

DIALOGUE:
Christian and Buddhist

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REV. T.N. CALLAWAY

Callaway: The question of the relationship between subject and object, the matter of experiencing the external world, the so-called external world within one's heart, please speak to me of such things.

Suzuki: Well, my view is this. Western people start with the dualistic view of thinking, but Eastern people go further back. Further back means not in the chronological sense, but before we think, before we divide ourselves. There must be something which has not yet been divided. That is to say, before God said "Let there be light!" what did God have in his mind? Now, we want to start with that. Western people start with things after light separated itself from darkness. This is the great difference between the Eastern and Western minds.

And then, by East and West, I don't mean the geographical division but the types of mind.

Callaway: If I hold this tea cup, it is my Western temptation to think that I am here and the tea cup is over there. Please speak to me of the Zen attitude.

Suzuki: The Zen attitude is before I hold this tea cup, who is that who says, "I hold"? When you say "I" and the "tea cup," they are already separated. The Eastern mind wants to know what is that "I" when you say "I hold tea cup." Who makes you say "I"?

Callaway: Can you say then that there is no "I" and no "tea cup"?

Suzuki: That's already "tea cup" and "I." When "I" is not divided into "I"

and “not-I,” you may think that we can’t say anything more. Yet, we can say something because we are born to say something.

Callaway: So we are limited to the necessity of speech?

Suzuki: Yes.

Callaway: Therefore, what can we say regarding this?

Suzuki: Well, we don’t say anything.

Callaway: Then we must be silent.

Suzuki: Well, Buddha raised a bunch of flowers before the congregation and he did not say anything. One of his disciples smiled. And Buddha said to him, “I hand you the absolute mind-seal.” Then you may ask, “When there is nothing to speak about, what mind-seal is there to be handed from one to another?” Really, there is no seal whatever.

Callaway: I am seeking to understand the experience itself. I am not interested in the words. I wish to know the experience itself—the experience of the cup. There is the experience of the cup. We do not say the “I” and the “cup,” but there is the cup, or there is the experience of the cup. There is the brightness, the wonder, the fullness of the being of the cup.

Suzuki: Another way of saying what I have been saying is this. When you say, “I see the cup,” there are the various senses at work—the senses of sight, touch, taste when you drink from it, and so on. These are all sensuous experiences. But what I speak of is before something is divided into the senses, five or six of them—Buddhists have six instead of five, the sixth corresponding to the intellect and not what the parapsychologists refer to as the sixth sense. Therefore, when you see the cup, instead of seeing the cup with the sense of sight, we see the cup with the sense of hearing. If we hear with the eye, and see with the ear, this is something of what I am trying to say, of not being divided into two, object and subject. There is something which sees

with the ear and hears with the eye. That something we take hold of. Then we know the "I" before dividing itself into subject and object.

Callaway: Is it the same being that hears the sound of one hand?

Suzuki: Yes, you can say that. No sound comes out of one hand. Yet when you hear the sound, that sound we don't hear with the ear. You hear with the eye, or, it does not matter, you can say you hear with your touch. Seeing and hearing are senses more commonly experienced perhaps, so we generally say "to hear with the eye; to see with the ear." Daitō Kokushi, the founder of Daitoku-ji in Kyoto, once gave this statement to his disciples: "If your ears see,/And eyes hear,/Not a doubt you'll cherish—/How naturally the rain drips/From the eaves!"

So this "I" which is before I say "you" or "I" is nobody's "I." Some may call it "the universal I," Godhead, or absolute something before dividing into two. If you become that "I" you hear the sound coming out of one hand, and you know God before he said "Let there be light!"

Callaway: There must be deliverance from bondage to the belief in the objectivity of sensual experience.

Suzuki: Yes, before you can say objectivity or subjectivity. There are existentialists nowadays who talk of death. Death, they say, is nothingness which overwhelmingly overtakes the philosopher, and they are afraid to taste it. But somehow it has to be tasted.

Callaway: But if the person knows the universal self—may we use the word *mushin*—I know words are not adequate, but if we know the self before the senses, the *mushin*, the *muga*, then there is no birth, there is no death, and the concept of death becomes like other concepts. They are *kū*, they are *śūnyatā*. They have no self-existence, I think.

