Title: *Satori* and the Moral Dimension of Enlightenment

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Abstract: This essay addresses the question posed by Brian Victoria's description of "moral blindness" in twentieth century Japanese Zen masters by claiming that since Zen monastic training does not include the practices of reflection and morality, skill in these two dimensions of human character are not necessary components of Zen enlightenment. The essay considers how a literal interpretation of Zen 'no-mind' or 'no-thought' can lead to less than admirable moral decisions, and concludes in challenging the Zen tradition to consider re-engaging the Mahayana Buddhist practices of reflection out of which Zen originated in order to assess the comprehensiveness of its thought and practice of enlightenment.

Satori and the Moral Dimension of Enlightenment

This essay responds to Brian Victoria's critique of Zen social ethics by attempting to answer his question about how it could be that Japanese Zen masters before and during the Second World War seemed to act without moral conviction in confronting the crisis of their time. How could Zen "enlightenment" manifest itself in anything less than morally admirable actions? By assessing the role of morality in Zen tradition, the paper considers how the Zen tradition might extend itself in response to the moral crisis that these questions bring to light.

Although himself a fully ordained Zen priest in the Japanese tradition, Victoria's publications have shaken the world of Zen in Japan and in the west. His books document how Zen masters became advocates of Japanese military values, co-opted by the Japanese government into rationalizing the militarization of Japanese society in the 1930s and 40s by proclaiming the "unity of Zen and war."[i] Beyond this willingness to construct ideological links between military aggression and the teachings of Zen, Victoria describes how certain acclaimed Zen masters showed "complete and utter indifference to the pain and suffering of the victims of Japanese aggression."[ii] He asks how it was possible that acknowledged Zen masters had witnessed "what were so clearly war atrocities committed against Chinese civilians, young and old, without having confronted the moral implications of....this mindless brutality."[iii]

Some have responded to this critique by saying that those who demonstrated such "moral blindness" were obviously not enlightened—they were not *true* Zen masters.[iv] Given the sheer numbers of authenticated Zen masters whose actions in the war fit this pattern, however, and the scarcity of those who comported themselves otherwise, this response is inadequate. In my judgment, a more honest and historically

disciplined conclusion would be that these Zen masters were indeed enlightened according to the tradition's own criteria, but that, by these internal, defining criteria, Zen enlightenment lacks a substantial moral dimension.   This understanding will of course be counterintuitive for many of us because by 'enlightenment' we want to mean an attainment of human excellence that is comprehensive and complete. That desire, however—to interpret particular concepts of enlightenment in terms of contemporary ideals--undermines our efforts to understand them historically. Historically considered, every attainment of enlightenment, like everything else human, has a particular character, one that takes different forms in different settings, cultures, and epochs. And in Zen, enlightenment has been conceived and experienced in a way that does not include morality as a substantial or central element.

This is not to say, of course, that Zen masters are necessarily immoral, or even amoral. No doubt at least a few masters in Zen history have been moral exemplars in their communities. But I conclude, following Tom Kasulis, Chris Ives, and others, that this is not directly attributable to their Zen training so much as it is to their participation in the traditions of East Asian Confucian morality, as well as to the moral teachings of the broader Chinese Buddhist tradition. In other words, Zen masters, like everyone else in East Asia, lived moral lives and expressed themselves morally *to the extent of* their absorption of the Confucian and Buddhist culture in which they lived. Wherever moral stature is a component of the character of a Zen master, that stature would be the result of something other than Zen training. This conclusion seems justified because if we search for evidence of substantive interest in morality in the two dimensions of the Zen tradition where we would most expect to find it—in the vast

canon of Zen sacred literature and in the full repertoire of Zen practices—we discover that it is largely absent.

Reading widely in the enormous Zen canon which chronicles many centuries of Zen history, we find no mention of what happened when Zen masters faced moral dilemmas like the ones that Brian Victoria has described in modern Japan, or any other for that matter. What happened, for example, when a Zen master had to decide between speaking on behalf of peasant farmers who were impoverished and starving in a time of famine or scarcity and supporting the wealthy ruling powers of the region? How did Zen masters respond when a local regime governed through intimidation and cruelty, or when corruption was blatant, widespread, and devastating to the society? What happened when a donor to a Zen monastery asked in return for substantial favors that seriously compromised the values of the Buddhist tradition? How were moral issues like these decided and how did such decisions draw upon the awakened minds of Zen masters?

