

**WITTGENSTEIN AND ZEN: A COMPARISON**

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## ABSTRACT

### WITTGENSTEIN AND ZEN: A COMPARISON

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This thesis is a comparison of the philosophical systems of Zen Buddhism, which is an Eastern Philosophy, with Ludwig Wittgenstein's philosophical studies, who is an extraordinary name of the Western Philosophy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The history and sources of Zen Buddhism were given with its adoption in the use of language and arts. Besides, this study exemplifies the philosophy of Zen Buddhism with the examples from the life story of Wittgenstein. The thesis is written with a full awareness of the sensitivity of comparing different systems which always embody counterexamples and speculations. This is the reason why speculative ideas and resources were deliberately ignored. The aim is to contribute the cultural life of Turkey by taking such a subject to the academic milieu. Moreover, Turkey is the passage of the East and the West both geographically and culturally. There are resemblances between Zen and Wittgenstein by means of method and the use of language. Furthermore, it was given the names of the books that Wittgenstein read and the philosophers who influenced Wittgenstein. The parallels between Zen and Wittgenstein are justified.

Keywords: Wittgenstein, Tractatus, *Philosophical Investigations*, Mysticism, Zen.



## ÖZ

### WITTGENSTEIN VE ZEN

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Yüksek Lisans, Felsefe Bölümü

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Bu tez bir Doğu öğretisi olan Zen Budizm ile 20. yüzyıl Batı dünyasının en sıra dışı felsefecilerinden biri olan Ludwig Wittgenstein'in felsefi sistemlerinin bir karşılaştırmasıdır. Çalışmada Zen tarihsel bir perspektifle ele alınarak sanat ve dille olan bağları üzerinde durulmuştur. Wittgenstein'in yaşam öyküsü Zen düşüncesiyle benzerlikleri vurgulanarak ele alınmıştır. Bu çalışma farklı sistemlerin karşılaştırılabilirliğinin her zaman için felsefi spekülasyonlara ve karşı örneklere yol açabileceğinin farkındalığında gelişmiştir. Bu nedenle, böylesi tartışmalara yol açabilecek kaynaklar kasıtlı olarak göz ardı edilerek karşılaştırılan her iki sisteme de eşit mesafede durulması hedeflenmiştir. Burada amaç, kültürel ve coğrafi olarak doğu ile batı arasında bulunan Türkiye'nin akademik ortamına çok uzak gibi görünen bir konuya katkıda bulunmaktır. Zen ile Wittgenstein arasında dil kullanımı konusunda benzerlikler vardır. Ek olarak Wittgenstein'in kaynaklarına baktığımızda okumuş olduğu yazarların/filozofların Zen Budizm'le ilgili oldukları bilinmektedir. Bu çalışmada Zen ile Wittgenstein'in düşünceleri arasındaki benzerlikler nedenlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Wittgenstein, Tractatus, Felsefi İncelemeler, Mistisizm, Zen.

**To my beloved parents**

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*The handful of sands looks uniform at first, but the longer we look at it the more diverse we find it to be. Each grain of sand is different. No two are alike. Some are similar in one way, some are similar in another way, and we can form the sand into separate piles on the basis of this similarity and dissimilarity. Shades of colour in different piles-sizes in different piles-grain shapes in different piles-subtypes of grain shapes in different piles-grades of opacity in different piles—and so on, and on and on. You'd think the process of subdivision and classification would come to an end somewhere, but it doesn't. It just goes on and on.*

*Robert M. Pirsig*

#### 1.1 The Aim and the Scope of the Study

Everything is in a continual motion: People, languages, cultures, science, seas, animals, earth, even the mountains change in time. Nothing remains constant and every being in the universe is related to each other. This endless flux is the very nature of the being. World history is shaped by this endless flux as well. In this respect, human beings are both the makers of this history and they are at the same time affected by it. Therefore, the cause and effect relationship is an important notion to be studied in order to understand history, culture, and nature.

Water, which is referred as “arche” by the Greek philosopher Thales, is considered to be the main source of life. Hindu civilization was named after the Indus



Valley, where Hinduism was born. Today, Hindu religion and philosophical tradition is known as the oldest living tradition in the world. Water plays an important role in the Western philosophy as well. The Nile, the Tigris, the Euphrates, the Hermus, and the Meander shaped nature, people and culture. Ancient Greeks founded a very strong theoretical and philosophical system on the grounds of the Ancient Egyptians and Mesopotamians. And the Greek culture became the basis of European philosophy, particularly after the Renaissance. In the Continent, Latin based languages such as French, German, English, Spanish and Italian diverged from Latin and they became a part of the national identity. Philosophies of Europe went parallel to this fact: Empiricism in England, rationalism in France and idealism in Germany became their characteristics.

Buddhism was born out of Hinduism. It was under Hindu influence in its early years. After a while, it became a completely different religion and philosophy. The pacifist attitude and life style that Buddhism offers turned it into a respected religion in the world, although it was not an institutionalized one.

A millennium after Buddha, Buddhism spread out to China and then to Japan. Zen was born from the interaction of Buddhism with the ancient traditions and religions of China and Japan. Eventually, it has become a very special teaching; most scholars call it as the art of living.

Wittgenstein, a famous philosophical figure of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was an Austrian. He was grown up in a large and rich family in which various kinds of art were always appreciated. The early decades of Vienna had experienced a vivid social, scientific and artistic life. Robert Edler von Musil in prose, George Trakl in poetry, Gustav Klimt in painting, Adolf Loos in architecture, Sigmund Freud in psychiatry, Arnold Schoenberg in music are all examples of great geniuses. The list may be extended but it needs to be

emphasized that the German language and culture created the background for all the artistic and philosophical movements in Austria. Moreover, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, Friedrich Nietzsche, George Wilhelm Hegel, Karl Marx, Wilhelm Schelling, Johann Gottlieb Fichte were the forerunners of the intellectual life of Germany and Austria in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Wittgenstein traveled to England at a young age to study engineering; however he changed his direction towards theoretical studies. In England, he met Bertrand Russell, Gottlob Frege, and George Moore, who were the founders of analytic school in philosophy. Wittgenstein dedicated himself to searching the ultimate philosophical reality and truth. There is no doubt that Wittgenstein has a very unique place in the history of philosophy. Countless of works about him have been produced since his death.

Zen is also an extraordinary religious-philosophical system with a huge canon and it still continues to develop as a philosophical trend through various contributions of the followers of Zen.

Being objective is like an attempt to walk on the sharp side of a knife because as you walk, your feet will indispensably bleed. This study accepts all the pain in advance by attempting to compare Wittgenstein and Zen.

Besides, an attempt to compare Wittgenstein and Zen includes a comparison between the West and the East as well. Therefore, this study also acknowledges the difficulties of comparing philosophical approaches of the East and the West deliberately. The basic criteria for such a comparison can be doubtful. For instance, orthodox philosophers from the West may completely oppose the philosophy of the Eastern culture; or Eastern philosophers can overestimate Zen philosophy and think that their way of interpreting life is more important than Wittgenstein's. In order to avoid



these extremes, this study can be read as a contribution of this long discussion between the East and the West by emphasizing none is more important than the other, but both are important for the humanity.

This work is not interested in speculative ideas such as everything emerges from the East or the Eastern philosophy is more significant than the Western philosophy. The aim is not to prove one system is dominant over the other. The traditions, religions, philosophies, societies and human beings cannot be positioned in a hierarchical rank.

This study claims that there are obvious parallels between the philosophical works of Austrian twentieth century philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein and Zen philosophy whose origin is Mahayana Buddhism which dates back to the second century. Wittgenstein's philosophical propositions in his the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations* have strong similarities with the Zen methodology. Furthermore, the writing style of Wittgenstein is also close to the historical Buddhist texts. This thesis shows that great minds think alike. Moreover, the strict judgments and classifications in philosophy always bear its counter examples. Wittgenstein is a counter example in the analytic tradition so is the Zen in the Eastern tradition.

This thesis starts with a discussion of the life and the works of Wittgenstein. In the second chapter, the aspirations and the reasons for a young man to become a philosopher are examined. It continues with the description of Wittgenstein's family and intellectual atmosphere in Vienna in the early 1900s. The education of Wittgenstein and the writers he admired are also subjects of this chapter. The roots of Wittgenstein's philosophy are sought in his relationship with his family and the psychological state he is in.

In the third chapter, Zen Buddhism is discussed in detail. The roots of Zen, the general philosophy of Zen, Zen and its reflections in the art, Zen and the language are



the main subjects. It is justified that it is language which binds Wittgenstein's philosophical approaches and Zen philosophy.

This study does not follow a linear order, nor does it follow a main scheme. It also visits Taoism, mysticism, Christianity, Mahayana Buddhism, Buddhist philosophers like Nagarjuna.

The fourth chapter of this study builds the bridge between Wittgenstein and Zen. The main question is how there can emerge a link between Wittgenstein, a philosopher raised by Western culture and Zen, a system of belief produced by the Eastern culture. Whether Wittgenstein had read about Zen or not remains a doubtful issue. However, since Wittgenstein's philosophical thoughts are based on Schopenhauer's and Nietzsche's works which referred to Zen, it is possible to think that he had been influenced by Zen teachings. Besides, the common deconstructionist and anti-hierarchical structure of the philosophies of both Wittgenstein and Zen can indicate that Wittgenstein was familiar with Zen philosophy.

Language has the utmost importance for both philosophies. They do not avoid metaphorical language on the way of searching for reality. Poetical form of Zen and Wittgenstein inspired many poets from all over the world.

In this study, there are a lot of allusions to the greatest Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna's masterpiece, *Mulamadhyamakakarika*. *Karikas*, is the abbreviated form of *Mulamadhyamakakarika*. It can be claimed that *Karikas* may be a source for Wittgenstein's *Logico Philosophicus Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*.

On the other hand, this work can be regarded as a small contribution to the ongoing discussion about the comparison and interaction of the Western and Eastern philosophies. Due to the globalization, the philosophy always welcomes new approaches. Conze indicates that the East and the West were separated from each other

in 1450s. However, the age that we live in, is the age of communication which wipes away distances and makes people closer. As a result of these interactions and the technological developments, the knowledge of both the West and the East can be combined in the contemporary world. This study avoids prejudices felt for these two different cultures and tries to shape the concept of reality through both the Western and the Eastern lenses.

When Zen terminology is adopted it can be claimed that there is no East or no West. What matters is the difference between the minds. However, it can also be claimed that there is no stable description of mind neither in Zen terminology. If such an approach is employed, the result can be dangerous: There is no Wittgenstein, no Zen, no comparison, or no thesis!

## **1.2 Interactions between the East (Buddhism) and the West (Wittgenstein)**

Although Wittgenstein published only a single philosophical work in his lifetime; he had made a great contribution to psychology, logic, epistemology, philosophy of mathematics and language. He put the instruments in any language by using paradoxical as well as provocative methods. Wittgenstein's unique philosophical mind reflects itself through his search for the answers to the strange questions which are never thought by an ordinary mind. For instance, he asks: "Can a machine have a toothache?", 'What is the color of the number three?' and 'How can you hang a thief who doesn't exist?', 'What is the meaning of a word?'" Hardwick draws attention to Wittgenstein's method of thinking and claims that "[t]he aim of the method is, by the use of intentional nonsense, to bring one to see the sense underlying the method" (Hardwick, 227). Thus, Wittgenstein's intentional nonsense method of questioning the world reveals the sense

behind these questions.

Wittgenstein's method of intentional nonsense can be observed in his argument about the concept of identity as well. He argues that

[t]he word "I" does not mean the same as 'L.W.', even if I am 'L.W.', nor does it mean the expression that, 'the person who is now speaking'. But that doesn't mean that 'L.W.' and 'I' mean different things. All it means is that these words are different instruments in our language" (Wittgenstein, BLBK, p.67).

In fact, Wittgenstein tries to discuss the difference between himself and the initials of his name, Ludwig Wittgenstein. This is the typical proposition of Wittgenstein because at a first glance such a proposition seems nonsensical. However, he aims to show the main logic of difference that may lie in the person who is speaking through the mouth of the first person and the identity attached to him through his name. In this respect, "L.W." is a name used by the others in the external world in order to refer to himself and "I" is the word which he adopts to define himself and his inner world.

Wittgenstein makes a similar claim in his *Philosophical Investigations*: "I" is not the name of a person, nor 'here' of a place, and 'this' is not a name. But they are connected with names. Names are explained by means of them. It is also true that it is characteristic of physics not to use these words" (Wittgenstein, § 410). Wittgenstein indicates that the pronouns used instead of the names do not indicate anything if they do not have names connected to them.

Wittgenstein's philosophical views got much more developed in his *Philosophical Investigations*. It can be claimed that *The Blue and Brown Books* is a transition book between the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein's philosophical approaches particularly presented in his *The Blue and Brown Books*, *Tractatus Logico-*



*Philosophicus* and *Philosophical Investigations* have outstanding similarities with the Buddhist philosophy. For instance, in one of the major Buddhist text which is titled *the Prajnaparamita* Wittgenstein's adoption of "I" can be found: "Subhiti: I who do not find anything to correspond to the word 'Bodhisattva', or to the words 'perfect wisdom' - which Bodhisattva should I then instruct and admonish in which perfect wisdom? (qtd. in Gudmunsen, 7) And in the other Buddhist text *Suvikrantavikramipariprccha* "One speaks of 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am' but no dharmic fact corresponds to this (qtd. in Gudmunsen, 75)"

The idea of transmigration of soul and reincarnation play an important role in the concept of "I" in the Hinduist and the Buddhist world. The aim of life for a Hinduist and a Buddhist believer is to attain Samadhi or Buddhahood which means awakening. Until this ultimate goal is achieved, one may reincarnate in the form of human, animal, heaven, hell, hungry ghost and Asura (a race of demons and giants) again and again. In this respect, rebirth is perceived as a punishment for the ones who have not been able to attain the status of awakened mind. If they achieve this, then they will be liberated from this cycle of being reincarnated in various forms.

In Buddhism, one's life depends upon the Karma. All kinds of action belonging to the body and the mind create a new karma. One's future is dependent on his positive or negative actions. Whatever one chooses to do by his own free will, he receives a response for his action from the outer world. This is called the Karmic law. In fact, the Karmic law indicates that you reap what you sow. Then, according to his own deeds, one person can be reincarnated in a different form that is determined by his karmic past.

According to the Buddhist belief, in order to get out of this reincarnation cycle in different forms, the main aim to be achieved is to destroy the hegemony of the ego in one's life. In Buddhism, the Buddhahood can be achieved by every one. It is not a status

that can be attained by a member of a privileged class or cast. In this sense, Wittgenstein also attempted to get rid of his ego by searching for higher goals in his life. He did not want to pursue a life which was composed of high standards as his family ancestors had. He wanted to get rid of the needs of his ego by involving himself with ordinary deeds.

Wittgenstein presented propositions, but he never strictly advocated an idea or made his readers feel that he is imposing his ideas on them. He expected his readers to see the beyond of his propositions, not to hold onto them. In this sense, he did not want his propositions to be received as biblical statements and doctrines which should not be questioned. He even disagreed with the philosophers of the Vienna Circle who had highly esteemed his studies. Wittgenstein avoided joining meetings with them because he was very much disturbed by this appreciation of his works.

Wittgenstein, who was able to make radical changes in his philosophical thoughts, was a unique case in the history of philosophy. He always wanted to get further when he achieved what he had aimed. He was never scared of opposing one's ideas and even his own ideas. In this respect, his philosophical life encourages the reader to see what is beyond his propositions. Therefore, this can be regarded as another example to show how he had defeated his ego. The Great Buddhist masters say "Kill the Buddha" in order to indicate that one should not be subject to any authoritative order. And Wittgenstein similarly says: "Kill Wittgenstein" in order to show that Wittgenstein as a person does not have any authority on his writings.

