

# COMPARATIVE INVESTIGATIONS OF DAISETSU SUZUKI'S PURE LAND BUDDHISM AND EMERSON'S RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

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*Abstract:* Daisetsu Suzuki was the leading figure in the popularization of Zen in the West in the mid-20th century. More accurately, his Mahāyāna Buddhist thought is constituted by Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism. Suzuki shows a tendency to admit an indwelling presence endowed with positive attributes of “Buddha-womb” and the Amida-Buddha (the Buddha of Infinite Light and Life), which can be considered to have a remembrance of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s “God-within” and “Over-soul.” In this article, by making comparative investigations of Suzuki’s Pure Land Buddhism and Emerson’s Transcendentalist religious thought, the remarkable similarities and essential differences between their thoughts will be clarified by examining the following contrasting religious and intellectual conceptions: the indwelling of “Amida-Buddha” and “Over-soul,” experience of “enlightenment” and “unity with God,” theory of “logic of simultaneous identification and differentiation” and “correspondence,” and consciousness of “reisei” and “religious sentiment.”

## I. Introduction

Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (鈴木大拙 1870–1966) was the leading figure in the popularization of Zen in the West in the mid-20th century. Between 2016, 50 years after his death, and 2020, 150 years after his birth, he came into the spotlight again. The reiterated publication of *Selected Works of D. T. Suzuki* in the United States was epoch-making (Suzuki, 2015–20). Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803–82), an American essayist, poet, and philosopher, has also increasingly been reevaluated from a modern East-West cultural and religious interchange perspective. Undoubtedly, Suzuki was a world-renowned Japanese Zen Buddhist teacher and scholar, but, more accurately, his Mahāyāna Buddhist thought is constituted by both Zen Buddhism and Pure Land Buddhism. Suzuki was born in 1870 in Kanazawa, a city in the Hokuriku region facing the Sea of Japan, where the Buddhist religious atmosphere is still evident. His family belonged to a temple of the Rinzai sect of Zen Buddhism. However, his mother Masu, who secretly believed in Pure Land Buddhism, exerted a religious influence upon him in his childhood, which marked his long and abiding interest in Pure Land Buddhism throughout his lifetime. He published several books and articles on Pure Land Buddhism, such as *Amida Butsu* (Amida Buddha, 1906), *Principal Teachings of the True Sect of Pure Land* (1910), *The Life of Shonin Shinran* (1911), *Jōdokei shisōron* (Treatises on Pure Land Buddhist thought, 1942), *Nihon teiki reisei* (Japanese Spirituality, 1944), *A Miscellany on the Shin Teaching of Buddhism* (1949) and *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (1957). After moving to Kyoto in 1921 and starting working as a professor in the *Jōdo Shin* (True Pure Land)-affiliated Otani University, he had the

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opportunity to advance his scholarly work on Pure Land Buddhism steadily. There, he established the Eastern Buddhist Society with like-minded scholars and issued *The Eastern Buddhist* quarterly editing with Beatrice A. Lane, his American wife.

This article presents comparative investigations into Suzuki's Pure Land Buddhism and Emerson's Transcendentalist religious thought. It is easy to recognize many noticeable affinities between Suzuki's and Emerson's careers, thoughts, and experiences in their religious lives. Both freed themselves from the existing religious institutions and, much influenced by European and Eastern views and religions, went beyond Japan and New England's regional and cultural boundaries. Suzuki—neither a monk belonging to a specific temple nor a specialized researcher of Buddhism—succeeded in reconstructing antiquated Buddhism into one well adaptable to modern times by determining the commonalities of Mahāyāna Buddhism and European and American Christian mysticism. Emerson resigned from the Unitarian ministry and presented his own Transcendentalist thought for a more broadly democratized approach—as a lecturer, poet, and literary man—to the contemporary increasing middle-class citizens. Both of them had mystic experiences of *kenshō* (見性 enlightenment or *satori*) or the unification with God and nature by seeking the spring of universal spirituality within their innermost minds, and they both presented such concepts comprising the transcendental and super-personal Being as “Amida-Buddha” (阿弥陀仏) and “Over-soul.”

The author of this paper attempts to clarify the remarkable similarities and essential differences between their thoughts by examining the following contrasting religious and intellectual conceptions: the indwelling of “Amida-Buddha” and “Over-soul,” experience of “enlightenment” and “unity with God,” theory of “logic of simultaneous identification and differentiation” and “correspondence,” and consciousness of “*reisei*” and “religious sentiment.” To the author's knowledge, comparative investigations between Suzuki's Pure Land Buddhism and Emerson's Transcendentalist religious thought have not received much scholarly attention yet. Hence, the author believes taking notice of these remarkable similarities is an attempt genuinely worth undertaking from the viewpoint of the cultural and philosophical interrelation across the Pacific.

## II. Indwelling of “Amida-Buddha” and “Over-soul”

In his sermon, Emerson preached: “Know you not that you are the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” (Emerson, 1989–92, 3:90). In his journal, he wrote with the excitement of his discovery of “God-within” in his inner soul in his poem “Know Thyself”: “Clouded and shrouded there doth sit the Infinite embosomed in a man” (Emerson, 1960–82, 3:291). Quaker's “Inner Light,” and the power of God constantly working within every human mind, played a crucial influence on the development of Emerson's thought on “God-within.” Emerson seems to have been influenced by the Quaker doctrine of the Inward Christ, which the Puritans repudiated as heretical. Quakers believed that “pre-existent Logos” works as saving power in every human mind and even in nature and they placed greater importance on the “eternal Christ” than the “historical Christ” (Irie, 1967, 44–47).

