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What's Compassion Got to Do with It? Determinants of Zen Social Ethics in Japan

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Abstract

Judging from pronouncements by contemporary Engaged Buddhists, one might conclude that historical expressions of Zen social ethics have rested on the foundation of compassion and the precepts. The de facto systems of social ethics in Japanese Zen, however, have been shaped largely by other epistemological, sociological, and historical factors, and compassion should best be understood as a “theological virtue” that historically has gained specificity from those other factors.

Modern Zen thinkers and contemporary Zen activists tend to situate compassion (Skt. *karuṇā*; J. *jihī*) at or near the center of their representations of Zen.¹ Throughout his writings, Abe Masao portrays Zen as directed toward an awakening — to *śūnyatā* (emptiness) — that equips the awakened with wisdom and compassion and motivates them to function compassionately through skillful means to liberate suffering beings.² Similarly, many Engaged Buddhists build their formulations of social ethics around compassion, as reflected in the title of the first anthology of their writings, *The Path of Compassion*.³

This emphasis on compassion finds support from *Mahāyāna sūtras* and Zen texts. The *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra* celebrates a host of compassionate heroes:

Of bodhisattvas there were thirty-two thousand, great spiritual heroes who were universally acclaimed. . . . They had crossed the terrifying abyss of the bad migrations, and yet they assumed reincarnation voluntarily in all migrations for the sake of disciplining living beings. Great Kings of medicine, understanding all the sicknesses of passions, they could apply the medicine of the Dharma appropriately. They were inexhaustible mines of limitless virtues, and they glorified innumerable buddha-fields with the splendor of these virtues. They conferred great benefit when seen, heard, or even approached.⁴

Zen “records” (Ch. *yulu*; J. *goroku*) echo the broader Mahāyāna celebration of compassion. In the *Linji-lu* (J. *Rinzairoku*, The Record of Linji), the young monk Linji (J. Rinzai; d. 867) thanks the head monk for the compassion he had expressed in sending Linji to question the master Huangbo,⁵ and later in the text Dayu recognizes the compassion with which Huangbo received Linji’s questions.

Linji: “Three times I asked him just what the cardinal principle of the Buddhadharmā was and three times he hit me. I don’t know whether I was at fault or not.”

Dayu: “Huangbo is such a grandmother that he utterly exhausted himself with your troubles!”⁶

Contemporary Engaged Buddhists base much of their ethical analysis and activism on not only compassion but also the precepts, which, like compassion, appear in core Zen texts. The first fascicle of the *Chanyuan qinggui* (J. *Zen’en-shingi*; Rules of Purity for Zen Monasteries) positions precepts as the starting point of Zen practice: “Both meditation and the quest for the truth begin with receiving the precepts (*kairitsu isen*).⁷ If one cannot abstain from error and avert evil, how can one become a Buddha or a patriarch?”⁸ Japanese Rinzai Zen founder Eisai (1141–1215) quotes this line near the beginning of his *Kōzen-gokoku-ron* (Treatise on Promoting Zen to Protect the Realm), in which he argues that Zen monks should follow both the 250 precepts in the *Dharmaguptaka-vinaya* (J. *Shibunritsu*) and the 10 major and 48 minor bodhisattva precepts in the *Fanwang-jing* (J. *Bonmō-kyō*; Brahma’s Net Sūtra). Japanese Sōtō Zen founder Dōgen (1200–1253) writes in the *Jukai* (Receiving the Precepts) fascicle of *Shōbō-genzō* that the *Chanyuan qinggui* “saying that the precepts should come first (*kairitsu isen*) is the Treasury of the True Dharma Eye.”⁹ For centuries, Sōtō Zen monks have received the sixteen bodhisattva precepts administered by Dōgen, with Mahāyāna compassion advocated in a subset, the three pure precepts (*sanju-shōjō kai*): the observance of all rules that eradicate evils (*shōritsugi kai*), the commission of all things that are good (*shōzenbō kai*), and the liberation of all sentient beings (*shōshujō kai*).¹⁰ In *Banmin-tokuyō* (Virtuous Action for All People), Suzuki Shōsan (1579–1655) lifts up both precepts and compassion when he writes that “Buddhist practice is to observe the precepts strictly, never opposing the teaching of the Buddha and of the patriarchs; to banish the mind warped and twisted, and to become of good mind; . . . and to lead all people, uprightly and with compassion, to enlightenment.”¹¹

While compassion and the precepts appear in these texts and modern discourse on Zen and social ethics, the de facto formulations of social ethics by historical Japanese Zen figures and the actual sociopolitical stances of Zen in Japanese history have been determined by a range of other factors as well, which, *depending on how one construes compassion*, can be viewed as having augmented, muted,

refracted, or even contravened this ostensible cardinal virtue in Mahāyāna Buddhism. An inventory of those factors, many of which were highlighted by Zen priest and Hanazono University professor Ichikawa Hakugen (1902–1986), reveals several issues concerning the precepts and compassion vis-à-vis *social* ethics, and indicates that compassion should best be understood as a “theological virtue” that gains sociopolitical specificity only when coupled with other constructs, ideologies, or moral systems.

Ichikawa Hakugen's Critique of Zen “Peace of Mind”

As a prominent postwar critic of his tradition, Ichikawa focused much of his writing on factors other than compassion and the precepts that have determined Zen's social stances, especially its historical lack of resistance to, if not valorization of, the sociopolitical status quo in Japan, as brought into stark relief during the imperialism and warfare of the early-Shōwa period (1926–1945). Ichikawa traces those factors back to the origins of Zen. From his perspective, in the social and political chaos of the 6th through 10th centuries, Chinese elites were confronting two challenges: how to secure personal safety; and, given the tenuousness of any apparent safety, how to live their lives while constantly facing the prospect of death. They had three main options for responding to these problems. The first was to maintain physical safety (*anzen*) by yielding to the powerful, avoiding conflict, and seeking peace at any price (*kotonakare-shugi*). The second was to unite with others to resist and eliminate the oppressive conditions that jeopardized their safety. The third option was what Zen refers to as *anjin* (Ch. *anxin*), “pacifying the mind” or, translated nominally as a *telos*, “peace of mind.”¹²

In the third approach, rather than maneuvering to guarantee one's physical security or, more broadly, social peace, one cultivates a type of psychological security, a mental peace. As Ichikawa puts it, “The Way of peace of mind (*anjin*) is pursued and attained as an existential wisdom by means of which one avoids being crushed by the dangers and insecurity that emerge in the tumult and vicissitudes of actuality.”¹³ To attain this peace of mind one must embrace whatever one encounters: “The wisdom of peace of mind does not flee in the face of a lack of safety or the onslaught of overwhelming danger; rather, it steps forward and receives such things. As the expression [by Ryōkan (1758–1831)] goes, ‘When you encounter a disaster, it is good to meet it [fully]; and when you encounter death, it is good to meet it [fully].’”¹⁴ This is “the path of attaining the wisdom through which one can accept, just as it is, whatever misery or impending danger of death one might encounter, and thereby live a fulfilled life in each situation.”¹⁵ More specifically, “One greets and accepts each situation, without hating or avoiding it, and by becoming one (*narikiru*) with that situation, one lives a life characterized by peace of

mind.”¹⁶

These constituents of “peace of mind” — not judging or reacting to situations, accepting whatever situation one encounters, “becoming one” with each situation — appear repeatedly in Zen texts. For example, in the *Xinxinming* (J. *Shinjinmei*; Inscriptions on Trusting in Mind), Sengcan (d. 606?) declares, “If you wish to see it before your own eyes, have no fixed thoughts either for or against it. To set up what you like against what you dislike — this is the disease of the mind. . . . Try not to seek the true, only cease to cherish opinions. . . . As soon as you have right or wrong, confusion ensues, and Mind is lost.”¹⁷ In his *Fukan-zazengi* (Universal Recommendation of Zazen), Dōgen commands his disciples, “Setting everything aside, think of neither good nor evil, right nor wrong.”¹⁸

