ZEN AND THE BIRDS OF APPETITE by Thomas Merton:

Where there is carrion lying, meat-eating birds circle and descend. Life and death are two. The living attack the dead, to their own profit. The dead lose nothing by it. They gain too, by being disposed of. Or they seem to, if you must think in terms of gain and loss. Do you then approach the study of Zen with the idea that there is something to be gained by it? This question is not intended as an implicit accusation. But it *is,* nevertheless, a serious question. Where there is a lot of fuss about "spirituality," "enlightenment" or just "turning on," it is often because there are buzzards hovering around a corpse. This hovering, this circling, this descending, this celebration of victory, are not what is meant by the Study of Zen— even though they may be a highly useful exercise in other contexts. And they enrich the birds of appetite.

Zen enriches no one. There is no body to be found. The birds may come and circle for a while in the place where it is thought to be. But they soon go elsewhere. When they are gone, the "nothing," the "no-body" that was there, suddenly appears. That is Zen. It was there all the time but the scavengers missed it, because it was not their kind of prey.

A dialogue between Dr Daisetz T. Suzuki and Fr Thomas Merton:

1) KNOWLEDGE AND INNOCENCE by Daisetz T. Suzuki

I

When I speak about Zen to the Western audience, mostly brought up in Christian tradition, the first question generally asked is: "What is the Zen concept of morality? If Zen claims to be above all moral values, what does it teach us ordinary mortals?"

If I understand Christianity correctly, it derives the moral authority from God who is the giver of the Decalogue, and we are told that if we violate it in any way we shall be punished and thrown into everlasting fire. It is for this reason that atheists are regarded as dangerous people, for they have no God and are no respecters of moral codes. The Zen-man, too, having no God that corresponds to the analogical Christian God, but who talks of going beyond the dualism of good and evil, of right and wrong, of life and death, of truth and falsehood, will most likely be a subject of suspicion. The idea of social values deeply ingrained in Western minds is intimately connected with religion so that they are led to think religion and ethics are one and the same, and that religion can ill-afford to relegate ethics to a position of secondary importance. But Zen seems to do this, hence the following question: "Dr. Suzuki writes: 'All the moral values and social practice come out of this life of Suchness which is Emptiness.' If this is so, then 'good' and 'evil' are secondary differentiations. What differentiates them and how do I know what is 'good' other than 'evil'? In other words, can I—and if so, how can I—derive an ethics from the ontology of Zen Buddhism?"

We are all social beings and ethics is our concern with social life. The Zen-man too cannot live outside society. He cannot ignore the ethical values. Only, he wants to have the heart thoroughly cleansed of all impurities issuing from "Knowledge" which we acquired by eating the fruit of the forbidden tree. When we return to the state of "innocence," anything we do is good. St. Augustine says, "Love God and do as you will." The Buddhist idea of *Anabhoga-Carya* corresponds to Innocence. When Knowledge is awakened in the Garden of Eden where Innocence prevails, the

differentiation of good and evil takes place. In the same way, out of the Emptiness of the Mind a thought mysteriously rises and we have the world of multiplicities.

The Judaeo-Christian idea of Innocence is the moral interpretation of the Buddhist doctrine of Emptiness which is metaphysical, whereast the Judaeo-Christian idea of Knowledge epistemologically corresponds to the Buddhist notion of Ignorance though superficially Ignorance is the opposite of Knowledge. Buddhist philosophy considers discrimination of any kind—moral or metaphysical—the product of Ignorance which obscures the original light of Suchness which is Emptiness. But this does not mean that the whole world is to be done away with because of its being the outcome of Ignorance. It is the same with Knowledge, for Knowledge is the outcome of our having lost Innocence by eating the forbidden fruit. But no Christians or Jews, as far as I am aware, have ever attempted to get rid of Knowledge in order to regain Paradise whereby they might enjoy the bliss of Innocence to its full extent as they originally did.

What we are to realize, then, is the meaning of "Knowledge" and "Innocence," that is to say, to have a thoroughly penetrating insight into the relationship between the two opposing concepts—Innocence and Original Light on the one side, and Knowledge and Ignorance on the other. In one sense they seem to be irreducibly contradictory, but in another sense they are complementary. As far as our human way of thinking is concerned, we cannot have them both at the same time, but our actual life consists in the one supporting the other, or better, that they are inseparably co-operating.

The so-called opposition between Innocence and Knowledge or between Ignorance and the Original Light is not the kind of opposition we see between black and white, good and evil, right and wrong, to be and not to be, or to have and not to have. The opposition is, as it were, between container and the contained, between the background and the stage, between the field and the players moving on it. The good and the evil play their opposing parts on the field which remains neutral and indifferent and "open" or "empty." It is like rain that falls on the just and on the unjust. It is like the sun rising on the good and on the evil, on your foes and on your friends. In a way, the sun is innocent and perfect, as is the rain. But man who has lost Innocence and acquired Knowledge differentiates just from unjust, good from evil, right from wrong, foes from friends. He is, therefore, no longer innocent and perfect, but highly "morally" conscious. To be "moral" apparently means the loss of Innocence, and the acquirement of Knowledge, religiously speaking, is not always conducive to our inner happiness or divine blessings. The outcome of "moral" responsibility may sometimes lead to the violation of civil laws. The outcome of the "great hermit's" inner goodness in releasing the robbers from jail (See story in the note below[1]) may be far from being desirable. Innocence and Knowledge must be kept well balanced. To do this Knowledge must be disciplined and at the same time the value of Innocence must be appraised in its proper relation to Knowledge.

