Jung's Satori: Swedenborg Between *Liber Novus* and Zen

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Abstract

This article reassesses the extent and structure of C.G. Jung's engagement with Zen Buddhism from the late 1930s to the 1950s. Drawing on new documentary evidence, namely Jung's marginalia in his copies of D.T. Suzuki's *Essays in Zen Buddhism* (1933) and *Living by Zen* (1949), it shows how Jung read *satori* (Zen enlightenment) as a close analogue to his 1944 near-death visions. This article argues that Emanuel Swedenborg provided a shared conceptual template through which both Jung and Suzuki could describe sudden, non-theistic spiritual transformation and that this Swedenborgian mediation helps explain why Zen became particularly salient for Jung from the late 1930s into the 1950s. Two Swedenborgian motifs prove decisive: first, his notion of heaven and hell as present states unconditioned by space and time; and second, his concept of regeneration, a catastrophic 'new birth' of the person. I clarify how and why Zen became particularly significant for Jung at this moment in his career, thus reframing a familiar East–West narrative in terms of a transatlantic intellectual history.

Keywords

Zen Buddhism, C.G. Jung, Emanuel Swedenborg, D.T. Suzuki, East-West

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Preliminary Remarks

In a well-known anecdote, Henry Corbin recalled D.T. Suzuki holding up a spoon and remarking, 'This spoon now exists in Paradise. We are now in Heaven,' before calling Emanuel Swedenborg 'your Buddha of the North' (Corbin 1969, in Bernstein 1996: xv). Suzuki's remark encapsulates a conceptual overlap between Swedenborg's account of a present, non-spatiotemporal spiritual order and Suzuki's modern articulation of Zen awakening that later became decisive for C.G. Jung. The question this study addresses is therefore not simply why Jung was interested in 'Eastern wisdom,' but why Zen, in particular, became quite so significant for him from the late 1930s into the 1950s and how Swedenborg provides the backdrop behind this late intensification of interest.

The prevailing literature tends to explain his interest as follows: dissatisfied with Freud's reduction of religion to psychopathology, Jung turned to a comparative study of Eastern and Western religion and mythology and, through Suzuki, eventually found in Zen, among other Eastern religions, a living tradition that he could align with his psychology. In this view, Zen functions chiefly as an alternative model of higher psychic transformation, another counterexample in Jung's cross-cultural research to Freudian reductivism, which tended to explain religion away as disguised pathology or wish-fulfilment. Much of the existing work on Jung and Asian religions has, therefore, mapped thematic convergences without asking what, in Jung's own life, made Buddhism, and particularly Zen, so salient during this period (cf. Spiegelman 1985; Clarke 1994). What follows argues that a decisive episode in Jung's life has been overlooked: the overwhelming visionary episode he experienced in 1944 and which he later narrated to Aniela Jaffé during the production of *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (1961). In Suzuki's account of *satori*, Jung met a vocabulary structurally commensurate with the experience he had undergone.

Discussions of Jung's encounter with Buddhism have already shown that Buddhist materials reached him through highly particular modern channels, for instance, the Keyserling School of Wisdom, Eranos and his correspondence with independent scholars and commentators such as Suzuki, Heinrich Zimmer and Walter Evans-Wentz, and that Jung's own psychology was quickly taken up to explain Zen to Euro-American audiences (Knox 2021a; Knox 2021b). These studies mapped how Jung's categories, for instance, individuation, a broadened conception of the unconscious (opposed to Freud's reductive notion) and active imagination,[1] circulated through figures such as Suzuki, Frederic Spiegelberg and Alan Watts to produce what became known as the 'religion of no religion,' a

modern, psychologised interpretation of Zen Buddhism.[2] What they did not trace was an earlier, Nordic strand in that same genealogy, namely the Swedenborgian framework that both Suzuki and Jung already shared. The present article develops that omitted argument.