Suzuki: That is right. That is a difficult point. When we talk about *śūnyatā*, we think it is just sheer emptiness, and that emptiness is already standing in contrast to something which is not emptiness. But *śūnyatā* is absolute. It

is beyond something and nothing, object and subject, birth and death, and so on. And yet, in that *śūnyatā* death takes place, birth takes place. That is why I say that it is something unlimited, absolute and infinite. Our lives are limited by things of finitude. Therefore we always feel dissatisfied. Rather, we might say that this very feeling of dissatisfaction comes from our wishing to go beyond, that is, to come to Godhead itself.

To put it in another way, Godhead is beyond the reach of our senses, our intellect. Yet how is it that we have come to talk about it, to interview it, or come to identify with it? Of course, this idea of interviewing or identifying is already governed by our intellectual logic. So it is very difficult to express this in words, yet we have to use words. That is a contradiction, you might say. A dilemma is needed in which words at the same time ought to be all taken away in order to come to ultimate reality. But again if we think that ultimate reality stands outside ourselves, we miss the point. It is therefore not identifying in the sense of annihilation of all things. We are right in it, yet out of it. Zen people therefore say neither.

Callaway: I believe you have been speaking in terms of what might be applied to the *cbūdō* [the middle way] concept of there is neither existing nor not-existing. In one sense things exist. The cup is there, I see it. And yet in the other sense, it is not there, it has no objective being. Therefore, if we want the *cbūdō* we say that the cup is and is not. Or neither is nor is not.

Suzuki: And what Zen proposes is to realize that situation or position. As soon as we begin to talk we are so involved in contradictory terminology. A friend of mine, Kitarō Nishida, talks about the "identity of contradiction." And the Jōdo Shinshū people say "Namu-amida-butsu!" *Namu* is ourselves, and *amida-butsu* or Amida Buddha is over there. And they say *namu* and *amida-butsu* are one. But as soon as you say "they are one," you imagine one here and another one there and they become one with each other. This is not the way. Just "Namu-amida-butsu!" [Holding up the tea cup...] So this is *namu-amida-butsu* drinking *namu-amida-butsu*. Yet we don't say that. When we say it, it is already wrong.

Callaway: Then can we say that the *kansha*, the thanks-giving, of which the

Jōdo Shin people speak is very similar to *jibi*, compassion, which we read in Zen? Is it a glad acceptance of all things as they are, can we say that?

Suzuki: Shin people all want to go to the Pure Land. They are not satisfied with the *sbaba* life. The *sbaba* world is full of misery and sufferings. Psychologists these days might say fears, uncertainties, anxieties, and so on. But Shin people would say it is Amida who is making me feel this way so that we can go to him. It is Amida's summon, his calling to come to him, they say. That is to say Amida makes me feel uncertain about myself because the finite is always seeking after something infinite. The very word finite implies infinity. So when you ask a question, the answer is already in the question. When I am thankful to Amida, this feeling of thankfulness is Amida's gift, his favor.

Callaway: I remember in one place, in one of your books, you made the comment that perhaps there were more living cases of satori among the followers of Shin than within Zen circles. Say a little about that, please.

Suzuki: That's what I think. They are called *Myōkōnin* and are wonderful individuals. Generally they are illiterate, not so learned as Zen people. Zen people are learned in classical Chinese and use it in their speech and writings very much. I think one of the finest examples of *Myōkōnin* is Shoma of Sanuki, who was a day laborer hired by people of his village to work in the paddy fields. One summer day, while working, perhaps weeding, he got so tired and, being hot, he came up to the temple porch and aired himself in the cool breeze. He felt so fine that he went into the temple and took Amida-san from the shrine, and binding him to the pole outside said, "Now you, too, cool yourself." That is very fine! He does not ask whether a wooden image has any feelings—that is not the point. He simply wants to share what he enjoys most with Amida, or with anybody in fact.

Callaway: So it is this attitude, the attitude of gratitude or thankfulness which he feels though he cannot explain with words. He lives this gratitude.