[1] "There was once a great hermit in the mountains and he was attacked by robbers. But his cries aroused the other hermits in the neighborhood, and they ran together and captured the robbers. These they sent under guard to the town and the judge put them in jail. But then the brothers were very ashamed and sad because, on their account, the robbers had been turned over to the judge. They went to Abbot Poemen and told him all about it. And the elder wrote to the hermit saying: Remember who carried out the first betrayal, and you will learn the reason for the second. Unless you had first been betrayed by your own inward thoughts, you would never have ended by turning those men over to the judge. The hermit, touched by these words, got up at once and went into the city and broke open the jail, letting out the robbers and freeing them from torture.*"—The Wisdom of The Desert, XXXVII.*

In the *Dhammapada* (verse 183) we have:

> *Not to do anything that is evil.*
> *To do all that is good,*
> *To thoroughly purify the heart:*
> *This is the teaching of Buddhas.*

The first two lines refer to Knowledge, whereas the third is the state of Innocence. "To purify" means "to purge," "to empty" all that pollutes the mind. The pollution comes from the egocentric consciousness which is Ignorance or Knowledge which distinguishes good from evil, ego from nonego. Metaphysically speaking, it is the mind that realizes the truth of Emptiness, and when this is done it knows that there is no self, no ego, no *Atman* that will pollute the mind, which is a state of zero. It is out of this zero that all good is performed and all evil is avoided. The zero I speak of is not a mathematical symbol. It is the infinite—a storehouse or womb (*Garbha*) of all possible good or values.

zero = infinity, and infinity = zero.

The double equation is to be understood not only statically but dynamically. It takes place between being and becoming. For they are not contradicting ideas. Emptiness is not sheer emptiness or passivity or Innocence. It is and at the same time it is not. It is Being, it is Becoming. It is Knowledge and Innocence. The Knowledge to do good and not to do evil is not enough; it must come out of Innocence, where Innocence is Knowledge and Knowledge is Innocence.

The "great hermit" is guilty of not realizing Emptiness, that is, Innocence, and Abbot Poemen commits an error in applying Innocence minus Knowledge to the affairs of the world. The robbers are to be consigned to prison, for the community will suffer; as long as they are outlaws they must be deprived of their liberty—this is the way of the world in which we carry on our business of earning bread by hard, honest labor. Our business is possible only by living in the world of Knowledge, because where Innocence prevails there is no need for our laboring: "All that is needed for our existence is given freely by God." As long as we live a communal life, all kinds of law are to be observed. We are sinners, that is, we are knowers not only individually but collectively, communally, socially. The robbers are to be confined in prison. As spiritual beings we are to strive after Innocence, Emptiness, enlightenment and a prayerful life. "The great hermit" must lead a life of penance and prayer but not interfere with the laws of the land that regulate our secular life. Where secular life goes on, Knowledge predominates, and hard and honest labor is an absolute necessity, and, further, each individual is entitled to the fruit of his work. "The great hermit" has no right to release the robbers, thereby threatening the peace of law-abiding fellow beings. When Knowledge is not properly exercised, strange, irrational phenomena will take place. The hermit is no doubt a good social member and he means no harm to any of his fellow beings; the robbers are those bent on disturbing the peace of the community to which they belong. They must be kept away from the community. The hermit deserves to be imprisoned for having violated the law by freeing the antisocial members. The good man is punished, while the bad men roam about free and unhampered, annoying peace-loving citizens. This, I am sure, is far from the hermit's aspirations.

II

The metaphysical concept of Emptiness is convertible in economic terms into poverty, being poor, having nothing: "Blessed are those who are poor in spirit." Eckhart defines, "He is a poor man who wants nothing, knows nothing, and has nothing." This is possible when a man is empty of "self and all things," when the mind is thoroughly purified of Knowledge or Ignorance, which we have after the loss of Innocence. In other words, to gain Innocence again is to be poor. What strikes one as

somewhat strange is Eckhart representing a poor man as knowing nothing. This is a very significant statement. The beginning of Knowledge is when the mind is filled with all kinds of defiled thought among which the worst is "self." For all evils and defilements start from our attachment to it. As Buddhists would say, the realization of Emptiness is no more, no less than seeing into the nonexistence of a thingish ego-substance. This is the greatest stumbling block in our spiritual discipline, which, in actuality, consists not in getting rid of the self but in realizing the fact that there is no such existence from the first. The realization means being "poor" in spirit. "Being poor" does not mean "becoming poor;" "being poor" means to be from the very beginning not in possession of anything and not giving away what one has. Nothing to gain, nothing to lose; nothing to give, nothing to take; to be just so, and yet to be rich in inexhaustible possibilities—this is to be "poor" in its most proper and characteristic sense of the word, this is what all religious experiences tells us. To be absolutely nothing is to be everything. When one is in possession of something, that something will keep all other somethings from coming in.

In this respect, Eckhart had a wonderful insight into the nature of what he calls *die eigentlichste Armut.* We are generally apt to imagine that when the mind or heart is emptied of "self and all things" a room is left ready for God to enter and occupy it. This is a great error. The very thought, even the slightest, of making room for something is a hindrance as monstrous as the mountain. A monk came to Ummon, the great Zen Master (who died in 949), and said, "When a man has not one thought occupying his consciousness, what fault has he?" Ummon roared, "Mount Sumeru!" Another Zen Master, Kyogen Chikan, has his song of poverty:

> *Last year's poverty was not yet perfect;*
> *This year's poverty is absolute.*
> *In last year's poverty there was room for the head of a gimlet;*
> *This year's poverty has let the gimlet itself disappear.*

Eckhart's statement corresponding to Kyogen's runs in this wise, where he is typically Christian:

> *"If it is the case that a man is emptied of things, creatures, himself and God, and if still God could find a place in him to act, then we say: as long as that (place) exists^ this man is not poor with the most intimate poverty (eigentlichste Armut). For God does not intend that man shall have a place reserved for him to work in, since the true poverty of spirit requires that man shall be emptied of God and all his works, so that if God wants to act in the soul, he himself must be the place in which he acts—and that he would like to do. For if God once found a person as poor as this, he would take the responsibility of his own action and would himself be the scene of action, for God is one who acts within himself. It is here, in this poverty, that man regains the eternal being that once he was, now is, and evermore shall be."*

As I interpret Eckhart, God is at once the place where He works and the work itself. The place is zero or "Emptiness as Being," whereas the work which is carried on in the zero- place is infinity or "Emptiness as Becoming." When the double equation, zero = infinity and infinity = zero, is realized, we have the *eigentlichste Armut,* or the essence of poverty. Being is becoming and becoming is being. When the one is separated from the other, we have a poverty crooked and limping. Perfect poverty is recovered only when perfect emptiness is perfect fullness.