Buddhism and Wittgenstein's philosophical studies belong to different cultures and different periods of time. Buddhism is a 2500 years old belief system and Wittgenstein's philosophy emerged in the twentieth century. In this respect, comparing these two different historical lines of thought may seem disconnected. However, all kinds of philosophies attempt to find systematical definitions for the questions that are

in people's minds for a long time. Therefore, all kind of philosophies whether they belong to different cultures or not, try to construct a system of explaining humanity and the world. The Western mind which is based on a much more scientific and logical system of thinking has not given any credit to the Eastern philosophy until the main Buddhist and Hinduist texts are translated from Pali, Sanskrit, and Chinese into various Western languages.

Philosophers and scientists were surprised when they discovered certain similarities and connections between these two different systems of thought of Western and Eastern cultures. In fact, wars, trades, and travelers have created many interactions between these two cultures. Therefore, the similarities and relations between these two different cultures are not surprising. Chris Gudmussen thinks that "those similarities are fortuitous", however he adds: "Wittgenstein's later work was not independent of Buddhist philosophy" (Gudmussen, vii).

On the other hand, Edward Conze, who is the pioneer of the translation of the Buddhist texts from Sanskrit into English, protested the above view by claiming that

[a]fter an examination of the genuine parallels between European and Buddhist philosophy, we shall now consider a few of the more widely advocated spurious parallels. They often originate from a wish to find affinities with philosophers recognized and admired by the exponents of current academic philosophy, and intend to make Buddhist thinkers interesting and respectable by current Western standards. (Conze, 105)

These two opposing approaches to the interactions between the Western and the Eastern philosophies show that at least there is an attempt to bridge the gap between these cultures. Although the similarities between these two philosophies are regarded either as fortuitous or spurious, many philosophers from different disciplines are still studying both lines of thought. For instance, Thomas Tominaga, Richard Hayes, Chris



Gudmudsen, Jay Garfield, Lik Kuen Tong, and Russell Goodman emphasize these similar aspects in their studies.

Marlow draws similarities between antique Indian and Greek philosophies in his article on “Hinduism and Buddhism in Greek Philosophy” and he concludes that

these coincidences of thought and language, each small in itself, amount to quite a formidable total. As to the problem of the way by which Indian influence reached Greece I have no new solution to offer and fall back with others on Persia as the intermediary. Of course, after the time of Alexander the way lay so open to Oriental influence that parallels become more frequent and less remarkable. (Marlow, 45)

Alexander the Great traveled the Oriental world in the IV. Century BC, Persian, Arabs and Mongols followed the other direction and attacked the mid and the West Anatolia. Arabs also went to Spain via the North Africa and ruled the Spain from 711 until 1492. Silk Road was the main trade link passing through the Middle East from China to Europe for some 3000 years and spice route was another link between India and the west of Europe via southern Africa. Not only the richness of the East was carried to the West but also the language and sciences were carried. Algebra and arithmetics were the most important contributions of the Arabs to the whole world. Today, the most common symbolic representation of numbers in the world is Hindu-Arabic numerals.

Another strong evidence of the connection between the two cultures can be added and it is the language. Latin based languages such as English, German, Italian and French and Indian languages such as Punjabi, Marathi, Hindi and Bengali belong to the same language family called Indo-European Languages. The issue of identifying the borders of the West and the East are also perplexing. To draw geographically strict borders between these two spheres is difficult in the global age. While Euphrates is

sometimes claimed to be the borderline between the East and the West, the strait of Istanbul is also regarded to be the borderline in some other occasions. However, the philosophical and scientific developments have gone unparallel in those two worlds throughout the history, and the interactions between them have come to occur occasionally.

Today, those borders between the West and the East have been transgressed culturally and geographically. For instance, talented people immigrate to Western countries from India. Buddhist monks become the citizens of the Western countries, and they live in the monasteries built in the US or the UK. Japan is much more developed than many European countries in the technological field.

So to speak, the aim of this work is to look at the distinction between the Western and the Eastern philosophies and the interpretations on their different aspects. This study is neither a Wittgensteinian interpretation of Buddhist thought nor an attempt of emphasizing that Buddhism has a great influence on Wittgenstein's works. This thesis tries to keep a certain distance to both philosophies in question with an awareness of the fact that it would be a useless effort to compare the two or to say one is more important than the other. It is accepted in advance that a comparison seems to be impossible between Wittgenstein's philosophy and the Eastern thought because these two lines of thoughts belong to two different cultures. Nonetheless, to catch the uncatchable is a method in the Zen Buddhist way. It is also something like saying the unsayable which is a Wittgensteinian way. Therefore, this study following these methods could be read as a comparison between the incomparable or the commensuration of the incommensurables.



## CHAPTER II

### WITTGENSTEIN

#### 2.1 Life and Education

Ludwig Wittgenstein was born in Vienna in 1889 and died in England in 1951. He was born into a period which suffered the contradictions arose in Europe from the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, nearly half of the world was ruled by the United Kingdom. Intellectual life was in a boiling pan while German idealism was striving to reflect itself in the philosophy and technology.

Political regimes were changing as well in this period. Since Wittgenstein studied and learnt Russian in the 1920s, he wanted to live in Russia which had become a new entity under the name “The Soviet Union” in 1917. At the same time, another radical political change was taking place in Germany. Austrian-born German politician and the leader of the National Socialist German Workers Party Adolf Hitler became a leader in 1933.

The fascination with the fin-de-siècle Vienna in the present day lies in the fact that its tensions prefigure those that have dominated the history of Europe during the twentieth century. From those tensions sprang many of the intellectual and cultural movements that have shaped that history. (Monk, 31)

As Karl Kraus, an Austrian writer and poet who is regarded as one of the foremost satirists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century said, “Vienna was the research laboratory of world destruction” (Monk, 9) and he adds it was also

the birthplace of both Zionism and Nazism, the place where Freud developed psychoanalysis, where Klimt, Schiele and Kokoschka inaugurated the *Jugendstil* movement in art, where Schoenberg developed atonal music and Adolf Loos introduced a starkly functional, unadorned style of architecture that characterize the buildings of the modern age. (Monk, 9)

It was also a time of great thinkers. In a letter, Franz Ramsey (the publisher of *Tractatus*) wrote: “We really live in a great time for thinking, with Einstein, Freud and Wittgenstein all alive (and all living in Germany and Austria, those foes of civilization!)” (Monk, 224).

The important figures mentioned above being Wittgenstein’s contemporaries had shared certain common environments. For instance, it is known that Hitler attended the same school with Wittgenstein. During the Second World War, since the roots of Wittgenstein’s family were Jewish, Wittgenstein had to change his national identity and save his family members by trying to prove that his ancestors were protestant. It is highly possible that Freud and Wittgenstein also met or read each other’s works as well as works by the other writers of their period.

According to Terry Eagleton “Wittgenstein is the philosopher of poets and composers, playwrights and novelists” (Eagleton, 5). Wittgenstein was the son of one of the plutocrats and the richest men in Europe. His childhood passed in wealth. He did not attend primary school, but private tutors trained him in different branches. He was a good musician and he was playing the clarinet.

However, on the other hand, Wittgenstein’s familial history shaped his character in an opposite way. Wittgenstein grew up in a depressive family environment and this naturally affected his philosophical path. Out of his eight siblings, five of them committed suicide, which leads to the fact that there was an explicit suicidal tendency in the family. Wittgenstein did not totally suffer from depression; but his psychological

state was threatened by these harsh experiences. Monk says:

For much of his childhood, he was considered one of the dullest of this extraordinary brood. He exhibited no precocious musical, artistic or literary talent, and, indeed, did not even start speaking until he was four years old. Lacking the rebelliousness and willfulness that marked the other male members of his family, he dedicated himself from an early age to the kind of practical skills and technical interests his father tried unsuccessfully to inculcate into his elder brothers. (Monk, 13)

Wittgenstein began traveling when he was 17. He started to study mechanical engineering in Berlin, and a year after, in 1908, he went to England to study engineering in the Victoria University of Manchester. He was mainly interested in aeronautical projects. He designed a propeller with small jet engine placed on the edge of its blades which shows us that he had a visual intellect. In his mid ages he also designed a house. He made some statues as well. All these creative attempts emphasize his versatility.

After Wittgenstein discovered *Principia Mathematica* by Alfred N. Whitehead and Bertrand Russell and *The Foundations of Arithmetic* by Gottlob Frege in Manchester, he directed his studies from the practical to the theoretical. He visited Frege, who was one of the founders of modern logic and was considered as the father of analytic philosophy. Frege directed him to attend the University of Cambridge to study with Russell, who is considered as one of the founders of analytic philosophy along with his pupil Wittgenstein and Frege.

It cannot be denied that Russell, Moore and Frege had a big impact on the construction of the philosophy of Wittgenstein. *Tractatus* was received as an extraordinary work in the field of philosophy, which is considered as “[a]n analysis of logical symbolism in the spirit of Frege and Russell into the curiously hybrid work which we know today, combining as it does logical theory with religious mysticism”



(Monk, 116).

While Wittgenstein was serving as a soldier in Galicia, he found the book *The Gospel in Brief* by Tolstoy and he was immediately captivated by it. It turned out to be a talisman for him (Monk, 116). Even though his religious roots were a mixture of Jewish, Protestant and Roman Catholicism, a fact which could have affected his critical mind indeed, according to him all religions were wonderful. Wittgenstein also read Saint Augustine, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Søren Kierkegaard and Martin Heidegger.

He followed the contemporary anthropological writings as well. He was interested in magic, which is a primitive expression of religious belief. That is why he started to read Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, but after he realized that he was completely in disagreement with him, he called Frazer as "more savage than most of the savages" (Monk, 310). Wittgenstein claims that:

What narrowness of spiritual life in Frazer! Hence: how impossible for him to comprehend a life different from the English life of his time. Frazer cannot imagine a priest who is not basically an English parson of our time, with all his stupidity and vapidness. (Wittgenstein, Remarks on Frazer's Golden Bough, p.238)

Aydan Turanlı classifies Wittgenstein's critique of Frazer in three points: "1. science and technology; 2. method of social sciences and philosophy; 3. tolerance towards alternative forms of life" (Turanlı, 69).

It is no doubt the anthropological readings of Wittgenstein helped him to understand human nature and language better. His criticism of Frazerian scientific and philosophical views is very much reasonable. For example, Turanlı explains why Wittgenstein is disturbed by Frazer's intellectualism: "Frazer implies that when a primitive man practices a ritual act he behaves as if he is a theoretician, who tries to

control nature by means of magic". She adds "according to Wittgenstein, an anthropologist should not consider ritualistic actions to be wrong ideas about the physics of things: 'An error arises only when magic is interpreted scientifically'" (Turanlı, 72).

Also, Wittgenstein contends that the methodology of social sciences should be different from that of natural sciences. That is one of the important continuities between his early and later thought. Both in the *Tractatus* and in the *Investigations* periods he asserts that, while the methodology of natural sciences is explanatory, the methodology of social sciences, resembling his therapeutic understanding of philosophy, should be descriptive (Turanlı, 80).

At this point, a curious question may arise in people's mind whether Wittgenstein read any texts from the Eastern world or not. As far as it is known, he read the Indian writer and poet Rabindranath Tagore, who was the only Asian of his time who won the Nobel Prize in literature. Wittgenstein read Tagore from time to time. He even retranslated one of his plays with his friend Yorick Smythies. Monk says about the translation that it might fruitfully be read in conjunction with his lectures on religious belief for, in those passages he translated, Tagore expresses Wittgenstein's own religious ideal.

Wittgenstein read Franz Kafka as well but he did not appreciate him. He also contrasted Kafka with Weininger who was a "remarkable genius" for him. Weininger was fluent in many languages including Greek, Latin, French, English and Italian and studied philosophy and psychology at the University of Vienna. He was also interested in natural sciences. Perhaps, Wittgenstein was influenced by this multitalented personality. Weininger committed suicide when he was twenty three. It is such a coincidence that Wittgenstein and suicidal character were always together. His work *Sex*

*and Character* was thought one of the remarkable works of the twentieth century even though it was also regarded as misogynistic. Wittgenstein read that work when he was a school boy and admired it. Wittgenstein's general mood and sexual tendencies may have been affected by the ideas of Weininger.

As is shown above, Wittgenstein's educational background is founded upon many diverse fields such as mathematical logic, religion, psychology, aesthetics, and ethics. This is the reason why his writings can be approached in many different ways by logicians, philosophers, and researchers of various fields. And a quite number of critics produced significant works in order to reveal Wittgenstein's philosophy and his influence on philosophical developments in the modern world. Considered as a man of extremes, he is also one of the most quoted figures of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Wittgenstein's major work, *Tractatus*, was an outcome of his intellectual background and his restless personality. According to Eagleton, the *Tractatus* "is the first great work of philosophical modernism" (Eagleton, 5). He says that "its true coordinates are not Frege or Russell or logical positivism but Joyce, Schoenberg, Picasso" (Eagleton, 5). Until he finished *Tractatus* he had traveled, read, wrote and made research without any break. For him, going to remote areas was something like retrieving as the prophets did. After the publication of *Tractatus*, he abandoned his academic career which had never satisfied him. He returned to his country and started to work as a primary school teacher in the rural part of Austria. Then, for about eight years he worked in different jobs such as teaching, gardening, architecture, etc. and developed his philosophical theories through these experiences gained from various jobs and visiting different places. Eventually he went back to Cambridge in 1929. Cambridge was the oldest academic center in the world. The *Tractatus* was good enough to grant him with a Ph.D. degree.



Wittgenstein's philosophical ideas presented in the *Tractatus* had begun to change and his lectures and notes reflected a completely different philosophy. Briefly, language lost its rigidity in the later period that was the denial of the first period. Wittgenstein In the first period of his philosophical career while he was writing the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein was young and inexperienced. He joined the army in the World War I and his book was composed of his notes written down when he was at the battlefield. He felt very much disappointed with the outbreak of the war and therefore the writing style of the book is so strict. What he wanted to do is to change the world by language. Since he was aware of the fact that the cultural, social, and economical aspects were constructed by language, he thought that he could only change the chaotic state of the world by the power of the language. The *Tractatus* is constructed so firmly and structurally that when any sentence, any word or even any use of punctuation is omitted, its meaning can change. Eagleton thinks that *Tractatus* "is the place where philosophy begins to bend back on itself and interrogate its own medium, which is of course language itself" (Eagleton, 7).

Because of this important change in his philosophical thoughts, Wittgenstein's philosophical career is analyzed roughly in two separate periods as early Wittgenstein developed by *Tractatus* and later Wittgenstein developed by *Philosophical Investigations*.

In the later period, as Eagleton writes: "he will abandon the crystalline purity of his ascetic youth and seek to return us to the rough ground of our mystic, ambiguous, commonplace speech" (Eagleton, 7).

Language as a concept is moved from its idealistic status to an ordinary status which shows itself only as a tool of communication in *Philosophical Investigations*. The structure of this work is quite different from the *Tractatus*. It is a condense book as well

but it consists of questions rather than propositions. It is more about the individual psychology rather than about changing the world.

Wittgenstein, which will be studied in detail in the following pages, is divided into four main periods by Thomas Tominaga. He referred to these periods as: (1) The early Wittgenstein, (2) The middle Wittgenstein, (3) The later Wittgenstein, and (4) The mature Wittgenstein” (Tominaga, 132). However, this study will basically concentrate on the early period which is *Tractatus* and the later period which is *Philosophical Investigations*. On the other hand, it will demonstrate that no matter how much difference there is between those two books, Wittgenstein always had the same attitude against life, world and philosophy.