Ichikawa on Zen “Accommodationism”

Insofar as Zen peace of mind requires acceptance of whatever one encounters, whether objects, events, or social conditions, one functions in the world through what Ichikawa refers to as the “principle of according with things” (*sokubutsushugi*, literally, “according-with-things-ism”), an “accordance with the principles of things as a kind of naturalism.”¹⁹ Bodhidharma terms this approach *suiyuanxing* (J. *zuien-gyō*), the practice according with circumstances.²⁰ In *Anxin-famen* (J. *Anjin hōmon*; Method for Pacifying the Mind) Bodhidharma purportedly writes, “The wise entrust themselves to things, not to the self. For this reason, there is no grasping or rejecting, no opposing or obeying. The ignorant entrust themselves to the self and do not accord with things. For this reason, there is grasping and rejecting, opposing and obeying.”²¹ Three centuries later, in his characterization of the “true person of the Way,” Linji puts it this way: “Merely according with circumstances, he uses up his past karma; entrusting himself to things as they come (*nin’nun*), he puts on his clothes; when he wants to walk he walks, when he wants to sit he sits.”²²

Ichikawa thus construes early Zen as a religion for Chinese elites seeking existential security in the midst of social turmoil. With their awakened way of being (*kyōgai*), featuring transcendence of dualistic discrimination, acceptance of whatever they encounter, and fluid accordance with circumstances around them, “masters” (*tatsujin*) of the Zen path enjoy a type of existential freedom, expressed by Linji as the ability to “make oneself master of every situation.” In epistemological terms, they display “mastered insight” (*takkan*).²³

While recognizing the existential freedom provided by “peace of mind,” Ichikawa argues that insofar as Zen Buddhists cultivate peace of mind by letting go of critical discrimination, mirroring or “becoming one” with what they experience, and accepting and according with their situation “just as it is,” they tend to slip into a

way of living that is indistinguishable from and effectively converts (*tenkō*) them to the first option for responding to chaos and danger: accommodating one's sociopolitical situation, lying low, avoiding conflict and by extension danger, and thereby trying to secure one's personal safety.²⁴ That is to say, Zen Buddhists have usually taken a safe, acquiescent stance in tension with the ideal of compassionate and courageous "bodhisattva functioning" (*bosatsu-gyō*) in the world. As Ichikawa puts it, "Zen has preached the epistemology of a doctrine of mental states (*shinkyō-shugi*; literally, "state-of-mind-ism") in which the demand for peace of mind (*anjin*) has gotten swallowed up by the demand for physical safety (*anzen*)."²⁵ The sort of wisdom that Ryōkan advocated with his call to "meet" or embrace extreme, unavoidable situations, "seeped into the daily life of ordinary people as a kind of mood and, in general, made them passive. A way of living in which they did not fight against their given actuality or the actuality pressing on them, but to the contrary harmonized with it, became the foundation of their daily life."²⁶

Ichikawa further argues that Zen admonitions to avoid "setting up what you like against what you dislike" and to "think of neither good nor evil" — to rid oneself of discriminating thought and thereby transcend good and evil and all other dualisms — hobbles Zen when it comes to responding to complex historical scenarios that call for sustained, rigorous analysis and evaluative categories.²⁷ And insofar as "peace of mind" derives from "becoming one" with and accepting whatever one encounters, it is dogged by other ethical problems. First, "becoming one" with things concerns *how* one experiences, not *what* one experiences, and in principle one can "become one" with anything. As Ichikawa puts it, "Zen does not necessarily set or produce any concrete content for our thought or lives. Rather, it is a kind of life attitude, conveyed by such expressions as 'become one' (*narikiru*) and 'samādhi.' This leaves us with the problem of 'what' we become one with, of 'what' we enter into *samādhi* with,"²⁸ for we can equally become one with a beautiful sunset or a mushroom cloud. Second, Ichikawa notes that "becoming one" with things allows for none of the epistemological distance necessary for critiques of actuality. "In the subject's merging with the object there is realization (*tainin*) and contemplation (*kanshō*) but no critical evaluation. Only when the subject and object separate and the subject stands apart from the object does one secure a position for critically evaluating the object."²⁹

In other words, to Ichikawa's way of thinking, the religious path to peace of mind, including the praxis of letting go of discrimination and achieving a non-dual apprehension of things, leads not to the sort of criticism, resistance, and activism that one might expect from a courageous bodhisattva, but to the aforementioned "mastered insight," which, while perhaps offering an existential liberation coupled with a rich aesthetic appreciation of the world (what Ikkyū and others have re-

ferred to as a fluid elegance (*fūryū*), accepts whatever it encounters and rests in a contemplative (*kanshō-teki*), solitary aloofness (*kokōsei*).³⁰

Put differently, with its principle of according with things (*sokubutsu-shugi*), Zen assumes a sociopolitical stance of conformism or “accommodationism” (*junnō-shugi*) that rejects conflict. Ichikawa traces this approach back beyond Sengcan and Bodhidharma to Daoist inputs to Zen, such as the *Dao de jing* statement about the highest good being like water, “It simply does not struggle, and hence there is no offence,” which Ichikawa glosses, “According with a round vessel, settling in accord with all places, calming down in accord with all places — to water, squares and circles are the same.”³¹ About Linji’s advocacy of “entrusting oneself to things as they come” (*nin’nun*), Ichikawa claims that “If we apply this wisdom to daily living, it amounts to a doctrine of accommodating the times (*taisei-junnō-shugi*).”³²

Karmic Justification of Social Differences

Ichikawa detects further causes of this “accommodationism” in Zen views of society and history. He claims that while Zen has embraced a concept of equality in the doctrine of shared buddha-nature (*busshō*) and has recognized that in society humans differ in terms of health, wealth, and status, Zen maintains that “human beings are equal only in that we all possess buddha-nature and hence have the potentiality of becoming buddhas. Differing social positions, abilities, and circumstances are the retributive fruits of good and bad actions in previous existences.”³³ That is to say, traditional Zen thinkers have accepted, explained, and even justified societal differences in terms of karma, the “doctrine of the law of cause and effect across the three worlds [of past, present, and future]” (*sanze-inga-setsu*).