When a monk has anything to loan and when he feels anxious to have it returned, he is not yet poor, he is not yet perfectly empty. Some years ago when I was reading stories of pious Buddhists I remember having come across one of a farmer. One evening he heard some noise in the garden. He noticed a young man of the village atop a tree stealing his fruit. Quietly, he went to the shed where he kept his ladder and took it under the tree so that the intruder might safely make his descent. He

went back to his bed unnoticed. The farmer's heart, emptied of self and possession, could not think of anything else but the danger that might befall the young village delinquent.

Ill

There is a set of what may be called fundamental moral virtues of perfection in Mahayana Buddhism known as the Six Paramita. Followers of the Mahayana are expected to exert themselves to practice these virtues in their daily life. They are: (1) *Dana,* "giving"; (2) *Sila,* "observing the precepts"; (3) *Virya,* "spirit of manhood"; (4) *Ksanti,* "humility" or "patience"; (5) *Dhyana,* "meditation"; and (6) *Prajna,* "transcendental wisdom," which is an intuition of the highest order.

I am not going to explain each item of the six virtues here. All that I can try is to call the attention of our readers to the order in which they are set. First comes *Dana,* to give, and the last is *Prajna,* which is a kind of spiritual insight into the truth of Emptiness. The Buddhist life starts with "giving" and ends in *Prajna.* But, in reality, the ending is the beginning and the beginning is the ending; the Paramita moves in a circle with no beginning and no ending. The giving is possible only when there is Emptiness, and Emptiness is attainable only when the giving is unconditionally carried out—which is *die eigentlichste Armut* of Eckhart.

As *Prajna* has been frequently the subject of discussion, I shall limit myself to the exposition of *Dana,* giving. It does not just mean giving in charity or otherwise something material in one's possession as is usually understood when we talk of "giving." It means anything going out of oneself, disseminating knowledge, helping people in difficulties of all kinds, creating arts, promoting industry or social welfare, sacrificing one's life for a worthy cause and so on. But this, however noble, Buddhist philosophers would say, is not enough as long as a man harbors the idea of giving in one sense or another. The genuine giving consists in not cherishing any thought of anything going out of one's hands and being received by anybody else; that is to say, in the giving there must not be any thought of a giver or a receiver, and of an object going through this transaction. When the giving goes on thus in Emptiness, it is the deed of *Dana,* the first Paramita, directly flowing out of *Prajna,* the final Paramita. According to Eckhart's definition, as was quoted above, it is poverty in its genuine sense. In another place he is more concrete by referring to examples:

> *"St. Peter said, "We have left all things." St. James said, "We have given up all things." St. John said, "We have nothing left." Whereupon Brother Eckhart asks, When do we leave all things? When we leave everything conceivable, everything expressible, everything audible, everything visible, then and then only we give up all things. When in this sense we give up all, we grow aflood with light, passing bright with God."*

Kyogen the Zen Master says: "This year's poverty has let the gimlet itself disappear." This is symbolical. In point of fact it means that one is dead to oneself, corresponding to:

> *Visankharagatam cittam,* Gone to dissolution is the mind,
> *Tanhanam khayam ajjhaga,* The cravings have come to an end.

This is part of the verse ascribed to Buddha when he attained the supreme enlightenment, and it is known as the "Hymn of Victory." The gimlet is "dissolved," the body is "dissolved," the mind is "dissolved," all is "dissolved"—is this not Emptiness ? In other words, it is the perfect state of poverty. Eckhart quotes St. Gregory, "No one gets so much of God as the man who is thoroughly dead." I do not know exactly in what sense St. Gregory uses the word "dead." But the word is most significant if it is understood in reference to Bunan Zenji's poem:

While alive, be dead,
Thoroughly dead—
All is good then,
Whatever you may do.

Emptiness, poverty, death or dissolution—they are all realized when one goes through the experiences of "breaking-through" which is nothing else but "enlightenment" *(Sambodhi*). Let me quote a little more from Eckhart:

> *"In my breaking-through, . . .' I transcend all creatures and am neither God nor creature: I am that I was and I shall remain now and forever. Then I receive an impulse (Aufschwung) which carries me above all angels. In this impulse I conceive such passing riches that I am not content with God as being God, as being all his godly works, for in this breaking-through I find that God and I are both the same. . . ."*

I do not know how my Christian readers would take these statements, but from the Buddhist point of view one reservation is needed, which is: However transcendental and above all forms of conditionality this experience itself of "breaking- through" may be, we are liable to formulate a distorted interpretation of the experience. The Zen Master therefore will tell us to transcend or "to cast away" the experience itself. To be absolutely naked, to go even beyond the receiving of "an impulse" of whatever nature, to be perfectly free from every possible remnant of the trappings we have put on ourselves ever since the acquisition of Knowledge—this is the goal of the Zen training. Then and only then do we find ourselves again to be the ordinary Toms, Dicks and Harrys we had been all along. It was Joshu, one of the greatest masters of the T'ang, who confessed something like this: "I get up early in the morning and look at myself—how poorly dressed I am! My upper robe is nearly reduced to tatters, my surplice somewhat holding its shape. My head is covered with dirt and ashes. When I first started the study of Zen, I dreamed of becoming a fine imposing clergyman. But I never imagined that I should be living in this tottering shanty and eating scanty meals. After all, I am a poor beggar-monk."

A monk came to this man and asked, "When a man comes to you free of all possible possession, how would this do?" Joshu answered, "Throw it away!"