Wittgenstein worked diligently in order to resolve the philosophical problem by analyzing the language. He believed, after writing *Tractatus*, it was done. He left academic studies and philosophy. It has been already stated that Wittgenstein’s family had suicidal tendencies and these and also self-criticism played an important role in his life. He had a destructive attitude against whatever he conceptualizes. In this sense, destruction and creativity went hand in hand in his philosophical works. Monk called him as the laboratory of self destruction. It can be claimed that he did not commit suicide but by finishing his ongoing works or believing in them strongly, somehow he satisfied his suicidal desire. On the other hand, it can be said that by donating the money he inherited he did not want to follow a typical rich family life and wanted to kill his father symbolically which can also be regarded as a so called patricide. In addition, the relationship between Russell and Wittgenstein was an intellectual father-son relationship and Wittgenstein always wanted to move beyond Russell’s teachings. In this sense, this attempt can also be regarded as another patricidal tendency of him.

Even though Wittgenstein had an important status in his social environment and



he was very much respected by both his colleagues and students at the University, he did not feel content. He left the University once again, as he did in the past, and began to work as a laborant to serve the soldiers who were injured during the war. Wittgenstein did not lead an ordinary and ordered way of life. He might be seen as a quiet person but behind that quietness there had always been a thunderstorm as the proverb says: still rivers run deep.

Wittgenstein suffered from cancer and died in 1951. His last words revealed that he had a good life. He accepted death as a sage. Finally, his mental restlessness ended and he achieved a state of peacefulness toward the end of his life. Although he had a strong ego which provided him with a questioning attitude toward everything he sees around him. On the other hand, he had a strong resistance against the control of his ego over his life. By trying to escape from intellectual activity and leading a humble life, it can be claimed that he has achieved to get rid of egoistic aspirations to use the Buddhist terminology.

Just before dying, like a wise man, he said to his friend: "Isn't it curious that, although I know I have not long to live, I never find myself thinking about a 'future life'. All my interest is still on this life and the writing I am still able to do" (Jarman, 138). And just a few days later he passed away and his last words were: "Tell them I've had a wonderful life" (Jarman, 140).

In the film by Derek Jarman which is about Wittgenstein's life, Wittgenstein told his student that he was not afraid of dying. He thinks that "[i]t is death which gives life its meaning" (Jarman, 140).

Eagleton gives a good definition of his personality: "Wittgenstein was an arresting combination of monk, mystic and mechanic; a high European intellectual who yearned for Tolstoyan simplicitas, a philosophical giant with scant respect for

philosophy, an irascible autocrat with a thirst for holiness” (Eagleton, 7-8).

As a conclusion, the philosophy of Wittgenstein can hardly be classified in the history of philosophy because it is anti-theoretical (Pears, 685). Since it is observed that the philosophy of Wittgenstein cannot be separated from his experiences in life, Buddha’s words “whoever sees me sees my teaching whoever sees my teaching sees me,” can be adapted to define Wittgenstein’s philosophical studies. It can be articulated that whoever sees the philosophy of Wittgenstein can understand the life of Wittgenstein, and whoever understands the life of Wittgenstein can see his philosophy. Wittgenstein never followed a straight path in his philosophical life as well as his approach to philosophy and sciences. He was not scared of refuting himself. He was not scared of revolting against some other philosophical views as well. He used metaphorical paradoxes similar to the Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus’ famous statement. As Wittgenstein says: “Anyone who understands me eventually recognises the propositions as nonsensical. The book will ... draw a limit to thinking, or rather - not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts .... The limit can ... only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense” (Wittgenstein, TLP, 27).

The *Tractatus* is basically full of with statements of fact so that the discourse in the book is factual. There are strict definitions and placements of Logic, mysticism, ethics, and aesthetics. Wittgenstein did not want to discover any facts; he wanted to clarify them by philosophizing on these culturally and socially established facts. According to Pears, the task of his philosophy “was never to explain but only to describe. “Since western philosophy had mainly been conceived as a search for explanations at a very high level of generality, his work stood to one side of the tradition” (Pears, 687). *Tractatus* was the only work of Wittgenstein which had a

theoretical basis.

Wittgenstein reevaluated the function of words and sentences in language. This reevaluation hints at the therapeutical effect of language on any psychological problem and also at the same time the language's being a tool for discussing any philosophical problem. For instance, in Christian and Buddhist terminology, language is the only vehicle to salvation.

Philosophy is like a puzzle, sometimes its pieces can be brought together to create a big picture of the philosophical concept in question. However, sometimes its pieces are scattered around so that you cannot have a unified and complete idea about it. Philosophers can both compose and decompose these pieces. In this sense, Wittgenstein wanted to *dissolve* rather than to *solve* the established philosophical assumptions. Wittgenstein believes that he untied the knots in the *Tractatus*. This was the illusion to believe to dissolve all the philosophical problems so that he started to philosophize when he went back in Cambridge in 1929.

Wittgenstein did not want to be understood easily and this is evident by his use of the anti-theoretical approach. This is the reason why his works were discussed a lot. However, the works of Wittgenstein have still been attracting many philosophers and scientists. The works of Wittgenstein are getting published again and again; and also a considerable number of articles and books are written about his works from all over the world.



## CHAPTER III

### BUDDHISM AND ZEN BUDDHISM

#### 3.1 Definition of Buddhism

*No longer knowing whether time existed, whether this uncovering had lasted a second or a hundred years, whether there was a Siddharta, or a Gotama, a self and others, wounded deeply by a divine arrow which gave him pleasure, deeply enchanted and exalted, Govinda stood yet a while bending over Siddharta's peaceful face which he has just kissed, which had just been the stage of all present and future forms. His countenance was unchanged after the mirror of the thousand-fold forms disappeared from the surface. He smiled peacefully and gently, perhaps very mockingly, exactly as the Illustrious. One had smiled*

*Hermann Hesse*

Today, Buddhism is acknowledged as a religion which has millions of believers mostly from Asian countries. Buddhism also with its humanistic, non-violent, and environmentalist philosophy as well as its meditation techniques such as Zen and Vipassana is a very much respected way of living attracted many people from all over the world. Suzuki claims:

Buddhist philosophy is based on the experience Buddha had about twenty-five centuries ago. To understand, therefore, what Buddhist philosophy is, it is necessary to know what the experience was which Buddha had after six years' hard thinking and ascetic, austerities and exercises in meditation. (Suzuki, 31)

Suzuki emphasizes that the enlightenment experience is the model for many people. For instance, the modern German novelist Hermann Hesse and Jack Kerouac, a writer of the Beat Generation from the United States, were inspired by those experiences and they put them into words by writing about Buddha. In this respect, many contemporary western writers, poets, and philosophers have made a great contribution to Buddhist literature and canon by writing novels, poems, and articles.

Entering the Samadhi ecstasy of the first Dhyana meditation, he (Sakyamuni) went successively through all the nine Dhyanas in a direct order; then inversely he returned throughout and entered on the first, and then from the first he raised himself and entered on the fourth Dhyana, the Dhyana of Neither Joy nor Suffering, utterly pure and equal, the original and eternal perfect essence of Mind. Leaving the state of Samadhi ecstasy, his soul without a resisting-place forthwith he reached Pari-Nirvana, complete extinction of the form after it has died. (Kerouac, 145)

The life of Buddha inspired many writers and artists. Especially his samadhi state was depicted by many writers in elaborated words. No matter they are fictions, doubtless to say, all those books contributed the whole Buddhist thought and made Buddhism a very respectable way of living in all over the world.

Here, it may be emphasized once more that the life and enlightenment experience of Buddha cannot be separated from the Buddhist philosophy. The same can be argued for the life and philosophy of Wittgenstein.

A popular and an international bestseller author Deepak Chopra also wrote a book about Buddha. He explains the nature of the books on Buddha as follows:

For a storyteller, it would be ideal if Buddha's life came to a spectacular end. We're holding our breath for it. First came the fairy-tale beginning as a handsome prince, then a second act with a wandering monk who goes through all manner of trials and suffering, reaching a brilliant climax when enlightenment is achieved in a single night under the bodhi tree. Where did stunning life finally wind up? (Chopra, 205)

Hinduism is one of the oldest living religions in the world. It is also a very much complicated system of beliefs composed of mythology, mysticism, history, literature and legends. It has a large documentation of written texts such as Mahabharata, Ramayana and Upanishads. Hinduism has got millions of devotees and believers basically from the South Asian countries.

Buddha's life and spiritual experiences are based on the Buddhist teaching. Buddhism, like Hinduism, has got a very huge literature. Sutras (prose discourses), Vinaya (rules of monastic discipline), Abhidharma (analytical texts), Perfection of Wisdom (Prajñāpāramitā), Mulamadhyamakakarika, Dhammapada are ancient Buddhist texts which are still read and respected by not only the Buddhists but also by non-Buddhists.

Even though Hinduism is not a monotheist religion, Brahma is considered its one and only creator who is incarnated from time to time, and Buddha who is the founder of Buddhist religion is also seen as the ninth incarnation of Brahma. Though Buddhism and Hinduism share the same past; Buddhism is a different belief system. There is no concept of God in Buddhism and this is its distinctive characteristic. However, in Hinduism there are Gods and Goddesses which form its system of belief.

According to Jaan Kaplinski “the relationship of Buddhism with the pre-Buddhist Indian religions is like the relationship between the derivation and the function”. He claims that what is essential in Buddhism is not its religiosity but its transcendence: The transcending of religiosity” (Kaplinski, <http://jaan.kaplinski.com/philosophy/-investigations.html>).

Antique beliefs, wisdoms and religions are respected today as historical and cultural inheritance no matter whether they still have believers or not. However, the philosophical and wise teachings of Hinduism and Buddhism have been getting popular all over the world since the 1960s. As being a Buddhist scholar Daisaku Ikeda’s words can help us to understand this issue: “the philosophy of Buddhism has been associated with peace and pacifism. This derives principally, I feel, from Buddhism’s consistent rejection of violence, its constant emphasis on dialogue, discussion and language as means of resolving conflict” (Ikeda, <http://www.daisakuikedada.org/sub/resources/works-/lect/lect-04.html>).

Buddhism is against violence and this characteristic of this belief attracts many people to get interested in its teachings. Buddhism promotes a peaceful environment and tranquility. For example, the most famous Buddhist in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century is Dalai Lama who is the famous spiritual and political leader of Tibet. Over the last fifty years he has been living in exile never giving up his attempts to achieve peace against Chinese invasion of Tibet.

Siddhārtha Gautama, who lived in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC and who became the spiritual leader of all the Buddhists was the prince of a small kingdom or principality of Kapilvastu in India where today’s Nepal is located. His followers know him as the Supreme Buddha (Sammāsambuddha). His thoughts spread out of India, and today



Buddhism is a widely accepted religion throughout India, Nepal, Tibet and Southeastern Asia.

Buddhism is more agnostic than mystic, more pragmatist than supernaturalist, even Buddha is not mythologized; rather it is rationalized. This uniqueness of Buddhism inspired the unauthoritarianist movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Buddhist philosophers such as Nagarjuna, Dogen and Zhuangzi are no less important for humanity than Plato, Aristotle or Heraclitus.

Throughout the years Buddhism is blended with other Asian philosophico-religious systems. This is one of the reasons behind the rich structure of Buddhism:

In its early stage of development in China, found the Confucian conception of the homocentric universe too far-fetched and so it had to be allied with Taoism in drawing the human interest of life to the liberated world for an assured satisfaction. But, as time went on, it began to see anew the strong points in Confucianism and found in it a spiritual affinity in affirming the perfectibility of human nature in the form of buddha-nature. As Buddhism is a system of philosophy as well as a variety of religion, its exponents of high merits have the caliber of a prophet whose mind's eyes are to be fixed on the final destiny of mankind and the universal emancipation of all beings in the future. (Fang, 101)

Both Confucianism and Taoism were born at the same century with Buddhism in the neighbor geographies. Buddhism moved to China in the sixth century and interacted with those Chinese religious and philosophical systems. Confucius's approach is humanistic because he places the humankind at the center of the universe. Homocentrism is also known as anthropocentrism or humanocentrism which is the belief that human being is the central entity in the universe.



Taoism is an atheist religion like Buddhism so that Chinese Buddhism is associated with Taoism more than Confucianism. As will be defined in the following paragraphs this composition of Taoism and Buddhism was the source of Zen Buddhism.

Buddhist philosophy and ideas depend on “sutras” which are sacred scriptures. However, it is not a conservative philosophy. It regenerates itself from time to time, so it has changed from age to age, from country to country. Many sages and many Buddhist sects carried the religious teachings to the present day. Buddha’s philosophy has always drawn attention and has been the focus of great speculations since the ancient times.

Comparisons between Buddhism and the various schools of existentialism have revealed a number of parallels. Such studies have frequently centered on each tradition’s metaphysical approach and the fact that they all appear to share some form of phenomenological methodology (Moad, 2004).

Since the Buddha’s way is liberating, it is in harmony with other philosophical views. Therefore, it is easy to find similarities between the Buddha’s way of living and philosophy as a sage and some other philosophers.

Particularly Indian philosophers indicate that Buddha’s and Pythagoras’s thoughts have strong similarities. Buddha and Pythagoras shared the same historical period. They were both vegetarians and both believed in the transmigration of the soul. These similarities could be considered as pure coincidences. However, the evidence that Pythagoras lived in the Middle East connotes more than a coincidence. Thus, there may be a more intimate connection between these two different philosophies.

Robert Thurman, who is a professor of Indo-Tibetan Buddhist Studies at Columbia University, draws our attention to the relations between Buddhism and Christianity. As

he writes in the introduction of Jack Kerouac's book on the life of Buddha: "Mahayana Buddhism and Christianity have very strong "family resemblances" (Thurman, xiv). Kerouac himself called Buddha as the Jesus of Asia. Some other scholars both on the Buddhist and Christian side try to find identical life experiences and identical teachings of the two to prove that Jesus is a Reincarnation of Buddha.

It is better to make an amendment on Kerouac's words for the sake of honesty. Buddha lived six centuries before Jesus, so it is not valid to say that Buddha is the Jesus of Asia. Kerouac's approach is very much Eurocentric. It would make sense if he said that Jesus was the Buddha of the Middle East.

The aim of Buddhism is to get liberated from the cycle of birth and rebirth which is called as samsara in the Buddhist terminology. The concept of reincarnation and six realms have been discussed before. In order not to be born again, Buddhists follow the main principals such as refraining from harming any sentient being, from lying, and from stealing.

The Basic Buddhist view of life in this world is called "the four noble truths". They are (1) Life contains suffering, (2) Suffering has a cause, and cause can be known, (3) Suffering can be brought to an end, (4) Nirvana. The path to an end suffering has eight parts (Chopra, 267).

The Noble Eightfold Path is described as:

(1) Right Ideas, based on these Four Noble Truths, (2) Right Resolution to follow this Way out of the suffering, (3) Right Speech, tender sorrowful discourse with the brothers and sisters of the world, (4). Right Behaviour, gentle, handful, chaste conduct everywhere, 5. Right Means of Livelihood, harmless food gathering is your living, 6. Right Effort, rousing oneself with energy and zeal to this Holy Way, 7. Right Mindfulness, keeping in mind the dangers of the other way (of the worlds) 8. Right Meditation, practising Solitary meditation and prayer to attain holy ecstasy and spiritual graces for the

sake of the enlightenment of all sentient beings (practising Dhayana to attain Saamadhi and Samapatti). (Kerouac, 31)

Although the Noble Eightfold path is the fundamental teaching of the Buddhist thought, due to different interpretations of several sages throughout the history, some sects such as Mayahana (Great Vehicle), Therevada (the ancient teaching) and Vajrayana (Tibetan Buddhism) were born in different places of Asia. In this work, the main focus is on Mahayana Buddhism since Zen Buddhism is a teaching originated in the Mahayana Sect of Buddhism. The importance of the pantheon of Bodhisattvas (enlightened existence or wisdom-being) is often underestimated in Mahayana and instead it aims at focusing on the meditative aspects of the religion.