Emerson's conception of “God-within” can be considered to be analogous to the doctrine of “Buddha-womb” or “Buddha-nature,” in which Suzuki's Pure Land

Buddhist thought is grounded. According to this doctrine, the actual mind is in a defiled state because of worldly desires, whereas the original mind houses the unblemished and pure “Buddha-womb” (Skt.: tathāgata 如来藏). In 1844, Emerson also had the opportunity to take an interest in Buddhism. He came into contact with the word “tathāgata” when he read “The Preaching of Buddha” in the *Dial*: “The Tathāgata is equal and not unequal towards all beings when it is the question to convert them” (The *Dial*, 1961, vol. 4, no. 3, 392). Thus, both Emerson and Suzuki presented such concepts of “indwelling” potentiality as “God-within” and “Buddha-womb” or “Buddha-nature” (仏性), which can partly explain why Suzuki finding the remarkable affinity between his views of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Emersonian Transcendentalism, felt a great intimacy with Emerson throughout his life. In his college days, Suzuki turned to reading Emerson’s essays even before going over to America in 1897, and the first essay he wrote was “*Emāson no zengaku ron*” (Zen theory of Emerson, 1896).<sup>1</sup>

Later, in his book *Zen and Japanese Culture* (1959), Suzuki confessed that he deeply sympathized with Emerson’s thoughts: “I am now beginning to understand the meaning of the deep impressions made upon me while reading Emerson in my college days. I was not then studying the American philosopher but digging down into the recesses of my own thought, which had been there ever since the awakening of Oriental consciousness. That was the reason why I had felt so familiar with him—I was, indeed, making acquaintance with myself then” (Suzuki, 1959, 343–44). Furthermore, after about fifty years, at the age of 77, Suzuki recollected his first experience reading Emerson’s essay “Self-Reliance” in his younger days: “I was deeply moved when I first read this essay. This is self-reliance! This is true freedom! This is true independence! We don’t need to feel mean only because we are little. We can express anything we have regardless of our great or little ability. This is sincerity! In this way, I was deeply impressed” (Suzuki, 1997, 277). The author now sets out to examine the unification of Suzuki’s “individual spirit” and “supra-individual spirit” and that of Emerson’s “soul” and “Over-soul.” In his book *Japanese Spirituality*, Suzuki writes about the relation between the ego-self as the individual and the Amida-Buddha as the supra-individual as follows:

The individual spirit begins a relation straightforward to the supra-individual spirit. In no case does it allow intermediaries. In this insight the supra-individual spirit is transformed into the individual. The spirituality of the individual is the spirituality of the individual and yet it is not the spirituality of the individual (Suzuki, 1988, 115).

Ordinarily, to become the master of Namu-Amida-Butsu would necessitate becoming Namu-Amida-Butsu itself. Which is to say that oneself and Namu-Amida-Butsu must not be two. . . . To “become Namu-Amida-Butsu” is for one to become one’s own master. It means casting away the ego-self of the individual, thereby awakening to a spirituality which transcends the ego-self (*Ibid.*, 156).

Suzuki’s “Amida-Buddha” can be compared with Emerson’s “Over-soul.” Emerson started his career as a minister of the Unitarian church, which denounced the essential orthodox Christian doctrines of Trinity, Original Sin, and Predestination.

<sup>1</sup> Suzuki, *Zen shū* 14 in *Suzuki Daisetsu zenshū*, enlarged edition, 1:17–25.

However, he freed himself from the Unitarian church system by resigning from the ministry and developed his thought as a self-reliant public lecturer, writer, and poet. He came to embrace his Transcendentalist concept of “Over-soul,” to be distinct from the personal God as “Father” and “Lord,” and believed in divine immanence and omnipresence. In his essay “The Over-Soul” (1841), Emerson writes:

That Unity, that Over-Soul, within which every man’s particular being is contained and made one with all other; ... We live in succession, in division, in parts, in particles. Meantime within man is the soul of the whole; the wise silence; the universal beauty, to which every part and particle is equally related; the eternal One (Emerson, 1971–2013, 2:160).

The soul gives itself alone, original, and pure, to the Lonely, Original and Pure, ... It is not wise, but it sees through all things. It is not called religious, ... Behold, it saith, I am born into the great, the universal mind. I the imperfect, adore my own Perfect (*Ibid.*, 174–75).

Suzuki uses the expression “the great spirit of the universe,” a concept comprising the universal and super-personal Being just like Emerson’s “Over-soul”: “The great spirit of the universe, the supra-individual Person, reflects itself in those persons endowed with the greatest receptivity of all who live and die ... . Therefore, a great individual spirit may be said to be a mirror in which the universal spirit, the transcendent spirit, is reflected” (Suzuki, 1988, 102–03). In the above citations, Suzuki’s “individual spirit” is equivalent to Emerson’s “soul” and “I the imperfect,” and his “supra-individual spirit,” “spirit of the universe,” and the Amida-Buddha are equivalent to Emerson’s “Unity,” “the soul of the whole,” “the great universal mind,” and “my own Perfect.” Suzuki’s idea that “supra-individual spirit” as the Amida-Buddha is immanent within “individual spirit” and his unification of the two spirits or souls can also be found in Emerson, as is written in his journal: “God is the substratum of all souls. ... It is ... God only within that worships God of the Universe” (Emerson, 1960–82, 3:213).