Still another came and asked, "Who is Buddha?" Joshu retorted instantly, "Who are you?"

An old woman visited Joshu saying, "I am a woman, who according to Buddhism lives under five obstructions;[10] how can I surpass them? Joshu advised her: "Pray that all beings may be born in Paradise, but as to myself, let me forever remain in this ocean of tribulations."

We may enumerate a number of virtues to be pursued by monks, Buddhist or Christian, such as poverty, tribulation, discretion, obedience, humility, not-judging-others, meditation, silence, simplicity and some other qualities, but the most fundamental one is in my opinion poverty. Poverty corresponds ontologically to Emptiness and psychologically to selflessness or Innocence. The life we used to enjoy in the Garden of Eden symbolizes Innocence. How to regain (or perhaps better how to recognize that we already possess) this primitive mindedness in the midst of industrialization and the universal, propagandism of "an easy life" is the grave question given to us modern men for successful solution. How to actualize the transcendental wisdom of *Prajna* in a world where the growth of Knowledge is everywhere encouraged in a thousand and one ways? A solution is imperatively demanded of us in a most poignant manner. The day of the Desert Fathers is forever gone and we are waiting for a new sun to rise above the horizon of egotism and sordidness in every sense.

2) THE RECOVERY OF PARADISE by Thomas Merton

I

One of Dostoevski's "saints," the Staretz Zosima who speaks as a typical witness to the tradition of the Greek and Russian Church, makes an astonishing declaration. He says: "We do not understand that life is paradise, for it suffices only to wish to understand it, and at once paradise will appear in front of us in its beauty." Taken in the context of the *Brothers Karamazov,* against the background of violence, blasphemy and murder which fill the book, this is indeed an astonishing statement. Was Zosima perfectly serious? Or was he simply a deluded idiot, dreaming the frantic dreams inspired by the "opium of the people"?

Whatever the modern reader may think of this claim, it was certainly something basic to primitive Christianity. Modern studies of the Fathers have revealed beyond question that one of the main motives that impelled men to embrace the "angelic life" *(bios angelikos)* of solitude and poverty in the desert was precisely the hope that by so doing they might return to paradise.

Now this concept must be properly and accurately understood. Paradise is not "heaven." Paradise is a state, or indeed a place, on earth. Paradise belongs more properly to the present than to the future life. In some sense it belongs to both. It is the state in which man was originally created to live on earth. It is also conceived as a kind of antechamber to heaven after death—as for instance at the end of Dante's *Purgatorio.* Christ, dying on the cross, said to the good thief at His side: "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise " and it was clear that this did not mean, and could not have meant, heaven.

We must not imagine Paradise as a place of ease and sensual pleasure. It is a state of peace and rest, by all means. But what the Desert Fathers sought when they believed they could find "paradise" in the desert, was the lost innocence, the emptiness and purity of heart which had belonged to Adam and Eve in Eden. Evidently they could not have expected to find beautiful trees and gardens in the waterless desert, burned by the sun. Obviously they did not expect to find a place, among the fiery rocks and caves, where they could recline at ease in shady groves, by cool running water. What they sought was paradise within themselves, or rather above and beyond themselves. They sought paradise in the recovery of that "unity" which had been shattered by the "knowledge of good and evil."

In the beginning, Adam was "one man." The Fall had divided him into "a multitude." Christ had restored man to unity in Himself. The Mystical Christ was the "New Adam" and in Him all men could return to unity, to innocence, to purity, and become "one man." *Omnes in Christo unum*. This meant, of course, living not by one's own will, one's own ego, one's own limited and selfish spirit, but being "one spirit" with Christ. "Those who are united to the Lord," says St. Paul, "are *one spirit* Union with Christ means unity in. Christ, so that each one who is in Christ can say, with Paul: "It is now not I that live but Christ that lives in me." It is the same Christ who lives in all. The individual has "died" with Christ to his "old man," his exterior, egotistical self, and. "risen" in Christ to the new man, a selfless and divine being, who is the one Christ, the same who is "all in all."

The great difference 'between Christianity and Buddhism arises at this juncture. From the metaphysical point of view[7], Buddhism seems to take "emptiness" as a complete negation of all personality, whereas Christianity finds in purity of heart and "unity of spirit," a supreme and transcendent fulfillment of personality. This is an extremely complex and difficult question which I am not prepared to discuss. But it seems to me that most discussions on the point, up to now, have been completely equivocal. Very often, on the Christian side, we identify "personality" with the illusory and exterior ego-self, which is certainly not the true Christian "person." On the Buddhist side there seems to be no positive idea of personality at all: it is a value which seems to be completely missing from Buddhist thought. Yet it is certainly not absent from Buddhist practice, as is evident from Dr. Suzuki's remark that at the end of

Zen training, when one has become "absolutely naked," one finds himself to be the ordinary "Tom, Dick or Harry" that he has been all along. This seems to me, in practice, to correspond to the idea that a Christian can lose his "old man" and find his true self "in Christ." The main difference is that the language and practice of Zen are much more radical, austere and ruthless, and that where the Zen-man says "emptiness" he leaves no room for any image or concept to confuse the real issue. The Christian treatment of the subject makes free use of richly metaphorical expressions and of concrete imagery, but we must take care to penetrate beyond the exterior surface and reach the inner depths. In any case the "death of the old man" is not the destruction of personality but the dissipation of an illusion, and the discovery of the new man is the realization of what was there all along, at least as a radical possibility, by reason of the fact that man is the image of God.

These Christian themes of "life in Christ" and "unity in Christ" are familiar enough, but one feels that today they are not understood in all their spiritual depth. Their mystical implications are seldom explored. We dwell rather, with much greater interest, on their social, economic and ethical implications. I wonder if what Dr. Suzuki had said about "emptiness" ought not to help us to go deeper than we usually do into this doctrine of our mystical unity and purity in Christ. Anyone who has read St. John of the Cross and his doctrine of "night" will be inclined to ask the same question. If we are to die to ourselves and live "in Christ," does that not mean that we must somehow find ourselves "dead" and "empty" with regard to our old self ? If we are to be moved in all things by the grace of Christ should we not in some sense realize this as action out-of-emptiness, springing from the mystery of the pure freedom which is "divine love," rather than as something produced in and with our egotistical, exterior self, springing from our desires and referred to our own spiritual interest?

