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The Enlightened Thought

I

One of the main achievements of Dr. Suzuki was his success in communicating of the incommunicable. The reality of Zen refuses by its nature to be transformed into a Rosetta Stone; it refuses ever to be translated into any kind of conceptual words. It reminds me of Chuang-tze's story of the three gods:

The one called Chaos¹ (*C. Hun-tun, J. Konton*) ruled the center of the universe. The one called Shu (Shuku) was god of the south sea and the third one Hu (Kotsu) ruled the north sea. As they were close friends, they met one day at the place of Chaos. He entertained his friends so nicely that the gods of the north and south seas wished to repay him. They consulted together and came to a conclusion: "While every one has seven holes through which one sees, hears, eats and breathes, Chaos possesses none of them; let us try to hollow him out." Each day they carved one hole in him and, after a week when they had accomplished the work, Chaos died.

(Chap. 7.)

It was Dr. Suzuki who attempted to introduce *Hun-tun*, the reality of Zen, to the Western way of thinking. Without killing *Hun-tun*, he made him communicable to Westerners to the extent that they came to notice the actuality of a well-weathered standpoint in the East. In the West the understanding of such a new standpoint seems really meaningful, particularly in the midst of the trends of

¹ Chaos. This name's signification should not be understood in the sense of the "confusion" after order or system has collapsed, but rather in the earlier sense of "the confused state without form and void of primordial matter before the creation of orderly forms." (Webster's) Chaos indeed was the most ancient Greek god.

modern thought. Erich Fromm, the psychoanalyst, said, "Taoism and Buddhism had a rationality and realism superior to that of the Western religions. They could see man realistically and objectively, having nobody but the 'awakened' ones to guide him, and being able to be guided because each man has within himself the capacity to awake and be enlightened. This is precisely the reason why Eastern religious thought, Taoism and Buddhism — and their blending in Zen Buddhism — assume such importance for the West today."¹ In the present world, man, being separated from nature, alienated even from himself, relies only upon the progress of science and technology in order to improve his standard of living and to build a limited heaven on earth. But man, as a matter of fact, is appalled by the idea that, while during the past 200 or 300 years he has increased his scientific knowledge enormously and is adding to it at an ever increasing rate, his wisdom of how to live together with his fellow men appears to have improved little, if at all.

Therefore, man at present must bear the sense of alienation due to the contradiction between individual intelligence in science and group stupidity in war. It is for just such a situation that communication between East and West in regard to finding new bearings has come to be felt necessary — the bearings according to which men could be integrated within himself and at the same time able to live with fellow men in spite of their diversities of situation.

II

"... our mission is to help to construct a cultural bridge between East and West, making it possible for Love to achieve her end." This is a statement by Dr. Suzuki in his editorial of the *The Cultural East* magazine, "Where there is no spiritual vision, there is no culture, for culture reflects one's spiritual attainments. Spirit speaks directly to spirit; this is Enlightenment. When the spirit is enlightened, Ignorance ceases to assert itself, and mutual understanding is made possi-

¹ *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (New York, 1960), p. 80.

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ble. An enlightened spirit is always creative, and from it springs culture in its manifold forms. A mutual cultural understanding therefore means an enhancement of one's spirituality."¹

As he stresses it, mutual understanding is necessary between East and West; for this the spirit of man must be enlightened at its root. This is one of the most important aspects of Dr. Suzuki's thought. And, in order to understand the meaning of the enlightened spirit, I should like to add my view. His thought is not to be classified as similar to other ideologies which are specific notions of thought limited to some nations or people. Rather it presents bearings common to human beings without any exclusive prejudices, making it possible for them to live together in peace. The thought of Dr. Suzuki is not the mere logical outcome of a certain fashion of scientific or metaphysical thinking, but issues directly out of his experience, enlightened to the essential reality of man as well as the world of nature. In other words, he did not approach reality from the outside, but he himself became one with reality of the "Cosmic Unconscious" (in his terms), which lies at the root of all existence and unites them all in the oneness of being.

He often said of himself, "I am not a scholar," by which he might have been suggesting that an ordinary scholar, so to say, lives in search of a certain reality through logical or objective thinking, setting himself apart from what he is pursuing. When the one who observes or pursues and that which is observed are set apart, the result of the observation will not be an integrating result. At present, for instance, man, without deep reflection, relies only on scientific ways of improving life, unaware of the cogent fact that in his observation of nature, he totally overlooks himself. Einstein, as I understand, affirmed "the four-dimensional universe" *i.e.*, adding the new dimension—time—to the three physical dimensions there to fore realized. But still, from my view, this four-dimensioned universe is lacking one more dimension, that is the living observer—Einstein himself; through him, the rest of the four dimensions are integrated. Was he himself aware of being this fifth dimension which indeed he

¹ *The Cultural East*, 1 (July 1946), pp. 1-2.

was? So long as natural science is not aware of the undiscovered dimension which integrates nature and man, the objective world, no matter how much it may be improved, will never be a sufficient condition for bringing man towards his own well-being, towards the world of mutual understanding among enlightened spirits.