Moreover, regarding the two kinds of the self—the outer, superficial, and selfish self, and the inner, original, and universal one—Emerson states: “I recognize the distinction of the outer and the inner self, —of the double consciousness, ... there are two selves, one which does or approves that which the other does not and approves not; or within this erring, passionate, mortal self, sits a supreme, calm, immortal mind” (Emerson, 1989–92, 4:215). Suzuki likewise explains the idea of the two kinds of the self, the outer self and inner self, which is similar to that of Emerson: “Our outer self is working only superficially over the surface of our consciousness, and this superficiality results from the separation of our self. When we think ‘This is myself,’ or ‘This is my inner self,’ our self comes to be divided into two, the self and its opposition. When we are conscious of ourselves, the self that is thinking and the self that are being thought—subject and object—come into being. ... The Amida-Buddha enters into our inner self, and becomes united with our self. That is to say, our self finds itself in the Amida-Buddha. And when we find ourselves in the Amida-Buddha, we dwell in the Pure Land. ... Just by reciting Namu-Amida-Butsu once, we find the inner self of our own. Amida-Buddha can be concluded to be our innermost self itself” (Suzuki, 1983, 34, 38–39).

### III. Experience of “Enlightenment” and “Unity with God”

Suzuki believes that the unification of the innermost self and the Amida-Buddha can be accomplished by reciting “Namu-Amida-Butsu” (念仏 *Nembutsu*): uttering the sacred name of the Buddha with hearted devotion, and states the following: “For this reason repeating ‘Namu-Amida-Butsu’ is nothing else but Amida calling out to himself through himself. The ‘oneself’ calling out is the spirituality that transcends the self; the ‘oneself’ who is called upon is the individual himself. When Amida thus halves himself the materialization of the Original Prayer occurs. When the Prayer is manifested the attainment of faith arrives. ... One must say the Nembutsu after attaining faith, as a Nembutsu of gratitude for the Buddha’s favor. Mere thankfulness or reverence is not expressive of one’s regard for his favor. After attainment of faith there must be uttering of Nembutsu, which is itself a praising of the Buddha’s favor. ... Nembutsu cannot be forced from without, it must emerge naturally” (Suzuki, 1988, 156–57).

Suzuki’s *Nembutsu* can be compared with Emerson’s “prayer.” Emerson’s Self-reliance entails the incorporation of the self and God-within, thus overcoming the outer and superficial self, which leads directly to faith in God, that is, God-reliance. In his journal, he writes about the manifestation of God-within into the human soul through praying with hearted devotion: “It teaches that Prayer does not at all consist in words but wholly is a state of mind. Consider it also in connexion with the doctrine that God is in the Soul of man, and we shall make another step towards truth. ... , but precisely in proportion as a man comes in conformity with God, he asks right things, or things which God wills, and which therefore are done. And when he is wholly godly or the unfolding God within him has subdued all to himself, then he asks what God wills and nothing else and all his prayers are granted” (Emerson, 1960–82, 3:308). Suzuki thinks of the Amida-Buddha from the viewpoint of its spiritual operation. Emerson also emphasizes human will and life and the spiritual working of God-within and considers God, the human soul, and natural things to be changing, flowing, and growing. In this respect, despite the difference in their religious backgrounds, Suzuki and Emerson express strikingly similar ideas about the unification of the outer and inner selves.

However, Suzuki insists that only by reciting *Nembutsu* the identification of the outer and inner self should be accomplished. To elaborate, reciting the Buddha’s name works as *ki* (機 recipient) of the Dharma (法 Law) to ward off the conceptual delusion that a separation exists between the self and the Amida-Buddha and to ultimately come to the spiritual breakthrough that the self is the Amida-Buddha itself. Conversely, a dualistic opposition and conflict can be observed in Emerson’s thought between the outer and inner aspects of the self; furthermore, to be incorporated with the Over-soul, the outer, superficial, and selfish self need to be overcome entirely. Although he preaches that the unification with the transcendental Being can be accomplished through the abandonment of the superficial self, his prayer for the divine manifestation beyond human power is not so thoroughgoing as that of a Pure Land Buddhist devotee altogether trusting in the mysterious working of the Amida-Buddha’s “other-power.” Emerson’s thought is grounded on a dualistic structure, with God-within intervening between the outer self and the Over-soul, as is written in his journal: “God in us worships God” (Emerson, 1960–82, 3:273). His prayer and faith, therefore, can be distinguished from Suzuki’s *shin* (faith), which disapproves of regarding the Amida-Buddha as

the object opposing the subject. While Suzuki emphasizes the instantaneous disappearance of the separation between the outer and inner selves, Emerson focuses on the spiritual process of the aspiration and growth of the self toward the universal “Over-soul.”