The secondary literature on Jung and Swedenborg is, in fact, thinner than one might expect. Apart from Eugene Taylor's historical reconstruction of Jung's early Swedenborg reading (Taylor 2007; 2013), and Sonu Shamdasani's discussions of Swedenborg in relation to *Liber Novus* and the visionary tradition (Shamdasani 2021), there are few sustained treatments of how Swedenborg figured in the formation of Jung's psychology. Biographical treatments (Bair 2003; Wehr 1987) note the early interest but do not pursue it. The present article, therefore, adds only a small section to a history that still awaits systematic treatment. A fuller account might, for example, trace Swedenborgian concepts through Jung's later scientific formulations in the *Collected Works.* Such work lies beyond the scope of the present article. Here I limit myself to one question, namely how a Swedenborgian framework helps to explain why Jung could recognise his 1944 visions in Suzuki's account of *satori*, and therefore why Swedenborg sits, quietly but decisively, behind Jung's reception of Zen Buddhism.

I argue that Jung's recognition of his experience as a kind of *satori* was indebted to Suzuki's Swedenborgian framing of Zen. Two motifs are crucial throughout. First, Swedenborg's idea that heaven and hell are not future localities but present conditions ungoverned by ordinary space-time. Second, his doctrine of regeneration, in which the old self undergoes a decisive reconstitution, expressed in biblical language as becoming 'as little children', or psychologically as the birth of a 'new man'. These motifs appear, albeit transposed into Suzuki's presentation of *satori* as a sudden 'turning over at the basis of consciousness'. These are, indeed, the motifs that Jung repeatedly marked in the margins of his books on Zen as he tried to conceptualise his own visionary experience of 1944.

Jung's Satori

Most accounts of Jung and Buddhism leave out the decisive experiential moment that, for Jung himself, reordered his sense of life, death, and the nature of psychic reality. In 1944, Jung suffered a heart attack, nearly died, and during a prolonged period of medical crisis underwent a series of visions he later called 'the most tremendous things I have ever experienced' (Jung 1989: 295). These visions, and the interpretive problem they posed, form the missing link. The central claim in this first section is that Jung's absorption in Zen can be read as a search for an adequate conceptual and experiential

language to grasp those visions. In particular, he would come to recognise in Suzuki's account of *satori* (*kenshō*) a structurally similar event, an irreversible transformation at the very ground of consciousness.

In his semi-autobiographical memoir, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* Jung narrates to Aniela Jaffé the weeks during which he hovered on the boundary between life and death. He reports experiencing himself as outside the earth, seeing the globe 'as if from space,' moving toward a stone or rock temple. As he approached its steps, 'everything was being sloughed away; everything I aimed at or wished for or thought, the whole phantasmagoria of earthly existence, fell away or was stripped from me — an extremely painful process' (ibid.: 290–91).[3] What remained was not a devotional 'soul,' nor an abstract metaphysical principle, but the factual totality of his lived being: 'It was as if I now carried along with me everything I had ever experienced or done… I consisted of my own history, and I felt with great certainty: this is what I am' (ibid.: 291).

Two features of this account matter to the present argument. First, Jung stresses a complete relinquishing of egoic teleology, that is, the ego's goal-driven and future-oriented grip on life. Aims, projects, identifications, everything bound up with striving and futurity, fell away. The experience was at once annihilating and liberating. 'At first the sense of annihilation predominated,' he remarks, but this soon became of 'no consequence' when he felt a deep sense of wholeness, as if nothing were missing. What remained was the sheer recognition of being, or, in his words, a 'fait accompli' (ibid.). The ego, as the knot between past and future, had collapsed. Second, Jung insists on the objectivity of this condition. The state is given as more real than empirical waking life. He stresses that 'it was not a product of imagination,' that it was 'utterly real,' that there was 'nothing subjective about [the visions]' and that they possessed 'a quality of absolute objectivity' (ibid.: 295). He describes a mystical experience of being 'in a tremendous void, but filled with the highest possible feeling of happiness,' an 'eternal bliss,' 'safe in the womb of the universe' (ibid.: 293). This is paired with a changed apprehension of time, a 'non-temporal state in which present, past, and future are one,' and in which 'everything that happens in time had been brought together into a concrete whole' (ibid.: 296). Time is apprehended as simultaneity, 'an indescribable whole,' which he can nevertheless observe with 'complete objectivity.'