III

As I said before, a distinguishing characteristic of Dr. Suzuki's thought is the fact that it is a spontaneous flow of his consciousness deeply rooted in his Zen experience. The consciousness, once culminated in him at its *ne plus ultra*, was then broken through into the infinite Cosmic Unconscious (Chaos) which precedes any of the bifurcations or polarizations necessary to the thinking process. The Cosmic Unconscious as such is the real basis which is common to the vast expanse of nature—space, time, constellations and universes, non-being as well as beings, including animals, plants, and human beings. This Cosmic Unconscious goes beyond the limits of the intellectual realm of human beings heretofore attained, so that sometimes it is likely to be called the "mysterious" or "supernatural" realm. But such terms are limiting notions coming from an unintegrated understanding, unaware of the essence of nature and man.

Fortunately, however, the consciousness of human beings is rooted deeply in the Cosmic Unconscious. At the moment when human consciousness, having gradually submerged into the ocean of the Cosmic Unconscious, suddenly rises up to the surface of that unconscious, it cuts into the level of normal consciousness again. Here, Zen declares that it is human consciousness awakened to the original nature: *satori* (enlightenment).

We must be very careful regarding the process of the awakening experience; We must bear in mind that it by no means is a mere continuation of the conscious state of mind, nor is it a mere submersion into the abyss of the unconscious. But it is the regaining of consciousness after having once "gone through" the Cosmic Unconscious. This "regained" consciousness, however, is never to

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be mixed with perception or cogitation but, according to Dr. Suzuki's favorite terminology, it is "unconscious consciousness" or "conscious unconsciousness."

Unless we understand this process fully, the term "enlightened spirit," affirmed by Dr. Suzuki as the common ground through which men become able to have mutual understanding, may not be clearly communicated.

IV

As a typical example which presents this process of the enlightened spirit, let me introduce a dialogue from the *Hekigan Roku* or the Blue Cliff Collection.¹

Jō-Jōza (one of Rinzai's main disciples) once asked Rinzai, "What is the essence of Buddha's teaching?" Rinzai, getting off his meditation seat, seized him, slapped² him, and pushed him away, Jō stood there utterly lost. Then a monk standing by said, "Jōza, why not bow?" Jō, just about to make a bow, all of a sudden awakened to the supreme enlightenment. (Case No. 32)³

Let me note here some of Engo's comments⁴ attached to each sentence of Jō's Koan. Under the passage "Rinzai, getting off his meditation seat, seized him, slapped him, and pushed him away," Engo commented: *Today [Rinzai] grasped [his student]. This is*

¹ See D. T. Suzuki, "The Hekigan Roku," *The Eastern Buddhist*, 1, No. 1, (September 1965, p. 5.)

² In Western custom, a slap may be insulting and may mean punishment, but from the Zen point of view, it has quite a different connotation. In a sense, it helps the student to get direct insight into reality, removing all wavering consciousness by a timely slap. The slap gives the motivation for getting to reality. Sometimes it connotes a religious negation, not by idea but through total act. The function of beating by a stick or of slapping by the hand do not differ so much in Zen instruction.

³ Rinzai Gigen (died 867) was one of the outstanding Zen masters of the T'ang Dynasty. He used a method known for its immediateness. Jō-Jōza was one of his leading disciples, and succeeded to his master's rough and direct way of Zen teaching — demonstrated with the fullness of his being. This story tells us how Jō came to real *satori* after tremendous effort. Such awakening would not just happen unless one had gone through a long, basic training of Zen meditation.

⁴ *Op. cit.* (See *The Eastern Buddhist*, 1, No. 1, September 1965, pp. 5-6.)

the old master's kindness. Even outstanding Zen monks in the world could never escape from it [the grasp].

The comment means that Rinzai's treatment of his student, at the moment his student's religious consciousness reached culmination, was really timely, and was backed by deep compassion.