Ichikawa singles out Hakuin (1685–1768) as a prime example of a Zen thinker who affirms equality at the fundamental level of buddha-nature (the first line of *Zazen Wasan* (Song in Praise of Zazen) reads, “sentient beings are fundamentally buddhas”) while accepting the notion that karma determines social standing. For example, in *Segyō-uta* (Song about the Practice of Giving),³⁴ Hakuin valorizes inequality: “Those who have riches and honors in this world are reaping the fruits of seeds that they planted in previous lifetimes. . . . This life depends on the seeds from previous lifetimes, and the future depends on seeds from this lifetime. The amount of wealth and honor depends on the amount of seeds sown. In this lifetime there is not much for us to sow, so select good seeds and sow them. . . . People who have to go and scavenge food that has been thrown away by others did not sow sufficient seeds in their previous existence, so now they are beggars.”³⁵

Hakuin is not alone in thinking this way. In *Muchū-mondō* (Zen Exchanges in Dreams), Musō Soseki (1275–1351) offers a karmic justification of poverty: “Being poor in this lifetime is karmic retribution for greed in a previous life.”³⁶

And in *Banmin-tokuyō*, Suzuki Shōsan writes, “Distinctions between noble and humble, high and low, rich and poor, gain and loss, and long life and short life are all due to karma from past lives.”³⁷ The accompanying message is for Japanese to “know their rightful station in life.”³⁸

“Differences Are None Other Than Equality”

To mitigate the tension between socioeconomic differences and the underlying equality of shared buddha-nature, Zen and other Buddhist thinkers have deployed the notion that “differences are none other than equality” (*shabetsu soku byōdō*).³⁹ Ichikawa claims that with this construct they have prompted their audience to accept the differences and discrimination permeating social, political, and economic life and view them as secondary to a deeper religious equality.⁴⁰ Further, coupling this construct with the doctrine of karma, Zen thinkers formulated a “philosophy of no-conflict⁴¹ and resignation, which taught people to be satisfied with their present condition and status,”⁴² and made it harder for them to recognize that social distinctions are not karmic fruits but human creations in class societies.⁴³ And going a step further, some Buddhists have brandished the notion of “evil quality” (*aku-byōdō*) to attack those who would seek to remedy inequalities in the secular realm, as if the attempt to ameliorate discrimination were a violation of the natural law of karma and a misplaced search for equality that ignorantly overlooks the more important underlying religious equality of shared buddha-nature. Ichikawa repeatedly criticizes prominent Buddhists who from the nineteenth century made this argument in their polemics against Christian activists, labor organizers, and human rights advocates working for more egalitarian social and economic arrangements. He comments that Buddhist conservatives, with no small measure of alarmism, “attacked socialism as a philosophy of evil equality that would level mountains to fill in rivers.”⁴⁴

In short, to Ichikawa’s way of thinking, Zen has formulated its de facto social ethic around a conceptual framework that deploys the law of karma to explain inequality, defers any change in social status to the next life (assuming the individual acts in the way that Buddhism prescribes), and affirms equality only in the sense that all people *equally* possess buddha-nature and should all *equally* act appropriately to their place in society. Insofar as inequality and discrimination are rationalized by the theory of karma and downplayed by arguments that, despite socioeconomic differences, all people are fundamentally equal by equally possessing buddha-nature (or, as Dōgen would have it, equally *being* buddha-nature), Zen has joined other forms of Japanese Buddhism in formulating a theodicy that explains — if not justifies — inequality and takes the sting out of the sociopolitical suffering associated with it.

Moral Values in Zen Monastic Life

In Japanese history, de facto formulations of Zen social ethics have been shaped not only by Zen's epistemology and sociology as sketched by Ichikawa, but by a range of other determinants as well. An inventory of Rinzai Zen, for example, reveals that monastic life conveys and reinforces a set of values with moral ramifications:⁴⁵ (1) simplicity, insofar as in the traditional pattern supplicant monks arrive at the training hall (*sōdō*) gate with only robes, bowls, a razor, straw sandals, a straw hat, and several other possessions;⁴⁶ (2) thrift, the commitment to wasting nothing, to using things at one's disposal as much as possible without throwing them away (*mono no shō o tsukusu*), as seen in the strict limitation of water for brushing teeth and washing faces, the ideal of scavenging scraps to make robes, and ritualized *oryōki* (three bowl) meals, in which all food is eaten or given to animals (and hungry ghosts, *gaki*) around the monastery and bowls are washed with tea that is usually then drunk; (3) manual labor, done as work practice (*samu* or *fushin*); (4) diligence in personal application to practice, as reinforced, for example, by the chanting of the *Daitō-kokushi yuikai* (Daitō Kokushi's Last Admonition), which closes with the refrain, "be diligent, be diligent" (*bensen bensen*); (5) perseverance, as conveyed by frequent exhortations by the *rōshi* or *jikijitsu* to push through pain in retreats (*sesshin*), rhetoric about sitting *zazen* even if one dies while doing so (*shinu kakugo de zazen o kumu*), and advocacy of solitary "night sitting" (*yaza*); (6) humility, as embodied, for example, in ritualized bowing; (7) penitent self-criticism, as conveyed by the *Sange mon* (Verse on Repentance): "All the evil karmic acts ever committed by me since long ago on account of greed, ill-will, and ignorance, which have no beginning, born of my body, mouth, and thought — I now make full, open confession of them;"⁴⁷ (8) deference and obedience, as monks submit to the strict and often challenging directives of the *jikijitsu*, the *rōshi*, the abbot (*kanchō*), and administrators in head temples; (9) respect, expressed through honorific forms of addressing those superiors.

Granted, although these values are woven into Zen practice and interpersonal relations in Zen institutions, this does not necessarily mean that they have broader *social* ramifications. Indeed, one could argue that they function mainly to promote smooth and ordered monastic praxis, as, in effect, part of the regulatory system established by monastic codes like the *Chanyuan qinggui*, *Rinsen kakun*, and *Eihei shingi*. At the same time, however, these values advance a de facto social ethic consisting of humility, obedience, and respect vis-à-vis superiors in a social hierarchy.

Blessings and Indebtedness

This orientation toward superiors comes into bolder relief when we turn to several other constructs that have shaped Zen social ethics, especially *on*, the blessings one has received from others and the resultant indebtedness incurred because of those blessings.⁴⁸ Buddhist texts usually treat *on* in terms of four *on* (*shi'on*): blessings from and indebtedness to the ruler, one's parents, all sentient beings, and the three treasures (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha). In *Mōanjō* (A Staff for the Blind), Suzuki Shōsan substitutes one's teachers and "heaven and earth" (*tenchi*) for sentient beings and the three treasures.⁴⁹

Zen liturgical life instills and reinforces a sense of indebtedness (and gratitude), whether to Bodhidharma,⁵⁰ the founder of the temple,⁵¹ one's parents,⁵² those whose labors produced the food that supports monastic practice,⁵³ the current emperor,⁵⁴ or a patron emperor.⁵⁵ In *Reirōshū* (Clear Sound of Jewels), Takuan (1573–1645) calls attention to indebtedness to the *daimyō* (feudal lord): "In regard to this, from the time one has been taken into a daimyō's service, of the clothes on his back, the sword he wears at his side, his footgear, his palanquin, his horse and all of his materiel, there is no single item that is not due to the favor (*on*) of his lord."⁵⁶ Hakuin writes in *Orategama*, "to be an ordinary human living as a subject means that you eat the lord's food, wear clothes obtained from him, tie a sash he has given to you, and wear a sword obtained from him. You do not have to fetch water from a faraway place. The food you eat you do not grow yourself; the clothes you wear you do not weave for yourself. In fact, your whole body in all its parts is dependent on the blessings of your lord (*kun'on*)."⁵⁷ In *Mōanjō*, Suzuki Shōsan writes, "Know well that it is to your lord's generosity that you owe your very life, and serve him by giving your body."⁵⁸ Pronouncements by Zen figures in the early-Shōwa period are peppered with references to one's indebtedness to the emperor and the need to repay that debt through military service.

