰

²⁰ This summary may serve as a beginning for a "logic of Zen," as Suzuki indicates, although it is by no means adequate as it stands. Attempts to explicate such a "logic" have been undertaken by such Zen scholars as Nishida Kitarō, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, and Richard DeMartino. Hisamatsu formulates the ultimate crisis of modern man in these terms in his powerful essay, "Ultimate Crisis and Resurrection" published in *The Eastern Buddhist* VIII, 1 (May 1975), pp. 12-29, and VIII, 2 (October 1975), pp. 37-65. An in-depth study of this question or explication of Zen logic is unfortunately beyond the scope of this paper and would require a full study in itself.

KOESTLER AND SUZUKI

In his later works, Koestler himself came to understand the shortcomings of reason. Although he never considers the alternative offered by Suzuki's interpretation of Zen, he describes the aspect of human reason which sets man apart from other animals in terms of the subject-object split:

The self which directs the search light of my attention can never be caught in its focal beam. Even the operations which generate language include processes which cannot be expressed by language It is a paradox as old as Achilles and the Tortoise, that the experiencing subject can never fully become the object of his experience; at best can achieve successive approximations. If learning and knowledge consist of making oneself a private model of the universe, it follows that the model can never include a complete model of itself, because it must always lag one step behind the process which it is supposed to represent. With each upward-shift of awareness towards the apex of the hierarchy—the self as an integrated whole—it recedes like a mirage. "Know thyself" is the most venerable and most tantalizing command.²¹

Koestler's language, employed well after his encounter with Suzuki, is remarkably similar to Suzuki's own formulation of Zen, and may indicate that Koestler later took Suzuki more seriously. But he does not proceed to the crucial next step. He has, in effect, come to understand the limits of dichotomous reason while at the same time employing this admittedly inadequate tool to debunk Suzuki's position. Rather than confront his own discovery, he uses reason to apparently extirpate himself from the "paradox." All this while never rescinding his condemnation of Suzuki's use of Orwellian "double-think" logic.

Once a criterion has been set up to evaluate Zen "logic," the non-logical actions and ejaculations of the Zen masters may also be reasonably understood. For they must be equally rigorous in eschewing a dichotomous view of the world while at the same time presenting the Zen student with the necessity of grasping reality in a direct, immediate manner. A master who "gives" a student one thing in place of another has not addressed the problem of finite, dualistic consciousness. He has merely substituted one limited perception for another. Whether with a staff or a kick in the leg,

²¹ *The Ghost in the Machine*, p. 212.

the master presents reality in its fullness and thereby undermines the foundations of the ego's tendency to break the world down into manageable, self-defining (and, therefore, ego-sustaining) parts. While the non-philosophical expressions of Zen are not in themselves logical, one may come to understand their a-rationality rationally.

Evaluating the genuineness of a Zen master is difficult in any event. But Koestler's attempt to discredit masters for possessing television sets or going to the cinema with geishas displays his misunderstanding of Zen. No particular mode of acting necessarily characterizes the Zen master. There is no preconceived idea of "sainthood" into which the master must fit. To the contrary, it is freedom from such forms which characterizes his being a Zen master. As Suzuki often taught, only *prajna*-intuition and the compassion of *mahakaruna* motivate his way of life.

The apparent "rudeness" or brutality of masters in traditional Zen stories is understandable when the difficulty of Zen is kept in mind. The master will use whatever is at his disposal to help bring the Zen student to "die the great death." Because the master sees the suffering inherent in dualistic existence and is not himself seduced into believing in the importance of proximate solutions, he consistently, and in any way possible, confronts the student with the problem. No rules of propriety are more important than this; the minor pain of a blow with a staff or a kick, or being shaken by the collar, is insignificant by comparison.