In his book *Japanese Spirituality*, Suzuki writes about the religious experience of attaining spiritual awakening through the identification of the self with the Amida-Buddha: “Since the *muga* of Buddhism is natural accordance with the way (realization, enlightenment) that materializes in spiritual insight, one is utterly free and unrestrained in moving and in being moved, and therein the world of naturalness unfolds itself. ... In Buddhism, the opposition of self and other is an opposition, but the operation of something beyond opposition is intuitively known (call this something spiritual insight), and from this insight another look is taken at the world of the opposition. ... Through the working of this insight the world of opposition ... comes to have no room for the problems of obedience or submission, helpless servitude, or the oppression of absolute power. ... All things in the world are subject to the so-called Law of Dependent Origination” (Suzuki, 1988, 123). *Jinen honi* (自然法爾 natural accordance with the way) is the concept that Shinran (親鸞 1173–1262), the founder of the Japanese *Jōdo Shinshū* (浄土真宗 True Pure Land School), ultimately embraced during his latest years. *Jinen* (naturalness) denotes the essential nature of reality and the true mode of things freed from human artificiality and self-willed intention. This spiritual state can be attained by entirely abandoning adhering to the self and things and recovering one’s perfect freedom. *Hōni* (law of dependent origination) means that the Amida-Buddha has the mysterious workings of the Original Vow to save all sentient beings (Suzuki, 1975, 154–56).

In his book *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, Suzuki writes: “To think that there is the self is the start of all errors and evils. Ignorance is at the root of all things that go wrong. ... According to Buddhism, the world is the network of karmic interrelationships and there is no agent behind the net who holds it for his willful management. To have an insight into the truth of the actuality of things, the first requisite is to dispel the cloud of ignorance” (*Ibid.*, 136–37). According to the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of *muga* (無我 no-self), the self is collectively constituted of five aggregates or components: form, feelings, perception, volitional factors, and consciousness (Keown, 2004, 270). Ignorance is adhering to the self and things, which generates evil desires and passions. Therefore, surrendering to the mysterious workings of the Original Vow (本願) of the Amida-Buddha by reciting “Namu-Amida-Butsu” is the only way to *ōjō* (往生 be reborn) in the Land of Bliss. The attainment of the state of no-mind and the mystic identity of *ki*, a mortal, sinful being, and *hō* (law), the Amida, ultimately leads to enlightenment or perfect spiritual self-awakening. Concerning his religious experience, Emerson writes the following in his journal and sermon:

To reflect is to receive truth immediately from God without any medium. That is living faith. ... It will come only to one who feels that he is nothing. It is by yourself without ambassador that God speaks to you (Emerson, 1960–82, 3:279).

There is a revolution of religious opinion taking effect around us, as it seems to me the greatest of all revolutions which have ever occurred, that, namely, which has separated the individual from the whole world and made him demand a faith

satisfactory to his own proper nature, ... Man begins to hear a voice in reply that fills the heavens and the earth, saying, that God is within him, that *there* is the celestial host. I find that this amazing revelation of my immediate relation to God, is a solution to all the doubts that oppressed me (Emerson, 1989–92, 4:215).

The above citations directly express his surprise at finding God-within in his inner soul and his experience of being immediately incorporated with God. According to the orthodox Christian doctrine, humans and all things in the world are created by God. Thus, a discontinuity exists between the transcendence of God as the absolute Creator and the finitude of human beings and nature as his creatures. However, in Emerson's Transcendentalist thought, God as the Over-soul is considered to constantly manifest itself in humans and nature rather than creating them one-sidedly. Therefore, there is a continuity between the Over-soul, human beings, and nature, with no distinction between cause and effect and upper and lower. In Emerson's understanding, humans are required to abandon, transcend, and conquer the superficial self through utter obedience to the indwelling God-within to attain unification with the God of the Universe. In his essay "The Over-Soul," he explicitly expresses the idea of the manifestation of God into the human mind: "We distinguish the announcements of the soul, its manifestations of its own nature, by the term *Revelation*. These are always attended by the emotion of the sublime. For this communication is an influx of the Divine mind into our mind" (Emerson, 1971–2013, 2:166).

Emerson dismisses the absolute authority of Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God and elevates "moral truth" above Jesus as the core of his Christian faith. He preaches that Jesus is merely a mediator between God and human beings who embodies the moral truth inherent in every person to the highest degree and that it is not Jesus but people themselves—united with the truth taught by Jesus—who save themselves. In "Divinity School Address" (1838), he states, stressing the importance of facing God directly by relying not on Jesus but one's innermost self: "Let me admonish you, first of all, to go alone; to refuse the good models, even those most sacred in the imagination of men, and dare to love God without mediator or veil" (*Ibid.*, 1:90).

From the investigation hitherto conducted, striking similarities between Suzuki's and Emerson's religious experiences and thoughts have been made more evident. First, they develop their reflections based on their own religious experiences of being directly identified with the Amida-Buddha or God without any mediator, as Suzuki clearly expresses: "Repeating "Namu-Amida-Butsu" is nothing else but Amida calling out to himself through himself," and Emerson: "To reflect is to receive truth immediately from God without any medium." Just as Emerson experienced the identification with God, from around 1830 to 1831, while he served as a pastor at a Unitarian church, Suzuki may have experienced *kenshō* (enlightenment or *satori*) by viewing his original and pure nature inherent in his mind while practicing Zen at the Engakuji monastery in Kamakura in 1896 before departing for America. He writes:

When, near the main temple gate, I started to descend, suddenly it was as if I forgot myself or, rather, I was not totally forgotten. However, the appearance of the different length shadows of the trees in the moonlight was just like a picture. I was a person in the picture and there was no separation between men and the trees. The trees were me (Suzuki, 2015–20, 1: "introduction," xxiii).