St. John of the Cross compares man to a window through which the light of God is shining. If the windowpane is clean of every stain, it is completely transparent, we do not see it at all: it is "empty" and nothing is seen but the light. But if a man bears in himself the stains of spiritual egotism and preoccupation with his illusory and exterior self, even in "good things," then the windowpane itself is clearly seen by reason of the stains that are on it. Hence if a man can be rid of the stains and dust produced within him by his fixation upon what is good and bad in reference to himself, he will be transformed in God and will be "one with God." In the terms of St. John of the Cross:

> *"In thus allowing God to work in it, the soul (having rid itself of every mist and stain of creatures, which consists in having its will perfectly united with that of God, for to love is to labour to detach and strip itself for God's sake of all that is not God) is at once illumined and transformed in God, and God communicates to it His supernatural being in such, wise that the soul appears to be God Himself, and has all that God Himself has. . . . All the things of God and the soul are one in participant transformation; and the soul seems to be God rather than the soul, and is indeed God by participation." (St. John of the Cross,* Ascent to Mount Carmel, *II, v. Peers trans. vol. i, p. 82)*

This, as we shall see, is what the Fathers called "purity of heart/' and it corresponds to a recovery of the innocence of Adam in Paradise. The many stories of the Desert Fathers in which they are shown to have exercised an extraordinary control over wild animals were originally understood as a manifestation of this recovery of paradisiacal innocence. As one of the early writers, Paul the Hermit, declared: "If anyone acquires purity, everything will submit to him as it did to Adam in paradise before the fall." (Quoted in Dom Anselm Stolz, *Theologie de la Mystique,* Chevetogne, 1947, p. 31).

If we admit Staretz Zosima's statement that paradise is something attainable because, after all, it is present within us and we have only to discover it there, we may still pause to question one part of his statement: "one has only to wish to understand it, and at once paradise will appear before us in all its beauty." That seems to be a little too easy. Much more is required than a simple velleity. Anyone can

make a wish. But the kind of "wishing" that Zosima refers to here is something far beyond daydreaming and wishful thinking. It means, of course, a complete upheaval and transformation of one's whole life. One has to "wish" for this one realization alone and give up wishing for anything else. One has to forget the quest of every other "good." One has to devote himself with his whole heart and soul to the recovery of his "innocence." And yet, as Dr. Suzuki has so well pointed out, and as the Christian doctrine of grace teaches us in other terms, this cannot be the work of our own "self." It is useless for the "self" to try to "purify itself," or for the "self" to "make a place in itself" for God. The innocence and purity of heart which belong to paradise are a complete emptiness of self in which all is the work of God, the free and unpredictable expression of His love, the work of grace. In the purity of original innocence, all is done in us but without us, *in nobis et sine nobis*. But before we reach that level, we must also learn to work on the other level of "knowledge"—*scientia*— where grace works in us but "not without us"—*in nobis sed non sine nobis.*

Dr. Suzuki has, in his own terms, very aptly pointed out that it would be a serious error to think that one could hoist himself back by his own bootstraps into the state of innocence and go on blissfully with no further concern about the present life. Innocence does not cast out or destroy knowledge. The two must go together. That, indeed, was where many apparently spiritual men have failed. Some of them were so innocent that they had lost all contact with everyday reality of life in a struggling and complex world of men. But their's was not true innocence. It was fictitious, a perversion and frustration of the real spiritual life. It was the emptiness of the quietist, an emptiness that was merely blank and silly: an absence of knowledge without the presence of wisdom. It was the narcissistic ignorance of the baby, not the emptiness of the saint who is moved, without reflection or self-consciousness, by the grace of God.

At this point, however, I 'would like to question Dr. Suzuki[5]s interpretation of the story of the "great hermit" who had the robbers arrested. I am tempted to wonder if there is not, in this reaction of his, a touch of what might be called "overcompensation." There is, in fact, quite a lot of Zen in this story of the robbers and of the "great hermit." At any rate, it is the kind of story a Western reader might be tempted to spot right away as having affinities with the spirit of Zen. And perhaps Dr. Suzuki is too much on his guard against such an interpretation which would, of course, tend toward the old accusation of antinomianism. Certainly the "great hermit" does not seem to have much respect for laws, jails and police.

But if we look at the story a little closer we find that the point is quite a different matter. No one is saying that robbers ought not to go to jail. What is pointed out is that hermits have no business sending them there. The robber should, certainly, respect property rights; 'but the hermit, consecrated to a life of poverty and "emptiness," has forfeited his right to be concerned with possessions, with property or with material security. On the contrary, if he is what he ought to be, he will do what Dr. Suzuki's farmer did, and help the robbers with a ladder. But no, these monks are spiritually sick. Far from being empty of themselves, they are full of themselves, they rise up in anger when their selfish interests are touched or even menaced. They revenge wrongs that are done to them because they are all bound up with a "self" that can be wronged and feel outraged. In the words of the "Path of Virtue" (*Dhammapada) :*

> *He verily is not an anchorite who oppresses others;*
> *He is not an ascetic who causes grief to another.*
> *This is almost identical with one of the sayings of Abbot Pastor*
> *"Fie v/ho is quarrelsome is no monk; he who returns evil for evil is no monk; he who gets angry is no monk."* {The Wisdom of The Desert, *XLIX)*

So the outraged hermits are in reality much more to blame than the robbers, because precisely it is people like these who cause poor men to become robbers. It is those who acquire inordinate possessions for themselves and defend them against others, who make it necessary for the others to steal in order to

make a living. That at least is the idea of Abbot Poemen and in telling "great hermit" to let the robbers out of jail he was being neither antisocial nor sentimental; he was just giving his monks a lesson in poverty. They did not wish to know the paradise that was within them through detachment and purity of heart: but rather they wanted to keep themselves in darkness and defilement by their love of their own possessions and their own comfort. They did not want the "wisdom" that "tastes" the presence of God in freedom and emptiness, but the "knowledge" of "mine" and "thine" and of violated rights "vindicated" by recourse to the police and to torture.