Suzuki: And that is what is called *jibi* [compassion]. Even an outlaw in case

of a crisis forgets himself and jumps into the sea to help the baby from drowning. It is a strange thing. He may be notorious for his anti-social behavior usually, but when he sees a child in danger he jumps into the river at the risk of his own life. That kind of thing. Well, you may say that is instinct, but that instinct is something very good. You don't use your mind, no subjectivity, no objectivity, no sociality, nothing. He just jumps in. That act, that feeling—absolute feeling, you might say—that is at the bottom of all our existence, we might say.

Callaway: I think you use the term *bisbiryō* [unthinkability].

Suzuki: Yes.

Callaway: Not thinking, this acting immediately or spontaneously.

Suzuki: Yes, instantaneously. And that is what I'd like to talk to you about. You know Dr. Tillich?

Callaway: Yes.

Suzuki: Whenever we meet he talks so much about "participation," and I talk about "identity." And I say that participation cannot take place unless there is identity behind it. Unless you and that object are identical or share something there is nothing to respond to your participation. You cannot put anything of you into it.

Callaway: Of course, at that point we Christians raise the question with you. We say, from our point of view only if there is an objectively real person there over against this self, only if we have an objective relationship can we speak of love in the real sense. Love in the sense of giving oneself for another. We feel that the objectivity or dualism is necessary.

Suzuki: But before that dualism takes place, unless you and that object are identified, that participation, that feeling or sympathy, or compassion can't take place. Com-*passion* already means we and what you call object are one.

Callaway: We are speaking of Shin or Shinshū, and they make much use of the concept of *tariki* [other-power], of course, through the *hongan* [Original Vow], the power of *ganriki* [vow-power]. They receive salvation from the other [*ta*], and yet in the ultimate sense can we say there is a *ta*, a *tariki* [the other, the other-power]?

Suzuki: This is another point. There is another *Myōkōmin*, Shin devotee, who died about thirty years ago, who used to say; “In *tariki*/There is neither/*jiriki* nor *tariki*.” Now you see when you say *tariki*, *ta* [other] already involves *ji* [self], but Saichi does not bother about this at all. He simply says, “There is neither/*jiriki* nor *tariki*.” And then “*Tariki* all over, nothing but *tariki*!/Namu-amida-butsu/Namu-amida-butsu!” That “Namu-amida-butsu” is neither *tariki* nor *jiriki* [self-power]. It’s absolute *tariki*.

Callaway: So it would seem to me also that if we speak of *jiriki*, *tariki*, then we have “self”, “other” and we have fallen into dualism.

Suzuki: So it’s simply “Namu-amida-butsu”, or *tariki*, we say. This is where some people say Buddhism is pantheistic. But that is also wrong. *Ji* and *ta* are there, and yet with these it’s all *ta*.

Callaway: *Ji* and *ta* are there and yet it is all *ta*.

Suzuki: Yes.

Callaway: Or we can say it is all *ji* [self].

Suzuki: We can say that, but *ji* has a certain odium about it, so we try to avoid it.

Callaway: Yes, I understand you. Typically, people think of Zen-shū as *jiriki* or self-effort. They think of sects like Jōdo Shin as the Way of Faith. Yet you have sometimes spoken of faith in Zen. What do you mean by faith in Zen?

Suzuki: It might be better to say that realization is faith. When you speak of

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faith there is something outside of yourself in which you take faith. But that faith could never have taken place in you unless that object of faith was already in you.

Callaway: So it is not faith in something other, but it is just realization.

Suzuki: Yes. So you can say that that object comes to me and becomes one with me, or it may be better to say I go into the object and become one with it.

Callaway: So though the people of Jōdo-Shin say, “We have the Way of Faith, Zen has the Way of *jiriki* or self-help,” actually we cannot make this distinction. Zen also is faith or just realization or acceptance.

Suzuki: Yes.

Callaway: We have the Indian expression, *tatbatā*. *Śūnyata* and *tatbatā* [emptiness and suchness] are closely related. In Japanese we say *shinnyo*. And you have also translated *shinnyo* as *sonomama* or *arugamama*.

Suzuki: When Moses asked for God’s name on Mt. Sinai, God said, “I am that I am.” I understand the Hebrew gives this in a different grammatical tense, but that does not matter. “I am that I am,” that’s enough. And this is *shinnyo*.