In actual practice, the reinforced sense that one carries a burden of debt for various blessings, ought to feel gratitude for those blessings, and, more importantly, ought to seek ways to repay that debt (*hō'on*) can, of course, compete with what may justifiably be seen as broader demands of compassion, as when the suffering of others could be reduced by criticizing those to whom one feels indebted, whether a feudal lord, the emperor, a jingoistic *rōshi* during WWII, or a Zen teacher with dubious sexual interest in his students.

Confucianism in Zen

The rhetoric of humility, obedience, and indebtedness bears traces of Confucianism, arguably the main determinant of Zen social ethics. Five Mountain (*gozan*)

monks of the Kamakura and Muromachi periods introduced Song Neo-Confucianism, made their monasteries centers of Confucian learning, and disseminated Confucian thought through their writings and lectures to warrior rulers and emperors.⁵⁹ In the Tokugawa period, leading Zen masters conveyed Confucian values to the laity through popular talks (*kana hōgo*) and to political leaders through letters and treatises. For example, organizing his *Banmin-tokuyō* along the lines of the four-tiered Confucian social hierarchy, Suzuki Shōsan configures Confucian values into different sets of guidelines for warriors, farmers, craftspeople, and merchants (*shinō-kō-shō*). In *Fudōchi shinmyō roku* (The Mysterious Record of Immovable Wisdom) and *Reirōshū* (Clear Sound of Jewels), Takuan champions core Confucian values of loyalty, filial piety, benevolence, and righteousness as part of his overall discourse on the unity of Confucianism and Buddhism (*Jubutsu-itchi*). In the Meiji period Imakita Kōsen (1816–1892) argues for such a unity in his *Zenkai ichiran* (One Wave on the Zen Sea).⁶⁰ During WWII, Zen figures applauded and helped disseminate the largely Confucian imperial ideology.⁶¹

The Confucian impact on Zen's social outlook has acted in concert with a range of other factors to shape Zen's ethical appraisal of women. As scholars have recently begun to highlight,⁶² Zen has generally denigrated and subordinated women. This is evident in a colloquial sermon preached by Bankei: "Women tend to anger easily and stir up delusions, even over quite trivial things."⁶³ In *Mōanjō*, Suzuki Shōsan exclaims, "Women . . . stick to other women. Their clinging to self is deep, and they are spiteful and jealous. . . . A woman's nature, now, is twisted deep down. Her greed is enormous, her egotism profound, and she is drawn to bewilderment until she knows no right or wrong. Her words are crafty and her mind is shallow. What you do when you yield to her turns to karma for rebirth; when you oppose her she is your sworn enemy. Know, at any rate, that she is pitifully ignorant."⁶⁴

Institutional Self-Interest

Another main determinant of Zen social ethics has been institutional self-interest, especially as promoted historically through the symbiosis between Zen institutions and the "state." As reflected in broader Buddhist discourse on "Buddhism for the protection of the realm" (*gokoku Bukkyō*) and the "unity of the ruler's law and Buddha's law" (*ōbō-buppō ichinyō*), a close relationship with ruling powers is not an exclusively Zen phenomenon, but along with Tendai and Shingon Buddhism, Zen stands out with the kind of quid pro quo relationships with those in power that Kuroda Yoshio, Neil McMullin, Allan Grappard, and others have delineated. Overlapping with this symbiosis has been the broader social embeddedness of Zen institutions, especially since the establishment of the Tokugawa *danka*

(parishioner) system with funerary and memorial practices replete with moral cues about social harmony, elders, and ancestors. Insofar as they have devoted their efforts to achieving and preserving security (*anzen*) through symbiosis with ruling powers and embeddedness in Japanese society, Zen leaders have not maintained the critical distance or offered the kind of “prophetic critique” that some might expect — accurately or inaccurately — from these aspirants to bodhisattvahood with such perfections as wisdom, compassion, courage, and skillful interventions (Skt. *upāya*).

This symbiosis and embeddedness reached its apogee during WWII in the form of Imperial-Way Zen (*kōdō Zen*), a modern instance of “Buddhism for the protection of the country” (*gokoku Bukkyō*). Ichikawa and Brian Victoria both recognize this historical pattern in their analyses of Zen’s wartime political stances. Victoria writes, “The emergence of imperial-way Buddhism (*kōdō Bukkyō*) in the 1930s was not so much a new phenomenon as it was the systematization or codification of previous positions. Stated in Buddhist terms, imperial-way Buddhism represented the total and unequivocal subjugation of the Law of the Buddha [*buppō*] to the Law of the Sovereign [*ōbō*]. In political terms, it meant the subjugation of institutional Buddhism to the state and its policies.”⁶⁵ As indicated above, Ichikawa primarily attributes this subjugation, as part of the overall “accommodationism” he astutely identifies, to the *religious epistemology* constitutive of “peace of mind,” but I would argue that a more important cause has been the *institutional episteme* of Zen. That is to say, Imperial-Way Zen derives less from acritical, acquiescent ways of experiencing the world than from institutional self-interest as Zen and other Buddhist leaders, reeling from the questioning and suppression of Buddhism in the early Meiji period, worked to reclaim for Buddhism what they perceived to be its rightful role as the protector of the country and thereby help restore the privileged position that Buddhist institutions had previously held in Japanese society. Along these same lines I have disagreed elsewhere⁶⁶ with Victoria’s argument that the *Zen-bushidō* connection was the main cause of Imperial-Way Zen; from my perspective, Zen figures were jumping on an imperial bandwagon that had already been sent rolling by other actors and then, after jumping on, deploying rhetoric about the *Zen-bushidō* connection as an *ex post facto* justification (or simply an embellishment) of their support for Japanese imperialism.

Precepts

Given the numerous factors that have shaped Zen rhetoric about social ethics and the actual political stances of Zen, we are left with the question of the significance of the precepts and compassion in Zen. In terms of the precepts, there is no single, orthodox interpretation or application of the precepts, and their importance varies

across the different strands of Zen. While Eisai and Dōgen both cite the *Chanyuan qinggui* on the priority of the precepts and advance the notion of “the unity of Zen and the precepts” (*Zenkai-itchi*), they focus on different sets of precepts and offer divergent views of the exact roles of the precepts. And in Rinzai Zen after Eisai the precepts generally have received less treatment and carried less weight than in the Sōtō tradition, as reflected by the fact that precepts are rarely mentioned by recent Japanese Zen writers who operate largely within a Rinzai framework, whether Suzuki Daisetsu, Ichikawa Hakugen, or Abe Masao.