In Mahayana, the Buddha is seen as the ultimate, highest being, present in all times, in all beings, and in all places. There are five central doctrines in Mahayana:

1. Bodhisattva, driven by altruism and continually reborn into the world by choice, takes the places of the spiritually individualistic arhant as the pathfinder and exemplar.
2. A new road to salvation is mapped out in which compassion ranks as high as wisdom – and along which progress is made in the early stages via the six ‘perfections’.
3. Faith – for initiate and layman alike – is given a fresh importance by the creation of a new pantheon of divine beings, to whom worship, veneration and propitiatory offerings can be made.
4. A new virtue, “skill-in-means-, ability to bring out the spiritual potential of others, is given priority in the attributes of a saint – even over wisdom.
5. A new coherent account of the nature of reality is given which, by advancing such notions as ‘Emptiness’ and ‘Suchness’, provides map-reference to the whereabouts and nature of the Infinite. (Smith, 123-124)

Here, it needs to be explained what the six perfections are: generosity, morality, patience, energy, meditation, and wisdom that are necessary for the Boddhisattvahood, which is the state of enlightened being.



According to Mahayana Sutras such as Lotus Sutra and Prajnaparamita Sutra, everyone can gain Buddhahood. Bodhicitta is the state of wishing Buddhahood by focusing the realization. Bodhisattva is enlightened being on the way to Samadhi.

Here, the roots and key features of Buddhism and Mahayana Buddhism were presented. In the following chapters, there will be examples from the sutras to understand the teachings of Buddha. Zen is the most saturated and condensed point of Mahayanic Buddhist philosophy. Kaplinski's words defining Buddhism are such a bridge between the Mahayana and Zen.

Kaplinski's definition of Buddhism can be adopted to make the concluding remarks:

Buddhism is understanding and therefore it is not a theory, not a philosophy, not a religion. For Buddhism, religions are just points, rungs, something you can step on but must leave behind. Buddhism is not Buddhism, therefore it is Buddhism, to paraphrase some Mahayanic texts.  
(Kaplinski, <http://jaan.kaplinski.com/philosophy/investigations.html>)

### **3.2 Mahayana Tradition, Nagarjuna and Zen Buddhism**

“Before I had studied Zen for thirty years, I saw mountains as mountains, and waters as waters. When I arrived at a more intimate knowledge, I came to the point where I saw that mountains are not mountains, and waters are not waters. But now that I have got its very substance I am at rest. For it's just that I see mountains once again as mountains and waters once again as waters” (Ching-yuan, qtd. in Coupe, 1).

Zen Buddhism, which is going to be called simply Zen throughout the rest of this study, is a teaching rooted in the Mahayana Sect of Buddhism. The Sanskrit term Dhyāna, which means meditation, has become Ch'an in China. Afterwards, when the



teaching came to Japan, the word Ch'an was changed into Zen in accordance with the Japanese pronunciation and transliteration. Ch'an is still used to refer to Chinese Zen.

Buddhism came to China in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD and to Japan in the 8<sup>th</sup> century AD. Before Buddhism came to China, Taoism had been the main religion. Buddhist and Taoist faiths were similar in many ways so that they dissolved in each other and the combination of both created Zen. While Taoism and Buddhism are still alive in China and other countries in Asia, Zen has become independent and followed a completely different way.

In India and in its first years in China, Buddhism was under the influence of Indian philosophy, which was in a desire to escape from the physical world to the supreme or transcendental world. Under Taoist influence, it changed completely and became worldlier. However, it will be claimed here that Zen way is not a theological philosophy and it has unique ways of teaching.

Even though there is a huge intellectual background of Zen, it rejects all of the theoretical knowledge. Experiential realization through meditation practice is the main practice of the whole philosophy. In order to understand Zen better, one needs to know about Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana dates, according to the scholars, back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD in India. It includes several philosophical sutras. Mahayana has been considered the most intellectual Buddhist school focusing on universalism, enlightenment, wisdom and compassion. It also constitutes the basis of other schools. In India, the two main philosophical schools of the Mahayana have been the Madhyamaka and the later Yogacara (Harvey, 95).

### 3.3 Nagarjuna, Sunyata and the Truth

*When the self-nature [of all things] is examined by knowledge, it is beyond reach; therefore, they are without self-nature and unattainable.*

*Lankavatara Sutra*

Madhyamaka (the Middle Way), which is the main text and also an important concept of Buddhism was systematized by Nagarjuna. “Nagarjuna has been considered the second Buddha” (Kalupahana, 2), asserts Kalupahana. He was an Indian philosopher lived between 150 and 250 AD. Nagarjuna is regarded as the most important philosopher in the Buddhist tradition after the Buddha. That is the reason why he is called the second Buddha. Nagarjuna’s exact dates of birth and death are unknown, and the number of Nagarjunas lived in that certain era is unknown either. He could be an anonymous being, or two or three monks living in the same monastery. For Gudmunsen, “Madhyamika school represents philosophical Buddhism par excellence” (Gudmussen, viii).

According to Kalupahana, Nagarjuna is the most fearless critique of metaphysical views (Kalupahana, 7). Furthermore, Durgen Smith calls Nagarjuna as the Indian Socrates. He says: “Like Socrates, he professed no views of his own - instead, he used his opponents’ arguments to demonstrate that their implications flew in the face of the very assumptions they were based on” (Smith, 137-138). He also adds: “He ruthlessly used the tool of the dialectic to demolish pair of the opposites that were routinely used to describe reality: unity and diversity, permanence and annihilation, coming and going, etc” (Smith, 138).

While comparing Buddhism and Zen, a lot of attributions to Nagarjuna and his texts such as *Mulamadhyamakakarika* (Fundamental Verses of the Middle Way), *Sunyatasaptati* (Seventy Verses on Emptiness)) should be made. *Prajnaparamita* sutras (Perfection of Wisdom), which were written in 100 BC and which consisted of 8000 lines are important Buddhist texts that inspired Nagarjuna and provided his intellectual basis. So to speak, Nagarjuna's main contribution to the Buddhist thought was the rereading of the *Prajnaparamita*. Another contribution of him is the concept of *sunyata*, or "emptiness". In fact, all these contributions gave birth to other key Buddhist doctrines.

According to Conze, there are four basic propositions in the Mahayana School, first one being about *sunyata*:

1. "All Dharmas are 'empty' in the sense that each one is nothing in and by itself. Any dharma is therefore indistinguishable from any other dharma. In consequence all dharmas are ultimately non-existent and the same".
2. "This emptiness can be called 'Suchness', when one takes each thing 'such as it is', without adding anything to it or subtracting anything from it. There can be only one Suchness and the multiple world is a construction of our imagination". (Conze, 49)

Dharma is an important concept both in Hinduism and Buddhism. It has got several meanings such as power, law, ultimate truth or the basic unit of existence. It is somewhat like the "logos" in ancient Greek philosophy. Nagarjuna's contribution to the concept of dharma can be considered as a critique of Buddha's thoughts:

"When all dharmas are empty, what is endless? What has an end? What is endless and with an end? What is not endless and not with an end? What is *it*? What is *other*? What is permanent? What is impermanent? What is impermanent and permanent? What is neither?"



“Auspicious is the pacification of phenomenal metastasis, the pacification of all apprehending”

“There is no dharma whatsoever taught by the Buddha to whomever, whenever, wherever” (Mulamadhyamakakarika, 25:22-24).

Sunyata is the central concept of the Madhyamaka School.

Madhyamika doctrines, such as Emptiness, the Middle Way, the Twofold Truth and the refutation of erroneous views as the illumination of right views, have been assimilated into Zen teachings and practices. Madhyamika philosophy seems to provide a major ‘theoretical’ foundation for Zen as a ‘practical’, ‘anti-intellectual’, ‘irrational’, ‘unconventional’ and ‘dramatic’ religious movement. (Cheng, 451-478)

The Buddha found a middle path between hedonism and asceticism. Nagarjuna elucidated a middle position between being and nonbeing, and this middle state of being in sunyata is translated as “emptiness” or “voidness”. The concept of Sunyata is quite confusing. Despite the fact that some may think of it as nihilism, while Sunyata does not mean non-existence, it does not describe some transcendent reality either. Sunyata simply signifies that things have no self-being or “essence” of their own.

Finally, it can be said that Nagarjuna’s primary contribution to Buddhist philosophy was the concept of sunyata (emptiness). According to Nagarjuna, the concept of emptiness cannot be separated from the concept of the middle way. Emptiness is defined by the words of Nagarjuna as: “The ‘originating dependently’ we call ‘emptiness’; this apprehension, i.e., taking into account all other things, is the understanding of the middle way” (Mulamadhyamakakarika, 24:18).

Nagarjuna negates all the rejections against the concept of emptiness by using the Socratic method. “Whoever argues against ‘emptiness’ in order to refute an argument, for him, everything, including the point of contention is known to be un-



refuted” (Mulamadhyamakakarika, 4:8). “And whoever argues by means of ‘emptiness’ in order to explain an understanding, for him, everything including the point to be proved is known to be misunderstood” (Mulamadhyamakakarika, 4:9).

For Nagarjuna, understanding and misunderstanding always go hand in hand. Since sunyata or emptiness is the ultimate reality, understanding and misunderstanding lose the oppositional characteristic constructed between them.

“Time and again you have made a condemnation of emptiness. But that refutation does not apply to our emptiness” (Mulamadhyamakakarika, 24:13). Condemnation of emptiness is not enough to refute the concept of sunyata. The only and strongest notion which could destroy the concept and the perception of emptiness is time. However, Nagarjuna believes that nothing can actually destroy the notion of emptiness. “If something would be non-empty, something would logically also be empty. But nothing is non-empty, so how will it become empty?” (Mulamadhyamakakarika, 13:7). Here, Nagarjuna gives the first examples of Koans which are mental puzzles used as a meditation method in Zen. Nagarjuna and his disciples are not the advocates of a single attitude. In other words, they do not hesitate to destroy even their own philosophies. Both poles of an opposition are tried to be annihilated by them in order to embrace emptiness.

For Nagarjuna, there is a conventional and an ultimate truth. The conventional truth is the commonsense truth and the ultimate truth is the absolute spiritual truth. The conventional truth is not ultimately true; however, to reach the ultimate truth, it is needed. On the other hand, both truths are equal; none is more valuable than the other. They depend on each other. Sunyata is a conventional truth which helps one see the ultimate truth.

The Buddha's doctrine of the Middle Way is about avoiding all the extremes and to become free from the concepts of "is" and "is not". Nagarjuna begins *the Middle Treatise* with these words:

Salute the Buddha,  
The foremost of all teachers,  
He has taught  
The doctrine of dependent co-arising,  
The cessation of all conceptual games.  
[The true nature of an event is marked by]  
No origination, no extinction;  
No permanence, no impermanence;  
No identity, no difference;  
No arrival, no departure (qtd. in Cheng, 1980, 230)

Nagarjuna is often called as a master of paradox, perpetrator of fallacies (Hayes, 1) "His texts are terse and cryptic. He does not shy away paradox and apparent contradiction" (Garfield and Priest, 1).

Nagarjuna's masterpiece is *Muulamaadhyamakakaarika* or *Maadhyamikakaarika*, (also simply spelled as *Mulamadhyamakakarika* or *Madhyamakakarika*, sometimes it is abbreviated as MMK or just Karikas).

As Waldo says: "formal statement of some of the problems discussed by Nagarjuna makes the relevance of the issues involved more direct to modern analytic philosophy" (Waldo, 287-298) Nagarjuna's philosophy is close to the modern analytic philosophy. On the other hand, Wittgenstein is the important component of the analytic tradition. Waldo goes forward and makes a strange comparison between the work of Wittgenstein and Nagarjuna as: "The MK (Karikas) is, like Wittgenstein's Tractatus, a work meant not to establish any positive thesis about its subject matter but to show the impossibility of doing so" (Waldo, 288).

It has already been declared that the main difficulty of this study is to find the similarities between the philosophy of Wittgenstein, who is a philosopher from Western world; and Zen, which is thousands years old religious-philosophical system of thought. However, in terms of understanding the satori experience, meditation always played an important role or had priorities than written documents in Zen tradition, whose roots are found in Mahayana Buddhism. Fortunately, Mahayana and Zen have an extended and strong bibliography by means of which Karikas can be compared to Tractatus. Such a contextual and methodological comparison gives some clues about how one can approach the world history and different philosophical traditions.

Nagarjuna is defined by Garfield and Priest as

a frontiersman adventurously exploring the limits of thought: Even were he not such a titanic figure historically, the depth and beauty of his thought and the austere beauty of his philosophical poetry would justify that attention. While Nagarjuna may perplex and often infuriate, and while his texts may initially defy exegesis, anyone who spends any time with Nagarjuna's thought inevitably develops a deep respect for this master philosopher. (Garfield and Priest, 86)

David J Kalupahana, who has written a number of books on Buddhism, is a Buddhist scholar, originally from Sri Lanka. He was also a student of the late K.N. Jayatilleke, who was a student of Wittgenstein. What Kalupahana says about Nagarjuna is that Nagarjuna set up the middle-way on the basis of the original philosophical ideals of the Buddha.

Sutras provide clues about the roots of the philosophy of Zen. The 6<sup>th</sup> Patriarch Hui-neng's sutra is a good example for the basic ideas of Mahayana Buddhism:

The true nature of an event is marked by  
No Permanence, no impermanence;



No arrival, no departure;  
No exterior, no interior;  
No origination, no extinction. The Essence of Mind or  
Tathata (Suchness) is the real Buddha. (qtd. in Cheng, 61)

Depending on the ideas of Buddha, Buddhist philosophers interpreted his ideas and gone further and deeper. The above sutra is a good example to show the general mood of the Mahayana Buddhism. It indicates directly the essence of mind because if one controls the mind, a way opens to reach the Buddhahood.

According to Jonah Winters, “Madhyamika thought are quite varied, nonetheless one can point to this work as being both the sole cornerstone of the school’s philosophy and the vital influence which literally provided the school with its very life-breath” (Winters, 93). Winters shows the importance of the Karikas for Mahayana Buddhism and adds in his complete work on the philosophy of Nagarjuna that: “The terse form of the treatise’s verses, their often cryptic quality, and the subtlety of the thought of both the Buddha and Nagarjuna all conspire to prevent any final certainties about what exactly Nagarjuna’s philosophy was. Moreover, it is not always clear which of Nagarjuna’s verses were meant to be an opponent’s position which he then refuted, and which represented Nagarjuna’s own position” (Winters, 94). This cryptic, koanic and paradoxical structure of the Karikas had a great impact on Zen.