The answer is that, for the most part, we don't know because the authors of Zen texts did not consider incidences like these to be worthy examples of the 'function' or 'skill' of great Zen minds. In fact, they don't even mention occasions of moral significance when describing the great masters of Zen. They directed their descriptions and their praise instead towards what they took to be situations in life that, to their minds, most fully disclosed the character of awakened Zen life. Even though the vast *Transmission of the Lamp* literature describes thousands of occasions in which a master's Zen mind came to fruition in some specific worldly context, virtually none of these call upon the *moral* capacities of their exemplars. [v] This is significant, and from it we ought

to conclude that, not just in twentieth century Japan but throughout the East Asian Zen tradition as well, morality was neither an explicit concern of practice or praise, nor a dimension of human life upon which anyone expected Zen enlightenment to have a significant bearing.

Moreover, morality appears to have been largely absent from the overall education that Zen monasteries have traditionally offered.[vi] Zen practice, for reasons associated with its particular conception of enlightenment, directed the minds of practitioners elsewhere. In the extensive repertoire of Zen practices, none appear to be intentionally and directly focused on the powers of moral reflection; none appear to aim explicitly at the cultivation of generosity, kindness, forgiveness, empathy, regard for the suffering of others, justice, or compassion. And if we inquire about social/ethical outcome, asking whether mastery of Zen practice has tended to lead to the explicit morality of social engagement, whether satori culminates in greater constructive involvement in society, greater compassion for the suffering of ordinary people, or in more concern for the socio-political whole, the answer is 'generally not.' At no point in the history of East Asian Zen was skillful engagement in social/moral issues considered to be one of the primary consequences of Zen enlightenment.

Why not? Why wouldn't Zen *satori* naturally encompass a kind of moral wisdom and become manifest in activities of compassion and concern for others? Buddhist philosophy provides the best theoretical answer to that question. It claims, by way of the concept of 'dependent arising,' that whatever comes into being is irrevocably shaped by the conditions that give rise to it. Thus, you become what you do insofar as your practices help shape the character of your participation in the world. As the East

Asian Confucian tradition had long maintained, moral sensitivity is a function of conditioning through practice and learning, rather than primarily a matter of sudden insight or a fully ingrained natural birthright. Although morality was thought to be within human beings as an innate potential, unless it has been cultivated there through appropriately moral practices it will not come to fruition or be actualized.[vii] This is true of virtually everything. If you don't practice meditation, or architecture, or cooking, you won't be good at it. If you don't practice moral reflection, you will similarly not be good at it because such reflection is essential to morally mature human life. Without the development of a basis for morality through explicit reflective practice, mature moral intuitions will have no grounds from which to arise.

As we know, Zen training focuses elsewhere. It is a highly specialized form of training that emphasizes a number of features: submission to the guidance of skilled teachers, rigorous physical discipline, calming or *samatha* types of meditation that clear the mind of thinking processes, focused meditations on non-analytical topics like *koans* and capping phrases, a variety of practices of silence, the cultivation of direct perception without conceptual mediation, and a quest for intuitive understanding. Enlightenment arises dependent upon the particular character and texture of these modes of training. It will therefore feature dimensions of human excellence that align with these determining conditions. The enlightened Zen master will tend to be characterized by mindfulness, self-discipline, endurance, stability, self-control, courage, confidence, loyalty, powers of mental concentration, immediacy, mental presence and focus, including the ability to set aside the peripheral in order to stay focused on what is essential. Given that orientation, little or no attention will have

been given in this training to other dimensions of human life, including those that pertain to morality. If these other dimensions of character are never or rarely mentioned in Zen canonical literature, and if there are no monastic practices targeting these sensibilities, it would be unreasonable to expect them to be necessary components of the outcome of Zen monastic culture.