II

The fathers of the Church have interpreted man's creation in the "image of God" as a proof that he is capable of paradisiacal innocence and of contemplation, and that these are indeed the purpose of his creation. Man was made in order that in his emptiness and purity of heart he might mirror the purity and freedom of the invisible God and thus be perfectly one with Him. But the recovery of this paradise, which is always hidden within us at least as a possibility, is a matter of great practical difficulty. Genesis tells us that the way back to Paradise is barred by an angel with a flaming sword "turning every way." Yet that does not mean that the return is absolutely impossible. As St. Ambrose says: "All who wish to return to paradise must be tested by the fire." (*Oportet omnes per ignem pirobari quicumque ad paradisum redire desiderant. In Psalmum* 118, xx, 12. Quoted in Stolz, p. 32). The way from knowledge to innocence, or the purification of the heart, is a way of temptation and struggle. It is a matter of wrestling with supreme difficulties and overcoming obstacles that seem, and indeed are, beyond human strength.

Dr. Suzuki has not mentioned one of the main actors in the drama of the Fall: the devil. Buddhism certainly has a very definite concept of this personage (*Mara*—the tempter) and if ever there was a spirituality more concerned with the devil than that of the Egyptian desert, it is the Buddhism of Tibet. In Zen, however, the devil appears relatively little. We see him occasionally in these "Sayings of the Fathers."[1] But his presence is everywhere noted in the desert, which is indeed his refuge. The first and greatest of hermits, St. Anthony, is the classic type of the wrestler with the devil. The Desert Fathers invaded the devil's own exclusive territory in order, by overcoming him in singlehanded combat, to regain paradise.

Without attempting the delicate task of fully identifying this ubiquitous and evil spirit, let us remind ourselves that in the first pages of the Bible he appears as the one who offers man the "knowledge of good and evil" as something "better," superior and more "godlike" than the state of innocence and emptiness. And in the last pages of the Bible the devil is finally "cast out" when man is restored to unity with God in Christ. The significant point is that in these verses of the Apocalypse (12:10) the devil is called "the accuser of our brethren . . . who accused them before God day and night." In the Book of Job, the devil is not only the one who causes Job's sufferings, but it is understood that he also acts as a "tempter" through the moralizing of Job's friends.

The friends of Job appear on the scene as advisers and "consolers," offering Job the fruits of their moral scientia. But when Job insists that his sufferings have no explanation and that he cannot discover the reason for them through conventional ethical concepts, his friends turn into accusers, and curse Job as a sinner. Thus, instead of consolers, they become torturers by virtue of their very morality, and in so doing, while claiming to be advocates of God, they act as instruments of the devil.

In other words, the realm of knowledge or *scientia* is a realm where man is subject to the influence of the devil. This does nothing to alter the fact that knowledge is good and necessary. Nevertheless, even when our "science" does not fail us, it still tends to delude us. Its perspectives are not those of our inmost, spiritual nature. And at the same time we are constantly being misled by passion, attachment to self and by the "deceptions of the devil." The realm of knowledge is then a realm of alienation and peril, in which we are not our true selves and in which we are likely to become completely enslaved to the

power of illusion. And this is true not only when we fall into sin but also to some extent even when we avoid it. The Desert Fathers realized that the most dangerous activity of the devil came into play against the monk only when he was morally perfect, that is, apparently "pure" and virtuous enough to be capable or spiritual pride. Then began the struggle with the last and subtlest of the attachments: the attachment to one's own spiritual excellence; the love of one's spiritualized, purified and "empty" self; the narcissism of the perfect, of the pseudo-saint and of the false mystic.

The only escape, as St. Anthony said, was humility. And the Desert Fathers' concept of humility corresponds very closely to the spiritual poverty Dr. Suzuki has just described for us. One must possess and retain absolutely nothing, not even a self in which he can receive angelic visitations, not even a selflessness he can be proud of. True sanctity is not the work of man purifying himself, it is God Himself present in His own transcendent light, which to us is emptiness.

III

Let us look more closely at two Patristic texts on science (*scientia*) or knowledge, as it occurred in the fall of Adam. St. Augustine says:

> *"This science is described as the recognition of good and evil because the soul ought to reach out to what is beyond itself, that is to God, and to forget what is beneath itself, that is bodily pleasure. But if the soul, deserting God, turns in upon itself and wishes to enjoy its own spiritual power as though without God, it becomes inflated with pride, which is the beginning of all sin. And when it is thus punished for its sin, it learns by experience what a distance separates the good it has deserted and the evil into which it has fallen. This then is what it means to have tasted the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."* (De Genesi contra Manichaeos, *ix. Migne, P.L., vol. 34, col. 203)*

And again in another place:

> *"When the soul deserts the wisdom (*sapientia) *of love, which is always unchanging and one, and desires knowledge (*scientia) *from the experience of temporal and changing things, it becomes puffed up rather than built up. And weighed down in this manner the soul falls away from blessedness as though by its own heaviness."* (De Trinitate *xii, 11. Migne, P.L., vol. 42, col. 1007)*