From within that condition, the ordinary world could be re-evaluated. Daytime consciousness, recovery, the hospital, the 'grey world with its boxes,' appeared to him afterward as imprisoning, trivial, even 'hideous nonsense' (ibid.: 295). Even after his recovery, Jung 'never since entirely freed' himself from the impression that waking life is only a 'segment

of existence… enacted in a three-dimensional boxlike universe especially set up for it' (ibid.). The visions, in other words, permanently relativised empirical consciousness and suggested that what we usually take as objectively real is, in fact, a confined, derivative stratum of reality.

These experiences confronted Jung with two problems. The first was descriptive. He had seen and known something to which his existing psychological vocabulary did not fully correspond. He had long worked with visionary material, of course, in his 1913 confrontation with the unconscious,[4] the dialogues and images in the *Black Books* and the *Red Book* and his study of visionary traditions of both East and West. Indeed, by the mid-1930s, he had argued that certain non-Western traditions, especially Mahāyāna Buddhism, had developed techniques of engendering the individuation process[5] in a way unparalleled in the West. The 1944 visions, however, seemed somewhat different insofar as they marked a completion: 'I was what I had been and lived… and that was everything' (ibid.: 291). If, following recent readings of *Liber Novus*, we treat 1913–30 as Jung's *katabasis*, that is, his descent into the underworld of the soul (Shamdasani 2021; Priviero 2023), then the 1944 visions may be read as the corresponding *anabasis,* a temporary admission to the upper, non-temporal order which, as we shall see, he had long held in view through Swedenborg and later recognised in Suzuki's *satori*.

The second problem was how to frame these visions conceptually. Jung was not willing to treat these visions as mere curiosities, nor did they easily fold back into conventional Christian categories. He distanced them from conceptualisations referring to devotional union with a personal God and, for that matter, resisted absolutist conceptualisations as such (ibid.: 350). This was, on the other hand, an authoritative breakthrough, impersonal and experienced as being outside the ordinary limits of spatial and temporal reality.

It is precisely here that Zen re-enters the picture. Five years prior to his visions, in 1939, Jung had contributed a foreword to Suzuki's *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*. In this work, he called Zen 'the most important fruit that has sprung from that tree whose roots are the collections of the Pali Canon' and 'one of the most wonderful blossoms of the Chinese spirit,' and he singled out the 'central perception of unsurpassed singularity' that Zen calls *satori* (Jung 1969: 538). Already in 1939, then, Jung had marked *satori,* framed by Suzuki as singular, irreducible and ineffable, as the decisive experience of Zen.

After 1944, Jung had to decide what to do with his own breakthrough. His personal library suggests the answer. In his copies of Suzuki's works, especially *Essays in Zen Buddhism (Second Series)*, which

Suzuki had sent him in 1933, Jung underlined and annotated passages on *satori* that mirror with striking precision the phenomenology he later ascribed to his 1944 visions. To mention several such examples from Jung's annotations:

1. He underlines Szu-hsin Wu-hsin's sermon: when 'the spiritual flower will suddenly burst into bloom, illuminating the entire universe… you can transform this great earth into gold… and the great rivers into an ocean of milk' (Suzuki 1933: 8).

2. He highlights Suzuki's description of the place of *satori* in Zen tradition: 'Satori is thus the whole of Zen… the entirety of one's mental construction goes through a complete change' (ibid.: 9).

3. He underlines a Zen Master's account of *satori*: 'I felt suddenly as if I were severed from all time and space relations. It was like cutting a skein of tangled thread with one stroke of a sharp knife' (ibid.: 14).