Under the line "Jō stood there utterly lost," Engo commented: *He has fallen into a dark cave where only dead devils are gathering. Lost all consciousness.* The comment means: The consciousness of Jō has merged into the Cosmic Unconscious, but it is not yet enlightened, being in a state of darkness. Under "Just about to make a bow, all of a sudden, he awakened to the supreme enlightenment," he puts: *It is just like the light given in darkness.* Hakuin adds, "All of a sudden a dead one has revived." Here we can see the darkness of the Cosmic Unconscious suddenly changed into light—the supreme enlightenment. According to Dr. Suzuki, the conscious mind of Jō, which was still on the level of ambivalence, had reached its end; then Rinzai who was well versed in such a process of consciousness, (this is why he was an outstanding Zen master), gave his kind help to his student, a slap! This is indeed the deep, compassionate heart of Zen. But Jō still stood there, submerged in the ocean of unconsciousness, not knowing who he was or what it was that he was doing at that moment, losing all of his previous consciousness in which until that moment he had flowed waveringly during his life in pursuit of truth. At that moment, one of Rinzai's advanced students, who had been watching, stimulated his fellow monk to make him break through the abyss of unconsciousness. He said, "You! Why not make a bow?" and this voice pushed him into awakening to the essential wisdom. Jō made a bow. Oh! What a new world he is revived in now! See the wonder of this moment depicted in the appreciatory verse of Secchō:

Korei had no difficulty
In lifting up his hand:
Look! in a minute, he clove the piled-up
Ranges of Mount Ka.⁵

⁵ Korei (巨靈 C., Chū-ling) was the legendary god of the Yellow River, who by

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The god Korei suggests Rinzai here. And his slapping of the *Joza* clove the piled-up unconsciousness and then, just as the Yellow River flew between the ranges of the Ka mountains, essential wisdom sprang out the moment the Cosmic Unconscious is broken through.

V

From the case I have introduced above, we might have a glimpse into the process of the experience of enlightenment. In the philosophy of Buddhism, it is spoken of as "the awakening of the great Wisdom (*prajñā*)."

This means that an individual spirit, through the experience of a "total-man-ness," is elevated from the level of discrimination and finitude to the level of non-discrimination and infinity. There one sees that he is no longer enclosed in the limited ego-centric shell which rejects other egos. Now he stands on the basis of "being" which everybody and everything equally share; he is immersed in the fountainhead of eternal life. At the root of individuality, then, one sees the universal and infinite nature of man. From this viewpoint, all human beings can understand and respect each other.

Within the range of Dr. Suzuki's thought, if his idea of the awakening to the great Wisdom (*mahā-prajñā*) may be called the first peak, the next peak must be the idea of the great Compassion which he sometimes compared to Love. He introduced this into the cultural milieu of the West as the principle synthesizing all different ways of thinking and life. I am going to try to make clear the inter-relation between the great Wisdom and the great Compassion.

The Buddhist technical term *prajñā* is often used in combination with *paramita*. We can interpret *pāramitā* at least in two ways. One meaning is "reaching the other shore" (by the transcendental wisdom); the other is "attainment of the transcendental wisdom." In the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, runs an important passage: "Wisdom is free from the idea of being and non-being, yet a great compassionate

one stroke of his hand cleft the mountain ranges of Ka which were hindering the flow of the Yellow River toward the ocean. Rinzai's one slap, which smashed the piled doubts of Jō, is compared to Korei's mighty stroke.

heart is awakened in itself."¹ This is the most important passage not only in the philosophy of the *Lankāvatāra* but in the whole teaching of Mahayana Buddhism. As I noted above, *prajñā-paramitā* means in one sense the completion of the transcendental wisdom which awakens one to the basis of all beings. But the great wisdom is never to be accomplished by itself alone; the awakening to the basis of all beings should be the common experience of men. As long as it remains on the level of individual experience or limited to a specific group of men isolated from other people, it will be but a limited, relative, and therefore, finite wisdom, though at times it may attain to a solitary, saintly life. It will never be the supreme wisdom shared by all mankind. As all men are living in a mutually related community, the mere individual attainment of the supreme wisdom would never be meaningful; it would never be concerned with the well-being of mankind as a whole. According to Dr. Suzuki, here the conception of a Bodhisattva is inevitable: a Bodhisattva never wishes to become Buddha, the one who has completed the great wisdom, unless all beings in the world, past, present and future, are enlightened as well. "If he attains to a state of self-realization which he finds so full of peace, bliss, and strength, his natural desire is to impart it to his fellow beings. Technically, when he has finished benefitting himself, his next step is to go out into the world and benefit others. In reality, he cannot do good for himself without letting others share in it."²

The great wisdom is sensitive to its own incompleteness; it is not a static intellect; it can not but work dynamically upon anyone who still remains under delusion. As long as unenlightened spirits remain, the heart of an enlightened one pains continuously. The great wisdom is tormented, suffering its own incompleteness. This innate sensitivity of the great wisdom is compassion. In the inmost depth of Cosmic Unconsciousness, wisdom and compassion are still undifferentiated. When the supreme wisdom is awakened in man,

¹ The opening stanza recited by Mahamati in the Sung translation of the *Lankāvatāra sūtra*. See D. T. Suzuki, *Studies in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra* (London, 1931), p. 215.

