RETHINKING TRANSCENDENCE: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE IN ZEN EXPERIENCE

Dale S. Wright

Associate Professor of Religious Studies at Occidental College in Los Angeles

I. Introduction

The object of this essay is to present an alternative to what I take to be a fundamental component of Western-language interpretations of Zen experience—the idea that Zen enlightenment is an undistorted, "pure experience" of "things as they are" beyond the shaping power of language. This alternative will consist in an interpretation of Zen practice and enlightenment that acknowledges numerous ways in which language and linguistically articulated social practice have shaped and made possible distinctively "Zen" modes of experience. The essay's critical focus will be restricted to the normative status of "our" (Western-language) claim that Zen experience transcends language, a position either developed or assumed, so far as I can see, in all English language works on Zen that attempt to articulate what "enlightenment" is. The essay is not, therefore, grounded in a text-based descriptive claim about what East Asians have thought or said about the relation between language and Zen experience. Instead it asserts that regardless of how East Asians have understood the role of language in Zen experience, "we" are no longer justified in thinking that this kind of religious experience (or any other) stands altogether beyond the shaping power of language and culture.

The essay begins with an account of modern Western interpretations of the role of language in Zen, a critical exploration of presuppositions and cultural origins in the West. Although the assertion that Zen enlightenment transcends language is ubiquitous to English language works on Zen Buddhism, I will characterize the position and outline my argument against it by focusing on two influential versions of that position: first, Erich Fromm's seminal essay "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism" and second, T. P. Kasulis' important book, *Zen Action: Zen Person*. This section is followed by a four-part articulation of ways in which language can be thought to have a role in the Zen experience of "awakening."

II. Modern Western Theories of the Role of Language in Zen

A. Enlightenment as the Transcendence of Language: Erich Fromm. Erich Fromm's well-known essay, "Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism," presented at a conference in 1957 and then published in 1960,[1] is interesting for our purposes because, in formulating his interpretation of "enlightenment" in both the Zen and Psychoanalytic traditions, he takes up the question of language. Moreover, while acknowledging at the outset that his understanding of Zen has developed primarily through the English-language works of D. T. Suzuki, Fromm goes on to present a considerably

Philosophy East & West
Volume 42, Number 1
January 1992
113–138

more thorough, more systematic position on the issue of language than Suzuki ever did. This surplus of articulation beyond his source inspires us to ask: What are the origins and genealogy of this influential understanding of the relation between language and experience that Fromm so naturally attributes to Zen? More importantly, though, this section seeks to outline Fromm's position as the mainstream position for English-language works on Zen, and to get it into critical view.

The focal point of Fromm's position is a sharp contrast between the mediating, conditioning effects of language and "enlightenment," understood as an "immediate, intuitive grasp of reality" (PZB, p. 94). Although he discusses at some length the role that language plays in "conditioning" the mind, Fromm's emphasis is on the extent to which this influence is a negative one. Because the conditioning power of language "prevents awareness of reality" (p. 98), the goal of both humanistic psychology and Zen Buddhism is a liberation from linguistic and cultural conditioning.

A whole series of connected metaphors shape this understanding. Language is figured as a "filter," a "veil," a "screen," an "obstruction," a "distortion," a form of "alienation," a system of "fictional" "categories," and "clothing" placed upon naked reality. On these terms, language is taken as an interpolation between the knowing subject and objective reality which inevitably causes distortion. The implication here is that although linguistic mediation is very common, it can and ought to be avoided. In the rare and liberating cases where language is circumvented, as in Zen, there is an "immediate, undistorted grasp of reality." We "see reality as it is" (pp. 128–129). Having adopted this point of departure, Fromm holds that the goal of Zen must be to "rid myself of this social filter of language" (p. 127) and to overcome the "false consciousness" (p. 98) that it generates.

Presupposed in this account, and therefore neither articulated nor argued for, is the belief that language is an avoidable and optional element in human experience. Language is taken to be independent of and separable from both subject and object in the same way that a tool or instrument is separate from the worker and what is worked upon. Here Fromm draws upon metaphors of utility and the "instrumental" theory of language, the dominant understanding of language in modern Western thought. Because of the extent of its dominance, this theory's applicability to Zen seemed "natural" to Fromm and others.[2] My argument, however, will be that this way of locating language in relation to human experience is incorrect and that the kind of pre-linguistic experience based upon it and valorized by Fromm is neither possible nor desirable.

A second presupposition that supports Fromm's position on language is the modern dichotomy between thought and feeling or, in

his words, between "cerebration" and "affection." Although the precise terms of the relation are not worked out, language is exclusively associated with the domain of "thought" and not with "feelings." Enlightenment, however, "the intuitive grasp of reality" (p. 94) is a felt experience that cannot be thought. Although the concepts embedded within language may be useful tools, more often than not they are "misused" in such a way as to hide reality behind a conceptual "screen" beyond the reach of unmediated feelings. Fromm's imagery in the development of this dualism between directly felt reality and linguistically "filtered" thinking is drawn from a particular reading of Plato:

> The cerebrating person is the alienated person, the person in the cave who, as in Plato's allegory, sees only shadows and mistakes them for immediate reality.... The full experience [of reality] actually exists only up to the moment when it is expressed in language ... words more and more take the place of experience. (PZB, p. 109)

Enlightenment is therefore "not an intellectual act, but an affective experience" (p. 110), a difference that

> ... constitutes one of the basic difficulties the Western student has in trying to understand Zen. The West, for two thousand years, ... has believed that a final answer to the problem of existence can be given in thought. (P. 118)

What Fromm has left out of this account of "Western thought," however, is precisely the tradition in which he stands, the tradition from which most of his ideas about language and experience, feeling and thought have been drawn. Attributing his reflections to Zen, he neglects to locate their diverse origins in eighteenth-century pietism, in the nineteenth-century relegation of "religion" to the domain of "feeling," in Romanticism, and in the existentialist appropriation of romanticism not only current but dominant when Fromm's essay was written.

Regardless of its origins, however, several contemporary realizations throw Fromm's independent domain of "feeling" into question. First, language extends far beyond the domain of thought. Feelings, like thoughts, are shaped and molded by the language that we have (instrumentally) taken merely to "express" them. Feelings and the language of feelings always interfuse. To know one is to have some kind of acquaintance with the other. If we did have feelings to which no complex of words could ever apply in any sense, we would neither know what those feelings were nor that we had them. Second, "cerebration" and "affection" are not independent domains that can be so easily juxtaposed. Feelings are inevitably associated with thoughts and thoughts with feelings. Language, concepts, and feelings interpenetrate each other such that none is independent of the others, each incorporating the effects of the others within its very "essence."

As the essay continues, however, Fromm backs off from the position he has been developing. Changing metaphors, he says that enlightenment involves the "whole person," which presumably would include other dimensions of human experience, together with feelings, in a more complex relationship than Fromm has assumed. If this kind of interrelationship prevails, then no "domain" could be entirely innocent of language and the shaping effects of culture and history.