As for the degeneracy of modern Zen masters, Suzuki fully agrees with Koestler: Zen is on the decline in Japan in terms of the lack of originality displayed by those who claim to be its representatives. He points out that Koestler's meetings with abbots who were "embarrassed" by logical questions is an example of this:

Wonderful is the stupidity of those high-ranked abbots of Zen!
 Why did they not give Mr. Koestler Rinzai's "*Kahiz!*" or Tokusan's stick and chase him out of the temple? He would never have written the article in which Zen stinks altogether too much in the wrong way!
[R 56]

Suzuki's position (often reiterated) is that Zen may easily fall into the trap of becoming a degenerate "establishment," duplicating particular methodologies while being untrue to its own teaching of "non-dependence on scripture." To help insure against this tendency, Zen teaches "meeting the

master, kill the master." No authority—expressed rationally or actionally—can be allowed to exist as a point of dependence. Put in other words, when the master is "killed" as an external authority, then and only then may the master be met. The confrontation, in the most direct sense, is one which a student must have with himself. And whatever method a Zen master may employ to bring about this self-confrontation is proper. But when methods become ritualized, teachings "established," they become ends in themselves. This tendency, so understandable in terms of egos which require conventions of one sort or another to shore themselves up, is degenerate from Suzuki's perspective. Rather, each Zen teaching must be fully and radically original.

Koestler's claim that "satori" is a "rubber term" which is used to express a number of various intuitional phenomena, should be evaluated. This will be done in two stages. First, the consistency with which the term is used within the four quotes (see page 49) from *Zen and Japanese Culture* will be examined. Then, an example of Suzuki's use of the term in other places, as well as his understanding of "intuition" will be considered in order to determine whether he has a comprehensive, coherent notion of "satori."

The four quotes from Suzuki emphasize the following implications regarding satori: 1) the uncovering of a new meaning in concrete, everyday experiences, 2) an emancipation on the moral, spiritual and intellectual level, 3) the discovery of values ordinarily hidden by our limited, dualistic purview, and 4) the psychological aspect of becoming conscious of the "Unconscious," as, for example, in the supreme creative moment in the life of an artist.

Aspects 1) and 3) are clearly similar. Both speak of satori as a discovery of something new, and indicate that this is a discovery of meaning or value previously "hidden" in the everyday world. Satori is not the uncovering of some "novel" reality. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to consider that moral, spiritual and intellectual emancipation is a concomitant of such discoveries. On any level, when categories of understanding or acting are broken down, new information and appreciation are made available which were "hidden" by the former mode of relating to the world. Thus, Suzuki's first three usages are not only consistent, but complementary and mutually explanatory.

To understand how the fourth usage is consistent with the other three, its context should be examined. Suzuki is not talking about art in general, as

Koestler seems to indicate. Rather, he is talking about those elements of Japanese culture which have been traditionally associated with Zen. In these cases satori is the goal of art as well as religion. Through rigid discipline and concentration, the artist comes to the same crisis as that achieved by means of the koan method or Zen philosophy as described above. Since Zen itself may be approached from many different directions (Suzuki divides these approaches into the actional and the verbal), satori may be described in terms of various cases. The example of the artist within traditional Zen-related art forms in Japan is one possible mode. The artist, no less than a monk in a monastery setting, comes to "discover" a new value and dimension to reality when the dualistic point of view is overcome in satori. In this respect, then, Suzuki's fourth usage is consistent with the other three.

The psychological aspect of the fourth quote, however, is more difficult. Suzuki writes that the experience of satori means "to become conscious of the Unconscious (*mushin*, no-mind)." In order to understand how Suzuki is using "Unconscious," various other quotations within *Zen and Japanese Culture* must be cited. Suzuki writes about no-mind: "It is a state of mind which is no more troubled with the questions of death or of immortality" (p. 74). Or, put in terms of the relationship between art and Zen, ". . . It means going beyond the dualism of all forms of life and death, good and evil, being and non-being. This is where all arts merge into Zen" (p. 94). Suzuki devotes a section of this book to "The Mind of No-Mind," which emphasizes that when one passes "beyond" the problem of life and death (dualistic consciousness), one is free to create without becoming "stopped" or "stuck" in one place as opposed to another. In Zen master Takuan's words, as translated by Suzuki:

A mind unconscious of itself is a mind that is not at all disturbed by affects of any kind. It is the original mind and not the delusive one that is chock-full of affects. It is always flowing, it never halts, nor does it turn into a solid. As it has no discrimination to make, no affective preference to follow, it fills the whole body, pervading every part of the body, and nowhere standing still. It is never like a stone or a piece of wood.²²

This is not a description of a person's ability to overcome his particular

²² Takuan, "The Mind of No-Mind," in Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, p. 111.