A morally exemplary person by contrast is someone who has undergone a different kind of training. The aim of moral training is to instill the desire for justice, a desire, against the pull of most instinct, to treat others as you would hope they treat you. Such training must address conflict of motive or interest, and must include reflection on human relations, including difficult and ambiguous situations. Moral training does not dwell on a metaphysical concept of non-dualism; instead it focuses on non-dualism with respect to the relative interests and needs of oneself and others. Expertise in matters of moral significance requires considerable experience in the complexity of human relations and extensive practice in moral thinking. What earlier Mahayana Buddhists called 'skill-in-means' is essential because effective consideration of how to act must take into account particular features of the life and character of each person implicated in the situation. But moral excellence is not just a matter of means. It is a further dimension of moral excellence to determine appropriate ends with skill and integrity. The fact that even thieves can practice skill-in-means shows us the necessity of deep reflection on authentic moral ends. Lacking sufficient concern for appropriate goals in the moral sphere, nothing provides guidance for choices that have moral bearing. Since so much of Zen training focused on a state of 'no-mind,' a state of mind prior to conscious thinking of any kind, little room remained for the

development of the reflective dimension of human character. Without it, however, the expectation of morally admirable lives has little basis.

Following the war, D.T. Suzuki acknowledged this weakness in the Zen tradition in Japan. He wrote: "...present-day Zen priests have no knowledge or learning and therefore are unable to think about things independently or formulate their own independent opinions. This is a great failing of Zen priests."[viii] Suzuki harbored no assumption that Zen satori would enable moral excellence. "With satori alone," he wrote, "it is impossible [for Zen priests] to shoulder their responsibilities as leaders of society....by itself satori is unable to judge the right and wrong of war. With regard to disputes in the ordinary world, it is necessary to employ intellectual discrimination...."[ix] Going further, he opened the possibility that a more comprehensive *satori* might encompass intellectual powers: "I wish to foster in Zen priests the power to increasingly think about things independently. A satori which lacks this element should be taken to the middle of the Pacific Ocean and sent straight to the bottom!"[x] What Suzuki's claim calls for is a thorough reconsideration of the character of Zen enlightenment on the grounds that *satori* as it now stands is inapplicable to important moral matters, matters about which a Zen master cannot afford to be naïve.

To what is Zen *satori*, as traditionally defined, thought to be applicable? In what spheres of life will a spontaneous, unreflective mode of comportment be likely to yield actions that we would find admirable? Two domains seem most receptive to this Zen state of mind: first, any aspect of life that is not structurally complex, and, second, any sphere of life that has been fully mastered and is, as a result, well known. The first domain encompasses relatively simple activities, activities for which little or no

thought is required, where few subtle choices need to be made and practitioners can see immediately how to respond. Such situations in life are increasingly rare, however, and even when we do encounter them much of our fluency in them is attributable to our past mastery of these situations more than to their simplicity.

The second domain is therefore more revealing. We can be spontaneous and engage fluently 'without thinking' in any activity whose contours and demands are already well known to us. In these areas of life, the grounds for unmediated intuition are already solidly in place. Here we can imagine the craftsman who knows his work and materials so well that for most dimensions of the craft no thought is required. Indeed, in some of these circumstances, thought simply gets in the way. The potter who knows in the muscles of her hands how to shape the clay will proceed on some tasks without thinking. The rules and principles of her craft need not be conscious; indeed, they may never have been known in an explicit conceptual form. On these same grounds of practice and experience, the skilled athlete can make moves without consulting the principles of the game; indeed, if he does consult them, his moves will be too slow, too self-conscious to succeed.

Some great athletes and potters are, when asked, unable to articulate the principles of their discipline because, embedded in their practice, they have never stood back to consider how they do what they do. Their moves have always proceeded without thinking. But it is a mistake to conclude from this, as some Zen practitioners have, that knowing the principles of a craft is somehow detrimental to its practice, or that it is irrelevant to practice. Indeed, there are limitations to what someone can accomplish without thinking even in relatively simple disciplines. The potter or

athlete who has studied the theory of their craft or sport will have enormous advantages at just those junctures where reflection provides opportunities for flexibility, imagination, and insight. Having never reflected on the principles that govern what they do, nor on the full spectrum of possible moves, their options are significantly limited in comparison to the practitioner who stands back to get reflective distance on her activity. An irony of Zen history is that many of the great masters of Zen attained their elevated status in part because of their non-Zen skills, their skills of persuasion, or analysis, or social understanding, for example. Thus, even in areas where spontaneity is valuable, thinking is sometimes its basis and always its resource.