Finally, it seems that Fromm's views on language are linked to his views on the relation between the self and society. On this view, enlightenment requires that the individual transcend society because

> ... most of what is in our consciousness is "false consciousness" and it is essentially society that fills us with these fictitious and unreal notions. But the effect of society is not only to funnel fictions into our consciousness, [it is] also to prevent awareness of reality. (P. 98)

If this is true then the goal of practitioners in both Zen and Psychoanalysis must be to "transcend the limits of ... society and ... become a citizen of the world, a cosmopolitan" (p. 105). Both traditions of practice would seek to produce "... the whole man—minus that part of man which corresponds to his society" (p. 106).

The viability of Fromm's understanding of Zen "enlightenment," and of the relation between language and human life generally, turns on the possibility of making the act of subtraction just mentioned. If "the social" is already there in the "essence" of the human, then the subtraction of one from the other would not be possible without destroying what is basic to human experience.

Fromm's hierarchical dichotomy between the "universal" and the "particular" sets the stage for his placement of language in Zen. Enlightenment is identification with the "universal" in "human nature," the attainment of which requires that the particular must be transcended. And since languages are unique—particular to each society—the differences they structure into particular cultures must be renounced in order to attain the depth of "universality." The character of Zen "*satori*," therefore, would not be related in any significant way to the histories, cultures, and languages of East Asian societies. This point is so central to Fromm's enterprise that his final sentence confirms it in the form of a rhetorical question:

> How could such [Western] understanding [of Zen] be possible, were it not for the fact that the "Buddha Nature is in all of us," that man and existence are universal categories, and that the immediate grasp of reality, waking up, and enlightenment, are universal experiences. (P. 141)

Without devaluing many of the important "humanistic" consequences of this "universalist" thought, it would be difficult today not to be aware

of its shortcomings. Most decisively, it eliminates what is valuable and interesting in cultural studies—the particular institutions, beliefs, and practices of a culture. In refusing to acknowledge experiential difference between cultures, it fails to understand Zen enlightenment as a unique and impressive cultural achievement particular to East Asian societies. In effect, this prevents Fromm from learning anything new from Zen—he already understands the universal experience to which it aspires. The guiding thought of this essay is that the attainment of what Alasdair MacIntyre has called "tradition-free individuals"[3] is an unworthy goal—East or West—and that for us to improve upon it would require greater attentiveness to the role that language plays in the pursuit of excellence in any culture.

B. Transcending Language Relatively: T. P. Kasulis. Sensitivity to Zen language and to the particularity of Japanese culture is precisely what T. P. Kasulis brings to his important book, *Zen Action: Zen Person.*[4] The text opens with a discussion of the unique character of Japanese language, moves into a philosophical discussion of Buddhist theories of language, and demonstrates a well-cultivated appreciation of Japanese poetic language all the way through. Just two decades later, Kasulis had an access to Zen that Fromm did not.

Kasulis' version of the relation between language and Zen experience is more complex, partly because he is working out of original Buddhist sources, partly because his account has attained a greater philosophical rigor, and partly—perhaps most importantly—because he is working back and forth between two quite different views of language. One view follows the basic structure of Fromm's understanding: the Zen master is free of the screening effects of language so that his experience is direct and unmediated. The second view, inspired by a different set of sources, argues convincingly that being human means being fully situated within a particular cultural milieu and that full transcendence is not possible. Working between these two positions both deepens Kasulis' account of language in Zen, and, in the end, undermines it.

Under the constraints of Kasulis' first position, most of Fromm's metaphors reappear. Language is a "filter," a "screen," a "tool," an "overlay," a "covering," a "distortion," an "obstruction," and extra "baggage." As for Fromm, these metaphors carry with them traditional associations with some form of dualism. In Kasulis' case, the essential dichotomy, which sometimes carries temporal connotations, is between an initial moment of unmediated contact and subsequent "filtering" through linguistic categories. The specific terms of the dichotomy are as follows: "raw data" versus "meaning," "pure experience" versus "conceptual overlay," "original image" versus "blurring through conceptual filters," "prereflective awareness" versus "reflective categories," "primordial given" versus "linguistic construct," and so on.

Given this dichotomy as background, how does enlightenment come to be construed in Kasulis' account? If language and concepts "cover over" the "raw data" of "pure experience," enlightenment would require that "one must overcome the tendency to filter experience through previously learned categories..." (*ZAZP*, p. 113). In the moment of "awakening" we "return to the state before we put on the first filters" (p. 56). Having made this "return," "the master does not immediately filter his direct experience..." (p. 134). For him, things "... manifest themselves just as they are" (p. 134), without labels, distinctions, judgments, or meaning.

The alternative account offered in this essay is based upon the thought that this foundational dichotomy between the "primordial given" and a subsequent attribution of meaning is untenable. In support of this claim it will be argued that human perception is always—even for the Zen master—already linguistically shaped, and that there is no human access to a pre-linguistic, objective "given."

Kasulis' claim here is based on a temporal distinction: "... the Zen master does not *immediately* filter his direct experience" (p. 134, emphasis mine). He does that later, if and when the situation requires it. First, there is

> ... immediate, non-verbal intuition of *Prajñā*. *Then*, if one finds it necessary to describe or analyze phenomena, one will be cognizant of which aspects of the primordial experience are being highlighted and which hidden by distinctions. (P. 61, emphasis mine)

The irony of this account is that it attributes nondualistic, undichotomized experience to the unenlightened and a cumbersome bifurcation to the Zen master. Whereas the unenlightened experience meaning right in the things themselves, the Zen master experiences in succession both the "things in themselves" and their socially ascribed meaning and is, therefore, charged with the constant task of comparing them. The point here, however, is that this division within the Zen master cannot hold.

One way to locate the problem is to notice in the previous quote that the movement from primordial experience to linguistic articulation cannot occur without presupposing distinctions, judgments, and meanings already present within the primordial. One would only "find it necessary to describe or analyze phenomena ..." (p. 61) if there were some distinction, some criterion of "necessity," already present in the primordial. Necessary with respect to what? In contrast to what? In terms of what context of meaning? The impetus to make the move from nonconceptual to conceptual shows the prior presence of the conceptual in the supposed preconceptual. The claim that the enlightened "... will be *cognizant* of which *aspects* of the primordial experience are being highlighted and which hidden by distinctions" (p. 61, emphasis mine) already implicitly recognizes the presence within the primordial of both "cogni-

tion" and differentiated "aspects." Furthermore, the portrait of the Zen master as needing to hold one access to the world up against another for comparison[5] must render problematic any claim to "immediacy" and "spontaneity."

