"A lucid and illuminating presentation of the essential nature of Zen by an outstanding scholar. This book is an invaluable bridge between East and West."—Masao Abe, author of *Zen and Western Thought*

ZEN *Enlightenment*

ORIGINS AND MEANING

HEINRICH DUMOULIN

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Introduction

INTEREST IN THE ZEN BUDDHIST WAY of enlightenment, growing steadily in the West since the end of World War II, is evidently more than a short-lived vogue. For many, Zen meditation has become a matter of daily commitment; and it would also appear that our knowledge of the Zen way, with its rich variety and depth, has entered into a new phase. Research in the last two or three decades has brought to light a wealth of material that enables us to learn of Zen more clearly and more extensively, to learn of its historical aspects as well as of its essential, meditative side.

History and essence are tightly interwoven in Zen Buddhism. As a particular way to enlightenment founded, according to traditional accounts, on the direct transmission of mind outside the writings, Zen was launched in China by spiritually gifted men who knew how to pass on their own experience to followers of equal capacity. Zen Buddhists trace their school's way of enlightenment back to Shākyamuni, the founder of the Buddhist religion. Hence, a well-rounded understanding of Zen requires that one look back to the beginnings of Buddhism in India and include in his study the Yoga that had spread throughout the Indian subcontinent, for the practice of Zen owes much to this Yoga. And the soaring metaphysics of the Mahāyāna movement will also require attention.

This spiritual legacy of India took root in China. There, the Mahāyāna Buddhism of Indian origin met with Chinese Taoism, an encounter essential to the formation of the Zen school, the meditation school of Mahāyāna, as we may call it. And there, primarily through the activity of the great masters of the T'ang period (618–906), Zen ac-

quired its distinctly Chinese character. I have attempted in this book to elucidate some of the more obscure points of early Chinese Zen history. Here the figure of the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Zen, Hui-neng, towers above all else. Quotations from Chinese Zen literature, that is, the collections of koans and sayings of the masters, add color and perspective to the fascinating picture we have of the early Chinese Zen movement. In particular, the *Record of Lin-chi* punctuates the rapid climb of its development. In connection with such typical Chinese masters as these, the characteristically Chinese practice of the koan finds its expression. Koan practice has aroused the interest of today's psychologists especially; but from the perspective of the history of ideas, it remains wholly within the Mahayanist world view.

Transplanted to Japan, Zen became the fountainhead of a high degree of culture and art during the middle ages. This expansion into the secular realm was characteristic of the Zen school. Thus it is misleading to consider Zen asocial, as happens occasionally, because of its followers' unrelenting meditation and concentration on the self. Zen's contributions to culture are not to be seen as a mere byproduct of the activity of its monasteries. For, of all Buddhist schools in Japan, Zen was able to relate "worldliness" with religious endeavor most clearly. Historical research confirms this as an essential trait of Zen that is still evident today.

The number of Japanese Zen masters is considerable, most likely larger than that of Chinese masters if we take the present into account. I was able to include relatively few within the limits of my presentation here. I have given considerable space to Dōgen, for the spiritual fruits that so intrigue people today are most clearly visible in him. Moreover, he is the sole original Buddhist thinker in Japan prior to its encounter with the West. It is not by accident that the most significant Japanese philosophical movement today, the Kyoto school founded by Kitarō Nishida and now led by Keiji Nishitani, has recourse to Dōgen in its endeavor to link Eastern and Western thought. For this reason I have devoted an entire chapter to Dōgen's teaching on Buddha-nature.

The final chapters of this book relate, in translation from the original Japanese, the accounts of contemporary Zen students. These reports illustrate Zen practice in the concrete. Long hours of silent sitting in the lotus posture, which is not without its perils, forms the basis of this practice. The ineffable experience of enlightenment can only be described indirectly in terms of its effects on the practitioner. As a radi-

cally subjective experience, it is not amenable to any generally accepted interpretation or judgment concerning its authenticity.

During the many centuries of its history in East Asian countries, the Zen way of enlightenment was always of a ramified and varied nature. Today Zen has come to the West, only to increase its diversity. The meditation movement, which has become a worldwide phenomenon significant for spiritual life in our day, proceeds along a variety of paths. Indeed, it is characterized by a pluralism of method and goal. In the modern Zen movement as well, accommodations have been made to the times and circumstances. Diversification into a number of forms is well under way. Under these circumstances we cannot predict what the future holds in store for Zen. The extent and character of its diversification will to a large degree be determined by the meditation movement as a whole. And undoubtedly this movement has a future, ensured not only by the urgent needs of our times but also by the timeless value of meditation. For man is ever in need of meditation.

It goes without saying that my primary concern in this book has been to give those who have little or no knowledge of Zen an accurate, clear, and reliable account of its origins and meaning. But it is at the same time addressed to those already engaged in Zen practice. How can this be? Are not Zen practitioners warned daily by their masters in the meditation hall that theories are of no use in Zen, that they must only practice, that is, sit and sit and sit? On the other hand, no one can escape responsibility for what he undertakes. And thus it can be of value for the avid practitioner in particular to acquire a balanced view of the history and essence of Zen Buddhism. To be sure, for those who practice and experience Zen, the practice and experience justifies itself. Yet it is not a matter of indifference how the way of Zen and the goals of this way are presented.

This book is based upon lectures I gave while I was a visiting professor at the University of Munich. The original lecture format has been preserved as much as possible to facilitate easy access to the topics under discussion. I have at times taken sides on some of the issues that remain controversial from the point of view of Zen scholarship, without, however, burdening the reader with innumerable footnotes and references. Since it is primarily by way of Japan that Zen has become known in the West, traditional expressions and technical terms are given in Japanese. The reader will find their meaning explained in context, eliminating the need for a separate glossary. Proper names of Chinese Zen masters

are, however, given in their Chinese reading; a list of the Japanese equivalents of these names has been added at the end of the book for the convenience of those more familiar with the Japanese pronunciation.

I am left with the pleasant obligation of expressing my thanks to all who helped in the preparation of this book: to the University of Munich School of Philosophy for its invitation to lecture on Zen; to Dr. Hans Brockard, who read the manuscript and offered many pertinent comments; and to my students for their encouraging response. Dr. John C. Maraldo, himself well acquainted with Zen Buddhism, undertook the exacting task of translation into English. He rearranged the order of presentation and made small additions in a few places to facilitate understanding by an American audience. Finally, I owe thanks to John Weatherhill, Inc., for its care in preparing the manuscript for press and undertaking the publication.

HEINRICH DUMOULIN

Tokyo, October 1978

ZEN ENLIGHTENMENT

ONE

The Western View of Zen

THE THEME OF THIS BOOK is Zen Buddhism—more exactly, the "Zen Buddhist way of enlightenment." It is meant to express above all the essential features of Zen: Zen presents us with a way that leads to the awakening of the self and hence to the depths of being human. This way was opened up within the domain of a religion—namely, within Buddhism. Of course it is quite possible to speak of Zen in a more general sense and to view every enlightenment experience in connection with the way of Zen. But as it came to pass in human history, Zen is found in Buddhism. For this reason, any serious study of Zen must make reference to its Buddhist foundations.

With the introduction of Zen to the West in our century we were presented on the one hand with a typical phenomenon of East Asian spirituality. On the other hand, Zen claims a certain universality for itself, and thus is of especial significance for the encounter between East and West. If historians such as Toynbee have counted the ongoing encounter of these two hemispheres among the most important events of our day precisely because of its religious content, surely the reception of Zen in the West deserves our attention. Moreover, current interest in Zen is by no means of a merely academic nature; many people today look to Zen for support in their daily lives.

Five Phases in the Introduction of Zen to the West We must first look at the Western view of Zen. Since this view is not without its ambiguities, it will help if we first approach this complex theme from various angles. Today, of course, Zen is known generally throughout the West. But the ideas people have about Zen vary considerably. And the evaluations can often be nearly diametrically opposed. There are those who in

esoteric rapture attach messianic expectations to Zen, and those who warn of the Asian peril. We can get a better grasp of these widely differing reactions by recalling how Zen was introduced to the West. Five phases or factors are discernible in this process—all occurring in the twentieth century. To be sure, Europe came to know of Asia at the beginning of the modern era (*viz.* the figure symbolizing Asia on the inside of the dome of San Ignacio, a seventeenth-century Roman baroque church), and in the nineteenth century Buddhism came to be intensively studied by Western scholars. But Western Zen itself is entirely a twentieth-century phenomenon, and during the last five decades or so a great deal has happened with and to Zen in the West.