4. He marks Suzuki's outline of the structural features of *satori:* irrationality, intuitive insight, authoritativeness, impersonal tone, exaltation, momentariness and even corrects one. Where Suzuki writes that *satori* is 'an insight into the Unconscious,' Jung writes in the margin, 'rather, breaking into consciousness' (ibid.: 46). He is aligning his own experience, an impersonal, objectively given breakthrough standing 'outside' time and space, with Suzuki's *satori*, removing what he sees as an overly intellectual nuance.

5. Most revealingly, where Suzuki cites a master who calls awakening 'revolutionary,' 'the bottom of a pail is broken through,' 'the birth of a new man… is really cataclysmic,' Jung writes in the margin: 'Dream of tower and globe' (ibid.: 217–18). Here we see Jung pointing directly back to his 1944 ascent to the stone temple and the cosmic vantage point above the earth. This note shows that he was not merely noticing an analogy, but rather identifying his vision as the same kind of essential breakthrough as portrayed in Suzuki's work.

What the marginalia demonstrate is more than simply Jung's recognition of a conceptual sympathy with Buddhism. For Jung, Suzuki had named a precise analogue of what he had undergone – an overturning 'at the basis of consciousness' (Suzuki 1933: 9), 'a sudden outburst' (ibid.: 10), 'the bursting

of the bamboo with a crack,' 'the breaking of the void' (ibid.). All these phrases are, in fact, underlined in Jung's copy. Suzuki's Swedenborgian framing of *satori* is tied, in Jung's own hand, to his 1944 experience, when he refers to his 'dream of [the] tower and globe.' He did not, therefore, merely receive Zen as a comparative psychology, but saw it as a cross-cultural corroboration for a decisive and personal experience of ascent into a higher order of being.

It is important, however, to note that Jung's receptivity to Zen began, of course, prior to 1944. On 22 September 1933 he wrote to Suzuki, thanking him for *Essays in Zen Buddhism* and adding the striking remark that 'Zen is a true goldmine for the needs of the Western psychologist' (Jung 1973: 128). The date precedes his 1939 foreword to *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* and, significantly, falls in the first year of the Eranos meetings (1933–39), when 'the meeting of East and West' was the theme of the conferences, and it coincides with the phase in which Jung was widening his comparative field to include not only Tibetan materials, but also Pali and Mahāyāna sources treated in his 1938/39 ETH lectures. In other words, Jung recognised from the outset that Zen, at least as Suzuki presented it, offered a conceptualisation for sudden, non-theistic transformation that Western psychology lacked. This early enthusiasm shows that Jung already regarded Zen as a meaningful cross-cultural corroboration of the individuation process. His 1944 experience, however, supplied a phenomenology that made those earlier readings experientially commensurate, so that Suzuki's account could now be read as a description of the very state he had himself undergone. The annotations in his copy of *Essays in Zen Buddhism,* beside Suzuki's description of a cataclysmic new birth, show him returning to a book he had valued in the 1930s, reading it as a phenomenological parallel to his experience. Given the dating, the most plausible reconstruction is that Jung already had Suzuki's account of *satori* in mind before his illness, but that the 1944 visions sent him back to Suzuki's work.

Over the course of the following years, until the end of his life, Jung's interest in Zen continued. He read, alongside Suzuki, Nukariya Kaiten's *The Religion of the Samurai* (1919) and Shuei Ohazama's *Der Lebendige Buddhismus in Japan* (1925). In May 1958, in Küsnacht, in a conversation with the Rinzai lay teacher and Kyoto School philosopher Hisamatsu Shin'ichi (arranged by Suzuki),[6] Jung stated explicitly that 'the task is in both cases — Zen and psychology — the same,' and later, that 'the goal in psychotherapy is exactly the same as in Buddhism,' namely liberation from the compulsions that bind a person (Young-Eisendrath and Muramoto 2003: 112). *Satori*, for him, was not only a Japanese soteriological term, but

one of the most precise accounts of a universal mode of psychological reality he had himself known.