Now, refining the issue further, we can ask: In matters of moral significance, how does spontaneous action 'prior to reflection' fare? Here we can distinguish between two types of spontaneity, in two different types of people—one whose acts proceed spontaneously on the basis of unreflective participation in prevailing moral custom and another whose acts proceed spontaneously on the basis of a cultivated sensitivity through previous moral reflection. The first of these types has not grappled with questions of moral significance. Typically, such a person does not see the need for moral thought, and responds to moral situations in a spontaneous and straightforward way by following established patterns of behavior. As long as the situations that this person encounters are simple or straightforward in terms of the moral custom already in his or her mind, customarily acceptable actions are likely to result. But as soon as a situation arises that does not conform to custom, this person will have no resources to call upon in making a decision. Moreover, such a person will never be in a position to judge the adequacy of the moral customs currently in effect. Both of these conditions

pertain to the Zen masters who Victoria and Suzuki describe: they were unable to recognize that their current situations could not be adequately handled through past custom, and were ill equipped to think for themselves about how to solve these new problems. Their training had not prepared them to see how the moral customs of loyalty and patriotism that they practiced might themselves generate immoral instincts and outcomes.

The second kind of spontaneous practitioner acts out of a deep reservoir of moral reflection. This person can act in most cases 'without thinking' because he or she has examined cases like these before, perhaps both in theory and in conscious practice. Such a person can often proceed without thinking because this sustaining background of reflection is more than adequate to encompass situations that arise. Wherever it isn't adequate, such a person is practiced in matters of moral deliberation. He or she can step back out of immediate action and into further reflection in order to consider what options for action are most viable. Simple moral situations can be handled without thinking, flowing smoothly and effortlessly from a deeply cultivated moral wisdom. Complex or previously unknown situations are, by contrast, recognized as such and immediately give rise to thinking rather than to spontaneous, habitual action. Past experience in explicit moral deliberation provides the resources enabling one to respond thoughtfully to unfamiliar or unexpected situations. It also gives one the capacity to challenge traditional moral practices and customs in facing an unfamiliar situation that doesn't fit into previous models of behavior. In this sense, it is thinking—conscious reflection--there in the background that enables the moral improvisation that would befit the image of a Zen master's flexibility and spontaneity.

From this perspective, one of the greatest dangers to the Zen tradition is its ever-present temptation to be disdainful of conceptual thinking. In the moral sphere, this is truly dangerous because responding to complex moral issues with sound judgment requires clear thinking. Wherever Zen interprets its 'no-mind' doctrine literally, moral difficulties like the ones that Victoria documents in Japan will eventually surface. Similarly troublesome is the claim that 'Zen mind' is 'beyond good and evil,' precisely because it is regularly proclaimed without inviting or allowing open reflection on what that might mean. In what sense is the Zen master beyond good and evil? The inability to answer that question with intellectual and moral clarity opens the gates of Zen to the possibility of moral travesty.

That these extreme interpretations of Zen can be found in Yasutani Hakuun roshi, one of the best-known Zen masters of twentieth century Japan and, for western practitioners, one of the most influential Zen masters, is a clear warning sign. Teaching, without significant qualification, that "Buddhism has clearly demonstrated that discriminative thinking lies at the root of delusion,"[xi] and that "thought is the sickness of the human mind,"[xii] does more to undermine the possibility of "wisdom and compassion" than it does to enable it. If you have not developed the arts of reflection and imagination in the domain of morality, your actions will be vulnerable to a whole host of dangers, even to those that the early Buddhists had diagnosed so clearly—to greed, hatred, and delusion. As early Buddhist thought shows, morality is a fundamental dimension of life, one that requires both reflection and the training of one's vision through daily practice.

The conception or 'thought of enlightenment' that guides Buddhist practice also shapes its outcome. The 'thought of enlightenment' in Zen, inscribed into the design of its practices and imagined in literary accounts of Zen masters, covers a very specific range of human ideals. Morality, as we have seen, plays no substantial role in it. This is the point or thesis of the Neo-Confucian critique of the Zen tradition in China, Korea, and Japan—that the form of enlightenment to which Zen practice gives rise is insufficiently comprehensive. Although these Neo-Confucian sages were inspired and deeply influenced by the Zen tradition, they concluded that the image and conception of enlightenment in Zen was far too limited.

