

January 13, 1966
Rev. S. Suzuki

Buddhism is, maybe, rather difficult to understand for you because Buddhism is not monotheism or pantheism. This is...Buddhism is something different from your understanding of religion. It may be better to consider...to accept Buddhism something quite different from your understanding. It looks like pantheism, but in Buddhism also there is several ways of believing in our life....

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...something like pantheism because we say everything has Buddha nature so in this point Buddhism is pantheism, but we do not emphasize...concentrate...our religion is not concentrated on object of worship rather than subject of worship so..I don't know what to say...it may be better to forget all about idea of atheism or pantheism or monotheism ... because we don't know what to say...what category Buddhism can be put. In our belief we do not emphasize the object of worship rather we...and we emphasize the subject of worship. We, ourselves, is Buddha and Buddha is not some particular object of worship. We, ourselves, are Buddha. This is the main point. Buddha put emphasis on subject of worship does not mean to emphasize ego centered idea. In this sense, after you understand various religions you can understand Buddhism...after starting from some point of the circle...going on and on and when you come back to the starting point....that is Buddhism.....

(blank)

...then your country becomes Buddha country....

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...before you come back to the starting point, everything you saw is not our religion. After you come back to the starting point...that is Buddhism. So we do not emphasize any particular things. If you come back to America you will understand everything and...whether we put emphasis on object of worship or subject of worship...

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...so in this way there are many ways of believing in Buddhism but the three ways should...is actually should be one. That is why Buddhism is something different from other religions. One attitude...one way of observing god include the other two. So there is no independent...completely independent school in Buddhism. The...each school emphasize one point, but the other school's viewpoint is included, or else that is not Buddhism. One includes the others. The zen school puts emphasis on ourselves...who practice so each one of us is Buddha. We are Buddha. This is rather difficult to accept. So we say Zen Buddhism is very easy to understand intellectually. It is not difficult to understand, but it is difficult to believe in it completely. We cannot accept ourselves as Buddha. This is very difficult point.

Intellectually each one of us is Buddha. That is quite true. But emotionally, or actually we cannot accept ourselves as Buddha, or we do not like to accept ourselves as Buddha. If we are Buddha we think we should behave. It is rather inconvenient for us, but intellectually it is quite true. We can accept it intellectually but it is not so convenient for us to accept it actually. We want to escape from it always. So this is our weak point... those who...for those who believe in ourselves as Buddha. Nichieran sect believe in Dhama...teaching. This is quite easy to accept it. But we have so many scriptures it is almost impossible to understand all the scriptures. So, this is pretty difficult so founder of Nichieran sect selected one scripture. Intellectually this is pretty hard to accept...why one scripture is so important and why not the others.

This is rather difficult to accept it. And just to believe in the absolute existence which is Buddha is Shin school. In America, Shin school is most...among Japanese people in America, the Shin school is the most common school. But for them the practice is quite easy but it is rather difficult to believe in it...so their way is just to recite Amida Buddha's name...shutting their eyes...because it is very difficult to believe in it so it may be better to shut your eyes. This is their way.

This is quite good, but the ways are different, but as Buddhists we have universal understanding. Anyway it is not easy for us to believe in. Why it is so difficult for us to believe in it is we...our standpoint is wrong. Because when we believe in religion we want some advantage of our religion. We want to utilize Buddhism in our everyday life. So this point makes it difficult to believe in religion, because this is opposite. So the founder of our school emphasized to take opposite attitude...not starting from our usual understanding of religion, but starting from...but to take the opposite direction...not from starting this world to the religion but to start from religion to this world. In short, we should accept...we should start from death...not from this world...but from death...starting point of our religion is to...not to forget we will die sometime. From that point we should start to understand our everyday life. So if we ignore the fact that we will die pretty soon you cannot believe in any religion completely. Because we are seeking for truth, but truth is not just for yourself. Truth is for everyone. Truth does not ignore each existence but the truth is not for some particular person. So as long as your religion is based on your short life...seventy years or eighty years...there is absurdity. So we cannot believe in religion completely.

So if you want to believe in religion we should completely forget all ourselves and we take the quite different viewpoint intellectually and emotionally. If so, we should not

start religious life from this viewpoint, but from other viewpoint. Not afterlife, but when we do not appear in this world we should start religion. We should take viewpoint of death...then we can understand our religion completely. If there is some gap between death...between the understanding of...based on death and our usual understanding we should practice zen. That is why we practice zen.

We do not practice zen to attain some stage, but to accept the teaching with any prejudice. That is how we believe in our religion. So we emphasize the transcendency of the world and we emphasize the fact that we will die pretty soon. Before...we should accept this point first of all and our study based on this fact. We should not try to utilize Buddhism to our life. If you want to...if your attitude is based on utility you will not attain Nirvana. We do not ignore our life but we should take right point...right viewpoint and we should accept truth as the truth. When we accept the truth as it is, we cannot accept the viewpoint based on this life only. Our selfish idea should be ignored. Then we can understand Buddhism. And truth we accept as Buddhists is not the truth we accept as scientist, of course. But even though we are not scientists the truth is truth for everyone. In this point, science and Buddhism is quite same...exactly the same. But to accept...to...scientist.... (end of transcript)

ZMBMms box transcript. Exact copy entered onto disk and emailed to DChadwich by GM on 08/07/2008.

Note: This transcript has many missing parts as noted above. GM