Even though Dōgen and other Sōtō Zen figures have placed a greater emphasis on the precepts, they have generally construed the precepts and the minutiae of Zen monastic life through the lens of *shushō-ittō* (the unity of practice and realization) as actions through which one can express one’s buddha-nature, as opposed to resources for thinking through broader moral issues. And as William Bodiford and David Riggs have pointed out, in rituals that involve the precepts, Sōtō Zen has focused on the reception of the precepts, seen as conferring enlightenment, rather than on the actual observance of the precepts.

Even if we assume that the precepts may nevertheless have played a role in shaping the behavior of individual monks and nuns through Zen history, they did not receive the kind of social exposition that contemporary Engaged Buddhists have given them and arguably did not function as the key determinant of Zen social stances.⁶⁷ That is to say, though recently the precepts have received a clear social expression in such formulations as the fourteen Tiep Hien Precepts out of Vietnam,⁶⁸ it is not at all clear that they have played a major role in shaping Japanese Zen formulations of social ethics or determining specific sociopolitical stances of Zen figures and institutions in Japanese history. One might tentatively conclude that in addition to their central place in ordinations and funerals, with all the economic and political dimensions thereof, precepts have primarily functioned — like the values sketched above — together with monastic codes to promote self-restraint and harmony in the monastic context, as opposed to being conceptualized and utilized by historical Zen figures as a template for broader social ethics.

This lack of conceptualization seems evident in Zen ideologues’ rhetoric of compassionate killing during WWII,⁶⁹ and such rhetoric prompts the question of the exact sort of ethic the precepts offer, of whether they have any deontological bite or are broad, malleable guidelines in an amorphous rule utilitarianism that can get trumped by other values in a de facto moral hierarchy, as seen in texts that justify breaking precepts if compassion is thereby served.⁷⁰ In the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, the historical Buddha states that in an earlier life he killed several brahmins about to slander the Dharma and thereby spared them the retribution that would have followed from their actions,⁷¹ and in his chapter on ethics in the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi* (Bodhisattva Stage), Asaṅga (c. 310–390) argues in utilitarian and teleolog-

ical modes that killing one person can be justified if it functions to save the lives of others or to prevent the potential murderer from falling into hell:

The bodhisattva may behold a robber or thief engaged in committing a great many deeds of immediate retribution, being about to murder many hundreds of magnificent beings . . . for the sake of a few material goods. Seeing it, he forms this thought in his mind: "If I take the life of this sentient being, I myself may be reborn as one of the creatures of hell. Better that I be reborn a creature of hell than that this living being, having committed a deed of immediate retribution, should go straight to hell." With such an attitude the bodhisattva ascertains that the thought is virtuous or indeterminate and then, feeling constrained, with only a thought of mercy for the consequence, he takes the life of that living being. There is no fault, but a spread of much merit.⁷²

These texts indicate that at the societal level, rather than interpreting the precepts strictly and literally, one should start with compassion as the touchstone for evaluating actions. This brings us to the question of the nature of compassion and the possibility that, as I wrote earlier, *depending on how one construes compassion*, some of the factors that have determined de facto Zen social ethics historically may stand in tension with compassion.

Compassion

As we turn to the question of the exact nature of compassion, it is worth noting that insofar as Zen Buddhists do in fact embody compassion, they have not necessarily attained it through zazen, some sort of intuitive wisdom, or a realization of emptiness as representatives like D.T. Suzuki and Abe Masao have claimed.⁷³ Skeptical of claims that an insight into the lack of separate, enduring essence automatically causes one to feel profoundly the suffering of others and to act reflexively to alleviate it, I would argue that whatever compassion Zen Buddhists have exhibited has in all likelihood been instilled less through such insight than through an array of messages conveyed by Zen monastic life. Despite Zen rhetoric of not relying on "words and letters," the tradition is replete with texts and sermons promoting compassion, and life in the *sōdō* includes frequent chanting of the *Shigu seigan* (Fourfold Great Vow), which begins with a commitment to liberate others and only then turns to eliminating one's own mental afflictions (*bonnō*). And despite rhetoric of not relying on anyone outside oneself (as conveyed by the oft-cited line in the *Linji-lu* about killing buddhas and patriarchs), veneration of, if not reliance on, the compassionate bodhisattva Kannon (Skt. Avalokiteśvara) is ubiquitous in Zen chanting: Kannon compassionately hears the travails of suffering human beings at the beginning of the *Heart Sūtra*, appears as a "great compassionate bodhisattva"

in the *Jūbutsu-myō* (The Names of the Ten Buddhas), and is celebrated in the *Enmei jikku kannon-gyō* (The Life-Extending Kannon Ten-Phrase Sūtra), the *Kannon wasan* (Song in Praise of Kannon), and, especially, in the “sūtra” dedicated to Kannon, the *Kannon-gyō* (ch. 25 of the *Lotus Sūtra*),⁷⁴ which includes the passage,

He of the true gaze, the pure gaze,
the gaze of great and encompassing wisdom,
the gaze of pity, the gaze of compassion —
constantly we implore him, constantly we look up in reverence.
His pure light, free of blemish,
is a sun of wisdom dispelling all darkness.
He can quell the wind and fire of misfortune
and everywhere bring light to the world.⁷⁵

But separate from how compassion might be acquired, how major of a role does it play in Zen ethics? Ichikawa argues that Zen is “deep in wisdom yet lacking in compassion,”⁷⁶ that “it is hard for great compassion for others as brothers and sisters (*dōbōteki taihi*) to emerge from an aloofly seeking mind.”⁷⁷ But is the situation that stark?

Perhaps Ichikawa is on to something, given the historical record, in which ostensibly awakened Zen masters took parochial political stances in support of Japanese militarism that seem in stark tension with, for example, the commitment expressed in the *Shigu seigan* “to liberate sentient beings, however innumerable.” But is compassion something that by itself would, if it were present, militate against such political stances? That is to say, we must consider whether compassion is a social-ethical category with any specificity, whether it necessarily legislates against stances that may appear to certain contemporary eyes “feudal,” “co-opted,” or “fascist.”