Specifically, they thought that Zen lacked a substantial moral dimension, that it did not encourage inspired social/political participation, and that its contribution to the culture as a whole was lacking. They also thought that quite often the anti-rational pronouncements of Zen masters were counterproductive—didn't they realize that the coherence and viability of the culture as a whole depended upon leaders who had the knowledge, deliberative capacity, and moral sensitivity to work for the betterment of the whole society? Although Neo-Confucian critiques of Zen were often tempted into hyperbolic excess too, they had realized something important about the way Zen Buddhism had come to develop throughout East Asia. Some of their points are still germane, and for the most part the Zen tradition has not gone very far in responding to them.[xiii]

This is clearly D.T. Suzuki's point in his post-war remark that "...the opportunity was lost to develop a world vision within Japanese spirituality that was sufficiently extensive and comprehensive."[xiv] The spirit of Zen was limited, he concedes, and

therefore in need of extension and further cultivation. Like all religious traditions, Zen has gone through historical periods when practitioners assume its current form of practice and attainment to be unsurpassable, and other periods when it has been able to grow and extend itself.

There are two important images in the Zen tradition that encourage each of these two tendencies. The first is based on the historic claim that every instance of Zen enlightenment is identical to all others insofar as the 'stamp' of the master has been placed upon the mind of the disciple in a 'mind-to-mind transmission' of enlightenment from the Buddha down through all the patriarchs of Zen. This image is inherently conservative. It is based on the desire to preserve the tradition "as it has always been," on the thought that any change in 'enlightenment' would be a 'fall' from the fully enlightened status of the Buddha himself. The second image derives from the Chinese Zen claim that every authentic enlightenment "goes beyond" the teacher and the tradition as it was inherited. This account is based on the realization that the most exciting Zen masters were creative, that their actions extended the tradition in unforeseen directions. It seemed to recognize that the success of the tradition's efforts to preserve the vitality of Zen is located in its ability to criticize itself and to develop in new directions in response to the new possibilities and situations that emerge.

These two images are in tension; their messages feature the contrasting poles of stability and change, permanence and impermanence. The first image has a tendency to reify the 'thought of enlightenment.' It assumes that enlightenment is a fixed essence, that, unlike everything else from a Buddhist point of view, it is neither impermanent nor dependent upon conditions. A practitioner under the influence of

this image assumes the unsurpassability of the tradition that is being handed down, and has therefore been provided no reason to question it or to pursue anything beyond its current state. Historically, this is probably the position that has most often been promulgated in Zen. There have been times in the history of Zen, however, when this reification was not the dominant path, times such as the ninth and tenth centuries in China when important and historic advances in the East Asian Buddhist 'thought of enlightenment' were achieved. In such times or amongst representatives of the tradition such as these, there is the excitement of open questions and a fearless diversification among practitioners who refuse the objectification of the goal of Zen.

In my judgment, the question on which the Zen tradition faces its most important challenge is the meaning of Zen 'no-mind' and its relation to the full scope of enlightened life. If the state of enlightenment that is sought in Zen is literally 'without thinking,' then the dominance of that one guiding thought will render further self-conscious movement in the tradition impossible. It seems to me that the Zen tradition needs to re-engage the question of the relation between thinking and the form of awakening that is without thinking. The reasons for this need are amply demonstrated in the Zen masters chronicled by Victoria who were largely unprepared to face the moral challenges of their time. Lacking the resources of clear reflection that can only be generated through practice, Zen masters would be unable to assess their own goal. Without thinking, they will not have been able to consider how a spontaneous state of 'no-thought' stands in the overall scope of human life. Cultivating an understanding of one's own goal is essential because only through such an account can one grasp or explain how its benefits ought to be balanced against other values that are important in

admirable human lives. Deliberation about ends--about ideals like enlightenment--are

reflective enterprises. To the extent that Zen practitioners are 'without thinking,' they

will have no choice but to take it on faith that their inherited goals are adequate

because they will not have developed the skills that would allow them to think clearly

about or to enter into conversation and debate about the kind of life that they seek,

live, and teach to others.