psychological repressions. Rather, what Suzuki is talking about is a basic change in one's mode of being, such that freedom from life and death—and indeed, all dualities—manifests itself in the person *qua* swordsman, artist, or philosopher. “To become conscious of the Unconscious,” therefore, cannot be applied to piecemeal psychological derepression. It is instead a once-and-for-all event in which the “void” of no-mind becomes one's mind. Satori must be understood as the final death of ego, and is not reducible to experiences of artistic clarity. Koestler is therefore mistaken when he says, “I would be quite justified to claim that I have a satori on each of the rare occasions when I manage to write down a sentence which says exactly what I mean” (LR 244).

Keeping this once-and-for-all aspect of Suzuki's interpretation of “satori” in mind, it becomes clear that the four usages Koestler cites are consistent with one another. How, then, can Koestler reduce “satori” to “intuition?” Suzuki often speaks of one in terms of the other. But, as is the case with his use of “satori,” this must be understood as a technical term within the framework of Suzuki's interpretation of Zen.

The notion of “intuition” which Koestler holds to be the essence of satori is, indeed, elastic and ambiguous. But Suzuki recognizes this also, and expresses his uneasiness with its use. Suzuki employs the term to mean a direct contact with reality, that is, knowledge which is “prior” to the onset of dichotomous thinking. “Intuition” is therefore not the equivalent of “acting on a hunch” or trusting to chance, but rather a form of “prehesion.”²³ The relation of Zen and intuitive understanding is a difficult one to understand. In *Zen and Japanese Culture*, Suzuki refers the reader to a treatment of the subject in *Studies in Zen* (1955). In the chapter entitled “Reason and Intuition in Buddhist Philosophy,” Suzuki suggests that *prajna*-intuition (which is the Zen type of intuition) differs from ordinary intuition insofar as ordinary intuition is still of the subject-object mode of thinking. *Prajna*-intuition, on the other hand, has “no definable object to be intuited.”²⁴ *Prajna*-intuition is contrasted with *vijnana* (dualistic knowledge), “which wants everything to be clear-cut and well-defined, with no mixing of two contradictory statements, which, however, *prajna* overrides.”²⁵ Finally, Suzuki returns to a statement consistent with his “Zen

²³ *Zen and Japanese Culture*, p. 219n.

²⁴ *Studies in Zen*, p. 89.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

way of reasoning" when he declares that *prajna*-intuition differs from other forms of intuition by demanding not only that something be intuited, but that all things be intuited at the same "instant." As he puts it,

Thus we can see that *prajna*-intuition is an intuition all by itself and cannot be classified with other forms of intuition as we ordinarily use the term. When we see a flower, we say it is a flower, and this is an act of intuition, for perception is a form of intuition. But when *prajna* takes the flower, it wants us to take not only the flower but at the same time what is not the flower; in other words, to see the flower before it came into existence—and this not by the way of postulation but "immediately." To present this idea in a more metaphysical fashion: *Prajna* will ask: "Even prior to the creation of the world, where is God?" Or, more personally: "When you are dead and cremated and the ashes scattered to the winds, where is your self?" To these questions *prajna* demands a "quick" answer or response, and will not allow a moment's delay for reflection or ratiocination.²⁶

It is easy to understand why Koestler misses the consistency with which Suzuki uses the term "satori," since he does not take this special use of "intuition" into account. If satori is, as Suzuki has said, "The Alpha and the Omega of Zen Buddhism," then the "Great Death" is similarly the beginning and the end of satori,²⁷ and a necessary factor to be considered in any attempt to understand Suzuki's use of "intuition."

When the more specific meaning of "intuition" in Suzuki's writings is taken into account, it is clearly no simple task for people to act "intuitively." Indeed, such an attempt might bring one to the very dead-end of reason which is the "Great Death." In other words, the ego's inability to grasp reality "intuitively" could be the vehicle by which one comes face-to-face with the inadequacy of *vijnana*-understanding. Seen in this light, Suzuki could be understood as asking the reader to do what no ego is capable of doing, in order to actualize the situation of ultimate crisis

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 91-92.