One might argue that Zen compassion concerns how a *rōshi* works with disciples in the monastery, not his or her political stances and actions, and thereby stands as a soteriological construct with little moral relevance. It may very well have been compassion that was being expressed when Juzhi (J. Gutei) cut off an acolyte’s finger and Nanquan (J. Nansen) cut a cat in half. (Not that those actions ever occurred. But, regardless of their historicity, these anecdotes do convey a message about means and ends.) In this respect, compassion may entail, as Kierkegaard put it, a “teleological suspension of the ethical” for the sake of higher-order religious objectives. Indeed, Ichikawa writes, “Compassion is the conscious making of vows and the unconscious — as in according with things as they come (*nin’nun*) — offering of suggestions, invitations, and encouragement intended to motivate people to break through the fundamental existential contradictions that they have encountered and with which they now struggle, and hence compassion is not a matter of

practicing justice and love for all humankind in the dimension of social humanism.”⁷⁸ Abe echoes this stance, viewing compassion as something “transmoral” when he writes that “transmoral compassionate activities and universal salvation are possible because they come spontaneously out of the unfathomable depth of Sunyata and because they are based on the great affirmation of things realized through wisdom.”⁷⁹ Of course, one might argue that awakening as the *telos* of the functioning of compassion is Zen’s *summum bonum*, but even if awakening is the supreme good, does that necessarily mean that compassion in and of itself is “ethical” (as opposed to being a non-moral instrument to a moral good)? And even if awakening is a “good” in the sense of being something of supreme value, is it necessarily something inherently “ethical,” something that falls properly in the arena of “ethics,” which such thinkers as David Little and Sumner Twiss have construed as dealing with the problem of cooperation?⁸⁰

Insofar as compassion aims primarily at awakening others, the criterion for action is what values, practices, political stances, and institutional arrangements lead to the greatest net decrease in suffering or, positively put, the greatest net increase in awakening, and along these lines one can construe compassion as not simply a soteriological concept but also a moral construct with implications for social ethics.⁸¹ Granted, some Zen figures have argued that awakening does not require any specific social, political, or economic conditions (a starving person and Bill Gates can equally wake up), and hence has little or nothing to do with social ethics or activism, but as scholars have pointed out in a range of Buddhist textual sources, other Buddhists have held that certain conditions promote or detract from awakening and the Buddha took the establishment or eradication of those conditions seriously. To date, virtually no Zen thinkers have engaged in rigorous analysis of what those conditions might be and, by extension, formulated a systematic Zen social ethic that articulates the connection between compassion as a response to the “religious” suffering of struggling with “fundamental existential contradictions” and compassion as a response to the “sociopolitical” suffering caused by social problems — whether poverty, discrimination, violence, or environmental degradation — that may detract from waking up.⁸² (Nor, for that matter, has any Zen thinker articulated a persuasive argument on a Zen basis for the intrinsic value of the alleviation of such social problems, separate from possible instrumental effects of that alleviation relative to awakening.)

Though Zen figures historically have not offered a systematic social ethic, they have not necessarily been silent on the question of the social and political ramifications of the construct of compassion. As engaged Buddhists themselves, Musō Soseki, Hakuin, and Suzuki Shōsan, with their worldview spanning past, present, and future (*sanze*), may very well have believed that compassion entailed letting their audiences know that it was in their best religious interest to accept their karmi-

cally determined lots in Japanese society and cultivate Confucian morality, that people most flourished and society was most peaceful and harmonious when people knew their place, accepted social distinctions, and rested assured that eventually they would awaken to the buddha-nature shared by all Japanese across class lines. It is likewise possible that the Zen masters Brian Victoria cites, who bought into and promulgated the imperial ideology — in all of its Confucian glory — and justified attacking other countries, did believe that the well-being of Asians, and by extension their political and religious liberation, would be served by what they perceived to be a compassionate use of force to liberate them from Western colonialism and ideologies that promoted the egoism so anathema to Zen. In postwar Japan, Ichikawa may have believed that he was revealing the true face of compassion when he drew on Marxist thought and biblical notions of justice to articulate a social ethic that would help Zen Buddhists find a critical, prophetic voice and avoid acquiescence in the future. And in parts of Asia, Europe, and North America, Engaged Buddhists are setting forth specific social formulations of compassion in conjunction with reflection on the precepts and Western liberal values of equality, democracy, and human rights.

Conclusion

Given the various social stances and political actions that have been taken in the name of compassion, perhaps we are compelled to conclude that while the construct of compassion may convey the message that Zen Buddhists should help others, it offers few specifics. That is to say, perhaps it would be best to view compassion as a kind of “theological virtue,” which, like the traditional Christian theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity (or love),⁸³ orients a Zen Buddhist’s feeling and volition but leaves a void insofar as the construct of compassion gives little specific guidance, especially when one dives into the chaotic, complex, and murky waters of politics, nationalism, and international relations. Without critical reflection on, for example, self-interest, conflicts of interest, power, ideology, and sociopolitical suffering in light of core Buddhist moral values — that is to say, unless Zen Buddhists were to construct a systemic and rigorous social ethic — self-interest or moral systems not necessarily congruent with Buddhist values can fill the void and grant compassion the specificity it lacks.

By constructing a rigorous ethic, Zen thinkers could begin to evaluate the degree to which historical formulations of Zen social ethics are congruent with compassion and other core values of Buddhism that are presumably best equipped to lead people to awakening. Granted, this prompts the question of which “Buddhism,” which ostensibly “core” values, and even if Zen ethicists were to agree that, for example, the first precept about non-harming is a core value that can provide

a Buddhist criterion for evaluating these formulations, including that of Imperial-Way Zen, they would still be left with the hermeneutical labor of determining how to construe the first precept, of clarifying (as much as possible, granting all the methodological challenges) whether it should be construed as an absolute, deontological prohibition that would point to radical pacifism, or as a flexible guideline that allows for self-defense, for killing that prevents greater killing (preemption), or for other exceptions.

Zen thinkers could also assess whether Engaged Zen Buddhists are retrieving Mahāyāna constructs like compassion and the precepts from the overlay of Confucianism and other East Asian cultural factors, or whether they are, consciously or otherwise, attempting to express certain non-Buddhist values and commitments in a Buddhist idiom. And to the extent that the latter may be the case, Zen ethicists could address the further question of whether Engaged Buddhists are engaging in acts of *eisegesis*, looking selectively in Buddhist texts and practices to find support for preexisting stances that they brought to their practice of Buddhism in the first place. Of course, bringing constructs and values to the tradition is nothing novel, for over many centuries East Asians have been integrating extra-Buddhist ideas and values — Daoist, Confucian, Shintō — into Zen. But Zen ethicists still need to consider whether Engaged Buddhists are developing Buddhism or distorting it, a possibility that has been broached in recent debates about whether it is possible to argue for human rights in a Buddhist context. Here, too, they encounter the question of what Buddhism is, of what, exactly, critics are referring to when they claim that Western Buddhists are distorting or watering down Buddhism.

Notes

¹For expediency's sake, I am using "Zen" here to refer to Chan, Sōn, Thien, and Zen, though my focus is on Japanese Zen.

²Abe writes, "Pure and free will revived in, and realized as the center of, Sunyata functions in terms of a 'vow' that is traditionally called *pranidhana*. It is a vow to save others, however innumerable they may be, as well as oneself, a vow in which the mind to seek enlightenment and the desire to save all sentient beings are dynamically one. This is because in Sunyata the wisdom aspect and the compassion aspect are always working together through Sunyata's self-emptying. . . . Just as Sunyata must empty itself and turn itself into a vow, it must . . . turn itself into 'act' or 'deed,' which is traditionally called *carita* or *carya*." *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation*, ed. by John B. Cobb, Jr. and Christopher Ives (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 1991), p. 58.