Madhyamika is defined by the Western and Eastern philosophers in a very good and understandable manner. Cheng, a contemporary Chinese philosopher says:

Zen masters follow the Madhyamika not to allow themselves to become attached even to the Buddha and Buddhism. It is very likely that under the influence of the Maadhyamika teaching of the Middle Way, Zen Buddhists have rejected the dualistic way of thinking through the negation of all conceptualization. Actually, Zen Buddhists even paraphrased the Maadhyamika statement in examining the dualistic way of thinking. (Cheng, 455)



In the philosophy of Madhyamika, all of the verbal acts are the expressions of the twofold way of thinking and they create unavoidable contradictions and absurdities. Mulamadhyamakakarika has attracted great attention and has been discussed and interpreted in the Western world as well. Despite the fact that Nagarjuna's use of syllogism, enthymeme, and sorites have been criticised in Kaarikaas, L. Stafford Betty makes references, regarding tetralemma as logical, mystical, both, or neither; and at the end of her critics stating that his (Nagarjuna's) work has been taken out of context, misinterpreted, and overextended (Betty, 136). Betty appreciates the importance and greatness of the *MMK* (Betty, 124). This unique hybrid of logic and mysticism is one of the most powerful and persuasive works in religious literature (Betty, 35). The main message of Madhyamika Buddhism is the doctrine of emptiness" (Cheng, 67) Emptiness is the primary theme of Karikas:

The concept depends on the realization that if no entities, events, or personalities have self-nature, then they are simply "empty". "Emptiness is the closest that the otherwise apophatic Madhyamika comes to advancing a doctrinal tenet. It is the only possible description of the ontological status of the world, and it is as well the sword which the Madhyamika uses to slash through all false views and counter all opposition. (Winters, 94)

In conclusion, "Nagarjuna deconstructs epistemological realism, essentialism, metaphysics, causality, and a referential view of language" in Karikas (Schroeder, 2000).

### 3.4 Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein

There are lots of attributions to the works of Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein. Streng, for example, says that, “Nagaarjuna’s use of words for articulating Ultimate Truth would find champions in contemporary philosophers of the language analysis school such as Ludwig Wittgenstein” (Streng, 20).

In the beginning of this study, the destructiveness of Wittgenstein was mentioned. He not only destructed some of the philosophical approaches of Russell but also some of his ideas.

Nagarjuna depends on Mahayanic ideas and he puts forward that there are two truths, and that they are a whole as a two faced monster. Everything both exists and does not exist; nothing exists or not exists. He refuses and refutes all philosophical views, even his own; and eventually he asserts nothing.

We might regard Nagarjuna’s philosophy as linguistic therapy: it uses language to reveal how language deceives us”, says David Loy, the Zen teacher and philosopher of religion. That is why Buddhist meditation is also known as a therapeutic spiritual exercise that reminds us, doubtlessly, Wittgenstein’s approach to language which is similar to the Buddhist views. Wittgenstein puts his approach forward as if he is showing the fly the way out of the flybottle. He sees the roots of philosophical problems as the language itself. Therefore, by solving the linguistic problems, the enlightenment conferred by both Wittgensteinian and Zen practice becomes a kind of emancipation or freedom. (Hudson, 481)

Frederick J. Streng writes:

Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein agree in holding that metaphysical propositions do not provide the knowledge that is claimed by systematic metaphysicians. Words and expression-patterns are simply practical tools of human life, which in themselves do not carry intrinsic meaning and do not necessarily have

meaning by referring to something outside the language system. (Qtd. in Anderson, 157)

Wittgenstein and Nagarjuna construct their systematics on language so that language is the main tool to destruct the linear flow of cause-effect relationships. Paradoxes, bizarre questions which have no proper answers, contradictions are the necessary tools for this purpose. They were not intellectual vandals. They both philosophized with the intention to overcome the philosophical problems. Actually, Nagarjuna, as a sage, wanted to reach nirvana with the help of his propositions. However, Wittgenstein, as a contemporary philosopher sought the radical solution of philosophical problems.

Streng adds:

The importance of this understanding of the nature of meaning is at it removes the necessity for finding a presupposed referent of a symbol or a "name," and it denies that a single ontological system based on the logical principle of the excluded middle is a necessary requirement for an integrated world view. (qtd. in Anderson, 157)

Anderson tells that "Streng believes that Wittgenstein, like Nagarjuna, would not accept the views on the function of words found in the mythical and intuitive structures of religious apprehension" (Anderson, 57). As Streng also points out, "because certain words have the power to bring forth the ultimately real, they are regarded as having exclusive intrinsic value over against other words" (Anderson, 141).

Syria born poet Adonis puts his thoughts on the relation of language and mysticism forward as:

Language, which cannot properly convey the world of experience, is restricted in its ability to reveal another place to us, which is inexpressible and unutterable; when we wish to



attain such a place, we can do so only by mystical means or what the Sufi called a state of ecstasy through which we can be connected to what is spoken indescribable. (Adonis, 199-200)

However, language is the only way to express both the inner and the outer worlds. Naturally, it is always easier to speak about the outer world than to speak about the inner world. Moreover, it is difficult to define the concepts based on intuitions. Both philosophers, Wittgenstein and Nagarjuna, as if they lived in the same century, did try to push the limits of language and of the mind. Of course, the main aim of philosophy is to do so; but the uniqueness of those two philosophers which makes them close to each other was to make the reader cross over daily language by using daily language.

Gudmunsen compares Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein, and says that they have specific things to say about volition (Gudmunsen, 84). Gudmunsen clarifies his statement as Wittgenstein in the *Philosophical Investigations* says about the identical structure of cause and effect, so that voluntary action cannot be divided into two as volition and action. (Gudmunsen, 86). In the *Philosophical Investigations* Wittgenstein claims that

willing, if it is not to be a sort of wishing, must be the action itself. It cannot be allowed to stop anywhere sort of the action. If it is the action, then it is so in the ordinary sense of the word; so it is speaking, writing, walking, lifting a thing, imagining something. But it is also trying, attempting, making an effort, - to speak, to write, to lift a thing, to imagine something etc. (PI, § 615).

At this point, Nagarjuna happens to be in agreement with Wittgenstein. It is written in Karikas that: "If there were a oneness of the cause and product, then there would be an identity of the originator and what is originated. If there were a difference



of product and cause, then a cause would be the same as that which is not a cause” (MMK, 20:20).

A paradox such as “neither something nor nothing” would be suitable to Zennist and Wittgensteinian characteristics. Emptiness saves one from this paradox. The “originating dependently” we call “emptiness”. This apprehension, i.e., taking into account all other things, is the understanding of the middle way. (MMK, 24:18)

In order to understand the notion of “dependent origination”, which is one of the basic concepts of Buddhism, it is necessary to broaden it. The general formulation of dependent origination which is also known as interdependence origination, dependent arising, co-dependent arising in *Assutava Sutta* is as follows:

When this is, that is.  
From the arising of this comes the arising of that.  
When this isn't, that isn't.  
From the cessation of this comes the cessation of that.  
(<http://www.accesstoinsight.org/tipitaka/sn/sn12/sn12.061.than.html>.)

This can be formulized as:

X causes Y  
When X is present, so is Y  
When X is unresent, so is Y  
When X ceases, so shall Y.

(<http://www.indopedia.org/Pratitya-samutpada.html>)

“This draws attention to the constant flux of coming into being, and going out of being that is happening all the time. All phenomena are subject to this. And since all phenomena are dependent on other phenomena, then all phenomena are transient and unstable” (<http://www.indopedia.org/Pratitya-samutpada.html>).

Interdependent origination is not separated from the concept of emptiness. For Nagarjuna, emptiness of causality is shown by the co-dependence of cause and effect. Here, the ecstatic side of language as Adonis expressed in the above paragraphs could

be felt. (A) When emptiness “works”, then everything in existence “works”. (B) If emptiness ‘does not work’, then all existence “does not work” (*MMK*, 24:14)

Nagarjuna asserts that emptiness is the “siamese twins” of existence that cannot be separated. In the following statement, he uses simple conditional sentences close to Aristotelian logic. “Why does the action not originate? Because it is without self existence. Since it does not originate, it does not perish” (*MMK*, 17:21). Also existence and origination are mutually inclusive. The above quotation shows us the flux of the being and the action.

“If we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation', the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant” (*PI*, § 293).

And Wittgenstein also argues:

And yet you again reach the conclusion that the sensation itself is a nothing -- Not at all. It is not a something, but not a nothing either! The conclusion was only that a nothing would serve as well as a something about which nothing could be said. We have only rejected the grammar which tries to force itself on us here. (qtd. in Gudmunsen, 35).

### 3.5 Yogacara

The Yogacara School, also known as the “consciousness-only” or “nothing but consciousness” school, is a fourth century outgrowth of the Mahayana Buddhism in the North of India. All the different schools in Buddhism are in many ways very similar to each other. However, there are also slight differences between their interpretations of the question of getting to the nirvana. What Yogacara means in Sanskrit is “yoga practice”. Even though it is a trend today in almost all the big cities in the world, its actual meaning is not widely known. The root of the word yoga is “yug”, which means “to unite”. Yogacara is not merely a meditative practice, but it can also be applied as a

descriptive method to understand the situations of action. As Harvey says: “The intention of the school is not to propound a mere philosophical viewpoint, but to develop a perspective which will facilitate enlightenment” (Harvey, 1990.).

Yogacarans’ interpretation of Buddhism is based on psychology, not the intellect. They believed that “everything, even the absolute, can be described as Mind, Thought or Consciousness” (Smith, 139). Smith points out a strange analogy between the Yogacarans’ and Jung’s psychology: “To explain how this central principle ‘created’ the world, they posited the existence of a ‘store’ or ‘foundation’ consciousness, a version of Jung’s ‘collective unconscious’ in which the seeds of potential phenomena are stored and from which they constantly pour out to be made manifest in perception” (Smith, 139).

It should also be emphasized that the doctrine of emptiness is central to Yogacara. Furthermore, the importance of meditation practice and consciousness influenced the Zen tradition.

### **3.6 Taoism**

“Tao” means road, channel, path or way. Laozi (also spelled as Lao Tse, Lao Tu, Lao-Tzu) is regarded as the founder of Taoism. However, it is not clear if he actually lived or not. He is sometimes believed to be a mythical character, who is a combination of several historical figures.

The philosophy of Ch’an (or Zen) Buddhism is remarkably similar to philosophic Taoism (Creel, 23). Taoism, like Zen, should not be confused with the Western conceptualizations of (a)theism, polytheism and monotheism. Taoism offers a liberal way of life in harmony with nature.



Zen and Taoism share a lot common points. Victor H. Mair clarifies the source of this relationship and the western interest in both philosophies:

Zen and Tao epitomize the quest for an intuitive approach to life that stands in opposition (or perhaps, to make the point more nicely, as a complement) to traditional Western rationality. A trip to the library reveals that Zen can be applied fruitfully to the following areas of human endeavor: running, jogging, archery, baseball, martial arts, motorcycle maintenance, photography, assembly language, tea drinking, pottery making, writing, painting, poetry, dancing, flower arrangement, photography, and helping (!). Apparently, even the reclusive J. D. Salinger relied upon Zen in crafting his inimitable fiction without being wholly aware of its capacity to transform our vision. (Mair, 1)

Taoism is interested in life, not “after life”. There is no heaven or hell in Taoism; this world is both heaven and hell. A Taoist does not expect to become the supreme being. That is to say, there is no mystification in Taoism. That is the main reason why it is still alive and why it still attracts many people from all over the world.

Tominaga asserts that in “the Taoist perspective, any attempt to use written or spoken words to talk about Tao, especially in the absolute sense, is [...] rejected on the grounds of indescribability or unnameability and ignorance of the nature of Tao” (Tominaga, 127). Laozi’s own words also refer to Taoism’s characteristic of “indescribability of unnameability”:

The Tao that can be expressed (named)  
Is not the Absolute Tao.  
The names that can be spoken  
Are not Absolute Names. (Albertson, 21)

Laozi also recommends that “if you really want everything, then give up everything”. This statement may gain depth by an expression by Nagarjuna, which follows as: “The cessation of accepting everything as real is a salutary (siva) cessation

of phenomenal development (prapanca); No dharma anywhere has been taught by the Buddha of anything” (*MMK*, 25:24). In other words, everything flows, the nature of dharma is in a big and endless flux. In order to be in harmony with the nature, cessation, in all forms, must be recognized and applied.

Finally, it is necessary to mention that while some philosophers compare Nagarjuna with Buddha, some scholars such as Tominaga and Goodman compare Taoism with the philosophy of Wittgenstein.

According to Goodman, “styles of writing which Wittgenstein and the Taoists Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu employ, taking the position, that their unusual styles are developed with the aim of ‘bumping’ the reader into a new awareness of the world” (Goodman, 145).

Tominaga opens the way and encourages his colleagues for a new research on the subject by pointing that “it is significant to observe that the related aspects that Ch’an and Taoism share with Wittgenstein tend to show that they may not be as philosophically remote and incompatible as we may be led to believe without closer scrutiny”(Tominaga, 142).

In this chapter, the fundamental concept in Buddhism was discussed and shown. Emptiness lies behind nearly all the statements of Nagarjuna. He, like Wittgenstein, was content with his philosophy. He prefers to present his philosophy through paradoxes as well.

Moreover, in this chapter Yogacara tradition and Taoism were also discussed. No doubt, in China, Zen was influenced by Taoism.

## CHAPTER IV

### ZEN

#### 4.1 Definitions of Zen

An attempt to make a single general dictionary definition of Zen is as difficult as defining the philosophy and methodology of Zen teaching. One can find only superficial definitions of Zen in dictionaries. For instance, Zen is defined as “a school of Mahayana Buddhism that asserts that enlightenment can be attained through meditation, self-contemplation, and intuition rather than through faith and devotion and that is practiced mainly in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam” (Longman, 1526). Some others emphasize Zen is a branch of Mahayana Buddhism, and it is widely accepted in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam. However, almost all the definitions put the importance of intuition, meditation, self-contemplation rather than faith. It is of course, the dictionary definitions of Zen are not sufficient to understand the spiritual philosophy and practices of Zen. They only give the general perceptions of Zen lacking the deep philosophical background of Zen formed throughout centuries.

However, when the definitions of Zen by Zen masters are compared with the definitions of encyclopedias and dictionaries, it is observed that Zen masters adopt a kind of language which is much richer, colorful and vivid that reflects the Zen way of life. Furthermore, it is believed that whenever Zen is defined, whenever it is put into words, Zen philosophy loses all its energy. This perception can be found in Wittgensteinian philosophy as well. According to him, the real meaning cannot be confined to words, since meaning pushes the borders of language. In this respect, the



definition of Zen seems to be an attempt to say the unsayable, to utter the unutterable, to catch the uncatchable.

Reginald Horace Blyth (1898-1942), who studied Zen and produced important works on Zen, defined Zen as: “doing anything perfectly, hesitating perfectly, having stomach-ache perfectly, doing anything perfectly or imperfectly, PERFECTLY” (Blyth, 4). This definition of Zen is really confusing because it dwells on contradictory terms: “perfectly” and “imperfectly”. According to Blyth, “Perfectly is in the will; perfectly is in the activity. Perfectly means that the activity is harmonious in all its parts, and fully achieved its proposed end” (Blyth, 4). In this sense, Blyth emphasizes that doing anything perfectly resides in the will and then in the action. He indicates that doing anything perfectly implies to be in a harmonious state with the action a person intends to do. Only then, that action achieves its aim. Thus, Blyth claims that even an attempt to do an activity imperfect should be done perfectly.

Daisetsu Teitaro Suzuki (1870-1966), who claims that “Zen teaches nothing” (1949, 38), wrote one of the most influential works on Zen. He is considered to be the first writer who introduced Zen Buddhism to the West. His writings were widely accepted by the western academic circles. For instance, his major book, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* was published in Kyoto in 1937, and it was translated into many languages in a couple of years. For the German edition in 1939, Carl Jung (1875-1961), who was a Swiss psychiatrist, an influential thinker and the founder of analytical psychology (known as Jungian psychology), wrote a preface to his study. The Western World welcomed Zen. Since then, most of the theologians, philosophers and scientists have become interested in Zen.