²⁷ See, for example, his chapter "On Satori: The Revelation of a New Truth in Zen Buddhism," *Essays in Zen Buddhism, First Series* (1927), pp. 229-266; and esp. pp. 237-248, 252-257.

necessary for satori. Pointing directly, it would therefore be superfluous to talk of "the great death" philosophically. Unfortunately, however, Koestler does not read Suzuki this way. To the contrary, Suzuki's failure to emphasize this central element of Zen has allowed Koestler (as well as others) to misunderstand satori as a finite glimpse into oneness, as an act of intuition (as this term is ordinarily, and ambiguously, understood), or as creativity.

Suzuki's writings provide a good starting point for a critique of Koestler's objection that Zen is a-moral. Suzuki makes no apologetic attempt to separate Zen from the samurai code or Bushido (way of the warrior), or to deny that Zen, having no set philosophy of its own, may be appropriated by persons or political movements which, in Koestler's opinion, are immoral. But the matter is not as simple as Koestler would have his readers believe.

First, Koestler has quoted Suzuki out of context. Whereas it is logically possible to support fascism, for example, with Zen-like thought and discipline, Suzuki maintains that Zen has a "revolutionary element." Koestler quotes Suzuki: "It [Zen] may be found wedded to anarchism or fascism, communism or democracy, atheism or idealism, or any political or economic dogmatism." But Suzuki's statement continues, "It is, however, generally animated with a certain revolutionary spirit, and when things come to a deadlock—as they do when we are overloaded with conventionalism, formalism, and other cognate isms—Zen asserts itself and proves to be a destructive force."²⁸

The importance of the context of Suzuki's remark is that Zen, by its very nature, cannot support particular forms of government without at the same time posing a challenge to these forms. Implicit in the freedom of the Zen man is the freedom to accept or reject the authority of a ruler. Similarly, Zen teaches independence from external sources of gratification. Since it points to a kind of "fulfillment" which is beyond the economic level and which cannot be defined in terms of particular political systems, Zen undermines the allegiance-gratification relationship characterizing most governmental and economic structures. By understanding the ego source of nationalism—self-definition writ large—Zen confronts that ego manifestation squarely, viewing it as problematical.

²⁸ *Zen and Japanese Culture*, p. 63.

Koestler suggests that Zen could be wedded to fascism. An examination of his own favorite example, Nazism, will show that this connection would be very different from what Koestler might expect. For one thing, Nazism played upon the German people's herd instinct. It was able to manipulate the actions of the people by making them feel united as Germans. Zen thought, on the other hand, confronts one with the problematic nature of individual, nationalistic and, indeed, every other form of ego-identity. Suspension of individualism in favor of other more inclusive forms of ego-centrism is not enough from the Zen point of view. These things, too, would be subject to the Zen "revolutionary" spirit. The unfortunate results of Nazi Germany's ability to manipulate people by formulating a collective identity are well-known. Clearly, the Zen man would be impervious to this form of manipulation, and anyone steeped in Zen teaching should be able to see the problem involved.

A second example may be taken from the case of Nazi Germany. Hitler promulgated the view that significance in life can be achieved through identification with the Aryan "super-race" as well as the elimination of mankind's "sub-standard" people. This led to the brutal slaughter of millions of human beings whom the Nazis considered "inferior." Again, the Zen "revolutionary" spirit would confront these claims. An ego-identity, no matter how large or militarily powerful, can never bring one to the ultimate fulfillment which, from the Zen point of view, egolessness alone can accomplish. For Zen, human fulfillment is not defined in relation to other rival claims or systems. There is no justification, therefore, for attempting to find fulfillment at the expense of other individuals or groups of people. Since Zen is free from particular nationalistic claims, one nation cannot attempt to annihilate another in order to find its own ultimate significance. A student of Zen would know that Hitler's madness was destined to be, in the final analysis, unfulfilling and unfulfilled. For, even had Germany succeeded, the "super-race" would be as much a problem to itself as would any other aspect of self-definition.