³Fred Eppsteiner, ed. *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Engaged Buddhism* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1985). In his preface for the 1988 edition, Eppsteiner expresses the hope that the book "will offer inspiration and insight to all who have entered 'The Path of Compassion'." (p. x).

⁴Robert A. F. Thurman, tr. *The Holy Teaching of Vimalakīrti: A Mahāyāna Scripture* (College Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), pp. 10–11.

⁵Ruth Fuller Sasaki, tr. *The Record of Lin-chi* (Kyoto: Institute for Zen Studies, 1975), p. 50.

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁷*Kairitsu-isen* can also be translated, "give priority to the precepts (*sīla*) and monastic code (*vinaya*)." Hee-jin Kim translates it as the "primacy of precepts" in *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 1987), p. 172.

⁸Yifa, *The Origins of Buddhist Monastic Codes in China: An Annotated Translation and Study of the Chanyuan qinggui* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2002), p. 114.

⁹Ōkubo Dōshū, ed., *Shōbō-genzō* (Tokyo: Chikuma Shobō, 1971), p. 619.

¹⁰Dōgen’s sixteen precepts (*jūroku-jōkai*) consist of the three refuges (in the Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha), the three pure precepts, and the ten major precepts of the *Fanwang-jing*. For a discussion of Dōgen’s view of the precepts and ordinations, see William M. Bodiford, *Sōtō Zen in Medieval Japan* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1993), pp. 169–173.

¹¹Royall Tyler, tr. *Selected Writings of Suzuki Shōsan*. Cornell University East Asia Papers, 13 (Ithaca: Cornell China-Japan Program, 1977), pp. 56–57.

¹²*Ichikawa Hakugen Chosakushū* (hereafter *IHC*), Vol. 2 (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1992), pp. 26–27.

¹³*IHC* 3:101.

¹⁴*IHC* 3:101. The next line in Ryōkan’s verse reads, “This is the wondrous method (*myōhō*; literally, wondrous law or Dharma) of eluding disaster.” Heinrich Dumoulin translates the verse, “When you meet with misfortune, it is good to meet with misfortune. When you die, it is good to die. This is the wonderful way of escaping misfortune,” and he notes that Ryōkan composed these lines in 1828, when the Niigata region, where Ryōkan was living, was hit by floods and a devastating earthquake. *Zen Buddhism: A History, Japan* (New York: Macmillan, 1990), p. 347.

¹⁵*IHC* 2:27.

¹⁶*IHC* 3:101.

¹⁷Translation by Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (New York: Grove Press, 1960), pp. 77–78.

¹⁸Quoted by Ichikawa in *IHC* 2:46. This translation of Dōgen’s statement is by Yūhō Yokoi and Daizen Victoria, *Zen Master Dōgen: An Introduction with Selected Writings* (New York: Weatherhill, 1976), p. 46.

¹⁹*IHC* 2:13.

²⁰This is second of the four practices set forth by Bodhidharma in the *Erru sixing lun* (J. *Ni’nyū shigyō ron*; Treatise on the Two Entrances and Four Practices). Jeffrey Broughton renders this expression the “practice of following conditions” in *The Bodhidharma Anthology: The Earliest Records of Zen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 10.

²¹*IHC* 1:504. This translation is an adaptation of Broughton’s in *The Bodhidharma*

Anthology, p. 79.

²²*The Record of Lin-chi*, pp. 9–10, adapted here. For the phrase on karma, I have followed a suggestion from Youru Wang to adapt Burton Watson’s rendering in *The Teachings of Master Lin-chi* (Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1993), p. 26.

²³Ichikawa also uses the expressions *taikan*, true insight or insight into truth, and *kūkan*, empty insight or insight into emptiness (Skt. *śūnyatā*).

²⁴*IHC* 2:27.

²⁵*IHC* 3:12.

²⁶*IHC* 3:101.

²⁷*IHC* 2:46–47.

²⁸*IHC* 3:456.

²⁹*IHC* 1:482.

³⁰See his article, “*Zen no kokōsei ni tsuite*” (On the Solitary Aloofness of Zen), *IHC* 1:482–510.

³¹*IHC* 4:47.

³²*IHC* 4:47. Specifically, Ichikawa applies the label “accommodation of the times” (*taisei junno*) to Buddhist leaders’ joining conservatives in criticizing the diplomatic efforts of Foreign Minister Shidehara Kijūrō in the late 1920s and early 1930s as “weak” (*nanjaku*). *IHC* 4:31.

³³Ichikawa Hakugen, “The Problem of Buddhist Socialism in Japan,” *Japanese Religions* 6/3 (August 1970): 16–17. I partially adapted the translation on the basis of the original Japanese in *Bukkyōsha no sensō-sekinin* (*IHC* 3:130).

³⁴Philip Yampolsky refers to *Segyō-uta* as a “song in praise of charity, dealing with Buddhism and common morality, and meant for the populace in general.” *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 232.

³⁵*IHC* 2:452. R.D.M. Shaw, tr. *The Embossed Tea Kettle: Orate Gama and Other Works of Hakuin Zenji, The Zen Reformer of the Eighteenth Century in*

Japan (London: George Allen & Allen, 1963), pp. 179 and 181; partially adapted here. Ichikawa criticizes Hakuin for (1) lacking historical awareness, due in part to the cyclical notion of time that Hakuin conveys with such expressions as “the ways of the world of prospering and withering, flourishing and decaying”; (2) engaging in an analogical way of thinking that equates the order and laws of nature with the structures and laws of society; (3) linking goodness to happiness, and evil to unhappiness, through the theory of karma, and evaluating the rich as morally superior and the poor as morally inferior; (4) embracing the calculating thought that good acts will bring about happiness in the next lifetime; (5) advocating satisfaction with what one has, contentment with one’s status, and gratitude toward others in Japan’s hierarchical society. See *IHC* 2:453–454.

³⁶*IHC* 1:495. For the context, see Satō Taishun, ed., *Muchū-mondō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1976), p. 15.

³⁷*IHC* 1:506–507. Tyler, *Selected Writings of Suzuki Shōsan*, p. 71; partially adapted here.

³⁸Tyler, *Selected Writings of Suzuki Shōsan*, p. 35.

³⁹The Japanese compound “*shabetsu*” (ordinarily pronounced “*sabetsu*”) can also be translated as “discrimination(s).”

⁴⁰Ichikawa’s comments foreshadow later criticisms by advocates of Critical Buddhism (*Hihan Bukkyō*).

⁴¹The term in Japanese is *musō*, which can also be rendered non-confrontation, non-competition, or no struggling.

⁴²Ichikawa, “The Problem of Buddhist Socialism in Japan,” *Japanese Religions* 6/3 (August 1970), p. 17. I partially adapted the translation on the basis of the Japanese in *Bukkyōsha no sensō-sekinin* (*IHC* 3:130).

⁴³*IHC* 2:468.

⁴⁴*IHC* 3:130.

⁴⁵I am looking at the moral signals conveyed by Zen monastic practice, not the degree to which they are actually assimilated, embodied, and put into practice by individual Zen Buddhists.