But what is really rendered problematic throughout is the adequacy of modern epistemology as the background in terms of which Zen experience can be understood. This background is what modern Western interpretations of Buddhism have consistently assumed. Kasulis' understanding of Nāgārjuna, drawn from the best interpretations available, shows this most clearly. Here the issues of representation and subject/object relations, the central issues in modern philosophy, are introduced. Nāgārjuna is taken to demonstrate that "there is an unbridgeable gap between the concepts and their supposed referents" (p. 23). Concepts or

> ... language structures do overlap with structures found in our experience of concrete phenomena, but the overlap is fortuitous, not necessary. (P. 22)

Although, as Kasulis puts it, "the gap between such concepts and their referents is not so great that language is to be avoided entirely" (p. 23), the enlightened know that it is "not to be totally trusted" (p. 23). Trusted for what? For accurate representation, the representation of the primordially given within the domain of the conceptually constructed. But if, as many contemporary thinkers now conclude,[6] language and concepts are already there deeply involved in the very "presentation" of "things as they are, then accuracy of representation and related problems in epistemology are not the primary issues at stake.

It may also be the case that this epistemological framework is problematic for understanding Buddhist thought generally. When we assume this framework we imply that Buddhists arrived at the same intellectual crossroads as their Western counterparts but, at that point, came to a different conclusion. Western thinkers responded to the problem of the "gap" by seeking well-grounded bridges between subjective concepts and objective referents, whereas Buddhists rejected that line of thought, deciding, for example, that the gap is unbridgeable and, therefore, requires the abandonment of the project of accurate representation. Although the purpose of this essay is not to assert it, it is entirely conceivable that Buddhists did not in fact arrive at this same intellectual impasse, and that, beyond coming to a different answer to the same basic question, they weren't even asking that question. To treat Buddhists as "skeptics" is to make their texts respond to problems they never had.[7]

At the beginning of this section I wrote that Kasulis' text is complicated by the fact that he is working between two different and contrasting views of the relation between language and experience. While the first view aligns with Fromm's, the second position goes in a different direction, not only qualifying and adding depth to the first, but undercutting

and subverting it. The second dimension of Kasulis' text points toward the understanding of Zen language that this essay will offer as an alternative to the theory that has dominated modern interpretation. At the time of writing, it would appear that Kasulis stood between two different paradigms of thought on this issue—one fully structuralist and another poststructuralist[8]—and his text tries to reconcile them by bringing the insights of the second within the framework provided by the first. Although that reconciliation is not, in my opinion, successful, Kasulis' attempt to work with an alternative view of language may in the end be the decisive significance of his text.

The focal point of Kasulis' second, qualifying account is the finitude and historicity of all human life—including enlightened life. Unlike Fromm's "universal" person, "who must transcend the limits of his society" (PZB, p. 105), Kasulis' account of enlightenment proceeds under the realization that human beings are always situated in particular time, space, and culture. Whereas Fromm takes a transcendental state as the goal, Kasulis concludes that "we cannot find our full sense of personhood by totally rejecting our historical conditions and seeking an ahistorical original face" (*ZAZP*, p. 138). Kasulis' Zen master

> ... does not transcend the world—he is firmly implanted in it.... [He] does not undo his conditionality; rather, he understands its nature and its limits. (*ZAZP*, p. 134)

This realization, inspired, according to the text, by Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Dōgen, will ultimately undermine Kasulis' overall account of the place of language in Zen experience. This can be seen not just in the tensions that it introduces into his text, but also in another look at his sources. Setting Dōgen aside, since his Zen view is at issue in our interpretations, we notice that, in articulating their positions, both Heidegger and Wittgenstein were working out an explicit rejection of the overarching epistemological framework to which Kasulis' text still appeals. What Heidegger and Wittgenstein have to say about language either argues against this modern (Cartesian) paradigm, or assumes its demise. At present, it is hard to see how the two points of departure for reflection on language could be reconciled and united. Because of the incongruity of these two frameworks, Kasulis' excellent chapter, "The Person as Act," ends up arguing in two directions. The first sets out the transcendental goal: the Zen master is "without presuppositions" (*ZAZP*, p. 141). Undetermined by the past, he encounters everything as if for the "first time" (p. 141). The second line argues convincingly that this ahistorical, uncontextualized ideal is neither possible nor in keeping with the world-ensconced character of the Zen master. Aware of the tension between them, Kasulis negotiates a compromise which acknowledges human finitude while at the same time maintains the transcendental framework:

enlightenment means being *relatively less* determined by language and cultural inheritance.

III. Resources for an Alternative Theory

In what follows I attempt to work out, in four steps, an alternative account of the relation between language and Zen experience. Like others, this account stands within a tradition of thought and, from that perspective, seeks to be influenced and informed by the best contemporary thinking on the matter. It is well known that the issue of language has been central to late twentieth-century thought. Picking up on the insights of Heidegger and Wittgenstein, poststructuralist theories of language are at the forefront of current discussion in most academic fields from Kuhnian philosophy of science to "deconstruction." Drawing upon this discussion, the contribution of this essay is, therefore, to ask: What would it mean for our understanding of Zen to have undergone the transformation in perspective afforded by the "linguistic turn" in contemporary Western thought. The foregoing discussion of the dominant (modern Western) model of the role of language in Zen has staked out how the critique of that model would proceed and how an alternative to it would be initiated. The force of both critique and alternative is the realization that language is embedded in all human experience, even at the primitive level of perception.

A. Language in Perception and Understanding. As we have seen, our understanding of Zen experience has presupposed a structural dichotomy between the immediately given data of experience and a subsequent interpretation that we (knowingly or unknowingly) place upon that data. Contemporary thinkers, however, deny this dichotomy by exposing the "myth of the given."[9] They claim that even the most immediate perception is already structured by some linguistically constituted cognitive context and that there is no human access to a world prior to interpretation.[10]

The first to make this assertion was Heidegger in section 32 of *Being and Time*.[11] There the claim is made that whenever we encounter something, we encounter it "*as*" something in particular. We see this *as* a book, that *as* a door, and so on. Anything not experienced *as* something in particular (or in general) is simply not experienced. Because this hermeneutical "*as*" is linguistically shaped, language is always implicated in our experience. Language, and its entire history of involvement in thought and practice, functions to set up a context of significance within which perception occurs. By means of language, the world (the given) is focused and organized in advance of every encounter with entities, persons, or situations. Thus, when we see something, we have already interpreted it—immediately—*as* whatever it is. Assigning it an interpretation is not something we do after seeing it. It is the very shape that

seeing has already taken. On Heidegger's terms then, interpretation is not an additional procedure that we conduct upon the "given." Instead, it constitutes the basic structure of our "being in the world."

Two qualifications are important here. First, this is not to say, as some do, that everything *is* language. It is rather to claim that we experience everything that is through the medium of language. Although what a particular word or sentence refers to may be extra-linguistic, it appears to us *as* the reality it is through language. Second, this is not to say that there is no such thing as nontheoretical experience. The simple, perceptual seeing something *as* what it is in the midst of our activity in the world does not require our thinking about it. No reflective mediation is required. The point, however, is that the results of past reflection—the formation of concepts—get passed along to all participants in a culture through its language. You don't have to reflect on the concept of a door, or define it, in order to experience that shape *as* a door and to use it in accordance with its appropriate "sense." Language, therefore, is not to be located only at the level of concept and predication. It is also present at the level of perception in such a way that perception, language, and thinking are all interdependent.