It is certainly not the case that deliberation has been missing altogether in the

history of Zen. But it is true, I believe, that its practice has been undermined by a

tendency to take the 'no-thought' doctrine literally. As a result, what reflection there is

has become constricted and, at times, convoluted. Thinking the 'thought of

enlightenment' is not encouraged in monastic settings in open discussion in Zen as

they are in some other forms of Buddhism. As a result, ideas are not honed and

developed in such a way that they can be elevated through practice. Given the kinds of

practices that are dominant, the stamp of enlightenment that monks receive in Zen

does not include the skills of reflection, conversation, reasoning, debating, organizing,

or planning. All of these capacities, it seems to me, are essential to ideal forms of

human life, components of a truly comprehensive concept of enlightenment. The

extent to which Zen practice has no bearing on these basic human capacities is the

extent to which Zen enlightenment must be considered a partial and limited

achievement, something subordinate to a more comprehensive thought of

enlightenment that would need to be sought beyond the Zen tradition.

Zen training also inculcates a certain relation to authority and hierarchy that

undermines the opportunity for monks to develop these skills. It would be

unreasonable to expect that after practicing decades of unquestioning subservience to monastic authorities, that habit of subordination would simply go away once a monk became a leader in the Zen tradition. When called upon, some Zen masters appear to have simply placed themselves in the service of the government's goals without facing the incongruence between those goals and their own principles. Loyalty and patriotism were simply extolled by Zen masters as enlightened virtues.[xv]

Had the tradition developed its practitioner's skill in considering the scope of these virtues, Zen leaders might have been able to see how limited and potentially problematic loyalty and patriotism are as virtues. Only in thought can one see that patriotism is among nations what self-centeredness is among persons. If Zen practitioners had been encouraged to engage in debate on the meaning of 'non-dualism,' they might have more easily recognized the dangers of the dualism between 'us' and 'them' that advocates of the 'unity of Zen and war' could not see. That advanced Zen practitioners so easily adopted this form of dualism is one sign that the 'thought of enlightenment' in Zen has been insufficiently comprehensive. Had Zen masters continued to practice Zen's own grounding in the tradition of Buddhist philosophy, they might have been in a much better position to face this crisis.

If, as Zen leaders claimed in the midst of the war effort, "It is not the responsibility of Zen priests to comment about what's going on in the world," then we must ask: what, then, is their responsibility?[xvi] And why *isn't* Zen enlightenment able to shed light on "what's going on in the world?" Given these serious limitations on the scope of Zen, imposed by the tradition's own self-definition, how, then, should we formulate a 'thought of enlightenment' that *is* comprehensive enough to provide us

with vision about "what's going on in the world?" Thus, the question is inevitable:
Does Zen enlightenment bring the whole person to a higher level of human vision and
action, or is it limited to very specific segments of life? Can Zen discipline benefit
everyone, including those who engage in reflective disciplines, or is Zen necessarily
limited to having an effect on unreflective life? If the tradition insists on these
significant limitations, then that would amount to an admission that Zen practice
cannot be good training for people who occupy prominent and important positions in a
society. It would be to admit that Zen practice is not appropriate training for prime
ministers, for urban planners, for directors of human resources, for engineers,
ambassadors, physicians, judges, lawyers, business leaders, scientists, teachers, parents,
and many more. A contemporary society that does not place these kinds of people in
positions of significance is currently unthinkable; these are the people who will lead us
into the future. If Zen is not applicable to these essentially reflective disciplines and to
the people who inhabit them, then its usefulness to our future will be highly
circumscribed.

So, to what in human life *does* Zen apply? Does it enhance and provide depth of
perspective *only* to those activities that can be done 'without thinking?' I don't think
so, and the implicit claim in the Zen tradition that this is so unnecessarily sells the
tradition short. It seems to me that a more comprehensive way to understand the
meditative cultivation of mind is that it deepens our contact with the world in every
sphere of our activity—it puts us into contact with the depth dimension of *any* sphere
of human life, whether more or less reflective. If that is so, then beyond the forms of
cultural life that have traditionally been affected by Zen--swordsmanship, calligraphy,

the tea ceremony, etc., people in widely diverse forms of life could benefit from the deepening of sensitivities that Zen practice makes possible. But this broadening of the scope of Zen would only be possible insofar as the Zen tradition expands and develops its 'thought of enlightenment'—the understanding a practitioner has of the point and the consequence of Zen training.   And this can only be accomplished by practicing the arts of thinking that have for so long been banished in Zen. The tradition needs to ask once again: What is enlightenment? In doing so, it needs to be prepared to learn from other non-Zen sources so that it's concept of enlightenment is comprehensive enough to give rise to human lives that we really do admire.