According to D.T. Suzuki, Zen is neither a philosophy nor a religion because it presents no dogmas, no rituals, no rites, and no sacred scriptures. Even during the

meditation practise there is neither mantra (spiritually effective syllabuse(s)) nor yantra (holy diagram, geometrical shape of mantra) in Zen. Kim states that

Zen and Christian mysticism, representing Eastern and Western intuitive philosophies, respectively, make this method essential and primary in their attempt to apprehend ultimate reality. The obvious difference between them lies, not in their methodology, but in their affiliation with different cultural backgrounds, with their divergent general characteristics, (Kim, 19)

It was already mentioned that throughout the history, Jesus and Buddha were somehow considered to be close to each other. D.T. Suzuki, who also wrote a book on Christianity and Buddhism provides an interesting point of view: “Whenever I see a crucified figure of Christ, I cannot help thinking of the gap that lies deep between Christianity and Buddhism. This gap is symbolic of the psychological division separating the East from the West” (Suzuki, 2008, 113).

However, although there are similarities in all kinds of religions of the Western and Eastern worlds, Zen keeps its unique character. For example, believers of institutionalized religions make sacred journeys to the places which are declared as sacred by those religions. These spiritual journeys are called pilgrimage. However, Zen does not promote such a practice. There is no sacred place to go which Zen urges its practitioners to go, any institution like church or any hierarchical position like priest. Besides, there are no concepts of heaven and hell. Zen does not force its practitioners to perform any rituals. For instance, there are no icons to kneel in front of and God or Prophet to pray for. Zen is iconoclastic. There is no God to be believed in or to be surrendered to, either. In this respect, Zen is anti-philosophical and deconstructive.

In his essays on Zen Buddhism, D.T. Suzuki also claims that “Zen is the ultimate fact of all philosophy and religion. Every intellectual effort must culminate in it, or rather must start from it, if it is to bear any practical fruits” (Suzuki, 1956, 294).

This is the reason why Zen is considered to be a very much respected philosophical approach in the fields of scientific and social sciences all over the world today. It has influenced many kinds of art such as Chinese and Japanese poetry form, Haiku, which is regarded as Zen poetry and Sumiye, a painting style, which is regarded as Zen painting. Furthermore, Zen continuously nurtures Japanese culture. Zen Gardens, Japanese visual arts, Japanese poetry, Martial arts and archery still reflect the Zen influence.

The Western world has also been influenced by Zen since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when the main Buddhist texts were started to be translated. Artistic movements such as Dadaism, expressionism and surrealism have come to employ Zennist themes and methods, such as koans. The Beat generation of the 1960s were also very much influenced by Zen philosophy. For example, Jack Kerouac wrote a novel in 1959, named *Dharma Bums* and also *Wake Up* (A life of the Buddha) in 1955. The other cult fiction by Robert M. Pirsig's *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance: An Inquiry into Values* was published in 1974. Alan Watt as a Western philosopher was interested in Zen culture as well; he wrote and lectured about Zen. There is still a considerable interest in Zen in the Western world. Not only thinkers, philosophers, intellectuals but also artists, writers as well as businessmen, lawyers, etc. have started to be interested in Zen. In addition to the Zennist art in the Eastern world mentioned above, the modern Western world has also produced interesting works about Zen such as *Zen in the Kitchen* (Tijen Inaltong), *Zen in the Art of Archery* (Eugen Herrigel), *Zen of Business Administration* (Marc Lesser) and *Zen and the Art of Programming*. As it is observed in these titles, nowadays various combinations of Zen and everyday life can be made.



Although the parties belonging to these combinations seem irrelevant, all of these works emphasize the eclecticism of Zen philosophy. Thus, Zen philosophy can penetrate into any kind of perception. In fact, Zen itself is a mixture of Buddhism, Chinese folk religions and Japanese culture. And any term can be combined with Zen because it is an all-including philosophy.

On the grounds of Horace Blyth's words, i.e. "Zen is doing anything perfectly or imperfectly", all these combinations can be formulized as "Zen and X", or according to Zennist terminology, as "Zen and no X". Zen and No X is a confusing statement. According to Zen philosophy, it is actually not different than the statement "Zen and X". Suzuki states: "Zen expresses itself is the denial of opposites, somehow corresponding to the mystic "via negativa" (Suzuki, 274). Here, Suzuki borrows the concept of Via Negativa, which is related to Christian theology. "Negative way" is used to define God by defining what God is not. By using this method, Christian mystics try to overcome God's unknowable characteristic.

This eclectic characteristic of Zen is also remarkable for the philosophy. Philosophers of Western and Eastern cultures have been much more in interaction since the mid-twentieth century. For instance, one can find studies about the influential philosophies of Western culture and Zen recently. Zen and Hegel, Zen and Foucault, Zen and Marx, Zen and Christianity, Zen and Sufism can be given as examples. As a conclusion of this interaction between Western philosophies and Zen, some hybrid philosophies, which include the Western approach, have emerged in the Eastern culture as well. For instance, recent Japanese philosophy reflects such a characteristic. As Kim argues:

In the history of recent Japanese philosophy, there is another development which shows a conscious blending of Zen with Hegelianism. A number of outstanding Japanese philosophers who were thoroughly trained in Western philosophy have deliberately attempted to create a so-called “Japanese philosophy”, which they regard as typically Oriental in character, by synthesizing Zen and Hegelian philosophy. (Kim, 25)

As a result, Buddha may be regarded as a prophet like Jesus, Mohammed or Moses; however, Buddha did not claim that he was the carrier of God’s words for the humanity. Buddha did not believe in God, and did not offer his disciples the way to God.

The main interest of this work is the Zen school of Buddhism. Mahayana is one of the biggest sects in Buddhism, where the roots of Zen can be found. The main characteristic of Mahayana Buddhism is its reduction of the importance of Buddha. So to speak, as Smith writes: “Mahayanists belittled the significance of Buddha’s appearance in History” (Smith, 121). That is why the practice of meditation by means of which Buddha achieved the enlightenment is much more important than the reading of Buddha’s words.

The legendary founder and the First Patriarch of Zen Buddhism is Boddhidharma, who is pictured as a wild, exophthalmic and bush-bearded barbarian. These adjectives of Boddhidharma may seem bizarre; yet it suits the character of Zen. At any rate, Boddhidharma is actually the one who rendered the philosophy more practical and vivid instead of theoretical.

The method of Zen masters in Zen education is “uncommon, unconventional, illogical, and consequently incomprehensible to the uninitiated” (Suzuki, 1949, 271). The method, as it shall be defined in detail, can be epitomized as “1. Paradox; 2. Going beyond opposites; 3. Contradictions; Affirmation; 5. Repetition; and 6. Exclamation”

(Suzuki, 271). The roots of the methods can be found in the Ancient Mahayana texts. However, great Zen masters after Boddhidharma contributed to Zen philosophy with their poems, stories and koans which are still being read.

#### **4.2 Zen beyond Religion**

The difficulty of defining Zen lies in its rejection of the method of logical reasoning which can be found in the Western philosophy. In other words, Zen does not conform to the rules of Western thinking which tries to find answers for philosophical questions through more concrete terms. Since Zen depends on spiritual thinking, giving precise definitions of Zen becomes a vain attempt. In this respect, the contribution of Zen to the Western thought is observed in its combination with certain Western philosophical concepts.

The Zen culture depends upon the words of Zen masters. Boddhidharma is a legendary Zen monk (originally he was an Indian prince) who transferred the teaching from India to China and who declared “[n]o dependence upon words and letters”. (Cheng, 1981, 472)

This statement seems to be a contradiction. But it is not. There is no escape from written and/or oral language to define a philosophy, to establish the rules for a meaningful system and to understand what a certain religion actually is. There is only one holy book in Christianity, Islam and Judaism and none of the followers of these religions ever write or think “to burn” the books. For example, the first verse of Koran, the holy book of Muslims’ is “Read in the name of Allah”, which means that this text is the only text one can read; therefore it is entirely credible and can never be criticized.

There is no single holy book, but numerous texts in Buddhism. Besides, Buddhist philosophers never hesitate to criticize these ancient texts. On the other



hand, although there is no concept of a single omnipotent god in Buddhism, it is certainly a religion. Its main purpose is to create a peaceful society. While in many traditional communities as well as Eastern cultures, art science and religion are harmoniously interrelated with each other forming a larger system in this respect, in Europe, there was a great conflict between Christianity and science during the Dark and the middle Ages. In fact, it can be claimed that these conflicts have not been solved yet. On the other hand, the Buddhist Side of Asia never experienced such conflicts thanks to the tolerant nature of Buddhism.

Chung-Ying Cheng calls Zen as a “proto-philosophy”. He explains the reason behind this definition as:

Though Zen in its pure and ultimate form is a form of experience, a complete understanding of it and its background nevertheless involves many references to philosophical and practical teachings. It is not a philosophy in a proper sense, but there are philosophical and historical presuppositions and implications of Zen. To speak about it we can make both philosophical and metaphilosophical observations. Similarly Zen is not religion in a narrow sense, but it is nevertheless describable in religious terms. Both philosophy of experience and philosophy of religion have yet to yield a place to Zen experience and Zen religion in their frameworks. (Cheng, 1973, 99)

As is seen in the quotation above, the goal of Zen is to reach Buddhahood, the Buddha mind, satori or nirvana, which are all in Suzuki’s words “intuitional understanding of the truth of Zen” (Suzuki, 37). Here, Buddha indicates more than Gautama Buddha, who was the founder of Buddhism. While Buddha refers to the enlightened being, Zen is the personal activity itself. In other words, one achieves enlightenment personally. This is similar in other mystic schools or sects. For instance, Islam is a religion for society, but Sufism aims at gaining vahdet-i vücud (union of body). Hinduism is also a religion to organize the society, but yogic way is to get the

Samadhi. It is exactly the same that the aim of a Zen practitioner is to gain Satori. Samadhi, Nirvana, Satori, Vahdet-i Vücut all meet at the same spot: Enlightenment.

#### 4.3 The Method of Enlightenment in Zen

The methods used by Zen masters/pupils in an attempt to get the Buddha mind are different than the other mystic ways. The enlightenment has nothing to do with rituals. No matter how much meditation a practitioner does, no matter how many books a practitioner reads, enlightenment does not occur gradually, but it comes suddenly. On the contrary, one gets that state of mind instantly; and some special methods are used in order to accomplish this. In this respect, *Koan*, which will be explained with examples in the following chapters, is a well known method. Briefly, a koan is something like a proposition to stimulate the practitioner to think about it. However, there is neither a truth value nor an answer for the Koan. It is often nonsense; yet while thinking about Koan, enlightenment instantly occurs. The other methods are somewhat peculiar. For instance, the Master slaps the pupil or hits him by using a stick in order to provoke him. Merely practicing certain sitting or walking meditations are other methods as well.

Zen sometimes called as the science of freedom. “Anyone who teaches a doctrine that is dependent upon letter is a merely prattler, because Truth is beyond letter and words and books” (Goddard, 77).

As is mentioned above, the main aim of Zen is to reach the Satori (enlightenment). What Osho, the famous Guru says about the enlightenment is:

Coming to understand, coming to realize that you are not the body. You are the light within, not the lamp, but the flame. You are neither body nor mind. Mind belongs to the body, mind is not beyond body, it is part of the body. Mind is also atomic, as body is atomic. You are neither body nor the mind - then you come to know who you are. And to know who you is enlightenment. (Osho, 28)

Satori is the pivot of Zen philosophy. Satori or Enlightenment means that you have realized who you are. "To gain Satori is to experience the natural state of the mind from which all good actions flow and in which there is an illumined recognition of the harmony of life" (Bancroft, 11). Satori is also a complete revaluation of One's own life. The practitioner does not pray hours and hours, does not need to believe in God (there is no God in Buddhism), does not need to believe in hell or heaven. Bancroft adds: "Strictly speaking, Zen does not believe that any method can awaken the mind to Reality, because this implies a self-conscious attempt to grasp something which is already present, and methods are considered as misleading as putting legs on a snake'"(Bancroft, 11)

Briefly, Zen does not believe that a certain method is useful to catch the reality of being. Bodhidharma advises his pupils by explaining that:

Trying to find a Buddha or enlightenment is like trying to grab space. Space has a name but no form. It's not something you can pick up or put down. And you certainly can't grab it. Beyond mind you'll never see a Buddha. The Buddha is a product of the mind. Why look for a Buddha beyond this mind? (Qtd. in Looi, 187)

Zen Master Hui Neng (AD 637-714) also states that: "Depending upon nothing, you must find your own mind" (Qtd. in Biddulph, 73). Zen study is related to the living world. It is never interested in the other world such as heaven or hell. Zen believes that human being can make the world as heaven or hell with the mind.

There are countless of sayings, statements and mondos used to educate Zen practitioners. Each of these, which focus on the distinctiveness of Zen among other religions, shows how a vivid, alive and worldly religion Zen is. Because of this, Zen is often accepted not as a religion but as the art of life.



There are mainly four practices to be applied by a Zen pupil: Zazen (sitting meditation), koans (problem or paradox beyond logic), sanzen (private class or interview with the master) and finally ordinary works to do be done in the monasteries and gardens.

The fundamental concepts of Zen are impermanence and emptiness. Sunya is a Japanese word the meaning of which is emptiness and reality. Emptiness is reality, and vice versa. Egolessness is another major concept in Zen. The modern world forces people to live in a negative environment full of anger, stress, greed and worry. In such an environment, many people try to satisfy the needs of their ego in order to preserve their standards of living. In this sense, they ignore their spiritual needs. They lose their awareness of existence and they think that the meaning of their lives reside in satisfying their material and egoistic needs. Such a kind of living makes people psychologically and physically ill. However, in the Zen study, ego must be annihilated to get the mindfulness and awareness fully.

In conclusion, Zen, which is the result of the combined geniuses of the Indian and Chinese people, is about everything as well as nothing (Blyth, 11). Nothing is good and nothing is bad; nothing is meaningless and nothing is meaningful, either. In Zen, the ultimate place is the Enlightenment which concedes the Endarkenment. There is not only one way to attain the Satori. In whichever way you act in your daily life, all of the sentient beings have buddha-nature and are capable of gaining Satori. A dialogue found in old Zen writings between the Buddhist Philosopher and the Master could serve as a final remark on the very essence of Zen:

“With what frame of mind should one discipline oneself in the truth?” Said the Zen master, “There is no mind to be framed, nor is there any truth in which to be disciplined.” “If there is no mind to be framed and no truth in which to be disciplined, why do you have a daily gathering of monks who are studying Zen and disciplining themselves in the truth?” The master replied: “I have not an inch of space to spare, and where could I have a gathering of monks? I have no tongue, and how would it be possible for me to advise others to come to me? “The philosopher then exclaimed, “How can you tell a lie like that to my face”. “When I have no tongue to advise others, is it possible for me to tell a lie?” Said Doko despairingly, “I cannot follow your reasoning”. “Neither do I understand myself,” concluded the Zen master. (Suzuki, 1991, 57).

As a conclusion, Zen does not depend on words, but it respects the words of the ancient texts and masters, as long as they are useful and helpful to gain satori. On the other hand, if it is useful to burn the texts and ignore the sayings to gain satori, then it is again valid and valuable.

#### **4.4 Zen, Language and Poetry**

##### **4.4.1 Zen and the Language**

The studies to elaborate the encounter between Wittgenstein and Zen Buddhism have come a long way over the last 30 years. The difficulties of understanding local languages of the Eastern communities have slowed down the researches of the Eastern philosophy and even caused it to be misinterpreted by the Western researchers. Fortunately, in recent years these misinterpretations are being corrected as more studies are done in the field.