Without this linguistically shaped sense that informs our direct awareness of things, the daily life of a Zen master would be problematic at best. One must be able to perceive those lines on the wall *as* a door in order to know how to exit the meditation hall. Inability to understand these sounds *as* a question, that sound *as* a meditation bell, and so on would render even the most basic functions of the Zen master impossible. Inability to experience a monastery fire "immediately" *as* a fire, *as* a threat, *as* a demand for action, *as* requiring the evacuation of others, *as* extinguishable by water, and so on would render the Zen master helpless and incapable of spontaneous, Zen-like response. No Zen text disputes this; in fact they all assume it. They assume the everyday function of distinctions and understanding by means of which things are experienced *as* what they are, fully laden with meaning and significance. It is on the basis of this background that distinctively Zen actions and discourse are performed.

The instrumental theory of language is not wrong in asserting that language functions as an instrument or tool that we use for our own purposes. We do, in fact, use language. But this theory is insufficient insofar as it sees this as the only location of language and insofar as it understands human beings to have an independent and controlling relation to language. Every act of use or control, whether discursive or not, is already structured for us by the linguistically shaped contours of our cultural inheritance. Moreover, transcending these contours, getting back behind them, is no more desirable than it is possible. Not only are we mistaken when we understand the Zen master to have achieved this

state, we also render him incapable of the worldly "function" for which he is famous.

One implication of this theory for our understanding of the "self" is that "individuality" comes to be situated upon the foundations of community, culture, history, and language. The individual self develops upon this foundation as an inheritor of the cultural achievements that have come to fruition in that tradition. Thus situated, the individual develops a capacity for involvement within the socially structured world. Language and culture function to make human experience what it is by structuring, in advance, a perceptual field of relevant features, self-evident relations, possible responses, and so on. Upon this foundation, the Zen master thinks and acts "naturally"—without abstract reflection—in response to the immediate situation. But in contrast to Kasulis' image of the Zen master as relatively less "determined," let us entertain the opposite possibility. Because he is a perfect instantiation of the cultural ideal, the Zen master can be understood to be "relatively more" determined and shaped by the Zen community's linguistically articulated image of excellence.[12] The behavior, perception, and understanding of any Zen practitioner is, in this way, internally structured by the language and culture of Zen. Since this is true of all participants in a culture, it is a further, derivative task to decide how the "excellence" of the Zen master is to be distinguished from the competence level of the ordinary practitioner. Both, however, share this (ultimately ungrounded) foundation in cultural history. If this is true, then understanding the awakened Zen master will require as much sensitivity as possible to the Zen community within which he stands and to the role that language plays in the constitution of that community.

B. Language in Zen Community. Because language is a communal or social practice, one consequence of a reassessment of the role of language in Zen will be that "community" is granted a greater significance than it has in modern interpretations. Rather than grounding meaning and experience in the private sphere of the individual subject (personal intuitions, intentions, desires, and so forth), our effort will be to stress the fundamental importance of the shared language of the Zen Buddhist monastic world. More basic than individual subjectivity is communal intersubjectivity, in this case the linguistically shaped sense of Zen that held monks together as a community in pursuit of common goals. On this interpretation, therefore, language is taken to be the power to form that commonality and to shape and sustain the monks' shared concern for the possibility of "awakening."

This way of proceeding—understanding Zen personal experience by way of the linguistically shaped world of the monastery—stands in sharp contrast to early interpretations of Zen like Fromm's. Recall that for

Fromm, authentic Zen experience entailed the transcendence of one's society. Consequently, Fromm shows no interest in Zen monastic life nor in the discursive practices that organize it. These would be figured as elements needing to be transcended rather than as the undergirding context that has made some form of enlightened transcendence possible.[13] Early interpretations of Zen, guided as they were by the modern valorization of individualism in its many forms, could not appreciate the significance of this sociolinguistic background. Indeed, American "Beat Zen" was commonly understood as a radical rejection of communal participation in stark contrast to the collective character of the Zen literature that served as its inspiration. Only recently has interest in Zen's communal background taken hold, both among Western practitioners of Zen and among academic analysts.

The two Western thinkers that Kasulis draws upon, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, are precisely the ones to have initiated this interest in the communal background of thought. Heidegger's critique of modern individualism focused on language.[14] Communication, he claimed, is not the transmission of individual thoughts and desires from the interior of one autonomous person to another. It is rather a reciprocally influential interaction within shared contexts of significance established and maintained in language. Similarly, Wittgenstein understood discourse as participation in diverse "language games."[15] On this model Zen monks would be pictured as participating in the shared concerns of the monastic community which were constituted and presented in the language they spoke and in the linguistically shaped practices and activities that held them together in their game—the pursuit of "awakening." Their language provided a medium within which this common enterprise could take shape and directed each of them toward the always evolving image of excellence that it projected.

We saw earlier how Fromm's modern understanding of the self led him to assume that Zen must be another form of individualism that rejects social influence. For him, the true self eschews what others think and say, taking upon himself what Harold Bloom has aptly called the romantic "anxiety of influence."[16] Although no adequate interpretation could deny the critical, subversive dimension of Zen, what this account will stress is the extent to which that dimension rests upon a much more basic submission to the tradition of Zen. The accomplished monk is a repository of the community's purposes, values, practices, and beliefs, and only secondarily, upon that basis, an individual agent who takes the tradition up into critical scrutiny. The capacity for critical distance, however, is based upon and derived from a prior mastery of the monastic language game. Through the process of Zen training, the language and practice of the institution become the very ground of the mind, upon which the monk as individual agent can function fluently and meaning-

fully. Understood in this way, language is far more than a tool for use in expression and communication. The language that the Zen master "uses" to teach his students would also be *what* he is teaching. Learning "Zen" would depend upon learning Zen language and the appropriate distinctions built into it. Some degree of fluency in this language would be prerequisite to experiencing what Zen is about.

If this is true, then Zen experience would be dependent upon prior education or socialization in the skills, customs, and beliefs valued by the Zen monastic community. The novice monk who enters this context of training is gradually formed into the kind of self for whom Zen experience is a possibility.[17] Our modern inclination has been to understand the Zen monastery as a voluntary community of individuals who come to that institution in personal pursuit of a goal that they already essentially understand. What further study of Zen history has shown, however, is that we have overlooked the extent to which monasteries served as educational and vocational institutions for boys. Upon entrance to the monastery, postulates might neither understand nor value the pursuit of "awakening." That understanding and that valuing were precisely what they were there to acquire. Acquiring them entailed a gradual restructuring of the monk's desires, behaviors, and beliefs. Zen concerns and Zen practices would slowly take shape in the novice's mind, replacing or reshaping whatever concerns and practices were there before. The process of acquisition, furthermore, was a lengthy and in-depth education in the language and practice of Zen that placed great priority on the imitation of role models. Because the abbot and senior monks embodied the purpose of the institution, the pedagogical method of imitating their gestures, speech, and concerns could hardly be improved upon.