Swedenborg as Mediator: Satori and the 'Buddha of the North'

The remaining question is why Jung could so readily recognise his own 1944 state in Suzuki's Zen. The answer lies less in Jung's 'turn to the East' than in the fact that Suzuki's modern Zen and Jung's earlier reading of Swedenborg occupied the same conceptual ground. As Sharf has argued, Suzuki's Zen was not a transparent transmission of medieval Japanese practice but a modern, experientialist construction that privileged sudden, interior realisation over institutional, ritual, or scholastic forms (Sharf 1993). I have made a similar point about the 1930s–60s reception of Zen around Eranos and in Californian Jungian circles, where Suzuki's Zen was read through Jung's psychology and presented as a universally available, interior awakening (Knox 2021b). What neither account has traced is that Suzuki had learned to speak about such awakening in Swedenborgian terms well before Jung read and annotated his books. It was precisely this trans-sectarian, universalised Zen, stripped to what Suzuki took to be the pure structure of *satori*, that Jung was reading. Into that construct Suzuki wove a set of Western, Romantic and post-Romantic sources, including Schleiermacher, James, Otto and, quite prominently in his early career, Emanuel Swedenborg.

Suzuki's Swedenborg

During his first American period (1897–1908) at Open Court with Paul Carus, Suzuki encountered Swedenborg alongside the comparative philosophy that later shaped his Zen essays. Through Beatrice Lane, his future wife, he also had a direct line into Swedenborgian and Theosophical circles (Nagashima in Suzuki 1996: ix). On his return to Japan, this interest intensified. He served as vice-president at the 1910 International Swedenborg Congress in London; in 1911 the London Swedenborg Society invited him to translate *Heaven and Hell*; and between 1913 and 1915 he published Japanese translations or studies of *Suedenborugu* (1913), *The New Jerusalem and Its Heavenly Doctrine* (1914), *Divine Love and Wisdom* (1914), and *Divine Providence* (1915). Japanese contemporaries could therefore describe him as 'more or less a Swedenborgian,' adding that his clarity in presenting Zen to the West was made possible because 'Suzuki's brain had previously been trained by Swedenborg's mysticism' (Furuno, in Hisamatsu, cited in Nagashima 1996: xi). Suzuki himself wrote that

'Swedenborg's theological doctrines greatly resemble those of Buddhism' (Suzuki 1996: 6). In Henri Corbin's aforementioned recollection of Suzuki holding up a spoon and saying, 'This spoon now exists in Paradise. We are now in Heaven,' before calling Swedenborg 'your Buddha of the North' (Corbin 1969, in Bernstein 1996: xv), Suzuki had learned to describe a present, non-spatiotemporal spiritual order in Swedenborgian terms even before he popularised Zen to a European audience.

From Swedenborg, Suzuki draws two elements that are central to Jung's later reading. First, Suzuki emphasises Swedenborg's claim that heaven and hell are not places 'out there' nor events deferred to the future, but 'a kind of spiritual state' (Suzuki 1996: 60). 'Neither heaven nor hell exists apart from this world, although this world also does not equal heaven or hell… the relationship between them is neither one of equivalence nor separation' (ibid.). Here, Suzuki is summarising *Heaven and Hell*, where Swedenborg reports, on the basis of being 'admitted' to the spiritual world, that heavenly life is not conditioned by time and space but by 'states of life' (Swedenborg 2010: 85). What appear as places are simply inner states shown without the masking constraints of the material world. Consequently, Swedenborg can describe heaven as a lawful and organic totality (the *Maximus Homo*), in which souls experience themselves not as isolated egos but as members of a living totality. He can, similarly, describe hell as the experiential field produced by disordered love of self. Both, crucially, are present conditions and not merely future localities.