D. T. Suzuki: Psychology and Wisdom Let us begin not with the very first contacts between the Western world and Zen, but with the decisive phase initiated by the work of D. T. Suzuki (1870–1960), that great interpreter so uniquely successful in bridging East with West. Suzuki was extremely qualified and well equipped for his mission. During his days as a university student he enjoyed close contact with Zen Buddhism, and after graduating he took up practice under the famous Zen master Shaku Sōen, the abbot of the Rinzai monastery in Kamakura. Shaku Sōen had been the Japanese Buddhist representative at the memorable World Congress of Religions in Chicago in 1893. Upon his return to Japan, Sōen sent the young Suzuki, his most gifted disciple, to America to assist in the publishing of Buddhist and other texts from the East Asian heritage. The work at the publishing house gave Suzuki an excellent opportunity both to perfect his English and to learn all he could about Western, especially Anglo-Saxon, civilization. He married an American who was both religious and open to Eastern spirituality, and soon he felt at home in the Western world. But his mind and heart remained devoted to Zen. If Suzuki's achievements in introducing Zen in the West were epoch-making, the key ideas and peculiarities of his understanding of Zen cast those achievements in a particular light. Hence it is worth while to examine the specific characteristics of the Zen interpretations in his works.

Suzuki was a prolific writer: his collected works in Japanese comprise some thirty volumes,[1] and his writings in English, as yet uncollected, would take up at least ten. The works can be considered from various standpoints. Chronologically, the Second World War brought about a decisive turning point. Prior to the outbreak of the Pacific War, Suzuki had completed a series of works that was comprehensive in its

own way. This does not mean that he had produced a systematic presentation of Zen Buddhism—during his over ninety years, he did not write one systematic work. But in the first half of his years of literary production, he touched upon practically all the important points of Zen. His three-volume *Essays in Zen Buddhism,* which first appeared in England in 1927–34, together with his trilogy *Introduction to Zen Buddhism, The Training of the Zen Buddhist Monk* (both 1934), and *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (1935), present Zen in its entirety, as Suzuki saw and experienced it and desired to introduce it to Westerners. In transmitting the teachings, Suzuki naturally interprets and adapts them to Western ways of thinking, as he was familiar with those ways. He consciously accentuates certain aspects in Zen literature while cautiously developing thoughts of his own.

The most obvious characteristic of Suzuki's early Zen interpretations is their predominantly psychological bent. His essays make use of the descriptive categories that William James developed in *The Varieties of Religious Experience.* But this influence was not a merely superficial borrowing of terms. Suzuki felt a certain affinity with the ingenious American philosopher-psychologist, who, like himself, esteemed experience above all else and displayed a genuine appreciation of religion. As is well known, the apex of religious experience in Zen is enlightenment—the experience of satori, which Suzuki considered the very quintessence of Zen. Of hardly less importance is the use of koan, methodically ordered in the Rinzai school to lead to the satori experience. Satori and the koan form the center of Suzuki's teachings on Zen and are presented chiefly from the psychological angle in his early works. During the first half of his life, philosophy and metaphysics were of secondary interest for Suzuki. And his appreciation of history was so limited that there arose lively debates between him and the Chinese historian Hu Shih, who openly criticized Suzuki for this deficiency.

In the postwar period, Suzuki's writings reached widespread audiences and took a new turn. The courses he gave at various American universities, especially Columbia, were widely acclaimed, as were his lecture tours throughout America and Europe. Everywhere he went he was recognized as the leading authority on Zen. Many people, moreover, welcomed him as one of the few living sages of the East. During this period, his theme remained Zen Buddhism, but he was less concerned with communicating factual information about Zen than with showing the way to an ultimate, comprehensive, and supreme truth.

In the later writings of Suzuki, a philosophical-metaphysical element clearly comes to the fore. Properly speaking, Suzuki was never a philosopher. However, one of his closest disciples once related to me that his master felt a predilection for philosophy throughout his life. Be that as it may, Suzuki surely counts as one of those true masters of life who, as Meister Eckhart put it, excel a thousand masters who do not but lecture. Each of his stimulating lectures and essays was sure to contain some real insight. A deep religiosity shines through his learned wisdom and never fails to impress us. For a better understanding of Christian mysticism, Suzuki went to Meister Eckhart, whose writings he esteemed highly.[2] And in the last years of his life, Suzuki concerned himself a good deal with the Amida devotees of the Shin school, the so-called Buddhism of faith. Just before his death I had the pleasure of attending his final public lecture, which treated the pious Amida faithful known in Japanese as *myōkōnin*, literally, "wonderfully happy people."

In evaluating Suzuki's contribution to the Western view of Zen, one must keep in mind that the presentation of Zen in his writings and lectures is confined to the Rinzai school—one of the two great schools of Zen transplanted to Japan from China. The second, historically no less important Sōtō school, introduced into Japan by the great medieval master Dōgen and still active today, is hardly mentioned by Suzuki. That is no mean superficial oversight, for it affects the understanding of Zen as such. Certain essential traits of Rinzai Zen, such as the paradox and the suprarational, are to some extent overemphasized in Suzuki, but these are particularly suited to his style of thinking. On the other hand, he has little interest in the meditation in everyday life that is so stressed by the Sōtō school. Hence a certain one-sidedness is undeniably present in the Zen that Suzuki conveyed to the West. Nevertheless, Suzuki's contribution to the scholarly study of Zen was considerable, and we shall have occasion to return to him, for this wise man of Zen counts among the most influential religious figures of our age.

Suzuki's view of Zen gave rise to widely divergent interpretations in the West. Above all, the uprooting of Zen from its native Buddhist soil can be traced to his teachings. His tendency to psychologize and generalize matters could easily lead one to lose sight of the Buddhist roots of Zen. Suzuki's disciples, who heard their revered master say over and over again that Zen was neither a philosophy nor a religion, proceeded to interpret Zen in their own terms, which were usually alien

to traditional Buddhism. Japanese Zen Buddhists were often astounded at the transformations Zen was undergoing in the West, and they differentiated between the traditional forms of Japanese Zen and that which they called "Suzuki Zen." Zen in the West unmistakably bore the spirit of Suzuki for a long time.

Rudolf Otto: "Born of the Gravity of the Numinous" Before we go on tracing the development of the Zen movement in the West as it was inspired by D. T. Suzuki's wide range of activities, we must turn back to a curious occurrence of much interest to the student of the history of religions. The great German scholar Rudolf Otto was deeply impressed when he accidently came across the earliest essays the young Suzuki wrote on Zen for the 1922 issues of *The Eastern Buddhist*. Otto refers to Suzuki's "thought-provoking essays" in an article on the experience of the numinous in zazen ("Das numinose Erlebnis im Zazen"), included in the volume entitled *Das Gefühl des Überweltlichen* [The Sense of the Transworldly]: *Sensus Numinis* (1931).[3]

The first book about Zen in German, *Zen: der lebendige Buddhismus in Japan* (Zen: Living Buddhism in Japan), was published in 1925. It consisted of selected Zen texts in translation, primarily pieces taken from two important Chinese collections of koan, the *Hekiganroku* (The Blue Cliff Records) and the *Mumonkan* (The Gateless Barrier). The book's introduction, translations, and commentary were by the hand of Ōhasama Shūei, a lay Japanese Zen Buddhist and professor from the Rinzai school. The young German scholar August Faust assisted in adapting the language and content to the German reading public. It was auspicious that Rudolf Otto wrote the preface for this first literary presentation of Zen in Germany, for, whereas the translations are obsolete today, Rudolf Otto's preface is still worth reading. This preface, as well as the above-mentioned essay on the experience of the numinous in zazen, signify precisely the point where Zen was discovered in Germany for the first time. Shortly prior to this, Friedrich Heiler had touched upon Zen in his noteworthy study of Buddhist meditation (*Buddhistische Versenkung,* 1918). But since Heiler's interest was directed to the early Buddhist meditation described in the Pāli canon, he considered Zen a degenerate form of the original. Otto changed this negative appraisal when he discovered in Japanese Zen an excellent and unique form of *theologia negativa*. Zen, Otto writes in his essay on the experience of the numinous in zazen, "is by its very nature born of the most profound gravity of the irrational in the nu-

minous itself. At the same time this aspect is so exaggerated that we who come predominantly from the rational side of religion are at first completely unable to note that it is a religion—an uncommonly strong and deep religion—with which we have to do."[4]

In evaluating Zen, the history of religions will always fall back upon Otto's lucid presentation of the West's first view of Zen. Otto grasped the eminently religious character of Zen and classified it as mysticism, for which the supreme truth is the ineffable "wholly Other."