Undoubtedly, language reflects the mind of a society. In this sense, the language of Zen also reflects the philosophy embedded in Zen thinking. From the Western point of view, Koans or Haikus may seem completely irrational and they are not appreciated

much by literary critics. Most of these literary works are considered as naive and congenial by some scholars.

Erich Fromm (1900–1980) was a renowned psychoanalyst who was interested in Zen as well. In his famous “*Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism*” paper presented at a conference in 1957 and then published in 1960, Fromm establishes a one to one correlation between enlightenment and language. According to him, satori is the transcendence of language. (Qtd. in Wright, 113). This correlation can be considered in relation to Wittgenstein’s famous proposition in which he states that “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (*TLP*, 5.6). If this statement is reconstructed as “the limits of the language mean the limits of the thought”, then Fromm’s statement becomes valid because when the language is transcendental, thoughts become transcendental as well, and this actually means satori.

Fromm’s statement is meaningful in terms of discussing the Zen point of view and Wittgenstein’s notion of ineffability. According to some views, some of the East Asian cultures position the notion of ineffability different than that of the Western ones.

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 (Wright, 135).

Everything is done by language. A philosophy can be constructed as well as deconstructed by language. People get sick by language and they get healed. Language can easily define the physical world; however, intuitions cannot be put into words. Zen is aware of this and never expects one to talk about the satori experience. It always



maintains its self destructive nature. However, in the Western societies, words have the utmost importance. Everything must be explained by language.

The fundamental question in Zen Buddhism is what is Buddha or Buddhahood. Almost all the pupils of this teaching ask this question. For instance, Taibai, a pupil, asked Baso, “What is Buddha?” Baso answered, “Mind is Buddha” (Yamada, 149). As Baso states, what Zen actually shows is what Buddha is. Wittgenstein similarly states: “Don’t think but look!” (*PI*, § 66). One will not need any language while looking and there will be no need for language either while one gets the mindfulness.

Buddha means the awakened one or the enlightened being. Tathata is a key word in Zen study, which is the reality as it is in its suchness or thusness. Buddha is the man that is one with the totality of reality.

According to Anton Sevilla, “many mistakenly see Buddha as something to be attained, some accomplishment to be strived for. As such, they go about polishing themselves in various manners. They seek out Buddhahood as if it is a lost secret” (Sevilla, <http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/2008/Sevilla.html>).

Sevilla also adds: “If one is to realize Buddha and reality as it is, one must rescind one’s attachment to this idea, this external ideal of Buddhahood and turn on the light within. It is mindful of this that Baso formulates his reply” (<http://www.japanesestudies.org.uk/discussionpapers/2008/Sevilla.html>).

#### **4.4.2 Zen Poetry**

According to Suzuki, “Zen naturally finds its readiest expression in poetry rather than in philosophy, because it has more affinity with feelings than with intellect; its poetic predilection is inevitable” (Suzuki, 1949, 117). Departing from the question “are words sufficient enough to reflect the reality”, Zennists have made a significant contribution to the poetic tradition of Zen. Conventional truth needs conventional

language which is a usual language of our daily life. However, ultimate truth needs a different discourse, different meanings of the words. Poetic language is different than conventional language. It is the same for all the languages. Poetry opens the doors to new worlds. Invisibles becomes visible, inaudible becomes audible by poetic language. It is the closest way to the ultimate reality and truth. All the poets have spiritual tendencies. Their aim is to use the power of the words no matter how rationalist or mysticist they are. Sevilla points out the importance of poetic speech in Zen:

The poem does not draw lines. The poem does not compete in an arena of truth. The poem merely calls us to reality, calls us to stand and be moved—moved by what is sensible and glorious in its shining light and moved by what is subtle and unspoken in the mysterious dark. Hence, the poet does not merely speak. The poet, in his speech, says less, less by enough that speech be silent. He does not cling to the transcendence of things, nor does he cling to their manifestness. In speech the poet flings us to the vast arena of the play of light and shadow, where the light glimmers and plays in the expanse of the suffocating dark. (Sevilla, 2008)

Zen teaches us a simple life. There is no doubt that all the teachings have a close relationship with language. In accordance with the notion of simple life in Zen, language is kept simple as well. The point is to see the profoundness underneath this simplicity. An example dialogue between a Zen master and his pupil might demonstrate this fact: Master Bokaju is asked: “We have to dress and eat everyday, and how can we escape from all that?” The master replies: “We dress, we eat.” The pupil says: “I do not understand”. Master finalizes the dialogue: “If you do not understand, put on your clothes and eat your food” (Bancroft, 5).

The replies given by the masters always shock the students. Dialogues or monologues of masters are understood sometimes in a second, sometimes in years; however, some people never ever understand their meaning. Language is a basic tool in the Zen study. Masters use language to open the way to enlightenment. They ask questions

despite the fact that there are no logical answers. Student's minds are engaged in making sense of those questions during the sitting meditation, walking meditation, working in the garden. All of these practices help the student to gain the Buddhahood. A Zen master Ummon says:

When walking just walk,  
When sitting just sit,  
Above all, don't wobble. (Bancroft, 5)

This poem seems to be simple at the first glance. But it symbolizes the philosophy of "here and now". In Zen tradition, the philosophical and ethical views are provided through poems. Another famous Zen poem follows as:

The perfect way knows no difficulties  
Except that it refuses to make preferences  
Only when freed from hate and love  
It reveals itself fully and without disguise;  
A tenth of an inch's differences,  
And heaven and earth are set apart.  
If you wish to see it without your own eyes  
Have no fixed thoughts either for or against it. (Bancroft, 6)

Poetry is Zen's peculiarity. It can be said that Zen has the largest historical poetic tradition which is still alive. Almost all religious -Christian or Muslim- classical hymns and poems are always important and are repeated for centuries without creating new ones. This is Zen's distinctiveness and could be a reason why it has a great influence on poets from all over the world. However, Zen poetry is a realist or naturalist poetry, not a surrealist one. The theme is basically the nature. It talks about the serious subjects with optimism. It tries to provide ethical messages by means of poetry.

Haiku is another form of poetry, which is considered as a contribution of Zen culture to the world. The form consists of three metrical phrases of 5, 7, and 5 syllables respectively. Today, some poets write in the haiku form in many languages. Zen has significantly shaped the historical development of haiku. Not all haiku poets are Zen



Buddhists, but many of them such as Matsuo Basho, who was ordained as a priest, are Zen trained.

As is already mentioned, the practitioner's aim in Zen is to get a great enlightenment called 'Satori'. While some pupils can reach this state of mind by meditating for years; some reach this mental state with many little flashes of enlightenment, which is called 'Kensho'. Kensho, which means to see one's own true self, is often confused with satori. However, while satori is a deeper state, Kensho could be a prior step before Satori. Like koans, haikus help the practitioner to get to this state. Haiku is an instant and condensed poetic form which can give the reader that little momentary Kensho insight. Basho writes:

Autumn-  
even the birds  
and clouds look old (Basho, qtd. in Levering, 46)

This haiku gives a picture of the changing of the season and the sky as well as the moods of the people.

Not last night  
not this morning  
melon flowers bloomed (Basho, qtd. in Levering, 47)

Here, Basho plays with the concept of time. He introduces the notion of timelessness with the negation of the morning and night and adds the blooming of the flowers instantly.

#### **4.4.3 Paradoxes and Logic**

Paradoxes are statements or group of statements, which express a contradictory situation where there is no possible resolution to it. There are various well-known paradoxes in the history of philosophy. They are also found in logic, literature, law and

ethics. Paradoxes are beyond logical inferences. Since logical thinking always depends on reasoning and strict distinctions between true and false, unsolvable situations do not belong to this field; yet they easily exist within the context of Zen.

Unlike Buddhism, many ideologies and religions try to eliminate paradoxes in order to set up a systematic way of thinking. Buddhism does not avoid paradoxes. Paradoxes are employed in Zen as a method to awaken one's mind. Actually, paradoxes are the main sources of Zen that keep it alive and allow it to continuously refresh itself.

Zen is basically a mental activity and meditation practice plays an important role in its teaching. At this practise, the enlightenment comes following the contemplation of paradoxes. Paradoxes are annihilated on the basis of the emptiness (*sunyata*) principle; in other words, they are emptied. It is said to be that, though it is a paradoxical teaching, "Zen teaches that it teaches nothing" (Suzuki, 1949, 38).

The fact that Zen works through paradoxes may be its most attractive aspect for the Western oriented philosophers. As Cheng argues, "[i]t seems to be constantly puzzling and persistently inscrutable to modern philosophers in the Western world" (Cheng, 77). In this context, Kim points out the paradoxical nature of Zen by means of constructing a good analogy: "Its situation is somewhat like that of Socrates' ironic modesty when, in upsetting the thesis of the Sophists, he declared, I know that I know nothing. This positive aspect of Zen is often ignored by the critics of Zen philosophy. Indeed, the positive side of Zen is the logic of the illogical. It may be added that the logic of Zen is not a-logical but super-logical; it transcends the logical bifurcation of subject and object, mind and matter, being and non-being, which always falls into the realm of relational knowledge. It is due to the thoroughgoing attitude of Zen that it pierces through relational knowledge, so as to acquire an absolute point of view" (Kim, 21).

Kim refers the illogical side of Zen as “super-logical”. Zen’s logical system may seem illogical at first sight. However, the fundamentals of the Zennist logical system are as strong as western logical systems’. On the other hand, when Zen philosophy is taken under consideration as an entire system with its arts, poetry, koans, meditation and the concepts such as thusness and emptiness, it can be seen that everything is consistent with each other and in a great harmony. Zen has got its own philosophical way of thinking, which is worth contemplating on.

Cheng explains the main ways in which paradoxes exist and operate within Zen. First of all, there is the doctrine, which holds that no rational doctrine and no form of language or speech are necessary for the realization of the ultimate truth called Buddhahood. This doctrine is essential for realizing the Enlightenment.

Secondly, Zen Buddhists’ bibliography with its long history and thousands of pages direct the practitioners to understand Zen philosophy while analyzing the dialogues between the masters and the pupils. Cheng calls these dialogues as “dialogic exchanges”, which are essentially very brief and to the point. Cheng argues that dialogic exchanges are a source for paradoxical puzzlement, which is created through koans. (Cheng, 294). At this point, it should be added that koans are more than dialogic exchanges. All dialogic exchanges could be koans but not vice versa. For a koan to be formed, there should not necessarily be a dialogue, just a statement is enough.

Zen thinkers assume that the well-known Hegelian “three steps dialectics” is a rationalistic one. The “thesis” part of this “thesis-antithesis-synthesis” triad turns in Zen into antithesis, whilst the antithesis part becomes the thesis. Dualism is a conventional way of thinking. In Zen, there is no synthesis, but there is the unity as Suzuki says: “Not unity in multiplicity, nor multiplicity in unity; but unity is multiplicity and multiplicity is unity” (Suzuki, 1951, 21). If this is translated into Zennist terminology, it means that



everything is in emptiness, and emptiness is everything. “Zen thinks that the truth can be reached when it is neither asserted nor negated” (Suzuki, 275). Ummon, a great Zen master from the 9th century says: “In Zen there is no absolute freedom; sometimes it negates and at other times it affirms; it does either way at pleasure” (Qtd. in Suzuki, 275). Zen masters are not interested in refutation of any thesis, in other words, they refuse to refute, they believe that there is nothing to refute. Briefly, in Zen, there is no thesis, no anti thesis, no synthesis.

Kim also emphasizes that “[i]n Zen, paradoxical propositions are convertible” (Kim, 24) If this notion of convertibility is to be formulised, the result would be that “A is not A” and “not A is A”. This is, of course, not valid in (western) logic. However, as Kim finalises: “The identity of a concept and its negation expresses the whole of truth in Zen philosophy. Truth consists of these two aspects of intellectual dichotomy, and, furthermore, Zen concludes that truth is not something beyond and more than these contradictions and paradoxes” (Kim, 24).

Scharfstein defines Zen as “salvation by paradox” and he identifies the working of Zen as “words against words” (Scharfstein 209). This can be extended as “propositions against propositions” or “language against language”. This opponent situation breaks the usual mode of thinking.

Zen masters prize illogic because like us, they know the value of logic and can therefore use it to break through to the insight they consider essential. The lesson they teach is not a bad one for philosophers, who too often, I think, have an exaggerated faith in the omnipotence of concepts, especially their own. (Scharfstein, 232)

Zen paradoxes are similar to the famous paradoxes of movement elaborated by Zeno. Zeno is an ancient Greek philosopher, who established some set of paradoxes such as Achilles and tortoise and arrow in flight. He basically asserts that motion is

nothing but an illusion. Zeno's paradoxes are mathematically not valid anymore, but they are still problematic for philosophers.

Zen is, therefore, not without knowledge; rather, it is the knowledge that is not knowledge. This is why Zen method can be regarded as the logic of the illogical. This is paradoxical, it is true, but to obtain the absolute standpoint Zen discards all of the ordinary logical laws. (Kim, 21)

As Kim states, Zen discards all of the ordinary logical laws. Yet, what is it to be used instead of those logical laws? In the next section, the paradoxical and contradictory nature of Zen and its extraordinary logical laws will be discussed. Zen Buddhist philosophy is supposed to be avoiding extremes. However, it wanders the extremes of the intellect by creating paradoxes. In order to find the middle way, it would be necessary to see the limits of thoughts. Eventually, paradoxes are not avoided in Zen. It helps us to see what are out of the frontiers of the mind and the way to satori.

#### **4.4.4 Tetralemma, Fourfold or Multiple Form of Logic**

Logic, as a science of reasoning, plays an important role in the western scientific and philosophical life. Its history goes back to the times of Aristotle (384 BC – 322 BC), who was one of the most important philosophers of the antiquity. Logic was part of the Western education system in the medieval ages along with grammar and rhetoric; the three disciplines were called as trivium and they were also prerequisites for all different studies.

Logic was an important part of the ancient cultures as well, such as the Indian and the Chinese cultures. Buddhist logic originates from Indian logic, which dates back to the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. Indian logic developed with the construction of the Sanskrit grammar. However, Indian and Buddhist logics are not secular like Aristotelian logic. They made use of the logical forms in order to constitute a doctrine and aimed at

avoiding suffering and attaining Nirvana. Hoffman's words are helpful in terms of understanding the difference between the Eastern and the Western logical views. He states: "Logic is sometimes said to be the backbone of philosophy, but in Buddhist thought that backbone is particularly supple"(Hoffmann, 81).

Depending on the Buddhist Logic, Nagarjuna created another technique, a type of logic named tetralemma (four propositional system). There are four propositions in a relation of exclusive disjunction ("one of, but not more than one of, 'x,' 'y,' 'z,' 't,' is true") in this technique.

After Buddha, Buddhist dialecticians have negated each of the alternatives that can be formulized as: If a proposition is called X, there are four possibilities with the logical propositions: 1.X; 2. not X; 3. X and not X; 4. neither X nor not X. This entire proposition has been negated. In *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, the basic Mahayana text by Nagarjuna, many propositions end as 'reductio ad absurdum'. The systematic style of *Mulamadhyamakakarika* is similar to *Tractatus*. Nagarjuna might have believed that he had refuted all the philosophical problems just like Wittgenstein had, after *Tractatus*.

The Aristotelian formal logic basically depends on the premise(s) and conclusion. There are different methods to prove a logical system and 'reduction ad absurdum' is one of them. If an assumption is considered false and if there is a contradiction in the implication, then it is indirectly proven.

Law of contradiction is an Aristotelian concept, which can be formalized as  $\sim (P \wedge \sim P)$  and whose logical truth value is always 1. In other words, according to formal logic, such a proposition is always true independent from the truth value of P.