From the point of view of Fromm's work, it would be unimaginable that the pursuit of Zen "freedom" would result from the acquisition of socially accepted, institutionally mandated conventions and practices. Yet so it now seems. Understanding—even Zen understanding—is a social and linguistic practice into which participants must be initiated. This is true even of Zen's most radical conventions—the critique and disruption of conventions, a skill acquired only at the most advanced stages of Zen training.

A new set of metaphors are involved in our thinking that language might have such a role in Zen experience. H. G. Gadamer's hermeneutical inquiries are a rich source for many of these.[18] In his terms, language is not a barrier, obstructing access; it is a "reservoir" of possibilities which it holds open to those who participate in it. Language is not a "clothing" which hides the truth; it is a "medium" through which truth becomes manifest. Language is not a "veil" preventing vision; it is a "window" which opens vision. Following the suggestions evoked by these metaphors, James Boyd White outlines the domain of language as follows:

> Language, after all, is the repository of the kinds of meaning and relation that make a culture what it is. In it . . . one can find the terms by which the natural world is classified and represented, those by which the social universe is constituted, and those terms of motive and value by which action is directed and judged. In a sense we literally are the language that we speak, for the particular culture that makes us a "we"—that defines and connects us, that differentiates us from others—is enacted and embedded in our language.[19]

C. Language in Zen Rhetoric. Within the foundational context of the Zen monastic world, laid out in broad but specific terms by the language of that time and place, a very unusual, precise, and exclusive language game was played. This discursive game was so exclusive—and so difficult to play—that only advanced members of the Zen monastic world could participate. This extraordinary rhetoric was clearly separate from other ways of speaking common to the everyday life of the monastery, such as the "normal" language of daily monastic operations, the socio-economic language that enabled the monastery to remain in functional relation to the nonmonastic world, and even the mythical-narrative language that had given rise to Zen and that had been appropriated into ritual practices. Beyond all these modes of communication, there is a kind of Zen rhetoric that was incorporated into explicit Zen practice. This unique rhetoric was closely linked to the experience of enlightenment, not just as its presupposed background, but as its initiating source and consequential outcome.

The essential feature of this rhetoric is its strictly emancipatory intention. By means of its "otherness" to ordinary discourse, and therefore to ordinary "mind," Zen rhetoric sought to free its speakers and hearers, writers and readers, from the constraints of conventional modes of human comportment. The otherness of Zen rhetoric was typically twofold, juxtaposing itself both with the classical language of established Buddhist institutions and with the conventional language of everyday East Asian life. Identifiably "Zen" rhetoric was marked by a persistent refusal to talk about ordinary matters in ordinary ways. Indeed, the discursive practice of "talking about," that is, propositional, representational discourse, was resolutely avoided. This reversal of priorities can be seen historically in the gradual movement away from both mythical/confessional and theoretical discussions of enlightenment. The earliest Zen texts still attempt to propose true statements about "enlightenment." Later texts have abandoned this effort. In later, classical texts, if enlightenment figures into the text at all, it does so obliquely and often with irony. While enlightenment could be rhetorically evoked, it could not be discussed. Increasingly, the language of Zen masters embodied the "ungraspability" of the matters about which they spoke.

This close relation between Zen rhetoric and the experience of "sudden awakening" is evident virtually everywhere in classical Zen texts,

perhaps most prominently in the *Transmission of the Lamp* texts, which narrate accounts of the experience of "awakening."[20] The phrase "at these words, so and so was awakened" is one of the most common in those texts. "Awakening" occurs, not in the absence of language, but fully in its presence as the focal point of its evocation and emergence. In the famous example of Lin-chi's enlightenment account, the narrative reports: "*At these words*, Lin-chi attained great enlightenment."[21] Now awakened, Lin-chi is anything but silent. Words give rise to the experience and then issue from it immediately and spontaneously. Rinzai's "discourse of awakening" is so powerful, in fact, that his teacher, Huang-po, predicts that he will "sit upon the tongue of every person on earth."[22] Lin-chi's practice is heavily focused on language, which, in both spoken and textual form, served to disseminate throughout the East Asian Buddhist world a particular kind of religious rhetoric.

One of the most common contexts for the experience of awakening as given in these texts is the context of narrative accounts of "encounter dialogue" between practitioners of Zen. These linguistic events, transmitted to all subsequent practitioners through classic texts, supplied the basic models for Zen rhetoric. Expertise or fluency in dialogical encounter was taken to be demonstrative of depth in Zen experience. One had to be so agile—so prereflectively quick in response—that the dialogue could continue of its own accord without "faltering." "Argument" in this context was clearly subordinate to the act of demonstration. One sought to have the language of the event show or demonstrate the point rather than to argue for it syllogistically. Presupposed here is a view that language works on the mind, brings about effects, and transforms experience. The crucial or focal word in a dialogue came to be called a "turning word,"[23] the word upon which the point of the encounter "turns" and the word carrying the power to turn the mind of participants, audience, or reader. The *Record of Lin-chi* calls this "speaking a word apropos of the moment,"[24] a word perfectly suited to exposing the depth of the present moment and situation.

Some Zen texts describe the "dialogical encounter" between two Zen masters, or between student and master, as coming to conclusion in a nonverbal act—a gesture, a shout, or a kick. Having come to the limits of language, the final stroke of the dialogue is pure act, a "direct pointing" to the point of Zen. This dimension of Zen practice was retroactively traced back to Bodhidharma, the legendary founder of Zen, who, having dispensed with linguistic signs, taught directly through act and silence. But from the perspective of this interpretation, direct pointing still falls within the domain of language. Acts of "pointing" are potentially readable signs; they point beyond themselves to something present but hidden from ordinary view. Pointing is not direct contact. It makes direct contact possible and therefore always entails whatever indirection

or mediation the pointer itself introduces. Nevertheless, the practical emphasis of nonverbal signs in Zen enhances the effective "otherness" of Zen rhetoric.

Released from the conventions of "using" language for the purposes of literal representation, a Zen way with language is necessarily "unusual." Zen texts and the masters who are credited with having spoken them are famous for their improvisation along unconventional lines. Instead of following conventional discursive patterns, they wander off in inventive and creative ways. These ways are meant to be disruptive for the reader or hearer. Their sense is hard to locate, and it is precisely in the search for it that the commonly held sense of things is dislodged. Zen discourse of this sort fulfills its function precisely as a transgression on everyday language and common sense. In the disorientation that results from it, the interlocutor or reader is himself thrown into question, sometimes by upsetting his normal position as the one who understands and acts on the world as subject. The "otherness" of Zen language is most powerful in the pressure that it places upon subjectivity. It introduces radical discontinuities into the subject's world and seeks some kind of significant disclosure as a result.