Beat Zen, Psychotheraphy, Esoterism The next three phases in the introduction of Zen to the West are to a large extent contemporaneous, covering the developments of the 1950s and 1960s. Each phase has its particular characteristic to add to the Western view of Zen.

During the 1950s, a decadent form known as "Beat Zen" emerged in America. For the youth dissatisfied with the technocratic consumer society of the West, Zen mysticism offered a new life style, one that appealed to young people all the more for its blatant opposition to conventions and rational thought—at least that was as much as this group was able to get out of the paradoxical koan stories they read in Suzuki and the flood of literature on Zen that appeared in those years. Beat Zen was quite popular for a time in California, the Eldorado of the new religions, but quickly faded from the public eye. Few traces of it are visible today, although this ephemeral phenomenon was captured by American literature, especially in the evocative novels of J. D. Salinger. To a lesser extent there arose another form that Ernst Benz termed "Zen snobbism," rather widespread among intellectual circles. It is impossible to tell just who is responsible for all the nonsense identified with Zen in the public eye. The view of Zen in the West still betrays some traces of a faddish character.

Much more serious is another deviation from Zen, namely its incorporation into psychotherapy. Although justified from a medical standpoint, the psychotherapeutic employment of Zen meditation must be regarded as essentially alien to Zen. A Zen severed from its foundations in Buddhism was included among numerous psychic healing techniques, regardless of its religious nature. Insofar as healing is possible with the aid of Zen or other kinds of Asian meditation (often simply called Yoga without differentiation), one can only welcome this addition to medical treatment. Nevertheless, as I have written previously, it still remains true that "Zen is robbed of its soul if it is made to eke out its existence in the psychological laboratory. Born as it was from the

primal religious urge of man, and nourished by religious resources, Zen for many centuries inspired great religious achievements. Therefore psychology cannot speak the final word regarding the value and usefulness of Zen."[5] Yet psychotherapeutical notions are still part of the Western conception of Zen.

In this connection we may say a word about the practice of Zen in esoteric circles, which were attracted to Zen meditation for its supposedly parapsychological effects. These groups occasionally sought support in Suzuki, but without ground. For all his predilection for the paradoxical and supra-rational, Suzuki was a far cry from miracles, parapsychology, and magic. This Japanese scholar was no esoterist, even if he did take into account the esoteric element undeniably present in Zen. In esoteric circles, that element is the focal point of interest; the altered state of consciousness linked with Zen enlightenment is the main concern. Such esoterism fails to recognize that in Zen an altered state of consciousness is no more than an ancillary phenomenon, never to be sought after for its own sake. When altered states and the expansion of consciousness are emphasized, as occurred in America and Europe, Zen falls into the proximity of drugs—an association not heard of in Japan. It is true that in some places psychological techniques were employed as a shortcut to the peak experience of the practitioners. But the authoritative Japanese masters of both the Rinzai and Sōtō schools repudiate such coercive methods, as well as any attempts to bring about an altered state of consciousness through hypnosis. In this respect Zen is unlike some of the methods employed in Yoga and in Theravāda Buddhism.

Although Japanese Zen masters reject hypnosis, they have nothing against a scientific investigation of the alteration in brain waves that occurs during Zen meditation. Recently a number of such experiments have been carried out, and with quite interesting results. Electroencephalograms of people practicing Zen meditation showed the same pattern of alpha waves observed in the state shortly before sleep, experienced as a state of relaxed alertness. Such experiments have been able to confirm the reciprocal psychosomatic effects one might expect in Zen.[6]

Japanese Zen Meditation and Pluralism As a fourth factor in the reception accorded Zen by the West, we may mention the effective work done by Japanese Zen teachers to spread their way on many fronts. Westerners whose hearts were touched by Zen and sought its authentic

form turned to Japan, the land of a living Zen tradition. Japanese Zen Buddhists responded to the call and willingly taught Zen to Americans and Europeans. In some cases the eager disciples traveled to Japan, in others Japanese teachers themselves took up residence in Western countries. The main obstacle to their efforts was the language barrier, but difficulties in communication were eventually solved. Some Japanese Zen monasteries nearly always have Westerners practicing Zen meditation. And there are Zen monks giving Zen courses in the United States, England, France, and Germany.

The Zen that has been transmitted to the West in this way is different by no small account from Suzuki's spirited and sagacious version. Rinzai and Sōtō, the two great Japanese schools, are almost equally represented in this movement. Practices vary according to the school and the line of descent within it. Sōtō stresses the practice of *zazen* (sitting in the lotus posture), whereas Rinzai emphasizes satori and the koan. But pluralism is not confined to the difference of Japanese Zen schools. Individual Japanese Zen Buddhists who give meditation courses in the United States and Germany frequently evince divergent spiritual leanings.

Of course not all teachers are of the same quality. Among Zen groups in Japan, one often hears differing opinions about Zen masters, including those active in the West. Therefore it is not unkind to say that Japanese Zen masters have their weak points and their strong points. Moreover, the Zen that they teach is linked to their Buddhist religion in varying degrees. Even when a Zen course takes place in a Buddhist hall, the degree to which the meditation is guided by the Buddhist religion depends upon the individual teacher. One certainly cannot hold it against a Buddhist monk if he proclaims his deep conviction of the Buddhist faith. He does not thereby violate religious tolerance. I know of Japanese Zen masters who gave much of themselves to guide the Zen practice of believing Christians, without making them any the less sure of their faith. In the case of Japanese Zen teachers, therefore, one cannot speak of a "Buddhist mission to the West" without qualification. The reality is more complex and variegated.

It is possible that even in those courses under the direction of Buddhist monks in the West, Zen is being severed from its roots in Buddhism. One must consider that the transplantion of Zen to the West itself somehow moves in that direction. This observation then leads to the general problem of whether, and in what ways, Zen and Buddhism in the West are undergoing changes in comparison with Zen and Bud-

dhism in their native Asian lands. A final question is raised: are the changes indicative only of a certain modernization and secularization, or do they penetrate the very core of Zen Buddhism?

Zen Meditation for Christians Our survey of the phases and aspects of the introduction of Zen to the West would be incomplete if we failed to mention the phenomenon of "Christian Zen." As remarkable as it might seem at first sight, the fact that believing Christians have turned to Zen for assistance in their own spiritual way is understandable in the light of their rapidly growing interest in meditation. One can already speak of a Christian Zen movement in America, Germany, and Japan. Courses are offered on such topics as Zen and Christian mysticism, and instruction in "meditation in the style of Zen" is not infrequently given at Christian retreat houses. The Irish Jesuit William Johnston and the English Benedictine Aelred Graham have published books on Christian Zen in the United States and England, and the German Jesuit H. M. Enomiya-Lassalle is the acknowledged pioneer of "Zen Meditation for Christians" in Germany. Similar efforts to utilize Zen meditation are found among Christians in Japan.