#### IV. Theory of “Logic of Simultaneous Identification and Differentiation” and “Correspondence”

In his book *Jōdokei shisōron*, Suzuki writes that *shaba* (娑婆 this world of suffering), the human or defiled world, *jigoku* (地獄 hell), and the world of sensation and intellect, stand in direct contrast to *gokuraku* (極樂 land of bliss), *Jōdo* (淨土 Pure Land), Paradise, and the world of spirituality. He adds that the Pure Land transforms into the *shaba* world, which, however, is not simply a self-identity of the two but is identical but different, continuous but discontinuous, and conforming but separating, with the defiled *shaba* world and the Pure Land facing and reflecting each other as a mirror. He explains that this relation between *gokuraku* and *shaba* is based on his trademark theory of *sokuhi no ronri* (即非の論理 logic of simultaneous identification and differentiation). “A is not A, therefore A is A” is logically impossible, because the affirmation is not made possible by the negation. This logic is reflected by the doctrine of the *Kegon* (華嚴 Flowery Splendor) school of Buddhism, which preaches that the realm of Dharma connotes the Universe and that the myriad things in the phenomenal world, mutually interacting and interpenetrating, form a perfect harmony (Suzuki, 2016, 5–35).

Suzuki writes, “*Jōdo* is a world of light and everything is clarified there. The great light of the Amida-Buddha hides everything. The *jōdo* is all over painted with the color of the Amida-Buddha. ... In contrast, the *shaba* is dark and full of shade and darkness. ... The *shaba* is a world of pitch-darkness, and the light of grace isn’t so all-pervading as in the *jōdo*” (*Ibid.*, 59–60), and states that according to the Pure Land Buddhist Sutras, *jōdo* faces the *shaba* as the exact opposite. At the same time, he writes, “The *jōdo* cannot exist without The *shaba*” (283), and “The *jōdo* doesn’t stand aloof over the *shaba*, but comes to be born out of the *shaba* itself” (302). He proceeds by arguing that Pure Land Buddhism teaches that only in this world of life and death filled with earthly desires and passions do humans have the possibility of freeing themselves from the bondage of karmic cause and effect and of ultimately attaining Nirvana or enlightenment to be reborn into the *gokuraku*, by awakening to the aspiration for Buddhahood and believing in the great compassion of the Amida-Buddha.

Next, the author sets out to make a comparative examination between Emerson’s theory of “correspondence” and Suzuki’s “logic of simultaneous identification and differentiation.” In his book *Nature* (1836), Emerson writes the following on the correspondence between the human mind and nature: “The world is emblematic. Parts of speech are metaphors because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind. The laws of moral nature answer to those of matter as face to face in a glass.” (Emerson, 1971–2013, 1:21). Emerson confesses that his theory of correspondence was influenced by Emanuel Swedenborg (1688–1772), a Swedish scientist, Christian mystic, philosopher, and theologian. In “The American Scholar (1837),” Emerson states: “There is one man of genius who has done much for this philosophy of life, whose literary value has never yet been rightly estimated; —I mean Emanuel Swedenborg, ... But he saw and showed the connexion between nature and the affections of the soul. He pierced the emblematic



or spiritual character of the visible, audible, tangible world” (*Ibid.*, 68). Furthermore, he regards Swedenborg as one of the greatest men in the chapter: “Swedenborg, or the Mystic” in his book *The Representative Men* (1849).

A ground Common between Suzuki and Emerson lies in the fact that Swedenborg strongly influenced both. While Suzuki spent twelve years primarily at the Open Court Publishing, working as a translator and editorial assistant for Paul Carus (1852–1919), a German-American author, editor, and philosopher, he became interested in Swedenborg’s theological doctrines, which he found similar to Mahāyāna Buddhism. In 1908, he attended the international Swedenborg conference in London (Yoshinaga, 2014, 112–43). After returning to Japan, he translated Swedenborg’s works into Japanese and published them. These include *Heaven and Its Wonders and Hell, Divine Wisdom and Divine Love, New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine*, and *Divine Providence*. Later, in 1913, he published *Suedenborugu* (A Representative Treatise on Swedenborg), which shows that he was eagerly devoted to Swedenborg and greatly influenced by his Christian mystic thought.

Suzuki’s idea of the *jōdo* and the *shaba* can be compared with Emerson’s spirit, mind, and nature. Emerson also considers that spirit and nature are independent and different while simultaneously relating and corresponding with each other—a conceptualization similar to Suzuki’s theory of simultaneous identification and differentiation logic. As Suzuki states that the *jōdo* is grounded in the *shaba*, Emerson writes: “It [Nature] is the great organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual, and strives to lead back the individual to it” (Emerson, 1971–2013, 1:37). He presents the Transcendentalist idea that humans can attain recognition of God through nature, and argues that nature’s ultimate goal is to make humans come into unity with God. However, despite the resemblance between Suzuki’s logic of simultaneous identification and differentiation and Emerson’s correspondence, a fundamental difference exists between their theories. According to Emerson’s idea of the manifestation of God through humans and nature, nature can be related to the ultimate Being through the human soul, with the God-within indwelling in it; as he writes:

Therefore, that spirit, that is, the Supreme Being, does not build up nature around us, but puts it forth through us (38).” The human soul is a place where nature and spirit can communicate with each other, as is written: “Man is the point wherein matter and spirit meet and marry (Emerson, 1060–82, 5:187).