This "discontinuity" can be overstressed, however. Zen rhetoric was, indeed, a radical departure from the East Asian Buddhist scholastic tradition, but that departure was as much a connection to the tradition as a disconnection. Radical Zen discourse extends and maintains the tradition by drawing upon its previously latent resources. Only romantically, following Fromm, can we conceive of a transformation in a tradition as so radical a break that all connections are severed to the previous history of that culture. The invention of new ways of speaking and of new ways to understand speaking can only occur within the parameters of the existing vocabulary any language has at its disposal. Romantic doctrines of creativity ex nihilo, when applied to Zen, will inevitably fail to account for the extent to which "training" is the essence of Zen. Figuring Zen as a liberating rejection of tradition, we fail to appreciate the extent to which the enlightening effects of Zen are themselves the result of an in-depth submission to this tradition. Entering the monastery was itself an act of submitting the mind to a lifetime of reshaping that occurs through the language and social practices of Zen. Having trained in this way, true creativity is possible—not before. One can speak the language of Zen freely only after having learned it and having taken into oneself its purposes and intentions. Training in this rhetorical practice provides the background out of which the Zen master's freedom can be performed.

This suggests a re-statement of the point of this section—that if Zen rhetoric both evokes awakening and is, in turn, evoked by it, then there is an important and interesting correspondence between this discursive practice and the goal of Zen. Understanding this correspondence, how-

ever, will require a departure from the romantic and transcendental grounds that have guided our reading of Zen texts thus far.

D. Language in Meditation and Silence. If there is one place in Zen where we would most expect to find that language has indeed been circumvented, this would be within the central practices of meditation and contemplative silence. Western interpretations of Zen have typically taken this nondiscursive dimension of Zen practice as the basis for the claim that "realization" in this area transcends language and avoids its mediating function. A strong textual basis for this understanding of the matter can be easily located throughout Zen literature from the Chinese classics through contemporary Zen manuals. Many of the founding narratives of Zen and many of the tradition's primary symbols juxtapose the immediacy of meditative silence with the mediating functions of discourse and concept. The Zen tradition traces its sacred lineage to the Buddha's silent transmission of the "dharma" to Mahakasyapa, through Vimalakirti's "thunderous silence" to Bodhidharma's nine years of silent, "wall-gazing" meditation. The founding formula of classical Zen, describing Bodhidharma's "wordless dharma," valorizes "direct experience" as a remedy for the Buddhist tradition's dependence on language and text. In its terms Zen is:

> A special transmission outside the sutras, not dependent on language and texts, direct pointing to mind, one sees the true nature of things and becomes the Buddha.[25]

From the perspective of this understanding of language in Zen, what evokes particular interest are the rhetorical practices entailed in making this claim to linguistic transcendence, especially the irony generated when you speak against speaking or when you write an antitextual text. On rare occasions, in fact, this irony emerges into the text's reflexive awareness as, for example, when a Zen text is able to see that "saying that there is no dharma that can be spoken is called speaking the dharma."[26] But whatever connections East Asians have or have not been able to make between language and silence, our Western interpretations have been naïve in taking their antilanguage rhetoric literally and have failed to appreciate the ironic fact that this was their most powerful religious language. Becoming more attentive to this dimension of Zen, we would learn to look behind what is said (the antilanguage doctrine) to the discursive practice of saying it. Reading in that way we would notice that every effort to relegate language to a subordinate position is itself linguistically articulated, thereby placing language in a more fundamental position than its particular message.

But aside from the critique of language and the conceptual dichotomy between language and silence, we are still tempted to claim that the

practice of nondiscursive meditation, at its deepest levels, is independent of language and that the experience of the accomplished meditator is thoroughly nonlinguistic. Yet this is not so for the same kinds of reasons that have been presented for the presence of language in perception and for the role that communal intersubjectivity plays in the constitution of individual subjectivity. In fact it might be possible to make the opposite case, that, given the range and the subtlety of their vocabulary of meditative silence, the experience of silence in Zen is the most highly nuanced, linguistically articulate—that is, "significant"—such experience in the world.

What does a "vocabulary of silence" have to do with its experience, besides supplying the terms for its communication? Initially, it makes silence noticeable. Although "silence" was available for experience long before Zen, only when the "teaching of silence" was generated and regenerated did it really become interesting. Before its articulation in language, silence wasn't much of anything; no one attended to it (at least not in view of Zen interests).

Moreover, whatever linguisticality there is to the various "doctrines" of silent "immediacy" is also present in the contours of the experience of "immediacy." The voluminous presence within the Zen tradition of symbols and myths of silence, of instructions and manuals on meditation, and of continuous discussion of these sacred artifacts "frames" the experience of silence in Zen as the particular kind of experience that it is. Silence in Zen is not just the absence of sound. It is "symbolic of awakening," "highly profound," "the foundation of any authentic practice," "the atmosphere most treasured and cultivated in monastic life," "unnerving," "capable of evoking insight," and so on. All of these elements of understanding and many more set the stage for the experience of silence in Zen; they make it what it is. Change them and you change the experience. All of this is to say, once again, that a reciprocal, interdependent relationship exists between direct experience (perception), language, and concepts. The actual contour of the experience of silence is dependent in part on the vocabularies and theories that relate to it, and vice versa.

Although modern interpretations have generally taken traditional Zen meditative claims as a rejection of language, my own hypothesis is that these claims are not directed at language so much as they are at reflection. The traditional assertion that Zen experience is "direct" appears to be bound up with the Zen critique of other, more scholarly, branches of Buddhism. That the early, foundational rhetoric of Zen was thoroughly connected to the ongoing political competition between Buddhist sects for prestige and patronage has been fully documented in recent years.[27] Early Zen literature intends to stake out a convincing alternative to prominent competitors and takes as its critical target their

grounding in intellectual, textual practices. Juxtaposed with these literary, philosophical practices then, is the Zen practice of silence and of prereflective spontaneity. Serious practitioners defined themselves in terms of a concern for the cultivation of prereflective experience—an experience and responsiveness not requiring explicit cognitive mediation.

On the terms of this essay, the claim to have transcended language is distinct from the claim to a kind of experience that is prior to conceptual reflection. Understood in this way, the experience of "sudden awakening" in Zen *is* immediate, but only in the sense that it is not mediated by self-conscious reflection on the part of the experiencer. It is, however, thoroughly interpenetrated by the forces of linguistic shaping that are communicated through the institutions, practices, and beliefs of the community and its underlying tradition. While a great deal of experience is, in fact, prior to conceptual reflection, none is prior to the norms, values, and language of the culture within which the experiencer has been raised.

It seems to me that Zen writers have not denied the role that linguistic, conceptual categories play in the formation of prereflective experience, because, given what other intellectual issues they seem to have faced, the question would simply not have come up. If this is true, then the premodern Zen tradition should not be taken to have made either assertion or denial on this issue.[28] The focus of this essay, however, is on the modern Western understanding of Zen experience, for which that question not only came up but has received a unanimous and consistent answer. In this case both question and answer have much more to do with what has been going on in Western culture than it does with Zen.