Callaway: Can we say *sonomama ga ii, yorosbii* [All is well just as things are]?

Suzuki: Yes, *sonomama de yorosbii*.

Callaway: But we must first have the faith or the realization.

Suzuki: Yes, realization. Shin people talk about our being destined for hell whatever we may do, and there’s no hope except to believe in Amida. But now are we to believe in Amida if we are all bound for hell anyway? One devotee said, “Well, if there’s no help, let me go to hell.” She made her decision—theologians talk very much about decision—and the very moment

of her decision, hell vanished and the blooming lotus flower received her. In this connection I often think of the case of the religious in despair. Some years ago, a student threw himself off the Kegon Fall in Nikkō, and he left a note saying that everything was beyond his understanding and he couldn't bear it any more. I am quite sure the very moment his feet stepped off the ridge he must have had a realization. But too late. When Darwin had a fall all his past appeared to him like a dream. Modern philosophers don't risk themselves by plunging into the abyss. They just peer from above and regard how terrible it is. They need pushing from behind. One must lose the individual in the infinite to discover being, you might say.

Callaway: That's right. Shin people says *ōcbō*, "leaping." A sort of "side-way leap."

Suzuki: "Side-ways" means a leap not on the same plane but onto the plane of infinity. They did not have enough words in those ancient days, perhaps. This kind of leap is needed.

Callaway: And it is given. That is what the Shin people would say is the gift of Amida. It is given. A man cannot choose it.

Suzuki: No, man cannot choose it because in deciding, if you have a choice you can't jump in. You hesitate and run back. It is not of your own energy or will, but somehow there is a way.

Callaway: In the *Tannisbō*, the author speaks of the effects of the past karma, the karma of past lives, but, of course, karma also is *bōben*, just a device. There are no past lives in the historical sense?

Suzuki: Quite. Now this is the way. There is no time, no history whatever. It's the present moment. As to karma, my own existence so called, objectively or dualistically speaking, did not come about of my own strength. I am not here on my own account. My parents gave birth to this biological presence, and we can go one after another up our ancestral tree all the way to God. There is something which moved in God and produced me. I am related

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biologically to all these people, but at the same time, somehow, as Buddha says, "Above heaven and below heaven, I alone am the most honored one!" I am something quite independent with individual feelings—"I am that I am." Biologically or sociologically, perhaps, I can trace my heritage. But there is something aside from this biological lineage which makes this "I" quite independent of this fact. There is something coming more directly. This I feel. This is directly connected with God's "I am that I am." And yet, I am I and God is different from me. God is God. I am not God, God is God, I am I. That is the important part.

Callaway: You can say this, that I am I and it is it, as though there were two?

Suzuki: When you think, when you begin to talk . . .

Callaway: I see, in speech and only in speech . . .

Suzuki: Speech need not necessarily involve the other. I may talk to myself, then I divide. But before I talk, before I think. This therefore cannot be expressed beyond this state, you might say. But that is because we are human beings. A cat, for instance, is a cat, and a dog, a dog. A dog barks, "Bow-wow," but he does not think "I am barking," "I am a dog."

Callaway: This is the spontaneity as we have in calligraphy, in the making of the beautiful characters, the *kanji*. The same sort of spontaneity coming immediately. We do not stop to think . . .

Suzuki: Well, if you say so, yes. It's true.

Callaway: The brush moves rapidly. We do not pause to erase or to change.

Suzuki: If you try consciously to form a good character, you can never do that. Spontaneous creativity must be like a crow when he cries, "Kah! kah!" In this sense Eckhart is very great. A little flea when he is inspired by God is greater than angels, he says. An angel without God is smaller than the flea. The flea, if it can come to have this awareness that we all have or can have,

then it, too, can become conscious of divine presence. But divine presence does not mean that God turns into myself. If I should say "I am God" it is sacrilegious. No, not that. I am I, God is God, and at the same time I am God, God is I. That is the most important part.

Callaway: And yet in the other sense, the essential self is God, so I am not God, I am God. And we're back to *chūdō*. We read in some writings of the *icbi-nen sanzen* and speak of the enlightenment of a grain of dust.