On the other hand, Suzuki’s theory implies that the *jōdo* and the *shaba* “enter and conform” to each other. He explains the indwelling transcendence through the conformity between the next world and this one by using Shinran’s word *ōchō* (横超 leaping sideways):

The Buddhist *jōdo* isn’t linked to this world. There can’t be recognized a continuity between the *jōdo* and this world, because the next world absolutely contradicts this one. The crossing of the next world to this one, and of this world to the next one, cannot be achieved without through “leaping sideways,” because it can be preached that this contradiction and disparity itself makes the identity of both worlds possible. “Leaping sideways” is the continuity of discontinuity.

“Sideways” means the negation of the direct interconnection between the next world and this one. “Leaping” is the word which signifies the Buddhist efforts of expressing the existence of interconnection where it doesn’t actually exist. He elucidates this to mean ... to abandon all intellectual calculations and to jump right into what seems to be a dark bottomless abyss of the absolute, where the white road to the Pure Land opens up before one. (Suzuki, 2015–20, 2:253, n.2)

Furthermore, Suzuki, relating to “leaping sideways,” proceeds to elucidate the absolute “other-power” operating from the Original Vows of the Amida-Buddha to promptly free sentient beings from the delusion, by using the word *ekō* (廻向 merit-transference) (Suzuki, 2015–20, 2:109–10) He writes: “Even if the believers of Pure Land Buddhism go from this world to the next one, it doesn’t necessarily mean that they don’t come back. If they go, they are sure to come back. Going is invariably followed by returning. The merit transference happens from this world to the next one. Similarly, it happens from the next world to this one. The operation of the Original Vows proceeds from the Amida to sentient beings and then returns to the Amida. (Suzuki, 2016, 67). Suzuki’s concepts such as “logic of simultaneous identification and differentiation,” “leaping sideways,” and “merit-transference” are grounded in the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of karmic cause and effect, which preaches that all phenomenal things come into generation interconnected and dependent on each other. The ultimate empty nature of both beings and phenomena interfusing within each other in actuality is called “suchness.” (Skt.: *tathatā* 真如)<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to Suzuki’s horizontal and recurring nature of the doctrine of “mutual interpenetrating transcendence,” Emerson’s theory of correspondence comprises a vertical structure of three strata: spirit, soul, and nature. In Emerson’s understanding of the Over-soul, the human soul, conquering the superficial self, abandons itself to the original and universal soul inherent within itself. The term “over” in the Over-soul does not imply rising *above* the self but rather sinking *into* its depth. Hence, Emerson’s Over-soul can be understood as a dynamic process, energy, and power of identification of the soul with the God of the universe through utter obedience to the indwelling God-within. Accordingly, Emerson’s “correspondence” between the human mind and visible nature can be distinguished from Suzuki’s “mutual interpenetrating transcendence” between all beings and phenomenal appearances. Moreover, Suzuki expresses the coming and going aspect of “merit-transference” with the image of circles, such as “circumferenceless circle,” “circular identity,” and “movement of rotatory inversion” (Suzuki, 2016, 238–39). Emerson’s concept of God is also reflected in his imagery of circles. His circles are “self-evolving,” producing new circles by expanding outward and simultaneously extinguishing old ones by contracting inward. For him, circles represent the living God as immanent and transcendent, repeatedly going beyond, returning to the self, and constantly changing and flowing. Although Suzuki’s circle resembles Emerson’s in its immanent and transcendent nature, the self-evolving aspect of Emerson’s circle cannot be found in Suzuki’s.

Next, the author discusses comparatively how the nature of language is considered in Suzuki’s Pure Land Buddhist thought and Emerson’s Transcendentalist reflection. Although Suzuki, as already been pointed out, assigns

<sup>2</sup> Keown, 2004, 296: “The term ... used in Mahāyāna Buddhism to denote the essential nature of reality and quiddity or true mode of being of phenomena.”

a spiritual and mystic meaning to the recitation of the Amida-Buddha's name "Namu-Amida-Butsu," he does not fully develop a theory of symbolic language. Conversely, he applies "the transmission of spiritual awakening without depending upon words and scriptures," one of the most prominent features of Zen Buddhism, to his Pure Land Buddhist thought. For him, words only work as a means or *ki* to break away from fixed ideas, dualistic logic, and the karmic law of cause and effect, ultimately leading to spiritual breakthroughs.

Emerson, like Suzuki, recognizes the limits of logical reasoning, but his distrust is only in the outer aspect of language. The correspondence he theorizes between mind and nature becomes possible through inner and symbolic language intervention. While still preserving the idea of God's creation of all things in the universe by the power of the word as is written in the Bible, he, as a Transcendentalist, views nature as divine manifestation and symbolic language. For him, revelation means that the divine mind as inner language manifests itself into nature as outer language, as he writes: "Nature offers all her creatures to him [the poet] as a picture language" (Emerson, 1971–2013, 3:8). He considers that the poet's role is to see through the symbolic language hidden in visible things and unite language with these things in nature. The unity of human thought and the indwelling essence of things can be recovered thanks to the poet's liberation and transformation of things (*Ibid.*, 12, 14–15). Therefore, an essential difference between Suzuki's and Emerson's views of language can be pointed out: While Suzuki, in his Pure Land Buddhist thought, accepting the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of no-mind and karmic cause and effect, repudiates the substantial nature of the soul and acknowledges only the outer aspect of language, Emerson thinks that the soul has spiritual essence, and in his Transcendentalist thought, law or logos and inner language occupy a central place.