Apparently the uprooting of Zen from its Buddhist foundations is at a quite advanced stage here. We cannot overlook the fact that this kind of adaptation poses serious problems that are not easily resolved. In the case of the adaptations of Zen mentioned previously, we were concerned with shifts of emphasis that occasionally also touched the very nature of Zen. Thus one perhaps exaggerated the psychological aspects at the expense of religious connections, but the Buddhist basis was left unviolated. Christian adaptations of Zen, on the other hand, signal an incomparably more radical dissociation from Buddhism. There can be no doubt that the world views of Zen Buddhism and Christianity differ radically, and this is readily admitted by the pioneers of Christian Zen.

In this respect we can raise two questions concerning Christian Zen. First, can the specific practice of Zen meditation be so totally divested of its religious and metaphysical underpinnings that Christians can take up the practice without endangering their faith? And second, can a Zen so radically severed from its Buddhist foundations still properly be called Zen? These questions were clear to me as long as ten years ago when I stressed that any total secularization that ignores the religious element necessarily alienates Zen from its traditional essence. Christianity commends the resurgent turn to transcendence, which one

can certainly observe in Zen meditation. The ways do not part until an interpretation of experience is reached, but there they part completely. On the other hand, Father Enomiya-Lassalle has in his publications continually represented the position that the Zen method of meditation can be fruitfully applied by Christians, and that Zen meditation can be of assistance in experiencing God in Christian terms.

But the Christian Zen movement, as it has progressed in recent years, is not a monolithic block of teaching and practice; a multiplicity of endeavors is involved. All of them are convinced of the overall value of Zen meditation and attempt to integrate the specific merits of the Zen way into Christianity. Meditation leaders inspired by Zen follow different ways in certain respects and, more important, betray different degrees of fidelity to their prototype. Some believe that new Zen ways are presently in the coming, but this involves the encounter of Zen not only with Christianity but also with modern mentality.[7] It is still too soon to estimate the effects, but the two points I raised earlier stand as questions not yet fully resolved.

Thus far we have attempted to delineate the Western view of Zen in a few essential strokes in order to highlight some of the problems of vital concern to Zen today. These problems, which will accompany us in our historical investigation, seem to converge finally in the one question of the essential nature of Zen. Through this book we can hope no more than to help elucidate the nature of Zen.

In our look at the adaptations of Zen meditation in the West, we frequently met with a detaching of Zen from its Buddhist foundations. Perhaps what is at stake here is a phenomenon explicable only in terms of the complexity of the twentieth-century world and its converging forces of modernization, secularization, and advancement of technology, under the aegis of Western humanism, be it Christian or not.

Origins and Meaning was chosen as the subtitle of this book in order to stress the importance of understanding Zen in its multifaceted context of Buddhism, Yoga, and Taoism. The origin and history of Zen in Asia are of central concern because we believe it is the history of Zen that reveals its form and its nature. But we shall also have occasion to touch upon East Asian culture, art, and religious education as we follow Zen from its roots in India through its emergence and flowering in China to its consummation in Japan. We shall endeavor to take into account the many sources of Asian religiosity as they have shaped this East Asian way of enlightenment.

Yet the aim of our investigation is not primarily to gain knowledge,

as desirable as that may be in itself. For we would also aspire to a genuine spiritual encounter with East Asia, one for which, in this hour of building a unified world, we are held responsible and which, to the extent it is successful, can only enrich us with new and vital values.

TWO

Indian Roots

THE PECULIAR WAY OF ZEN meditation, with its practice of zazen and the koan and its goal of the satori experience of enlightenment, has its origins in China, where the first Zen masters taught and the first Zen schools sprang up. But the Zen way has roots deeply embedded in the native soil of Buddhism in India. The Indian roots are primarily evident in two respects. First of all, Zen is connected to Shākyamuni, the founder of the Buddhist religion. Second, Zen is closely linked to the ancient Indian tradition of Yoga, which goes back even further than Shākyamuni. We shall first treat the Indian founder in order to show how Zen belongs to Buddhism. We shall then consider the Yogic aspects of the Zen way.

Shākyamuni Shākyamuni is venerated by the faithful of all Buddhist schools as the Buddha—that is, the Enlightened One. He was a historical figure who lived in the fifth century B.C. Through him a new category—namely that of the Buddha—entered the history of religions. The experience of enlightenment counts as the central event of his life. Buddhist scriptures report of the event in detail: how the ascetic Gautama, after six or seven years of frustrated attempts to gain an experience through the force of austerities and Yogic practices, was driven anew to sit beneath a pipal tree (a kind of fig tree, usually called the Bodhi tree, or tree of enlightenment) near the Neranjarā River. He resolved not to get up until his goal had been reached. The texts describe how in the course of a night he acquired threefold knowledge: in the first night watch, knowledge of his previous lives; in the second, knowledge of the karmic chain of world occurrences; and in the third, the redeeming knowledge of suffering—its causes, its cessation, and

the way to the cessation of suffering. It is also said that he consciously passed through the four *dhyāna* (meditation) stages.

The importance of this account for Zen lies in the actual experience of enlightenment: the great breakthrough in that hour when the eye of enlightenment was opened in Shākyamuni and he became a Buddha. Zen Buddhists reading the ancient accounts of the enlightenment of Shākyamuni will pay special attention to the experiential aspects of the event. The enlightenment occurred as a sudden breakthrough. Gautama's ascetic endeavors during the preceding years are depicted in such detail in order to highlight the suddenness of the experience. The event itself, although drawn out through the night according to the sources, is a genuinely sudden satori experience. Shākyamuni did not gain enlightenment in a gradual ascent of degrees of knowledge, but rather attained it all at once. Hermann Oldenberg, in his classic study of the Buddha, remarked on the affinity of the Buddha's enlightenment with the experiences of sudden transformation and cosmic consciousness reported by William James.[1]

The transformation is expressed in the new self-consciousness of Buddha. When asked by the ascetic Ajīvika Upaka who his master might be, the Buddha replied:

> I have no master, and no one can be compared with me.
> In the world of devas there is no equal to me.
> I am an Arhat [Holy One] to the world.
> I am the One Fully Awakened . . .[2]

Legend put the same words, in a slightly different version, into the mouth of the Buddha child, who immediately after his birth took seven steps in the four celestial directions and then said: "I alone am honored in heaven and on earth."[3] Since these words were set down in the Chinese scriptures as the birth verse of the Buddha (Japanese: *tanjōge*), they are familiar to Japanese Buddhists. Zen Buddhists interpret the verse in terms of the state of enlightenment in which the identity of the self, the universe, and Buddha is experienced. In a report of a contemporary experience, a Zen disciple tells how he felt gripped by this verse as his experience unfolded: "I alone am honored in heaven and on earth." The veneration of the Buddha derives from his enlightenment. Throughout all Buddhism there sounds forth the proclamation: "The Perfected One is the holy, supreme Awakened One."

The Zen school further traces its origins back to a special event in

the life of Shākyamuni. Chinese Zen chronicles, referring to an apocryphal sutra, report of the transmission of mind from Shākyamuni to his disciple Kāśyapa. This very occurrence can serve as a means to enlightenment in Zen; that is, it is practiced as a koan. The sixth case of the *Mumonkan* reports the event as follows: "Once when the World-Honored One was staying on the Mount of the Vulture, he held up a flower before the assembled ones. All fell silent. Only the venerable Kāśyapa broke into a smile. The Honored One then spoke: 'The Eye of the true Dharma, the wonderful Mind of Nirvana, the true formless Form, the mysterious Gate of the Dharma, which rests not upon words and letters, and a special transmission [which is identical with the first four] outside the scriptures; this I hand over to the great Kāśyapa.'"[4]

Zen finds the origins of its transmission expressed in this occurrence. The earliest tradition contains only the first three terms, namely, the "Eye of the true Dharma," "the wonderful Mind of Nirvana," and "the true formless Form." The last two terms were added later. The "mysterious Gate of the Dharma" signifies the Zen school, which passes on the spirit in a "special transmission outside the scriptures." What is significant for disciples of Zen is that this special transmission that carries so much weight in the Chinese Zen writings goes back to Shākyamuni himself. (We shall return to this point later.)

