

jhs

November 30th, 1959

My Dear Dr Suzuki:

I am so glad that you have added a few comments to your article. They are very wise and I do hope that they can lead to further exchange of views, because really we have only begun to get into our subject. It would be a very great pity not to carry the conversation further. What a great shame it is that my way of life makes it practically impossible for me to get to Japan. But perhaps you will come to America again. I do hope you will take the occasion to arrange a meeting.

I recognize the validity of your criticism of my treatment of "emptiness". You are perfectly correct, and I felt quite uneasy about the point, especially as Cassian is clearly not deep enough in his idea of "purity of heart". This struck me as I was writing the article and unfortunately there was nothing much that could be done about it at the time. It must wait for further development. But again I think your insight is very acute and fundamentally Christian in its own way, though in the way you formulate it, the distinction between "God" and the "Godhead" runs into technical theological difficulties for us, that is for the Christian writer. Do you know John Ruysbroeck? He develops your idea quite well. I shall try to send you a book of his, and also something of St John of the Cross who might interest you.

Here is the little note I am appending to your last statement in the book.

Once again I thank you warmly for your collaboration in this work. It has been very interesting and challenging and I feel that such contacts are of great importance. Certainly I know I have profited personally from your remarks. For we have been discussing our common interests on two levels: first as writers, but then as "monks" or Zen-men or whatever you would like to say. That level is to me much more important, though alas I have been compelled to stay more on the first level, in order to get out this book.

Speaking now as a monk rather than as a writer, I am much happier with "emptiness" when I don't have to talk about it. You have the knack of saying things about it that do not completely obscure it. But I do not. As soon as I say something then, that is "not it" right away. Obviously the conclusion is to say nothing, and that for a great deal of the time is what I manage to do. Yet one must speak of it. Obviously, one must speak and not speak. I am glad you are far away or you would settle the question with thirty blows of the hossu. But at any rate I thought you would be happy to know that I struggle with the -- not problem, but koan. It is not really for me a serious intellectual problem at all, but a problem of ~~the~~ "realization"-- something that has to break through. Every once in a while it breaks through a little. One of these days it will burst out.

What is your opinion of Chang Chen Chi who writes on Zen? Do you know him? Again, with every best wish and blessing-

Faithfully yours in Christ