To understand the status of the modern claim that Zen meditative experience is beyond the shaping power of language and culture, one would need to study the language of this claim in relation to its content. Although this language would typically go unnoticed, when examined, it dismantles its own basis. If Zen experience is "signless," then no sign of any sort derives from it—not even "the signless." If, in the experience, something is experienced *as* absent, such as signs, then a distinction is, in fact, present as are the signs that enable its emergence. On the other hand, if nothing is experienced as either present or absent, then no experience has taken place and no assertions of any kind would be made. Because an experience of the "uninterpreted" must be interpreted in order to be experienced *as* such, a claim about it deserves no special status. It would be judged on terms similar to other assertions, on grounds of who said it, how, with what support, and so on. Partly because of its firm background in Buddhist thought, the Zen tradition seems always to have had a well-developed understanding of the fact that whatever is said about the experience of "awakening," whether

descriptive, doctrinal, or practical, has no greater status than any other assertion and is no less subject to critical scrutiny. Indeed, criteria in this area may have been more rigorous.

It is also worth noticing that claims about "otherworldly" kinds of experience seem to have been relatively unimportant in Zen, claims, for example, about "ultimate unity," "pure consciousness," "contentlessness," "transcendence," and so on. The focus in Zen is more often on worldliness—on action, function, and immediate response. As Kasulis makes very clear, the Zen master is "firmly implanted in the world" (*ZAZP*, p. 134). This kind of experience obviously presupposes a solid world of clear distinctions within which spontaneous action can confidently be performed. Moving freely, without reflection, requires that one be fully familiar with the world and thoroughly at home in it.

The fact that this particular familiarity—a Zen orientation within the world—results from a radical process of disorientation also shows us something important about the relation between language and silence in Zen. Silence served in Zen as the "other" of discourse. It functioned to bring its opposite—language—into view by providing a perspective on language that is as distanced as it could be. It seems to me, therefore, that acute awareness of silence in Zen goes hand in hand with the awareness of language. The voluminous Zen vocabulary concerned with language, and the range of ways in which it enters into discourse, indicates a highly refined sense of language in that tradition. Understood in this way, it is not surprising that the tradition of "silent meditation" is also East Asia's most interesting and complex rhetorical tradition.

IV. Conclusion: Language in Enlightenment

Having described the role that language might play in various dimensions of Zen experience, it now remains for us to ask: If Zen enlightenment is not literally an unmediated, nonlinguistic awareness of "things as they are" in themselves, then what kind of experience is it? And, if a relation to language is essential to the life and experience of a Zen master, what kind of relation is that and how does it differ from the language use of the "unenlightened?" This final section aspires only to suggest directions in which promising answers to these questions might be found.

Anyone familiar with descriptions of the character of the great masters in Zen texts will recognize that their most noticeable feature of distinction is an unusual way with language. Therefore, many of these classic texts consist in "recorded sayings" and in descriptions of the Zen masters' "dialogical encounters" with other great practitioners. Given this fact, it now seems important to recognize that the crucial difference between the enlightened and the unenlightened is a discursive, linguistic difference—a distinction between very different ways in which the en-

lightened and unenlightened participate in their language. If the experience of awakening is mediated through the symbols, texts, instructions, and linguistically shaped social practices of Zen, then perhaps the outcome of this educative process ought to be conceived as a transformation of how one dwells in the linguistically shaped cultural world that is the practitioner's inheritance. In this case, awakening would consist, among other things, in an awakening *to* rather than *from* language. Focus on this dimension of "awakening" would help make sense of the ever-present connection made in classical Zen texts between "radical rhetoric" and "awakened vision."

On this model, Zen monastic training would be understood to require a fundamental reorientation of one's sense of language. Initially, this would be experienced by the novice as a transgression upon, and subversion of, everyday language and the "common sense" that issues from it. Among other things, one's linguistically structured self-understanding would be radically thrown into question. The effects of this process would vary, of course, depending on what background of understanding was being called into question. Any process of disorientation will be dependent in character on a prior orientation. But whatever the background, this desocialization and concurrent resocialization work on the practitioner by disturbing his conventional sense of self and his ordinary comportment in language. This would be, in effect, a contemplative estrangement from ordinary, worldly language games which, in addition to being disrupted, are being replaced through the process of hearing and imitating the Zen master's unusual rhetoric. Far from being a transcendence of language, this process would consist in a fundamental reorientation within language.

A Zen reorientation in language would require training to a level of fluency in distinctive, nonobjectifying, rhetorical practices. Only from within these practices could one come to experience the point of Zen. Moreover, we see that new rhetorical practices gave rise to new rhetorical categories—new ways of talking about discourse. Zen monks became attentive to "turning words," words upon which the point of a speech act turned and which were thought to have the power to "turn" the mind of properly trained practitioners. They distinguished between "live words" and "dead words." "Dead words" were thought to lack the power of transformation because they tend to presuppose, and therefore to encourage, ordinary modes of experience. "Live words" were a disruptive force. They functioned to break down and to dislodge assumptions that were essential to ordinary, worldly discourse and experience. They did violence to common sense and so, from the perspective of noninitiates, often failed to make sense. But in addition to their deconstructive force, they were constructive, and what they constructed was a transformed relation to language and world.

Dale S. Wright

More important than whatever doctrinal content was being taught in Zen discourse, then, was a particular mode of being in and with language. The "means" of Zen teaching was in fact a significant "end," a particular way with words. Awakening was characteristically judged by the extent to which a practitioner could participate in this new discursive milieu. "Excellence" in Zen, therefore, was measured primarily in the extent that one could successfully "do things with words" within the monastic community. What sets enlightened monks off from the others is the power and the relative ease with which they are able to work, to perform, and to accomplish the emancipatory purposes of the discursive community.

Given larger East Asian cultural contexts, it would not be appropriate to call this "discourse of awakening" "natural." Acquiring it typically called for a whole life of mental training. Old linguistic habits, and the sense of self and world that accompanied them, had to be systematically dislodged from the mind. While this training did indeed entail a critical rejection of tradition, more importantly, it required an in-depth appropriation of the tradition, including traditional modes of "critical rejection." To enter the monastery was to surrender the mind to a lifetime of reshaping that occurred through Zen language and social practice. Only upon this background was Zen freedom and spontaneous discourse possible.

The effort of this essay to place language in relation to Zen enlightenment does not imply that Zen enlightenment is in any sense reducible to language. The intention, rather, is to understand the extent to which language is both actively manifest and presupposed in the constitution of this experience. We have found, first, that language is involved in the linguistic stage-setting and shaping of enlightened experience, and, second, that the effects of enlightenment are most clearly manifest in their linguistic form. Upon a Zen cultural-linguistic foundation, and often with a discursive impetus, Zen "awakening" is commonly conceived as a "sudden," "overpowering," "breakthrough" experience. Its power is precisely its "otherness," its inability to cohere perfectly with any conventionally established form, linguistic and otherwise. Its most decisive metaphors figure it as an experience of the "void" at the heart of all things, as emptiness, openness, groundlessness. Moreover, it is not, strictly speaking, a voluntary experience. No one has control over it—it befalls the practitioner; it overwhelms and transforms beyond all subjective intention. The condition of its possibility is receptivity, a kind of openness, however, that is not without the finite form and shape of a particular tradition.