Master Wu-men, the collector and commentator of the *Mumonkan,* concludes the case with the following thought: "If everyone in the congregation had laughed, how then would the Eye of the true Dharma have been transmitted in a single line? Or if Kāśyapa had not laughed, how then would the Eye of the true Dharma have been passed down at all?" This remark holds the paradox of Zen for us: on the one hand, enlightenment and the Buddha-nature realized in enlightenment are equally accessible to and present in all people; on the other hand, there is need for the special transmission of mind in the Zen school if people are continually to be brought to enlightenment. In the foregoing case, this is expressed by the fact that only Kāśyapa smiled where all of the disciples could have. For this reason the Buddha entrusted the special transmission of mind only to Kāśyapa. In the Zen school, Shākyamuni ranks as the first patriarch, Kāśyapa as the second, and so on down the line of twenty-eight Indian patriarchs, concluding with Bodhidharma, who is at the same time the first Chinese Zen patriarch.

This event from the life of Shākyamuni, even if it is legendary, does not merely tie the founder of the Buddhist religion historically to Zen. It also most impressively conveys the spirit of Zen. A deep silence hovers

over the occurrence; not a word is spoken. The Buddha holds up the flower, the disciple smiles. The mind of the master and the mind of the disciple smile. Thus is Zen. Because supreme truth cannot be spoken in words, there has to be a wordless transmission outside the scriptures. It has happened that iconoclasm, rejecting every form of pictorial representation, accompanies this sort of *theologia negativa*. We shall see how it is with Zen. For now the point is that according to the Zen tradition, the Buddha did not speak the supreme truth in words. The Buddha's silence is a sign of his wisdom.

No other school of Mahāyāna Buddhism venerates the historical Buddha Shākyamuni as strongly as Zen has from its very beginnings in China. It is true that in Japan today, in the course of a general religious renewal, practically all Buddhist schools are turning to the sources of Buddhism and hence to Shākyamuni. But the Zen school has always displayed special veneration to the Buddha from the Shākya tribe. In many Japanese Zen temples the image of Shākyamuni is set up as the primary object of worship. The writings of Dōgen (1200–1253) reveal an intimate personal relationship to the Buddha Shākyamuni, who embodies the Buddha-nature in a unique way for this medieval Japanese Zen master. Personal devotion to Shākyamuni is widespread among Japanese Zen Buddhists today. The famous Japanese Zen master Yamada Mumon of the Rinzai school, for example, wrote a book entitled *Return to the Honored Shākya* (Shakuson ni kaere). Like many contemporary Japanese Buddhists, Yamada Mumon Rōshi had gone on a pilgrimage to Buddhist sites in northern India and been deeply impressed. His book relates some of his experiences. At the memorial of the enlightenment of the Buddha in Bodhgaya, the sight of the stupa and the Bodhi tree moved him to tears and occasioned a short poem:

While I peer
up at the lofty stupa,
towering into the red dawn,
softly my tears fall.[5]

Once at a meeting of Zen Buddhists and Christians, another Japanese master of the Sōtō school held a lecture that I shall never forget on the significance of Shākyamuni for Zen Buddhist spirituality. For him, Shākyamuni is the supreme exemplar, the one who followed the way to its end most perfectly and attained supreme enlightenment. Hence

Shākyamuni is an object of veneration to whom he feels intimately bound. In his case, too, the personal relationship to Shākyamuni far exceeds the respect accorded the founder in the system of teachings.

For hundreds of years East Asian Mahāyāna Buddhism was cut off from its roots in India; but modern means of transportation are bringing it, and hence Zen Buddhism as well, closer to the Indian heritage, as the wave of Japanese Buddhist pilgrims to the shrines in the northern part of India shows. The historical Buddha Shākyamuni has become personally dear to East Asian Buddhists today, and many features in the description of his life have taken on a concrete meaning for them. Among these features are Yogic practices, which comprise much of the Buddha's biography.

Zen and Yoga The relationship of Chinese-Japanese Zen to Indian Yoga is important both historically and intrinsically, and is of particular interest today. We tend to name Yoga and Zen together as paths of Eastern meditation, and it is common that the praise given or the fault found with one is applied without difference to either, i.e., to Eastern meditation in general. The similarities between Zen and Yoga are indeed unmistakable, but these two paths are by no means identical. To make inferences about Zen simply on the basis of phenomena in Yoga is to oversimplify the matter and to pave the way for patently false conclusions. Hence a critical investigation, which recognizes and maintains similarities but avoids identification, is in order.

All of Indian spiritual life is saturated with Yoga. The roots of the word literally mean to yoke or bind together; Yoga thus signifies all the corporeal, psychic, ascetic, and especially meditative efforts harnessed to help the spirit attain freedom. As a psychosomatic technique, Yoga embraces body and mind and brings their reciprocal relationship to bear on the full range of human activity. Yoga contains an enormous number of practices, ranging from entirely natural breath and concentration exercises employed in the posture of meditation to eccentric Fakir arts possible for only a few ascetics. What is practiced as Yoga in India and today in the West is legion.

Yoga has been in India since ancient times, probably going back before the Aryan influx. In Vedic literature it is found in connection and mingled with ancient Indian asceticism. What is important for our investigation is the fact that, in India, Yoga has been associated with widely varying philosophical systems, views of life, and religious movements. From Vedic Yoga an infinitely ramified way leads through

Buddhist Yoga, Jainist Yoga, Tantric Yoga, Vedānta Yoga (to name some of the most important branches) on to the modern forms employed in Ramakrishna community and Sri Aurobindo's integral Yoga. There is hardly an Indian philosophical school or religious community without its Yoga.

The special system of Indian philosophy that bears the Yoga (one of the so-called six orthodox systems, or *darśana*) has its scriptural basis in the *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali. It can be taken as representative of Indian Yoga. It is of interest to us because the classical Yoga of Patañjali is closely related to early Buddhism.

The *Yoga Sūtra* of Patañjali, called a "practical manual of ancient techniques" by Mircea Eliade,[6] summarizes the Yogic way in eight "members" *(aṅga)*. The first two members, the restraints *(yama)* and disciplines *(niyama)* concern the moral and ascetic preconditions for the exercises. The two following exercises are related to bodily postures *(āsana)* and control of breathing *(prāṇāyāma)*. The fifth member, the withdrawal of the senses from objects *(pratyāhāra)*, forms the bridge to the inner Yoga of concentration *(dhāranā)*, meditation (dhyāna), and absorption, or trance *(samādhi)*. As Friedrich Heiler demonstrated in his still-relevant study *Buddhistische Versenkung*, the members of this way of meditation are found one and all in the early Buddhist meditation of the Pāli canon. To be sure, historically Buddhism is considerably older than the work of Patañjali (the date of completion of the *Yoga Sūtra* is commonly held to be sometime in the fifth century A.D.), but the sutra represents the systematic, written form of much more ancient Yogic doctrines.

We do not know just how much or what kind of Buddhist Yoga is historically rooted in Shākyamuni himself. Apparently the founder of the Buddhist religion did practice and experience Yoga. According to the ancient biographies, two yogis, presumably adhering to the philosophy of Sāṃkhya, guided Shākyamuni into the ascetic life after he had left his father's house. For six years he applied himself to severe ascetic practices and meditation exercises taught in Yoga, but did not attain his goal on this path. Tradition also reports that the Buddha passed through the four dhyāna stages known to Yoga on the two great occasions of his enlightenment and his death (entrance into nirvana). Nevertheless, it is not historically certain to what extent the Yogic schema of meditation in early Buddhism is anchored in the teachings and life of Shākyamuni. Insofar as the Buddha expressly repudiated bodily castigations and magical or eccentric acts, Zen can find support

for its radical simplification of meditation practice in the founder of the Buddhist religion.

With these considerations in mind—especially Shākyamuni's questioning of Yoga and the connection between classical Yoga and early Buddhist meditation—we now turn to our theme of the similarities and dissimilarities of Zen and Yoga. It is well known that D. T. Suzuki repeatedly stressed the difference between Zen and the early Buddhist dhyāna meditation inspired by Yoga. "Zen is not the same as dhyāna,"[7] he emphasized, "Zen is not a type of dhyāna";[8] or "In the view of Zen, dhyāna does not correspond to the true practice of Zen."[9] Suzuki held this view out of his conviction of the singular uniqueness of Zen. (His works just as often pointed out the Indian roots of Zen.) We shall first expose the unmistakable relationship of Zen and Yoga, while keeping in mind Suzuki's words about the distinction between the two.