Should the tradition be flexible and responsive enough to do that, it will be recovering one of its own traditional formulas, most notably its own critique of the concept of enlightenment in East Asia that forced the tradition to 'go beyond' itself. Among its *koans* will need to be included a question that is applicable to the life of every one of us: Who or what should I become; what kind of person should I be? This question is essential to any effort to re-engage the creative cultural work of the Zen tradition. Like every tradition of any sort, Zen will need to continually re-imagine and rethink itself in order to avoid stagnation and irrelevance. It will need to go beyond itself. If Zen purports to bring about some form of self-transcendence—an emptying or deepening of the self—some sophisticated understanding of that transformation must be cultivated in at least some segments of the tradition. The Zen tradition will need to respond to the claim, made by Brian Victoria, D.T. Suzuki, and others, that, whatever its other impressive strengths, Zen training in its current form leaves even the most awakened practitioners in a state of moral immaturity and vulnerability. It will need to

respond by rethinking and expanding Zen training, extending it to include practices

that are relevant to the cultivation of moral excellence as well as to other reflective

powers that are essential to admirable forms of human life. We should expect nothing

less from this great tradition.

[i] .   Brian Victoria, *Zen War Stories*. Routledge/Curzon, 2003. p. 67.

[ii] . *Zen War Stories*, p. 12.

[iii] . *Zen War Stories*, p. 169.

[iv] . Although there were never historical occasions that drew attention to it, this "moral

blindness" that we see so clearly in Japanese Zen can also be found in the original

Chinese tradition and in its Korean variants. *Zen War Stories*, p. 15.

[v] . By morality here I assume a distinction between a form of morality that consists in

following social custom and norms and a form of morality as "social ethics" that includes

a concept of justice above and beyond social custom, as well as the capacity to give

critical assessment to prevailing norms.

[vi] . An important exception to this claim would be instruction in and meditation on the

precepts, on the rules of comportment relevant to life in a Zen monastery. This focus,

however, was largely on the meaning of the precepts for the cultivation of ones own

spirituality, rather than on concern for those beyond the walls of the monastery.

[vii] . It is also important to recognize how social structure conditions moral/political

participation in any society. Zen, like other forms of Buddhism, was fully dependent on

the larger society and on the government for its resources. We have learned that it is

excessively naïve to ignore the question of who is footing the bill for any institution.

Realizing this, it is important to ask: what kinds of reciprocal exchange and agreement

are included in the unwritten contract between Zen monastic institutions and the political power structures of East Asian societies. Still, providing social, political, and economic explanations for why Zen enlightenment might not encompass morality fails to attribute to Zen masters the capacity to recognize these social, political, and economic deficits, and the freedom to consider doing something about them. An explanation beyond the sociological is still required.

[viii] . Cited in Brian Victoria, *Zen at War*, Rowan and Littlefield Publishers, 2005. p. 148.

[ix] . Cited in *Zen at War*, p. 148-49.

[x] . Cited in *Zen at War*, p. 149.

[xi] . Cited in *Zen War Stories*, p. 76.

[xii] . Cited in *Zen War Stories*, p. 87.

[xiii] . The contemporary Chan tradition may be one notable exception to this. Although not necessarily responding to Neo-Confucian critiques at this point, many Chan masters have broadened their teachings considerably to re-envelope Chan concerns and practices within the tradition of Mahayana Buddhism. This allows the image of the enlightened Chan master to meld with the image of the Bodhisattva, bringing depth of moral concern more forcefully back into Chan than the earlier tradition had allowed.

[xiv] . Cited in *Zen at War*, p. 148.

[xv] . It is certainly true that religious leaders in all nations at all times have tended to something like this same compliance. But that historical fact doesn't alter our contemporary sense that a higher form of enlightenment would include the ability to raise critical and moral questions about wartime activities.

[xvi] . Cited in *Zen War Stories*, p. 145.