A few brief words of comment will clarify this concept of "knowledge" and of its effects. First of all, the state in which man is created is one of un-selfconscious "reaching out" to what is metaphysically higher than himself, but nevertheless intimately present within his own being, so that he himself is hidden in God and united with Him. This is what, for St. Augustine, corresponds to the innocence of paradise and to "emptiness." The knowledge of good and evil begins with the fruition of sensible and temporal things for their own sakes, an act which makes the soul conscious of itself, and centers it on its own pleasure. It becomes aware of what is good and evil "for itself." As soon as this takes place, there is a complete change of perspective, and from unity or wisdom (identified with emptiness and purity) the soul now enters into a state of dualism. It is now aware of both itself and God, as separated beings. It now sees God as an object of desire or of fear, and is no longer lost in Him as in a transcendent subject. Furthermore it is aware ot God as of an antagonistic and hostile being. And yet it is attracted to Him as to its highest good. But the experience of itself becomes a "weight" which gravitates away from God. Each act of self-affirmation increases the dualistic tension between self and God. Remember Augustine's dictum, *amor meus, pondus meum*. "My love is a weight, a gravitational force." As one loves temporal things, one gains an illusory substantiality and a selfhood which gravitates "downward," that is to say acquires a *need* for things lower in the scale of being than itself. It depends on these things for its own self-affirmation. In the end this gravitational pull becomes an enslavement to material and temporal cares, and finally to sin. Yet this weight itself is an illusion, a result of the "puffing up" of pride, a "swelling" without reality. The self that appears to be weighed down by its love and carried away to material things is, in fact, an unreal thing. Yet it retains an empirical existence of its own: it is what we think of as

ourselves. And this empirical existence is strengthened by every act o£ selfish desire or fear. It is not the true self, the Christian person, the image of God stamped with the likeness of Christ. It is the false self, the disfigured image, the caricature, the emptiness that has swelled up and become full of itself, so as to create a kind of fictional substantiality for itself. Such is Augustine's commentary on the phrase of St. Paul: *scientia inflat.* "Knowledge puffeth up."

These two passages from St. Augustine are sufficiently good parallels to the process which Dr. Suzuki describes in the sentence, "Out of the Emptiness of the Mind a thought mysteriously arises and we have the world of multiplicities." I do not of course insist that St. Augustine is teaching Zen. Far from it! There remain deep and significant divergences which we need not study at this point. Let it suffice to have said that there are also certain important similarities, due in great part to the Platonism of St. Augustine.

Once we find ourselves in the state of "knowledge of good and evil" we have to accept the fact and understand our position, see it in relation to the innocence for which we were created, which we have lost and which we can regain. But in the meantime it is a question of treating knowledge and innocence as complementary realities. This was the most delicate problem confronting the Desert Fathers, and for many of them it led to disaster. They recognized the difference between "knowledge of good and evil" on the one hand, and innocence or emptiness on the other. But, as Dr. Suzuki has wisely observed, they ran the risk of oversimplified and abstract solutions. Too many of them wanted to get along simply with innocence without knowledge. In our *Sayings,* John the Dwarf is a case in point. He wants to reach a state in which there is no temptation, no further stirring of the slightest passion.[2] All this is nothing but a refinement of "knowledge." Instead of leading to innocence, it leads to the most quintessential^ pure love of self. It leads to the creation of a pseudo-emptiness, an exquisitely purified self that is so perfect that it can rest in itself without any trace of crude reflection. Yet this is not emptiness: there remains a "self" that is the subject of purity and the possessor of emptiness. And this, as the Desert Fathers saw, is the final triumph of the subtle tempter. It leaves a man rooted and imprisoned in his pure self, a clever discerner of good and evil, of self and nonself, purity and impurity. But he is not innocent. He is a master of spiritual knowledge. And as such, he is still subject to accusation from the devil. Since he is *perfect,* he is subject to the greatest deception of all. If he were *innocent,* he would be free from deception.

The man who has truly found his spiritual nakedness, who has realized he is empty, is not a self that has *acquired* emptiness or *become* empty. He just "is empty from the beginning," as Dr. Suzuki has observed. Or, to put it in the more affective terms of St. Augustine and St. Bernard, he "loves with a pure love." That is to say he loves with a purity and freedom that spring spontaneously and directly from the fact that he has fully recovered the divine likeness, and is now fully his true self because he is lost in God. He is one with God and identified with God and hence knows nothing of any ego in himself. All he knows is love. As St. Bernard says: "He who loves thus, simply loves, and knows nothing else but love." *Qui amat, amat et aliud novit nihil.*

Whether or not the Desert Fathers were fully articulate in expressing this kind of emptiness, they certainly strove for it. And their instrument in opening the subtle locks of spiritual deception was the virtue of *discretio:* It was discretion that St. Anthony called the most important of all the virtues in the desert. Discretion had taught him the value of simple manual labor. Discretion taught the fathers that purity of heart did not consist simply in fasting and self-maceration. Discretion— otherwise called the discernment of spirits—is indeed germane to the realm of knowledge, since it does distinguish between

[2] "Abbot Pastor said that Abbot John the Dwarf had prayed to the Lord and the Lord had taken away all his passions, so that he became impassible. And in this condition he went to one of the elders and said: You see before you a man who is completely at rest and has no more temptations. The elder said: Go and pray to the Lord to command some struggle to be stirred up in you, for the soul is matured only in battles. And when the temptations started up again he did not pray that the struggle be taken away from him, but only said: Lord, give me strength to get through the fight."—*The Wisdom of The Desert,* XCI.

good and evil. But it exercises its functions in the light of innocence and in reference to emptiness. It judges not in terms of abstract standards so much as in terms of inner purity of heart. Discretion makes judgments and indicates choices, but the judgment and choice always point in the direction of emptiness, or purity of heart. Discretion is a function of humility, and therefore it is a branch of knowledge that lies beyond the reach of diabolical comment and perversion. (See Cassian, Conference II, *De Discretione*. Migne, P.L., vol. 49, c. 523 **ff.)**

IV

John Cassian, in his reports of the "conferences" he heard among the Desert Fathers, lays down the fundamental rule of desert spirituality. What is the purpose and end of the monastic life? Such is the subject of the first conference.