Koestler recoils at Professor N.'s suggestion that Hitler was "silly." It is preferable, he believes, to label Hitler "evil" and "damn" his memory. The depth of Zen tolerance which refuses to differentiate between good and bad, the oppressor and oppressed, is understandably irritating to someone who is so emotionally involved with this extreme case of human injustice. But much as the folly of Hitler's attempt to find ultimate fulfillment

through the "master-race" may be understood from the Zen point of view, so the Zen perspective recognizes the underlying problem which manifests itself in Hitler's maniacal thoughts and deeds to be an ego problem. Hitler was tied up in the inherent contradiction of dualistic self-consciousness which is the predicament of every other ego. His actions reflect this predicament, and betoken to an extreme the generalized human situation. When the problematic nature of his actions is thus understood, compassion should replace anger. And what prevents one from reacting to Hitler with the compassion his confused and pathetic state deserves, is one's own ego-stake. Since Hitler was such a threat to the existence and self-definition of so many people, it is understandably difficult to react even to his memory dispassionately. But this is what Zen demands.

When seen from Suzuki's point of view, there is great irony in Koestler's criticism of Zen. Koestler's passion is itself devoid of compassion. His moralistic fervour brutally turns on Nazism and such Nazis as Hitler. Because Koestler believes that his own notion of morality is correct, he can criticize Zen for not sharing it. But doesn't Koestler's position manifest the same inherent ego-problem as Hitler's—although, certainly, more benevolently? Potentially, Koestler could easily begin a crusade for his brand of "morality." At one point in his life, that meant a crusade for Leninist communism. At another point, it was expressed in ardent support of democracy. Most recently, it means refusal to deal with political questions at all.

Being attached to particular moral points of view, the tendency is to define oneself through them. Defining oneself through them, the tendency is to accept them oftentimes uncritically or through Orwellian "double-think." The way to insure that one's moral integrity is maintained, therefore, cannot be, as Koestler suggests, through the espousal of a particular standard of right and wrong which is defined and defended by logical arguments. Hitler, after all, attempted to present the world with a tight argument from evolution to support his platform, and one in which he fully believed. Moral integrity instead seems to demand that people divest themselves of the ego-interests which ensnare them. They would then, and only then, be free to accept *or* reject systems of government and economics without jaundiced critical perspectives, to accept *or* reject particular codes of ethics, and to manifest the tolerance and "compassion" which alone can avoid the conflict which motivates the forces of "right," however

defined, to overcome and obliterate their "opponents." This divesting of self-interests must be thorough-going and complete. It entails ego-death, which is the "Alpha and Omega of Zen."

Clearly then, there are considerable moral implications in Suzuki's interpretation of Zen.²⁹ But Suzuki prefers to deal with the "prior" question first. Put in other words, the relative problem of good-and-bad must be held off until the problematic root-source of human actions is "purified." Once this is accomplished, the cause of moral depravity will also have been eliminated. Far from being devoid of moral conscience, Buddhism, as Suzuki often pointed out, is supported by the dual (and mutually inclusive) concepts of *prajna* (supreme knowledge), and *mahakaruna* (supreme compassion). But in order to manifest true "compassion," one must "transcend" the dichotomous worldview in which good and evil are opposed.

Koestler's criticisms that Zen in Japan was a non-rigorous, ambivalent counterbalance to the rigid and stifling teachings of Confucianism is simply mistaken. In its formal aspect, Zen is extremely demanding, as monastery life exhibits.³⁰ Whether in or out of the monastery, however, Zen requires the disciple's one-pointed focus and unflagging concentration. It directs the ego where the ego does not want to be: to a final confrontation with itself as the source and substance of its most basic problem. Every time the ego attempts to place the blame elsewhere or find fulfillment externally, Zen takes that away. Such a task is by no means easy. The master's spontaneity and freedom come after the most gruelling and self-disciplined struggle. Short of that struggle, there is no satori. Short of satori, there is no Zen.

Is Zen a hoax? And does Suzuki resemble Lewis Carroll's Tweedledum and Tweedledee, as Koestler suggests?³¹ Perhaps, in the sense that Suzuki is talking about reason that negates itself, a morality which is no-morality and Zen teachings which are no-teachings. But if Zen is a hoax, it is a hoax which demands in no uncertain terms that we be able to laugh with absolute freedom at life-and-death.

²⁹ Again, it would be an important task to detail these implications, but one beyond the scope of this paper.

³⁰ See, for example, Suzuki's description throughout *The Training of the Zen Monk* (1934).

³¹ LR 260.