² *Studies in the Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, p. 214

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the compassionate heart simultaneously awakens—the completion of the great wisdom—just as it is the nature of light to rush from its source into darkness. The essential framework of Dr. Suzuki's thought, I believe, consists in these two main peaks of wisdom and love—or *prajñā* and *karuṇā*—and both issued immediately out of his enlightened spirit. When an enlightened spirit thinks, it creates an enlightened thought.

When the light of enlightenment illuminates a man inwardly, it becomes the great wisdom which cuts off all limited, distorted and ego-centric ideas. When it illuminates outwardly, it becomes the great compassion—love which moves towards the welfare of living beings in the world, enlightening their spirits.

VI

In the history of western thought, men once stood equally related to God and had no doubts as to the meaning and value of life. However, since all principles that had been dominating man lost their authority, man came to assume that "God is dead." And man began to presume to take the part of the Creator, finding in machines something approximating the creative power of the Creator.

Man believes now in science and technology which should give him a relative heaven on earth. And yet he does not know why he and his fellow men are feeling their life so empty and meaningless. Man, at a loss, looks around himself and comes to feel the solitude of being alienated from the center of his existence. Man has also become faced with the fear that, by means of scientific products, he will be wiped from the world in a nuclear holocaust. It was not only from such modern trends of thought but also from much deeper and more fundamental reflection upon the being of man that Dr. Suzuki attempted to introduce a new standpoint into the present world. What he wished to contribute, I believe, is the idea of a total man in whom great wisdom and great love are deeply rooted. While wisdom will be able to assume control of scientific knowledge and

thus save man from self-destruction, love will provide a basic understanding of men in diverse situations and also a basic harmony of man and nature.

VII

When I met with Dr. Suzuki for the last time, his body was in a room in the cellar of St. Luke's Hospital in Tokyo. He was already in the coffin before the altar. It was early morning and I was alone in the room. I stepped forward to him and lighted a candle. As I bowed deeply, the scent and smoke of the burning incense enveloped us, making us one. I recited the following verses:

However innumerable sentient beings are,
 I vow to save them;
 However inexhaustible the passions are,
 I vow to extinguish them;
 However immeasurable Dharmas are,
 I vow to master them;
 However incomparable the Buddha-truth is,
 I vow to attain it;
 Throughout your 96 years, nothing else but this vow,
 And look! you have left one more vow;
 How *Ya-Fū-Ryū*¹ it is!
 Oh, my teacher, my teacher . . . Kwatz!²

¹ *Ya-fūryū* is the name which was given him as a lay student of Zen by his Zen teacher Sōen Shaku. The term *ya-fūryū* is really hard for us to translate into English. *Fūryū* has a subtle meaning similar to that which the Japanese aesthetic principles *wabi* or *sabi* imply. It connotes a refinement of life or a spiritual elegance in life even though life is not rich or plentiful in appearance. The source of this term should be ascribed to the verse made by Hakuin Shūtan, a noted Zen master of the Sung Dynasty. The verse was composed as the comment on the case in which Rinzai for the first time opened his eye to the reality of Zen under the sixty blows of his teacher Ōbaku. It says: Just where there is *no-fūryū*, there is likewise *fūryū*, too.

"*No-fūryū*" points to the world of the Cosmic Unconsciousness where subject and object are not differentiated. *Ya-fūryū* means that as soon as the undifferentiation — *No-fūryū* — is broken through, an enlightenment takes place, it is the regained consciousness. When it flows, it becomes subject or object, joy or sadness . . .

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I offered this Kwatz to him with full strength, out of the bottom of my heart. It involuntarily came out of my inmost gratitude for his love to me. As soon as I finished reciting the verses before the coffin, tears suddenly fell down my cheeks, though I had not any clear conscious of sadness. That was my last farewell to the teacher in bodily form.

On the afternoon of July 14th, his body became a wreath of white smoke in the crematorium in Kita Kamakura. The smoke vanished into the cool breeze blowing from the sea. Where did he go? Look, here he is. He will never die—the vow he made! His great will which communicated the incommunicable and shared it with all human beings, will not vanish forever. The wheel of this vow, which had gone throughout his 96 years, must be driven further and further, generation after generation, as long as human beings exist on the earth.

and it becomes the eternal vow of human beings to share enlightenment with each other.

¹ Kwatz. We find "Kwatau," a shout, not only in old Zen masters' records but in the actuality of Zen discipline even today. It serves at times as a practical means to help toward the comprehension of reality and at times it becomes the living reality of Zen itself.