The similarity of Zen and Yoga is above all evident in their three basic techniques of meditation: namely in sitting, breathing, and concentrating. Of the many various sitting postures of Yoga (a treatise on Hatha Yoga describes thirty-two different kinds), Zen teaches the lotus posture *(padmāsana)*, considered the most perfect of all postures in Yoga as well. In Buddhism it is the posture of the Buddha, a sacred position from which magical effects pour forth. The regulation of breath (prāṇāyāma) is likewise common to Zen and Yoga, but Zen employs only one of the Yogic methods of breathing: rhythmical breathing in and breathing out (with the latter more drawn out), which the beginning student keeps count of. Coercive breathing techniques, suppression of breathing, etc., are not employed in Zen. The non-thinking of Zen, that is, the clearing out of all conscious impressions, desires, and thoughts, is similar but not identical to the Yogic exercise of concentration. (We shall return to this exercise in another connection later.) It is evident that Zen reduces the psychosomatic techniques of Yoga to a minimum. Zen is of the conviction that this simplification only facilitates the exercises and beneficial effects of meditation. Another mutual trait of Zen and Yoga is their high estimation of spiritual guidance. Just as the guru is indispensable to Yoga, so too the *rōshi*, or master, is essential to Zen. Zen fits into the tradition of Eastern meditation by way of its Yoga-like method.

We now come to the differences between Zen and Yoga. An initial distinction is apparent in Zen's simplification of Yogic technique. Suzuki does not mention this point. In stressing the uniqueness of Zen, he has in mind primarily the typical Chinese prototype whose peculi-

arity is already evident in the form of its appearance. A Chinese or Japanese Zen monastery is radically different from an Indian Yoga ashram or a Theravāda vihāra in Sri Lanka or Southeast Asia. The Zen monastery exhibits a freer, more open atmosphere, and this is not confined to external appearances only. The Chinese prototype of the Zen way reshaped the Buddhist monastic ideal, accentuating above all the sudden experience of satori and the paradoxical koan exercise. The differences that come to bear here should not be taken lightly. Zen enlightenment, precisely by breaking through the layers of the conscious, rational mind to transobjective being, proves itself a genuine experience of reality. The relation with reality in the Yogic and dhyanistic experiences, on the other hand, is not so evident.

Upon further investigation of the distinction between Yoga and Zen, we come across differing interpretations of the aspired goal. Experiences arrived at in meditation are ineffable, to be sure, but they are interpreted differently according to the practitioner's underlying philosophical views. In comparing the Zen and Yogic interpretations of experience, different views of the self come into play. Since Yoga is attached to various views of life and philosophical systems, the significance of the self will depend upon the particular school. We confine our discussion to classical Yoga.

In Patañjali's classical Yoga, as in the dualistic philosophy of Sāmkhya upon which this Yoga depends, the self *(puruṣa)* is opposed to nature *(prakṛti)*. The puruṣa is indescribable, spiritual, pure and free, but inactive and, for inexplicable reasons, bound to nature or matter (prakṛti). The practice of Yoga effects the liberation of the puruṣa, that is, its release from prakṛti. The liberation attained in this way appears as a state of total isolation *(kaivalya)*. Nothing binds the self any longer to nature; there is no longer any connection to physical or psychic natural processes. Innumerable puruṣa exist in isolation, like monads separate from the world and from each other as it were, each one free and autonomous in itself. This state of existence is achieved through Yoga, or so the experience of liberation attained in samādhi is interpreted by the Yogi.

The Zen experience is interpreted in the context of Mahāyāna philosophy. In the Mahāyāna view, self and universe, microcosm and macrocosm, ultimately coalesce into one. The self is not the same as the individual ego; the experience of the self is a cosmic experience. A well-known passage by Dōgen reads: "To learn the Buddha's Way is to learn one's own self. To learn one's self is to forget one's self. To

forget one's self is to be confirmed by all dharmas. To be confirmed by all dharmas is to effect the casting off of one's own body and mind and the bodies and minds of others as well."[10]

This passage about the self in Zen radically differs in mood and in content from the classical Yoga doctrine of the purusa. The self, as experienced by this Zen master, stands in essential relation to all of reality. One learns by forgetting, that is, in a stripping off of all conscious egoity from the self. One learns most intensely by being "confirmed" (literally, "enlightened") by all Dharmas, that is, by the whole of reality. In this experience, all oppositions and distinctions—even that between oneself and others—vanish. In Dōgen's terms, body and mind signify the total person in its corporeal and conscious aspects. The casting off of body and mind *(datsuraku)* is the transcending of ego and liberation from it in enlightenment. But this experience, as Dōgen later emphasizes, cannot be forced by the ego. The ego can only be willing and open to enlightenment by the reality of all beings. The experience of the self, for Zen, is a transcendent one. In the words of Dōgen, it is the Buddha-nature that is experienced.

Is Zen Narcissistic and Asocial? Our deliberations on the similarities and dissimilarities between Zen and Yoga have convinced us that Zen is deeply rooted in Indian spirituality. At the same time they prepared us to recognize what is new in Zen—the topic of what follows. But before we leave the theme of Yoga and Zen, we must deal with some basic misunderstandings that result when the two are too readily identified in the West. I shall mention two of the most important: first, the charge that the Zen way, like Yoga and ultimately like all Eastern forms of meditation, so they say, promotes a narcissistic egocentrism and, second, that it encourages an asocial attitude in its adepts. These charges may be partially justified in the case of classical Yoga and other schools related to it, but they certainly do not apply to Zen, nor to all Yoga schools without reservation.

In answer to the charge of exaggerated egocentrism, we must first of all consider that all meditation implies a way inward. Christian spirituality is known for the importance it attributes to inwardness and interiority. Inner concentration has a place in the meditative way just as does inner recollection. The way inward has been successfully pursued by many mystics in the East and the West. Augustine exhorts us to take this way. It goes without saying that interiority and inwardness should never be absolutized. The nonthinking taught by Zen practice

entails stilling the conscious activities of the ego in order to prepare for the experience. This Zen exercise reduces the ego to silence and clears space for what is essential. What thereby occurs is anything but the cult of the ego, narcissism, or egocentrism. Rather, the ego is compelled to make room for an experience that establishes communication with the reality of all existing things. This experience does not result in an isolation of the self; moreover, it is radically different from states of enstasis, trance, or hypnosis.

Thomas Merton warns of the danger of egocentric meditation, the kind that Hui-neng, the advocate of sudden enlightenment, ascribes to the quietistic Northern school of Chinese Zen: "... this clinging and possessive ego-consciousness, seeking to affirm itself in 'liberation,' craftily tries to outwit reality by rejecting the thoughts it 'possesses' and emptying the mirror of the mind, which it also 'possesses.' ... So the ego-consciousness is able, it believes, to eat its cake and have it. ... But since this nature is regarded as one's possession, the 'spiritualized' ego thus is able to affirm itself all the more perfectly, and to enjoy its own narcissism under the guide of 'emptiness' and 'contemplation.'"[11] Egocentric meditation, as Merton goes on to detail, is alien to the genuine Zen way represented by Hui-neng. We shall deal more with the controversy between the Southern school of Hui-neng and the Northern school of Shen-hsiu later.

The charge of asociality is likewise without ground in the case of Zen, and can be answered on two counts. The first follows from the Mahayanist attitude cultivated by Zen. In distinction from Hīnayāna or Theravāda Buddhism, Mahāyāna placed the Bodhisattva ideal characterized by wisdom and compassion in the center of its teachings. In Zen, the Bodhisattva figures as the ideal enlightened one, towering above in wisdom and bowing down with compassion toward all living beings.

The charge of asociality made against Zen, however, does not so much concern its Mahayanist attitude as the practice and experience of Zen meditation. Like the practice and experience of Yoga, it is attacked as fit only to make one asocial. The charge as stated must be dismissed. The Zen way is asocial neither in principle nor in its concrete manifestations. In Japan, experienced Zen masters engage in a wide range of religious and social activities, and encourage their disciples (especially those of advanced training) to develop a sense of social responsibility and to undertake social service. The difference from classical Yoga has practical consequences in this case.