⁴⁶Granted, one could argue that the institution as a whole has possessed significant wealth with its tax-free real estate, cultural artifacts, and other assets, and that

Zen simplicity, like the simplicity of the tea ceremonies performed by the masters of the Urasenke and Omotesenke schools, comes with a hefty price tag.

⁴⁷D.T. Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, p. 13; partially adapted here.

⁴⁸Relative to its importance in Japanese Buddhism, *on* has received insufficient attention in the English literature.

⁴⁹See Tyler, *Selected Writings of Suzuki Shōsan*, pp. 37–38.

⁵⁰On the *Daruma-ki* held every October 5.

⁵¹Commemorated on the *Kaisan-ki*.

⁵²In conjunction with a reference to the “four debts,” the *Daisegaki* (Prayer on the Occasion of Feeding the Hungry Ghosts) includes the sentence, “By the practice of this meritorious deed we pray that we repay what we owe our parents, who have done all they could for our sakes.” Suzuki, *Manual of Zen Buddhism*, p. 18. For the Japanese, see the *Rinzai Zenshō shintō nikka yōshū* (Kyoto: Nagata Bunshōdo, 1989), p. 20.

⁵³See the mealtime *Gokanmon* (Verses on the Five Contemplations) in *Rinzai Zenshō shintō nikka yōshū*, p. 63–64.

⁵⁴In the *Shukushin* on the first and fifteenth of the month.

⁵⁵In the case of Myōshin-ji, Emperor Hanazono, whose memorial service is performed November 10–11. T. Griffith Foulk, “The Zen Institution in Modern Japan,” in Kenneth Kraft, ed., *Zen: Tradition and Transition* (New York: Grove Press, 1988), p. 161.

⁵⁶William Scott Wilson, tr., *The Unfettered Mind: Writings of the Zen Master to the Sword Master* (New York: Kodansha International, 1986), p. 49; partially adapted here.

⁵⁷*IHC* 1:497. This translation of Hakuin is by Philip B. Yampolsky, tr., *The Zen Master Hakuin: Selected Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 53; partially adapted here.

⁵⁸Tyler, *Selected Writings of Suzuki Shōsan*, p. 32.

⁵⁹See Araki Kengo, *Bukkyō to Jukyō* (Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 1993).

⁶⁰See Morinaga Shūkō, ed., *Zenkai ichiran* (Tokyo: Hakuju-sha, 1987).

⁶¹In *Zen at War*, Brian Victoria translates a number of statements by Zen masters celebrating Confucian values, and I sketch contours of Buddhist engagement with the imperial ideology in “The Mobilization of Doctrine: Buddhist Contributions to Imperial Ideology in Modern Japan.” *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 26/1–2 (Spring 1999).

⁶²See, for example, Ōgoshi Aiko, Minamoto Junko, and Yamashita Akiko, eds., *Seisabetsu suru Bukkyō: feminizumu kara no kokuhatsu* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1990); Minamoto Junko, *Feminizumu ga tou ōken to Bukkyō*, (Tokyo: San’ichi shobō, 1998); Paula Kane Robinson Arai, *Women Living Zen: Japanese Sōtō Buddhist Nuns* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and Bernard Faure, *The Power of Denial: Buddhism, Purity, and Gender* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

⁶³Peter Haskel, tr. *Bankei Zen: Translations from the Record of Bankei* (New York: Grove Press, 1984), p. 55.

⁶⁴Tyler, *Selected Writings of Suzuki Shōsan*, pp. 46–47.

⁶⁵Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997), p. 79.

⁶⁶See Christopher Ives, “Protect the Dharma, Protect the Country: Buddhist War Responsibility and Social Ethics,” *The Eastern Buddhist*, XXXIII/2 (2001).

⁶⁷One other issue that arises here is the degree to which actual reflection on the role of the precepts in an individual’s immediate actions, not to mention in a possible social ethic, has been trumped historically by the notions of *musōkai*, the formless precepts, *musō-shinji-kai*, the formless mind-ground precepts, and *isshin-kai*, the one-mind precepts, which connote in part that rather than focusing on the 5, 10, 58, or 250 precepts, one should focus on zazen and awakening to formless mind (*shin*), one’s buddha-nature, and that once one does awaken, all the precepts will be fulfilled naturally and spontaneously.

⁶⁸See Thich Nhat Hanh, *Interbeing: Fourteen Guidelines for Engaged Buddhism*, 3rd ed. (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1998).

⁶⁹As sketched by Victoria in *Zen at War*.

⁷⁰I address these questions in “Dharma and Destruction: Buddhist Institutions and Violence,” *Contagion* 9 (Spring 2002).

⁷¹Cited by Paul Williams, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (New York: Routledge, 1989), p. 161.

⁷²Mark Tatz, tr., *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics with the Commentary of Tsong-Kha-Pa, The Basic Path to Awakening, the Complete Bodhisattva* (Lewiston NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), pp. 70–72.

⁷³In his writings, Ichikawa criticizes D.T. Suzuki's political stances from the Meiji period onward, yet his conception of Zen seems indebted to Suzuki's representations of the tradition, and this debt constitutes one of the weak points of his exposition. That is to say, his analysis of Zen ethics tends to privilege certain psychological or "spiritual" states, reflective of D.T. Suzuki's emphasis on *satori* (and "prajna-intuition"). In expounding on the "subjectivity of a Zen person" in terms of peace of mind and its contemplative perspective on things, Ichikawa, while otherwise critical of Suzuki, appears to have bought into Suzuki's representations of Zen as grounded in a unique epistemology. This idealist orientation seems an ironic move for a social critic influenced by Marx's materialist slant on history.

⁷⁴These texts all appear in the *Rinzai Zenshō shintō nikka yōshū*.

⁷⁵Burton Watson, tr. *The Lotus Sutra* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), p. 305.

⁷⁶*IHC* 1:500.

⁷⁷*IHC* 2:439

⁷⁸*IHC* 2:439.

⁷⁹*The Emptying God*, p. 33.

⁸⁰David Little and Sumner B. Twiss, *Comparative Religious Ethics: A New Method* (New York: Harper Row, 1978), p. 28.

⁸¹One might argue that Mahāyāna ethics, while exhibiting elements of deontology (a duty to act like a bodhisattva to help others) and virtue ethics (striving for Buddhistic fulfillment through the cultivation of various perfections (Skt. *pāramitā*)), seem most akin to utilitarianism, with the utility being liberation from suffering, and the goal being the greatest net liberation of the greatest number.

⁸²I began to analyze those conditions, articulate that connection, and formulate a Zen social ethic in *Zen Awakening and Society* (London and Honolulu: Macmillan and University of Hawai'i Press, 1992).

⁸³Perhaps the Buddhist triad is wisdom, compassion, and non-harming, or, in the case of Thich Nhat Hanh, mindfulness, compassion (smiling?), and being peace(ful). Buddhist ethicists need to follow the lead of Christian thinkers whose discernment of the limitations of theological virtues has led them to wrestle with the question of how one should respond to injustice and whether violence is ever justifiable as part of one's response. Reinhold Niebuhr's criticism of pacifists as naïve may be illuminating in this regard, as was the debate among Buddhists following 9/11 about Buddhistically justifiable uses of violence.