Suzuki: *Sanzen* stands for *sanzen-daisen-sekai*, or "this great world." And *icbi-nen* or *eka-ksbana* means just a little moment, an instant not in time but in eternity. Kierkegaard also has this word, "the instant in eternity." So it's the whole world in an instant.

Callaway: The whole universe in one-thought.

Suzuki: One-thought not in ordinary thinking, but one-instant. It's Dewey, is it not, who first used the term "here-now"? That means space and time are one. So the whole world in a particle of dust.

Callaway: In this connection we read in the ancient scriptures, Shakyamuni says, "I have saved myriads of beings and yet I have saved no beings." If one thinks there is some being to be saved he cannot be called a bodhisattva.

Suzuki: Yes, bodhisattva. He is a kind of savior. Usually, we think that if one is saved and another is not, then something is left unsaved. But when one is saved, all is saved. To realize the truth of this, you must be saved yourself. Then you can say that.

Callaway: I cannot say self but—there are no words . . . but when realization comes the realization includes the salvation of the tea cup which is within the realization, i.e., this cup is realized, the cup is saved.

Suzuki: Yes. So we have in the *Nob* chants that the banana plant can be saved. Snow, too. That is where Eastern thought is so different from the West.

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Callaway: Yes. We think of salvation as an act of will, a choice made by an individual, and you say that a grain of dust can be saved. This is ridiculous, we think, because a grain of dust is inanimate. But from the Buddhist point of view, the realization of the true nature of the grain of sand is the salvation of the grain of sand.

Suzuki: In the same way, you have in the Bible that God takes care of plants though they may be thrown into the oven tomorrow or even two minutes later. God takes care of each flower, each blade of grass. Why should God be so concerned about such insignificant plants, you might say? Yet God takes care of them just as much as he does Solomon in his glory.

Callaway: However when we Christians speak like this, we mean there is really a God and there are really plants apart from one another—as Creator and created things. But in Buddhism, I believe, we cannot speak of Creator and creation.

Suzuki: So the Creator is the created, and yet the Creator is Creator. That's it. That must be emphasized.

Callaway: Creation is the Creator, and the Creator is creation.

Suzuki: So, it is constant, continuous creation.

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Suzuki: There is in Buddhism what is called *mu-en no jibi*. *En* is relation or causal relationship. Generally, we may have relationship with this and this person and we may have compassion [*jibi*] for those persons. But *mu-en* means no special relationship. No reward is expected, no return. It is compassion simply going out.

Callaway: So Christian love would be *u-en no jibi* [relative compassion]?

Suzuki: Christians speak about *agape* and *eros*. And God's love is *agape*. This is

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mu-en no jibi. Christians also have *u-en no jibi* and that is *eros*.

Callaway: In other words, Christian love involves relationship and Buddhist love exists without relationship.

Suzuki: Yes, when you are struck on the right cheek, then you turn your left cheek. But Buddhists wouldn't do that. Right cheek is struck, well, just stay there. Don't turn the left. This is where I object to the Christian idea. Because they talk about left and right.

Callaway: Yes. It seems that Buddhism says *sonomama ga yoroshii*, but Christianity says *sonomama ga yokunai* [all is not well just as things are].

Suzuki: Yes, more or less.

Callaway: So we must try to improve things. We wish to change things.

Suzuki: Yes, that's the good side of Christianity. Buddhists accept everything as it is, perhaps. That is bad. They don't go out of their way to do good.

Callaway: That's the meaning of turning the other cheek, you see. We turn the other cheek to show our love for the enemy. It is to show love for the enemy. And if we do not turn the other cheek, he does not know our love.

Suzuki: So, you see, Buddhism does not talk about enemy.

Callaway: Yes. So there is no enemy.

Suzuki: Buddhism does not say "love thy enemy" because there is no enemy.

Callaway: That's true. And no "you" to have an enemy.

Suzuki: That's *mu-en no jibi*.

Callaway: That's a very good expression.

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Suzuki: So Buddhism has a great deal to learn from Christianity. Lately, I have been emphasizing what may be called "activism." Act is needed, work is needed.

Callaway: Well, as we try to explain Christianity we are using Buddhist terms always, and what you said before is quite true, I think, that though the words seem the same, the meaning is very different.