Our investigation of the Indian roots of Zen led us back to the ancient sources of Asian religious culture. We met with the two important phenomena of Shākyamuni, the enlightened founder of the Buddhist religion, and of Yoga. We caught sight of the links between religion and psychosomatic techniques characteristic of the East. When treating of the birth of Zen in China in the next chapter, we shall learn how Zen arose at a point of contact between India and China, the two great Asian civilizations that both play an essential role in the formation of Zen.

THREE

The Birth of Zen in China

THE TRANSPLANTATION OF BUDDHISM from the Indian to the Chinese cultural sphere forms a fascinating chapter in the history of religions. The process occurred over a period of three to four hundred years, in the first centuries A.D., when Indian Buddhist monks bore the teachings of Shākyamuni to the "Central Kingdom" and, with the help of newly converted Chinese, translated the enormous bulk of Buddhist scriptures into that language. This work of gigantic proportions was completed in spite of profound difficulties. One need only recall the extent of the two great Asian civilizations, the differences between Indian and Chinese mentality, the complexity of the Buddhist religion, and the natural resistance offered the ascetic ideal of Buddhist monasticism by a Chinese feudal society centered on the family. But in spite of all, the Chinese accomplished the difficult task of appropriating such a typical Indian religion as Buddhism and imprinting upon it a unique East Asian character.

Zen in particular is a product of the fusion of Indian Buddhism with Chinese culture. Representative of this process of amalgamation and yet possessed of a unique creative energy, the Zen school in China has no counterpart in Indian Buddhism. Its acknowledged founder was Bodhidharma, who is supposed to have transported the peculiar tradition underlying Zen from India to China. We turn first to look at the offspring of Zen from the marriage of the Chinese and the Indian mind.

Mahāyāna Foundations Zen belongs to Mahāyāna Buddhism, and in China as well as Japan is exemplary of Mahāyāna meditation. All branches of Buddhism were originally transplanted to China, and at first Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna were more or less equally represented.

But only Mahāyāna was able to establish a basis and spread throughout the country. This is not the place to explain in detail the differences between Hīnayāna and Mahāyāna. In short, Hīnayāna takes the much more strict and narrow stand in all areas, whether they concern monastic discipline, cultic practices, or metaphysical doctrines. The wider view and flexibility of Mahāyāna, it can be claimed, was largely responsible for its success in China. The cosmic view of the Mahāyāna teachings above all appealed to the Chinese, who since antiquity were on intimate terms with a cosmic philosophy. The Mahāyāna doctrine of the cosmos encountered analogous ideas in Chinese universalism—a circumstance that greatly facilitated rendering the basic Mahayanist notions in Chinese ideograms. Mahāyāna, moreover, with its numerous Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, offered a world rich with religious symbolism that (like the myth of the Buddha Amitābha) appealed to the Chinese intelligentsia as well as to the common folk. The most important Indian Mahāyāna schools sank roots deep in the Chinese soil and gradually developed original forms complementing the old. During a period of about a thousand years Chinese Mahāyāna offered the spectacle of a wide-ranging, ramified, and vivacious religion.

The Chinese Zen movement takes its place within this sphere of Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. Zen, too, is at home in the spiritual heritage of the great Mahāyāna sutras. In an earlier work, I examined the connection between Zen and four Mahayanist sutras—namely the *Sutras of Perfect Wisdom* (Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra), the *Garland Sutra* (Avataṃsaka Sūtra), the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*.[1] The religious teachings of Zen were inspired by all of these.

We can isolate a few points of particular significance for the Zen way of meditation and enlightenment. First is the negativity that we have already encountered in Shākyamuni's silence and that penetrates all forms of Buddhism, whether of Hīnayāna or of Mahāyāna derivation. In Zen is found the Mahayanist negativity that forms the core of the *Sutras of Perfect Wisdom*. The key terms are "empty" *(śūnya)* and "emptiness" *(śūnyatā)*, which apply equally to the metaphysics and to the way of meditation. The phenomenal world and all that appears in it is empty, void of definition, qualities, or characteristics, without substance and essence. Even the empirical and conscious human ego is empty and without essence. For this reason, one is mistaken as long as he clings to appearances and to his own ego. In meditation he faces the task of emptying his mind of all phenomenal forms. This movement

of negation is nevertheless a thoroughly positive endeavor; and the experience attained by way of it, though negatively formulated, is something positive. Neither the process nor the end of this emptying should be evaluated as simply negative. It finds its Christian counterpart in the so-called "dim contemplation" of John of the Cross and other mystics. This aspect of the way of enlightenment, then, should be understood in light of a *theologia negativa*.

The cosmic teachings of Mahāyāna are also of fundamental importance for Zen. Buddhist cosmotheism, epitomized in the *Garland Sutra*, considers all things in the universe to be organically interrelated, and senses the essential sacredness of all things—not in opposition to the profane, but in complete grasp of reality. All of reality shines in transcendence; all things reflect the splendor of the universe, even the smallest particle of dust. All this is realizable in the Zen experience. The fact that Zen does not dull one's touch for things by overstressing introspection, but rather sharpens this sense acutely, is proved by the art arisen from Zen. Numerous works express the organic, vital unity of all nature. The Japanese Zen painter Sesshū (1420–1506), for example, immersed in the life of nature, accomplished a sense of the changing four seasons in a few strokes of the brush, found among his famous ink drawings.

A cosmic element is also at work in the koan, although this exercise is designed primarily to overcome all distinctions, including that between the sacred and the profane. "Vast emptiness—nothing sacred," Bodhidharma is said to have answered when the Chinese emperor asked what the supreme and sacred truth was. One of the cases in the *Mumonkan* gives the answer "A dried shit-stick" to the question "What is the Buddha?"[2] Here the sense for the reality of all things is at its peak. The point is to realize this reality.

The *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* expresses the typical manner of Zen more concretely than any other Mahāyāna sutra. This sutra tells of the Bodhisattva of Wisdom (Mañjuśrī), who is especially emulated in Zen. After several other Bodhisattvas had expressed themselves in well-chosen words about overcoming all oppositions in an all-embracing unity, the Bodhisattva of wisdom turned to the lay disciple Vimalakīrti, to hear his answer to the essence of reality. But, as the sutra has it, Vimalakīrti said not a word, and was showered with praise. His answer of silence revealed supreme enlightenment, bound to no office and no monastic order. Vimalakīrti, the lay disciple and housekeeper, proclaimed his perfect enlightenment without saying a word.

Many other Zen-like sayings are found in the Chinese Mahāyāna sutras. D. T. Suzuki investigated especially the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*,[3] which pays a good deal of attention to psychic processes, in this connection. The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* is directed to the inner experience that no words can communicate. Grotesque gestures, grimaces, or shouts, as the sutra relates, often take the place of verbal sayings in Buddha lands. Such means of expression became commonplace in Zen. This sutra contains a wealth of psychological remarks. Of special significance for Zen is the description of inner turning *(parāvṛtti)* at the very root of the mind; here is a hint of the suddenness of Zen enlightenment that opens new and higher perspectives. In its psychological outlook the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* may be regarded a close relative of Zen.

The Mahāyāna sutras that we have considered the basis of Zen all stem from India. Hence significant elements of Zen are already found in Indian Buddhism. Indeed, the entire philosophical content of the Zen teachings is rooted in the Indian Mahāyāna sutras. But the particular points in Indian sources singled out by Chinese Mahāyāna must also be taken into account. Chinese Buddhism as a whole owes the wealth of its variety to such accentuations, and Zen in particular received the marks of its character from them.