The second element relates to Suzuki's interpretation of Swedenborg's doctrine of regeneration, namely that the passage to heaven entails a sudden and catastrophic reconstitution of the person. The former self dies; a 'new man' comes forth, no longer ruled by autonomous self-will but ordered by what Swedenborg calls divine inflow (*influx divinus*). Swedenborg repeatedly marshals the Gospel injunction from the Gospel of Matthew, 'unless you become as little children', to exemplify his concept of regeneration. The state of innocence, symbolised by the child, refers to a state in which one 'does not take credit for anything good' but 'loves to be led,' and in which one acknowledges that 'we know nothing of truth and are capable of nothing of good on our own' (Swedenborg 2010: 147). Regeneration begins with the 'innocence of infancy' and matures into an inward, wise innocence. As Swedenborg put it:

> Innocence does not take credit for anything good but ascribes it all to the Lord… So when we do get old, our bodies deteriorate and we become like little children again — but like wise little children or angels, for in the highest

> sense a wise infant is an angel. This is why 'infant' in the Word means one who is innocent, and 'elderly one' means a wise person full of innocence. It is much the same for everyone who is being regenerated. Regeneration is rebirth as a spiritual person. We are brought first into the innocence of infancy, which is realizing that we know nothing of truth and are capable of nothing of good on our own, but only from the Lord… (Swedenborg 2010: 147-148)

In other words, for Swedenborg, the decisive spiritual change is a return to being guided by the Divine inflow (*influx divinus)*, to non-appropriation (Swedenborg 137; 160-163; 212). He elsewhere calls this the birth of a 'new man.'

When Suzuki defines *satori* for modern readers, the same structure is explicit. *Satori,* as he puts it, is a *parāvṛtti*, a 'turning-over at the basis of consciousness' that reconfigures the whole mental construction. It is sudden, impersonal, atemporal, and symbolised through images of rupture (for instance, the aforementioned images of the flower bursting into bloom, the bottom of the pail broken through). In short, Suzuki presents *satori* as Swedenborgian regeneration in Zen terms - a decisive overturning that discloses a non-spatial present and yields a 'new man', marked by inward innocence. This is the structure Jung later marked against his 1944 visions.

Jung's Swedenborg

During the same decades that Suzuki was producing his Swedenborg translations, Jung was himself reading Swedenborg. On the basis of the Basel university library charging records first noted by Sonu Shamdasani and set out by Eugene Taylor, we know that in 1898, while still a medical student dissatisfied with a psychiatry that focused almost exclusively on psychopathology, Jung borrowed many works from Swedenborg's post-1745 visionary corpus. Swedenborg wrote the texts in question after 1744, when he underwent a series of dreams and waking visions documented in his *Journal of Dreams,* which he later took as preparatory phases of a divine mandate to disclose the inner meaning of the Bible and the realities of heaven and hell (Swedenborg 1986). The publications Jung checked out were: *Arcana Coelestia* (1749)*, Heaven and Hell* (1758)*, Earths in the Solar System* (1758)*, Intercourse between the Soul and the Body* (1769) and *Conjugial Love* (1768). Taylor later observed that Jung did so at a moment when contemporary psychiatric texts from figures such as Krafft-Ebbing and

Kraeplin offered him little beyond nosological classification. Swedenborg, on the other hand, supplied exactly the kind of ordered, experiential phenomenology he was looking for, 'a psychological language that would express the dynamic aspects of human consciousness in all their vagaries, from the psychopathic to the transcendent' (Taylor 2007: 30).

In his post-1744 oeuvre, Swedenborg reports his direct encounters with angels and the dead, which he experiences as objective realities unconditioned by space and time. He sometimes describes himself as a mere instrument through whom other intelligences dictated. Jung owned William White's nineteenth-century biography of Swedenborg and marked precisely such passages, where Swedenborg says spirits could even 'direct my hand when writing, as though it were quite their own' (White 1867, I: 293–94). As recent scholarship notes, Swedenborg shadows Jung's visionary project in *Liber Novus.* Both scientists confront a mid-life crisis and associate an experience of descent into their soul with an anagogic hermeneutic, though crucially, as Shamdasani emphasises, their ontologies diverge, with Jung recasting Swedenborg's spiritual realism as psychic realism (Priviero 2023; Shamdasani 2021; Taylor 2007). That is to say, whereas Swedenborg presents heaven and hell as ontologically real realms he was admitted to and whose meaning could be interpreted through his doctrine of correspondence, Jung, by contrast, resisted metaphysical claims altogether. Nevertheless, Jung's psychic realism does not deny the objectivity of visionary experiences in the sense that their directness and transformative effects imply an autonomy that allow them to be treated as empirically real facts, without requiring commitment to the existence of an independent spiritual world. This distinction is crucial since Suzuki's presentation of Zen occupies a similar middle ground. He describes *satori* as an authoritative breakthrough beyond ordinary space-time while remaining relatively non-committal on metaphysical matters. This made his presentation of Zen particularly sympathetic to Jung.