#### V. Consciousness of "Reisei" and "Religious Sentiment"

"Reisei" (靈性 spirituality) is a word that Suzuki proposes as the highest and most sophisticated expression for the nature of religious awareness. He regards the *jōdo* as the world of *reisei*. For him, intellect finds a law by classifying the world of an infinite variety which the five senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and touching perceive. He asserts that intellect has the function of discrimination, perceiving things in a dualistic opposition of the self and things. In *Japanese Spirituality*, he writes that *reisei* is "religious consciousness" transcending the dualistic opposition between *seishin* and substance:

In a view that sees *seishin* (or *kokoro*) in opposition to substance, *seishin* cannot be contained within substance, and substance cannot be contained within *seishin*. There is something more which must be seen at the innermost depths of *seishin* and substance. As long as two things oppose each other contradiction, rivalry, mutual suppression, and annihilation will be unavoidable. Where this occurs man's existence cannot continue. What is needed is something that somehow sees that the two are really not two, but one, and that the one is, as it is, two. It is *reisei* that does this. For the heretofore dualistic world to cease its rivalries and become conciliatory and fraternal, and for mutual interpretation and self-identity to prevail, one must await the awakening of man's *reisei*. In a sense, another world opens up on the far side of the world of *seishin* and substance, where the two of them must come to harmony, though still remaining mutually

contradictory. This is possible through spiritual insight, the awakening of spirituality. *Reisei* might be called religious consciousness (Suzuki, 1988, 14–15).

Suzuki thus distinguishes *seishin* (精神 psyche; mind; spirit) and *reisei* (spirituality; spirit-nature). He states that *seishin* means “an idea” or “ideal” and the nucleus of things, carries with it an abstract and conceptual quality and holds dualistic thought within it in rivalry against the material (*Ibid.*, 11–14). He considers *reisei* as an intuitive insight higher than *seishin* and comes into play in transcending the self and operating in *seishin* while being different from it. He argues that *seishin* is founded on the discriminatory consciousness, will-power, and ethical character, whereas *reisei* is non-discriminatory wisdom, the religious *hataraki* (operation) transcending the function of *seishin*, and has a universality that is not limited to particular people and nations. Suzuki highly esteems Shinran, asserting that the absolute *tariki* (他力 other-power) faith in Amida’s salvation developed by Shinran was the manifestation of *reisei* in its purest form in Japanese history. Suzuki writes, citing a passage from *Tannishō* (歎異抄 Notes Lamenting Deviations): “When I reflect deeply on Amida’s Original Prayer which issues from his meditation for five long kalpas, I realize that it was solely for the sake of this one individual person, Shinran” (*Ibid.*, 77), and he firmly asserts that only those who thoroughly embody the supra-individual Person can experientially understand the movement of *reisei*.

Suzuki’s *reisei* can be translated into “spiritual nature,” which Emerson as well uses in his essay “The Over-soul”: “We know that all spiritual being is in man. ... that is, as there is no screen or ceiling between our heads and the infinite heavens, so is there no bar or wall in the soul where man, the effect, ceases, and God, the cause, begins. ... We lie open on one side to the depths of spiritual nature, to all the attributes of God” (Emerson, 1971–2013, 2:161). Suzuki’s *reisei* may be analogous to Emerson’s “religious sentiment.” In “The Divinity School Address,” Emerson writes, “The perception of this law always awakens in the mind a sentiment which we call the religious sentiment, and which makes our highest happiness. ... But the dawn of the sentiment of virtue on the heart, gives and is the assurance that Law is sovereign over all natures; and the worlds, time, space, eternity, do seem to break out into joy. This sentiment is divine and deifying. It is the beatitude of man. It makes him illimitable. Through it, the soul first knows itself” (*Ibid.*, 1:79). Emerson preferred the term “religious sentiment” since it is closely connected with natural and innate feelings of the human heart, such as piety and intuition. Like Suzuki, he emphasizes that human beings perceive universal spirituality, not through religious doctrines or analytical reasoning but through religious sentiment.

Suzuki’s *reisei*, paradoxically meaning “discrimination of non-discrimination,” can also be compared with Emerson’s “Reason.” Emerson learned about Immanuel Kant (1724–1804)’s distinction between Reason and understanding from the writings of S. T. Coleridge (1772–1834). In his book *Nature*, Emerson regards Reason as synonymous with “universal soul” or “Spirit”: “Man is conscious of a universal soul within or behind his individual life, wherein, as in a firmament, the natures of Justice, Truth, Love, Freedom, arise and shine. This universal soul, he calls Reason: it is not mine or thine or his, but we are its; ... That which, intellectually considered, we call Reason, considered in relation to nature, we call Spirit. Spirit is the Creator” (*Ibid.*, 18–19). While “understanding” is the cognitive faculty of perceiving and conceptualizing the phenomenon, “Reason,” a faculty higher than “understanding,” is related to the invisible, spiritual, and universal

realities. This distinction between Emerson's Reason and understanding corresponds to that of Suzuki's between *reisei* and "discrimination." The Reason, like *reisei*, stimulates religious consciousness through its spiritual insight. However, *reisei* is closely related to the doctrine of the Buddha-womb or Buddha-nature, which holds that humans and all sentient beings inherently possess the potential to become a Buddha.<sup>3</sup> The reason, unlike *reisei*, is peculiar only to human beings and differentiates people from beasts and things. While Reason is closely associated with the human conscience and is the ground of human morality, *reisei* is "non-discriminatory" wisdom transcending goodness and badness. Reason is a divine and supernatural faculty and power intimately connected with creation, whereas *reisei* is a spiritual operation of interconnectedly arising, changing, and disappearing (Suzuki, 1988, 14–16). Therefore, in these respects, Emerson's "Reason" is distinguished from Suzuki's *reisei*.