There has been a tendency to find Zen so radically different from other Buddhist schools, especially during the Zen boom in America, that a distinction was drawn between Zen and Buddhism in general. It goes without saying that this sort of distinction is nonsense. Zen in its entirety belongs to Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism. It counts as one of the classical Buddhist schools in China, each of which can claim a certain autonomy. Zen itself professes to be that particular lineage of immediate transmission which, bound to no holy scriptures, hands down to progeny the original way to Buddha-enlightenment. It is, in brief, the meditation school of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

It must of course be added that Zen, more than any other lineage of Chinese Buddhism, was the receptor of a strong influx from the indigenous Taoism. Chinese Zen combines the spirit of Mahāyāna Buddhism with the down-to-earth appeal of Taoism. There is evidence of a close connection between the metaphysical content of each teaching, and a similarity in their practice of meditation is observable.

Relationship with the Spirit of Taoism The Taoist streak in Zen is by and large identical with the sinification of Mahāyāna Buddhism in the Central Kingdom. The Taoism indigenous to China aided the transplan-

tation of Mahāyāna into Chinese culture in a significant fashion. It was able to do this by virtue of the religious content of the Buddhism. Whereas Confucianism, the other great Chinese religious tradition, bears no resemblance to Buddhism, Taoism exhibits many essential traits of Mahāyāna thought, such as negativity and cosmic perspective. Lao-tzu's book of wisdom, the *Tao-te ching* (The Way and Power Classic, c. third century B.C), proclaims the inexpressible character of the Tao in its opening verses:

> The Tao [Way] that cannot be told of
> Is not the eternal Tao.
> The name that can be named
> Is not the eternal name.[4]

The Tao is "empty" and "deep," "silent" and "complete"; it is the mother of the universe:

> There was something nebulous yet complete,
> Born before Heaven and earth.
> Silent, empty,
> Self-sufficient and unchanging,
> Revolving without cease and without fail,
> It acts as the mother of the world.
> I do not know its name,
> And address it as "Tao."[5]

The Tao transcends Being and Non-being:

> All things in the world come into being
> from being,
> Being comes into being from non-being.[6]

The Tao is the unfathomable source, "Yet within it is an image. . . . Yet within it is a substance. . . . Yet within it is an essence. This essence is quite genuine and within it is something that can be tested."[7] The primal source is present in all the cosmos:

> The great Tao flows everywhere:
> It can go left; it can go right.
> The myriad things owe their existence to it,
> And it does not reject them.[8]

Man cannot fathom the ever-present meaning of the Tao, but he can reach its roots by way of silent meditation.

> The teeming things
> All return to their roots.
> Returning to one's roots is called stillness.
> This is what is meant by returning to one's destiny.
> Returning to one's destiny belongs with the eternal.
> To know the eternal is enlightenment.[9]

The experience of the Tao is the goal set for man.

Chuang-tzu, the second great proponent of Taoism, proclaims the inexpressible character of the Tao: "In the great beginning, there was nonbeing. It had neither being nor name."[10] "If words were sufficient, in a day's time we might exhaust it; since they are not sufficient, we may speak all day and only exhaust the subject of things. The Tao is the extreme to which things conduct us. Neither speech nor silence is sufficient to convey the notion of it. Neither by speech nor by silence can our thoughts about it have their highest expression."[11] The Tao, without beginning and without end, Chuang Tzu writes in another passage, is the great principle that penetrates all things: "It is everywhere."[12]

Mahāyāna Buddhists could just as well have referred to the cosmic Buddha, the ineffable primal source of the universe, as to the Tao. And this they did in China, the home of the Taoism they considered so close to their Buddhism. The connection between Mahayanist and Taoist thought took on vast proportions.

Zen Buddhism has a number of expressions for the absolute ground of reality. "Buddhahood," "Buddha-nature," "Buddha-mind," "Cosmic Body of the Buddha," and similar expressions directly mentioning the Buddha are without a doubt the prevalent ones. But "Nature" and "Mind" by themselves can also indicate absolute reality. The Chinese Tao, or Way, fits into the latter kind of expression. One treatise, until recently held to be a genuine writing of Bodhidharma, is entitled "Two Entrances to the Tao." Chinese Zen literature conceives the enlightenment of the Buddha as an "awakening to the Tao." A twelfth-century Chinese Zen master tells his disciples that "the Shākya of old, sitting at the foot of the mountain of enlightenment, raised his head to look at the morning star and awakened suddenly to the Tao."

Hui-k'o, the patriarch successor to Bodhidharma, was "a seeker of the Tao" as Zen chronicles record it. In early Chinese Zen literature there is a hymn ascribed to the third patriarch that betrays a very strong influence from Taoism. Entitled the "Treatise on Believing Mind" or the "Treatise on Faith in the Mind" according to the translation, it is a singular eulogy to the Tao, as its very first verse shows:

> The Perfect Way is only difficult for those
> who pick and choose;
> Do not like, do not dislike;
> all will then be clear.[13]

The entire hymn is filled with Taoist motifs and can be considered an example of Buddhist infusion into the Chinese language. It clearly anticipates the intimate relationship between Taoism and Zen.

We shall come across other Taoist motifs in later Chinese Zen masters when treating the flowering of Chinese Zen in the T'ang period (618–906). For now suffice it to quote one text that gives clear testimony to Taoism's direct influence on Zen literature. Master Huang-po, a disciple of Ma-tsu in the ninth century and teacher of the famous Lin-chi (Rinzai in Japanese), is reported to have said in a sermon: "Fearing that nobody would understand, they [the Buddhas] selected the name 'Way' [Tao]. You must not allow this name to lead you into forming a mental concept of a road. So it is said, 'When the fish is caught, we pay no more attention to the trap.' When body and mind achieve spontaneity, the Way is reached and Mind is understood."[14] The comparison with the fish and the trap is taken from Chuang-tzu, whose humanity, spontaneity, and humor made a lasting impression on the Zen masters. In the same sermon Huang-po expressly remarks that the Way is equivalent to the Mahāyāna Mind.

Taoist and Zenist Meditation In evaluating the Taoist influence on Zen, we must consider not only the philosophical teachings but also the meditation that played a significant role in the sphere of Taoist folk religion. A distinction was drawn in ancient times between Taoism as a teaching and the cult of Taoism, in which the practice of meditation enjoyed considerable popularity. Breathing techniques were mentioned as early as the sixth century B.C.

Chuang-tzu, in a remarkable text on meditation, treats of "sitting

and forgetting everything." In Book VI of his writings, he records the following conversation between the master Confucius (Kung-tzu) and Yen-hui:

> Another day Yen Hui saw Confucius again and said: "I have made some progress."
>
> "What do you mean?" asked Confucius.
>
> Yen Hui said: "I forget everything while sitting down."
>
> Confucius' face turned pale. He said: "What do you mean by sitting down and forgetting everything?"
>
> "I cast aside my limbs," replied Yen Hui, "discard my intelligence, detach from both body and mind, and become one with Great Universal [Tao]. This is called sitting down and forgetting everything."[15]

In addition to "sitting and forgetting everything," Chuang-tzu also mentions the "fasting of the mind"; but the expression "zazen" (sitting in meditation) is not used. The methodical efforts required in meditation seem to be more removed from Chuang-tzu's philosophy of "non-doing" *(wu-wei)* and spontaneity.

A writing of the second century A.D., the *Chou I Ts'an T'ung Ch'i* of Wei Po-yang, contains detailed instructions on meditation. This treatise is probably the earliest source of the description of meditation called the Inner or Golden Elixir, which was distinguished by Taoists of later centuries from exterior elixirs promising immortality and eternal youth.[16]

Later centuries amply testify to the mutual influences of Buddhist and Taoist meditation on one another. Tao-sheng (c. 360–434), the earliest proponent of sudden enlightenment in Chinese Buddhism, received much impetus from Taoism.[17] He applied Chuang-tzu's analogy of the fish trap that should be forgotten as soon as the fish is caught to the sudden enlightenment he taught. And the Chinese Zen master Ha Shan (1546–1623) wrote a commentary on Lao-tzu's *Tao-te ching*, saying the work could only be understood "if one has a personal experience" of the Way.

Taoist meditation is full of elements that remind one of Zen. For purposes of comparison, much material is provided by a Taoist book called *The Circles of Light: The Experience of the Golden Blossoms*, translated into German and annotated by the Japanese scholar Mokusen Miyuki. Since, however, this Taoist text derives from a period when Zen was