The answer is that the monastic life has a twofold purpose. It must lead the monk first to an intermediate end, and then to an ultimate and final state of completion. The intermediate end, or *scopos,* is what we have been discussing as purity of heart, roughly corresponding to Dr. Suzuki's term "emptiness." That heart is pure which is *"perfectum ac mundissimum"* (perfect and most pure), that is to say completely free of alien thoughts and desires. The concept, in actual fact, corresponds rather to the Stoic *apatheia* than to Zen "suchness." But at any rate there is a close relationship. It is the *quies,* or rest, of contemplation—the state of being free from all images and concepts which disturb and occupy the soul. It is the favorable climate for *theologia,* the highest contemplation, which excludes even the purest and most spiritual of ideas and admits no concepts whatever. It knows God not by concepts or visions, but only by "unknowing." This is the language of Evagrius Ponticus, severely intellectual, a fact which brings him closer to Zen than the more affective theologians of prayer like St. Maximus and St. Gregory of Nyssa. Cassian himself, though close to Evagrius and sympathetic with him, nevertheless gives a characteristically Christian affective balance to the concept of purity of heart, and insists that it is to be defined simply as "perfect charity" or a love of God unmixed with any return upon self. This qualification might conceivably constitute a significant difference between Christian "purity of heart" and the "emptiness" of Zen, but the relations between the two concepts should be further studied.

One thing, and this is most important, remains to be said. Purity of heart is not the *ultimate end* of the monk's striving in the desert. It is only a step towards it. We have said above that Paradise is not yet heaven. Paradise is not the final goal of the spiritual life. It is, in fact, only a return to the true beginning. It is a "fresh start." The monk who has realized in himself purity of heart, and has been restored, in some measure, to the innocence lost by Adam, has still not ended his |journey. He is only ready to begin. He is ready for a new work "which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive." Purity of heart, says Cassian, is the intermediate end of the spiritual life. But the ultimate end is the Kingdom of God. This is a dimension which does not enter into the realm of Zen.

One might argue that this simply overturns all that has been said about emptiness, and brings us back into a state of dualism, and therefore to "knowledge of good and evil," duality between man and God, etc. Such is by no means the case. Purity of heart establishes man in a state of unity and emptiness in which he is one with God. But this is the necessary preparation not for further struggle between good and evil, but for the real work of God which is revealed in the Bible: the work of the *new creation,* the resurrection from the dead, the restoration of all things in Christ. This is the real dimension of Christianity, the eschatological dimension which is peculiar to it, and which has no parallel in Buddhism. The world was created without man, but the new creation which is the true Kingdom of God is to be the work of God in and through man. It is to be the great, mysterious, theandric work of the Mystical Christ, the New Adam, in whom all men as "one Person" or one "Son of God" will transfigure the cosmos and offer it resplendent to the Father. Here, in this transfiguration, will take place the apocalyptic marriage between God and His creation, the final and perfect consummation of which no

mortal mysticism is able to dream and which is barely foreshadowed in the symbols and images of the last pages of the Apocalypse.

Here, of course, we are back in the realm of concept and image. To think about these things, to speculate on them, is, perhaps, to depart from "emptiness." But it is an activity of faith that belongs to our realm of knowledge, and conditions us for a superior and more vigilant innocence: the innocence of the wise virgins who wait with lighted lamps, with an emptiness that is enkindled by the glory of the Divine Word and enflamed with the presence of the Holy Spirit. That glory and that presence are not objects which "enter into" emptiness to "fill" it. They are nothing else but God's own "suchness."

*FINAL REMARKS by Daisetz **T.** Suzuki*

I am not well acquainted with all the Christian literature produced by the learned, talented and logically-minded theologians who have endeavored to intellectually clarify their experiences, and therefore, the comments I make on Christianity, its doctrines and traditions, may miss the mark altogether. I would like to say that there are two types of mentality which fundamentally differ one from the other: (1) affective, personal and dualistic, and (2) nonaffective, nonpersonal and nondualistic. Zen belongs to the latter and Christianity naturally to the former. The fundamental difference may be illustrated by the conception of "emptiness."

Father Merton's emptiness, when he uses this term, does not go far and deep enough, I am afraid. I do not who first made the distinction between the Godhead and God as Creator. This distinction is strikingly illustrative. Father Merton's emptiness is still on the level of God as Creator and does not go up to the Godhead. So is John Cassian's. The latter has, according to Fr Merton, "God's own 'suchness'" for the ultimate end of a monkish life. In my view, this way of interpreting "suchness" is the emptiness of God Creator, and not of the Godhead. Zen emptiness is not the emptiness of nothingness, but the emptiness of fullness in which there is "no gain, no loss, no increase, no decrease," in which this equation takes place: zero = infinity. The Godhead is no other than this equation. In other words, when God as Creator came out of the Godhead he did not leave the Godhead behind. He has the Godhead with him all along while engaging in the work of creation. Creation is continuous, going on till the end of time, which has really no ending and therefore no beginning. For creation is out of inexhaustible nothingness.

Paradise has never been lost and therefore is never regained. As Staretz Zosima says, according to Father Merton, as soon as one wishes for it, that is to say, as soon as I become conscious of the fact, Paradise is right away with me, and the experience is the foundation on which the kingdom of heaven is built. Eschatology is something never realizable and yet realized at every moment of our life. We see it always ahead of us though we are in reality always in it. This is the delusion we are conditioned to have as beings in time or rather as "becomings" in time. The delusion ceases to be one the very moment we experience all this. It is the Great Mystery, intellectually speaking. In Christian terms, it is Divine Wisdom. The strange thing, however, is: when we experience it we cease to ask questions about it, we accept it, we just live it. Theologians, dialecticians and existentialists may go on discussing the matter, but the ordinary people inclusive of all of us who are outsiders live "the mystery." A Zen Master was once asked:

Q. What is Tao? (We may take Tao as meaning the ultimate truth or reality.)
A. It is one's everyday mind.
Q. What is one's everyday mind?
A. When tired, you sleep; when hungry, you eat.