#### VI. Conclusion: Seeking after the Ultimate

Before offering a conclusive summary of comparative investigations from a religious standpoint into Suzuki's interpretation of Pure Land Buddhism and Emerson's Transcendentalist thought, a brief explanation will help us to understand Suzuki's unconventional way of interpreting Mahāyāna Buddhism. First, his view of Pure Land Buddhism is based on the doctrine of "Buddha-womb" or "Buddha-nature." It is proven by the fact that Suzuki himself translated into English and published *Aṣṭvaghosa's Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (大乘起信論) in 1900, which analyzes the mind's state and consciousness, grounded in the doctrine of Buddha-womb. According to this doctrine, every human contains "tathāgata" as an embryo in mind. "Tathāgata" has two meanings: the one who has reached the truth and attained the Buddhahood and the one who comes from the truth to save other sentient beings. Every sentient being, inherently endowed with an undefiled and pure mind, has the potential to become "tathāgata" as the Buddha-body or to eventually attain spiritual enlightenment by completely removing the cover of earthly carnal desires. *The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* and the doctrine of Buddha-womb or Buddha-nature have influenced the formation of prominent Chinese and Japanese Buddhist schools.<sup>4</sup>

Second, Suzuki's interpretation of *sunyata* (空 emptiness or nothingness) can be considered somewhat distinguishable from the Indian Mahāyāna Buddhist conception of emptiness, which preaches that all things in the phenomenal world, having no immutable substance, are ceaselessly generating, and changing in accordance with the law of causality, interdependently arising, and disappearing in relation to other things. For him, emptiness is never negativistic but is the natural

<sup>3</sup> See Keown, 2004, 44, 196, 296: "In India only the sentient beings were considered to have the Buddha-nature, but still later Chinese and Japanese Buddhism came to question the distinction between sentient and non-sentient beings. Some scholars came to assert that every phenomenon whatsoever has Buddha-nature."

<sup>4</sup> Keown, 2004, 168: "*The Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* is a short *summa* of Mahāyāna thought attributed to the Indian thinker and poet Aṣṭvaghosa. The text's major theme is the relationship between the noumenon (the absolute enlightenment) and phenomena, and it questions how limited and ignorant beings can attain the bliss of wisdom. The conjunction of the two occurs in the concept of the tathāgata-garbha."

state of mind, equivalent in meaning to *tathatā* (suchness) and ultimate reality or truth. In his book *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, Suzuki writes the following: “Therefore, Buddhist philosophy states that all these concepts, movement, and relativity, must have their field of operation, and this field is designated by Buddhist philosophers as emptiness (*śūnyatā*). ... While Nirvana is often thought to be a negativistic idea the Mahāyāna followers have quite a different interpretation. For they include autonomy (*ga, ātman*) as one of its qualities (*guna*), and autonomy is free will, something dynamic. Nirvana is another name for the emptiness. ... absence, extinction, and unoccupancy—these are not the Buddhist conception of emptiness. ... In Buddhist Emptiness there is no time, no space, no becoming, nothingness; it is what makes all these things possible; it is a zero full of infinite possibilities, it is a void of inexhaustible contents” (Suzuki, 1957, 27–28). Suzuki, while repudiating the negativistic interpretation of emptiness as absence, extinction, and unoccupancy, acknowledges the essentially pure, spiritual, and natural “field” or “state” of the mind in which emptiness dynamically operates (Suzuki, 1907, Ch. 5–7). Similarly, Emerson thinks of the divine manifestation and the spiritual and evolutionary power of the soul and nature as not fixed but continually changing and flowing. Accordingly, from the viewpoint of ceaseless spiritual operation, many similarities between both of their thoughts can be observed.

Moreover, particularly in Pure Land Buddhism, the central preaching of which is the wholehearted faith in the Amida-Buddha, it is inevitable that the tendency to admit a more indwelling presence endowed with positive attributes of “Buddha-womb” or “Buddha-nature” has gradually strengthened. Accordingly, the conception of the “non-duality” between “Buddha-womb” or “Buddha-nature” and the Amida-Buddha, in which Suzuki’s view of Pure Land Buddhism is grounded, can be considered to be coming to have a resemblance to the Hindu doctrine of Atman becoming at one with Brahman. Emerson was also greatly influenced by Hinduism. His aunt Mary Moody Emerson (1774–1863) had a strong interest in Hinduism and inspired the young Emerson. He began reading Indian poetry and mythology around the 1820s. He read the English translation of the *Bhagavad-Gīta* in 1845 and learned the Upanishad doctrine of the identity of Atman and Brahman. Emerson’s “Over-soul” bears many similarities to Brahman. In poems such as “Hamatreya” and “Brahman” and essays such as “The Over-soul,” “Fate,” and “Illusions,” the influence of Hinduism on Emerson can be clearly recognized.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, it can be concluded that Suzuki’s “Buddha-womb” or “Buddha-nature” is akin to Emerson’s “Over-soul” and Hindu Brahman.

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<sup>5</sup> For the influence of Hinduism on Emerson, see Shanta Acharya, *The Influence of Indian Thought on Ralph Waldo Emerson* (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 2001); Phyllis Cole, *Mary Moody Emerson and the Origins of Transcendentalism: FamilyHistory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Arthur Versluis, *American Transcendentalism and Asian Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993).

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