That Jung read *satori* through this Swedenborgian lens is materially evidenced by a further marginalium in Jung's copy of another *of* D. T. Suzuki's works, *Living by Zen* (1949). An annotated passage reads:

> [To live Zen] is relative and psychological while the consciousness of living Zen is something qualitatively different from it; it marks the limit of development which the human mind can achieve; it almost approaches divine consciousness. Perhaps it is, so long as we uphold time and space as real and not conceptually projected. But even when these basic conditions of experience are

> denied, Zen talks of a certain kind of experience. If this be really the case, Zen experience must be said to take place in the timelessness of the Absolute Present. (Suzuki 1949: 70)

Next to Suzuki's remark that Zen realisation 'takes place in the timelessness of the Absolute Present,' Jung writes in the margin 'become like a little child.' This crucial addition, the sole written annotation (as opposed to emphasis marks), in Jung's copy of the book, shows him reading Suzuki's description of *satori* through Swedenborg's biblical language of regeneration. At the same time, it shows Jung aligning Suzuki's 'absolute present' with the idea of innocence that Swedenborg treats as the condition of heaven. The biblical image of 'little children', in precisely those terms, is, as we have seen, one of Swedenborg's chief biblical correspondences for the heavenly state of innocence (ibid.: 7; 148; 150; 154; 189). It is hard to imagine clearer documentary evidence of the hermeneutic triangulation linking Swedenborg, Suzuki, and Jung.

From Swedenborg, then, Jung had already absorbed three working assumptions: first, that a vision can be treated as objectively valid; second, that such visions disclose a higher stratum of reality than ordinary waking life; and finally, that entry into that stratum is bound up with a radical inner re-constitution, i.e. Swedenborg's idea of regeneration. These same assumptions are at work, *mutatis mutandis*, in Suzuki's modern Zen. This shared ground is what makes the later Jung–Suzuki recognition intelligible.

Furthermore, Swedenborg's visions, as Shamdasani has noted, arrive together with their hermeneutic. That is to say, the doctrine of correspondence provides both the vision and the key to reading the vision. Jung follows the same double movement in *Liber Novus*, where he recasts spiritual realism as psychic realism (*esse in anima*) and then supplies a method for interpreting what the vision discloses. In a 1950s Psychological Club discussion, Jung said of Swedenborg that the visions were 'terribly important' but also dangerous, and that Swedenborg 'had to hold onto the concepts' to protect himself. Such conceptual scaffolds, Jung added, are 'a true salvation for many men' (Aniela Jaffé papers, ETH, in Shamdasani 2021: 172). One can only assume that Jung considered his own later scientific formulations in a similar vein. Concepts form, so to speak, a protective guard rail against the danger of confrontations with the unconscious. At the same time, however, that guard rail can become a doctrinal carapace that over-determines or distorts the original experience. Suzuki's account of *satori* is structurally similar and occupies precisely the same middle ground. Even while insisting that *satori* is itself

incommunicable, he nevertheless names and describes it, for instance, as a cluster of traits (impersonality, finality, etc), and in opposition to mere quietism. In other words, Zen, as Suzuki formulates it, brings its own interpretive scheme to the experience it names. Jung could recognise that structure and set it alongside his own and Swedenborg's, without simply adopting an Eastern soteriology. It supplied a traditional, supposedly 'Eastern' way of speaking about the kind of breakthrough he himself had undergone, while he continued to insist on a Western–Christian language for its fuller elaboration.