Given the sense of the "extraordinary," or "otherness" in the experience, it was commonly claimed to be "ineffable." One could not communicate or say exactly what it was about. But this experience of linguis-

tic inadequacy should not deceive us into thinking that the experience has no significant relation to language. The awareness that language is not in direct correspondence to experience is not, in fact, uncommon and not restricted to religious matters (although the domain of the "wholly other" is certainly its primary area of application). East Asian poets and painters would, drawing on the development of Zen vocabulary, make the same claim for love, suffering, landscape vistas, and the taste of persimmons. No set of metaphors could reproduce an extraordinary experience in the uninitiated. Language is always in some way inadequate to experience.

Two points help us to put this realization in context, however. First, the claim that language cannot fully communicate or describe an experience does not require the additional claim that language had no role in the cultural shaping of that experience. These assertions are distinct, and the position of this essay is that while the former is common and legitimate, the latter is mistaken. The second point is that there is a close relation between the awareness of the "inadequacy" of language and the language that structures this particular awareness. In the case of Zen this would entail that the experience of linguistic inadequacy and its articulation were both shaped and made possible by the extensive and highly nuanced vocabulary of "ineffability" as it became established and evolved in East Asian culture.

It is also worth observing that the focus in Zen was less on moments of "sudden, ineffable breakthrough" than on what this breakthrough made possible—the kind of intraworldly freedom that issues forth from it in paradoxical sayings, spontaneous dialogue, and unusual acts. What was of greatest interest was a new kind of correspondence to the world that could be observed in the Zen master's comportment, in his actions and discourse. The thesis of this essay has been that not only is language present in the enactment of the Zen master's enlightened bearing, it also plays a fundamental role in the origins and development of the monastic world that made a uniquely "Zen" experience of "awakening" possible. Realizing this, we find ourselves in a better position, first, to appreciate Zen Buddhist experience as one of the monumental achievements of East Asian culture, and second, to learn what we can from it.

NOTES

1 – Published in Erich Fromm, D. T. Suzuki, and Richard DeMartino, *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Harper and Row, 1960). Hereafter cited in text as "PZB" followed by page number.

Dale S. Wright

2 – For an excellent discussion of the instrumental theory of language, and a full critique, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Seabury Press, 1975), Part III.

3 – Alasdair MacIntyre, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988) p. 334.

4 – T. P. Kasulis, *Zen Action: Zen Person* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981). Hereafter cited in text as *ZAZP* followed by page number.

5 – For a critique of this possibility see Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 405; and Richard Rorty, "Pragmatism and Philosophy," in Kenneth Baynes, et al., *After Philosophy* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), pp. 32–33.

6 – See note number 10.

7 – Along similar lines, the modern philosophical problem of "freedom and determinism," which is closely linked to modern epistemological concerns, may be misleading as a framework for the interpretation of Zen enlightenment. At present, however, it is difficult to see how the kind of use Kasulis makes of these categories could be avoided.

8 – Where by "poststructuralist" I mean no more than the view that we begin our reflection within the realization that the structures we discover to be true are historical and contingent. Note that this position does not imply that there are no structures nor that there is no truth but rather that the structures and truths that govern our experience are open both to transformation and to being seen otherwise.

9 – This "myth" is first named and criticized by Wilfrid Sellars in *Science, Perception and Reality* (New York: Humanities Press, 1963).

10 – For the most influential articulations of this position, in the "analytic" tradition, see the works of Davidson, Kuhn, MacIntyre, Sellars, and Wittgenstein; among American "pragmatists," see the works of Fish, Rorty, and Stout; and in "continental" thought, see the works of Derrida, Heidegger, Gadamer, and Ricoeur.

11 – Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper and Row, 1962).

12 – This should not be taken as a criticism of Kasulis' point, however, because what we mean by "determination" is in each case quite different.

13 – Robert Gimello has in two earlier essays argued similarly about the relation between "mystical experience" and the Buddhist cultural tradition. See "Mysticism and Meditation," in Steven T. Katz, ed.,

Mysticism and Philosophical Analysis (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), and "Mysticism in its Contexts," in Steven T. Katz, ed., *Mysticism and Religious Traditions* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983).

14 – See *Being and Time*, section 34.

15 – Wittgenstein first introduces the idea of the "language game" in the *Blue Book* (p. 17) and develops it further in the *Brown Book* and in *Philosophical Investigations*.

16 – Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

17 – MacIntyre develops the theme of "acquiring a conception of the good' throughout *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*

18 – In addition to *Truth and Method*, see H. G. Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), and *Reason in the Age of Science* (Cambridge, MIT Press, 1981), as well as Joel C. Weinsheimer, *Gadamer's Hermeneutics: A Reading of Truth and Method* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), and Georgia Warnke, *Gadamer: Hermeneutics, Tradition and Reason* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1987).

19 – James Boyd White, *When Words Lose Their Meaning: Constitutions and Reconstitutions of Language, Character, and Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984) p. 20.

20 – It is also true that the centrality of discursive practice in the overall scheme of classical Zen practice can be seen in the centrality of the "Dharma Hall" within the monastic institution. The dharma hall is figured in classical Zen texts as the most common setting for the "dialogical encounter" between Zen masters and Zen monks as well as for the experience of awakening. See Martin Collcutt, *Five Mountains: The Rinzai Zen Monastic Institution in Medieval Japan*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, no. 85 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), p. 194.

21 – Ruth Fuller Sasaki, trans., *The Record of Lin-chi* (Kyoto: The Institute for Zen Studies, 1975), p. 51 (*Taishō shinshu daizōkyō*, volume 47 (1985), p. 504c).

22 – Ibid., p 56 (Taishō 47 (1985), p. 505c).

23 – Ibid., p. 40 (Taishō 47 (1985), p. 503a).

24 – Ibid., p. 60 (Taishō 47 (1985), p. 506b).

25 – This slogan appears in numerous classical Zen texts from Sung dynasty Chinese texts on into later publications. By the mid-Sung

it seems to have taken on central significance as the phrase most definitive of the self-understanding of Zen.

26 – Taishō 48 (No. 2012A), p. 382a. Iriya Yoshitaka takes this line from the *Ch'uan-hsin fa-yao* to be traceable to the *Diamond sūtra* in *Denshin hōyō* (*Zen no goroku*, no. 8 (Chikuma Shobō, 1969), p. 54).

27 – See especially the works of Yanagida Seizan, Philip Yampolsky, John McRae, Carl Bielefeldt, and T. Griffith Foulk.

28 – Due in part to its encounter with Western thought, the *modern* Japanese Zen tradition does, in fact, have a great deal to say on this issue.