Placed in this wider historical context, the Jung–Suzuki connection belongs to a much earlier network of translations and appropriations that has, so far, been largely left unrecognised in the secondary literature. In the eighteenth century, Swedenborg had articulated a graded, non-spatial and non-temporal spiritual cosmos based on a specific kind of mystical experience. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries his works circulated in English and German and were taken up in a variety of esoteric and comparative projects. In the 1910s, Suzuki appropriated and translated this material in Japan, presenting Swedenborg as a Northern analogue to Zen Buddhist *satori*. Some decades later Jung, who had read Swedenborg in Basel in 1898, encountered Zen Buddhism in a form already mediated by Swedenborgian conceptual categories. When, in 1944, Jung sought to make sense of his own mystical experiences, he found in Suzuki descriptions of them that resonated with his earlier reading of Swedenborg. What appears then, at first glance, as a late rapprochement between Jung and Zen, belonged in fact to a longer transpacific trajectory of Swedenborg reception.

Conclusion

What this reconstruction shows is that Jung's late engagement with Zen cannot be reduced to a generalised enthusiasm for 'Eastern wisdom,' nor to a simple convergence of two systems of thought. It was made possible by a Swedenborgian template already shared, in different ways, by both Jung and Suzuki. The assumptions both ascribed to, aided by their reading of Swedenborg, were: first, that visionary experience is objectively valid; second, that reality is stratified, with empirical life as a lower register; and finally, that inner transformation entails a catastrophic and sudden rebirth of the individual sense of identity ('regeneration'). When Jung, after 1944, found in Suzuki's works descriptions of *satori* as the 'birth of a new man,' of being 'severed from all time and space relations,' and of an authoritative, irreversible breakthrough, he was encountering not an alien Zen, but a Zen already articulated in a Swedenborgian conceptual framework he had

learned half a century earlier. Recognising this mediation allows us to relocate Jung's turn to Zen within a wider and more nuanced historical context, rather than within a simple West–East binary relationship.

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[1] Jung introduces active imagination as the method for 'bringing unconscious contents to consciousness' (Jung 1960: 409, para. 599) by deliberately engaging the images that arise in fantasy or dreams.

[2] The term was first used by Frederic Spiegelberg, Indologist, scholar of comparative religions and friend of Jung, in a 1937 article, 'Tibetan Psychotherapy'. Here, he drew parallels between the guru-disciple relationship in Buddhism and the analyst-analysand relationship in Western psychotherapy (Spiegelberg 1937). In 1938, he produced an influential article for the London Buddhist Lodge explicitly titled 'The Religion of non-religion', in which he baptised Zen as a 'super-religion' that transcended religious names and forms (Spiegelberg 1939). The impact of this concept and its intellectual history is addressed elsewhere (Kripal 2007; Knox 2021b).

[3] On the editorial history, see Shamdasani's introduction to *The Red Book*, which argues that Jung's later publications, including *Memories, Dreams, Reflections,* function as conceptual amplifications of material first worked through in *Liber Novus*. Jaffé's text drew (selectively) on *Liber Novus* with Jung's permission (Shamdasani 2009, Introduction).'

[4] Jung's confrontation with the unconscious refers to his deliberate self-experimentations that he began in 1912/1913, in which he intentionally engaged with spontaneous fantasy material and visual images in waking life. He later called this process active imagination and recorded his self-experimentations in the *Black Books.*

[5] The individuation process, or individuation, refers to the developmental movement towards wholeness. As he put it in *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology*: 'We could therefore translate individuation as 'coming to selfhood' or 'self-realization'' (Jung 1966, 173: para. 266).

[6] Suzuki wrote on 12 March 1958, asking Jung whether he could 'spare a moment for his [Hisamatsu's] interview ... sometime between May 1-25'. Letter from Suzuki to Jung in ETH Zurich University Archives, Hs 1056: 2671.