Law of identity is another classical law of logic, which simply signifies that 'A is A' and which is a tautology. The paradoxical nature of Zen manifests itself in its ignoring of the law of contradiction. It does not attempt to invalidate the law of



contradiction, but it ignores it only to illuminate the law of identity. Thus, the logical proposition of illogical Zen is: “A is not-A; therefore, A is A.” Zen believes that the true meaning of the proposition, “A is A”, will be realized only when “A is not-A”. The Zen way of thinking is to assert that to be itself is not to be itself, and also that one is truly that very person only by negating him/herself. (Kim, 22)

Here are two good examples for tetralemma by Nagarjuna from Karikas:

“Since all dharmas are empty, what is finite? What is infinite? What is both finite and infinite? What is neither finite nor infinite” (MMK 25: 22)?

If “What is finite” is taken as Q then “What is infinite” becomes  $\sim Q$ . As a result, the third step of “what is both finite and infinite?” would be  $(Q \wedge \sim Q)$ . “What is neither finite nor infinite” becomes  $\sim (Q \vee \sim Q)$ . Nagarjuna refutes the existence of poles: finite and infinite. He used the logical form to claim the existence of emptiness, which is the fundamental idea in Buddhism.

“Is there anything which is this or something else, which is permanent or impermanent, which is both permanent and impermanent, or which is neither” (MMK 25: 23)

Nagarjuna’s system consists of questions and since questions do not have logical truth values, they are not propositions. However, they can be formulized by using formal logical signs. In the above statement, Nagarjuna asks questions about very abstract concepts as if they were easily answered. The aim is the same, which is to prove the existence of emptiness. If we formalize this in the language of symbolic logic, it becomes as:

Q (affirmation)  
 $\sim Q$  (negation)  
 $(Q \wedge \sim Q)$  (both)  
 $\sim (Q \vee \sim Q)$  (neither)

Buddhism negates itself. On the other hand, there is no way to escape, but only a big emptiness. Taking satori into account as an instance: first satori, second no satori, third both satori and not satori, finally neither satori nor no satori. A Zen practitioner meditates and lives his/her life with full awareness. At first sight, this tetralemma may seem as an easy game, however, it is not. It is not a vicious circle or infinite regress.

Suzuki writes about the Buddhist logic that: "So long as the intellect is to move among the ordinary dualistic groove, this is unavoidable. It is in the nature of our logic that any statement we can make is to be so expressed" (Suzuki, 275). That is why Zen masters use different methods and welcome other methods without being orthodox.

It has already been mentioned that negation is the main characteristic of the Buddhist logic. If all the propositions, premises and conclusions are negated in tetralemma, the following formulation will be drawn and called as a negative tetralemma.

Not X  
Not ~X  
Not (X and ~X)  
Not (Neither X Nor ~X)

By negative tetralemma, Nagarjuna deconstructs the logic of the ultimate truth that is the emptiness of emptiness. In this way, the conventional truth, such as the doctrine of the two truth theory (commonsense and spiritual) is denied.

In terms of the Buddhist point of view, this can also be adapted to Wittgenstein's aim of building up a philosophy by which all the philosophical problems would vanish: First, the philosophical problem; second, no philosophical problem; third, both philosophical problem and no philosophical problem; thus, neither philosophical problem nor no philosophical problem. It is of course not very easy to make the philosophical problems vanish in the Western oriented system. In this respect, the Wittgensteinian logic and its relation with the Mahayanist logic will also be discussed.

The poetic, artistic and paradoxical nature of Buddhism reaches its climax in Zen by creating koans, which will be studied in the next section. Finally, since Nagarjuna's epistemology there is conventional and absolute truth, there are paradoxes in Zen. Zen paradoxes are literally the practical applications of the Madhyamika doctrine of the Twofold Truth. The purpose of them is to provoke people. Their verbal expressions can be accepted as true as long as they can help people to become enlightened. Hsueh-Li Cheng states that "for the so-called truth, according to Zen and Maadhyamika, is pragmatic in character; their truth-values lie in their effectiveness as a means to Nirvana" (Cheng, 469).

In conclusion, logic has an important place in both the Eastern and the Western cultures and philosophies. The main distinction between these two traditions is that Western logic is secular. There is nothing to do with the ancient Greek religion or Christianity. However, the roots of Indian and Buddhist logic are in Hindu and Buddhist religions. Moreover, Buddhist logic can not be separated from Buddhist epistemology. Eventually, following Hoffman's definition of logic which was mentioned before, it can be argued that with its softness, Buddhist logic is the backbone of Buddhist thought and language.

#### **4.4.5 Skepticism and Uroboric Philosophies**

John Visvader describes self-contradictory or self-referential paradoxes with the term "uroboric" (Visvader, 455). Uroboros is an ancient symbol shared by many cultures from ancient Egyptians and Indians to Nordics. It is a diagram in the shape of a snake, serpent or salamander, which swallows its own tail. Different cultures give different meanings to this metaphorical shape. Its circular shape symbolizes perfection, continuity and infinity.



Skepticism is also an ancient philosophical and scientific method, approach or tradition existent both in the Western and Eastern worlds. However, Skepticism in the philosophical sense is related to Western tradition, which depends on the idea that there is no certainty about knowledge. It can be said that the opposite of Skepticism is Dogmatics.

It is certain that Skepticism is the base of thought. It gives power to think and overcome the mental difficulties which one comes face to face during philosophizing. Doubting is the source of all creative activities. Moreover, self-contradictive and paradoxical philosophies cannot be thought independent of Skepticism.

While defining uroboric philosophies, Visvader mentions early Wittgenstein as well as the Greek philosopher Sextus Empiricus (c. 160-210 AD), who founded the Empiric School. According to Sextus, any belief is to be neither affirmed nor denied. (Visvader, 1978)

Sextus developed his system of thought on the basis of Pyrrhonian skepticism. Founded by Aenesidemus in the first century BC, the roots of the school go back to Pyrrho (360-270 BC). Sextus expresses his skepticism about the existence of external objects when he says that “the question of whether the senses have illusory affections or apprehend some real object will be incapable of either decision or apprehension”. (qtd. in Garner, 165) Garner also adds: “More frequently, however, he grants or even presupposes that there is a real object of sensation and raises his skeptical arguments to show that we cannot know its true nature” (Garner, 165).

Chatterjee, an Indian contemporary philosopher makes connections between Indian philosophy and Greek Philosophy in terms of Skepticism. Departing from a skeptical point of view, he arrives to a conclusion about mysticism. “Our perceptual evidence can never guarantee the truth of our beliefs because perception can never fully

comprehend the nature of reality. Mystical insights are beyond the limitations of perception and conceptualization; hence they can apprehend the truth. This truth, the mystic would hasten to remind us, is not a property of our beliefs, but is the reality as it is” (Chatterjee, 208).

Wittgenstein himself had always remained sceptical. “This was our paradox”, he writes in the 201. passage of the Investigations, “no course of action could be determined by a rule, because every course of action can be made out to accord with the rule [...] If everything can be made out to accord with the rule, then it can also be made out to conflict with it. And so there would be neither accord nor conflict here”. (*PI* §201)

Visvader, who identified Wittgenstein as an uroboric philosopher writes that “Wittgenstein was concerned to sketch out the limits of what could be said and then to point, in some sense, what lies beyond expression. Of course, the difficulty is that pointing is done in language and language, if understood in the ordinary way, cannot point beyond itself. This is the reason why language has to be cancelled at a certain point” (Visvader, 457).

Wittgenstein directs our attention to the function of philosophy by using his skeptical way of thinking: “What is your aim in philosophy? To show the fly the way out of the fly bottle” (*PI*, §309). “Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything” (*PI*, §126). “Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can only describe it. For it cannot give it any foundation either. It leaves everything as it is” (*PI*, §124).

There are also statements written by Wittgenstein concerning skeptical thinking in *On Certainty*. “The game of doubting itself presupposes certainty” (*On Certainty*, §315). However, one may say about the certainty by using skeptical way that there is

nothing certain, or paradoxes may occur such as it is certain that there is no certain. Here, Wittgenstein's skepticism differs from Visvader's definition of uroboric. Wittgenstein follows the way and says: "A doubt without an end is not even a doubt" (*On Certainty*, §625). However, this statement could only be considered uroboric if it were "a doubt *with* an end is not even a doubt".

"While Wittgenstein expresses a generally skeptical attitude concerning the nature of philosophical problems and tries to undo the skein of various problems he comes across, he still attempts to avoid developing a metaphilosophical stance" (Visvader, 457).

Wittgenstein, who wants all the philosophical problems to be vanished or disappeared, crosses over the skeptical dualities for the sake of clarity: "For the clarity that we are aiming at is indeed complete clarity. But this simply means that the philosophical problems should completely disappear" (*PI*, §133).

According to Garner, in the 133<sup>rd</sup> passage of *PI*, "Wittgenstein was contrasting; his then current attitude with ideas he had expressed many years previously in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*. But even in that earlier work he was highly critical of standard philosophical doctrines and discussions" (Garner, 171). In *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein writes:

Most propositions and questions that have been written about philosophical matters are not false, but senseless. We cannot, therefore, answer questions of this kind at all, but only state their senselessness. Most questions and propositions of the philosophers result from the fact we do not understand the logic of our language. (They are of the same kind as the question whether the Good is more or less identical than the Beautiful.) And so it is not to be wondered at the deepest problems are really no problems. (*TLP*, 4.003)

Canfield relates Zen's idea of "just doing something" (with a mind free of ideas or concepts) to Wittgenstein's notion of a practice. He shows that "if language works in



the way portrayed by Wittgenstein, there is no incompatibility between living free of thoughts in the manner of the Zen Master, and participating fully, and with full understanding, in the day to day use of language” (qtd. in Garner, 176).

Garner points out that “the Maadhyamika metaphysician’s method is intellectual in a different way, but like Sextus’ it involves a measure of philosophical contention and argument. The goal is closer to that proposed by Sextus, but the method is necessarily restricted to those few capable of coping with extremely refined speculations” (Garner, 177).

As it is understood from the statements of Garner, there are also resemblances between the methods of Mahayanists’ and Sextus. It can be realized that the historical periods Sextus and Mahayana Buddhism belong are close to each other. It remains a question whether there was an interection between the two or not. As a matter of fact, the similarity under consideration is aporetic according to Thomas McEvelley. He states that “[a]pparent gaps in the Indian tradition as it is presently known leave more room there than in Greece for the intrusion of foreign influence, and the general trend of Greek and Roman penetration into India provides clear and abundant mechanisms for diffusion” (McEvelley, 31).

Zennist point of view about this methodology depends on the simplicity and directness of the Zen philosophy. Garner says:

The Zen approach is strikingly direct. The direct response here, so typical of Zen, is entirely nonconceptual -sometimes it works and sometimes it does not. It is not the content of the message that is important; it is the actual total effect on the listener. And, as a token of the move away from conceptualization, the ‘utterances’ of the Masters came to include shouts and cries, slaps and silence, and we even hear stories of enlightenment arising spontaneously (as it must) at the sound of water or of a pebble falling. The Zen Master’s utterances are no different from the sound of the water--both,

with no conscious intentions and no thoughts, are capable of eliciting enlightenment from within. (Garner, 177)

There are a number of statements In *Philosophical Investigations*, which can serve as concluding remarks:

I can only *believe* that someone else is in pain, but I *know* it if I am [...] Yes: one can make the decision to say 'I believe he is in pain' instead of 'He is in pain'. But that is all. What looks like an explanation here, or like a statement about a mental process, is in truth an exchange of one expression for another which, while we are doing philosophy, seems the more appropriate one [...] Just try -in a real case- to doubt someone else's fear or pain (*PI*, §303).

Here, Wittgenstein makes the reader think about the differences between "to know" and "to believe" by giving a complex example. Pain and type and degree of pain are personal, psychological and physical issues. Therefore, one can only be sure of its own pain, yet one can only choose to "believe in" or "not to believe" another one's pain.

In conclusion, some philosophies regenerate themselves. John Visvader calls such philosophies as uroboric philosophies. For the regeneration of philosophies, paradoxes and contradictions have the utmost importance. In this comparative study, both Zen's and Wittgenstein's philosophies are classified as uroboric. Visvader mentions this fact as the "peculiar characteristic of having as one of its goals its own demise. It is easy to construct a philosophy that refutes itself through self-contradictions or self-referential paradoxes, but it would be difficult to convince anyone of its profundity" (Visvader, 455). Two unclassifiable philosophies are classssified with their paradoxical natures. However, for a Zen practitioner who wants to get enlightenment, paradox is only one of the methods. Wittgenstein wants to find the solution to the philosophical problems. In the next section, koans will be discussed following the same line.

#### 4.4.6 Koan

Koans are at the core of Zen. They give Zen its contradictory and paradoxical character. Since they push the limits of human intellect, many philosophers from all over the world are attracted by them. On the other hand, Zen history is not a linear one. Unlike other religions, it does not have a single text that defines and shapes its borders permanently. Rather, it continues to add on its already huge bibliography consisting of countless texts and scriptures. Therefore its teachings are always dynamic. They do not depend particularly on “authentic” writings, but allow for new texts to be written or new words to be told and embrace them. In this way, paradoxes are always kept alive. In other words, since Zen teaching strongly depends on personal experience and interpretation, it allows for its paradoxes and own history to be rewritten again and again. In this respect, in accordance with Visvader’s definition of uroboric philosophies, Zen is exactly an uroboric philosophy with its timelessness and nonlinearity.

Kyogen told that

Zen is like a man hanging by his teeth in a tree over a precipice. His hands grasp no branch, his feet rest on no limb, and under the tree another man asks him, ‘Why did Bodhidharma come to China from the West (India)?’ If the man in the tree does not answer, he misses the question, and if he answers, he falls and loses his life. Now what shall he do?” (Levering, 78)

Koan (Kung-an in Chinese; Koan in Japanese), which means “public case” or “public document” is simply a paradox in Zen Buddhism. Koans are found in different forms. A koan can be in the form of a story, a question, a dialogue, a statement or a combination of statements. Its aim is to break the ordinary patterns of mental activity and rational thinking.



For instance, in the 30<sup>th</sup> koan of *Mumonkan* named “Mind is Buddha”, Tabai asks Baso “what is Buddha?” and Baso answers that “mind is Buddha”. The 33<sup>rd</sup> Koan of *Mumonkan* rewrites this koan and leads to a uroboric situation: “A monk once asked Baso, ‘What is Buddha?’ Baso answered, ‘[There is] no mind, [there is] no Buddha’” (Levering, 119).

These above koans could be formulized as: If Mind(X) is Buddha(Y) then Y is X and if noX is No Y then noY is noX. However, Koans are strongly related to Buddhist logic and according to Buddhist logic, propositions are convertible. In this respect, new koans can be created as derivatives of the 30<sup>th</sup> and 33<sup>rd</sup> Koans of *Mumonkan*.

There are mainly three sects in Zen tradition. Rinzai School, founded in the 13th Century in Japan is one of them. This school’s method of training someone so as to see the “true nature”, gain enlightenment or the Buddhahood depends on Koans. This school makes use of the paradoxical structure of koans not only to stop the linear stream of thinking, but also to break the conceptual mode of thinking. By use of absurd cause-effect relationships, which koans give rise to, and which cannot be apprehended by logical reasoning, the school aims to lead its students towards a transcendental logic.

The power of Zen comes from, paradoxically, its written documents. Though the rejection of sutras is the cornerstone of Zen; they are nonetheless used and produced. For example, *Mumonkan* is a collection consisting of 48 koans compiled in the early 13th century by the master Mumon Ekai. It was published in 1228. Each koan is commented by Wume, and *Mumonkan* is also known as the Gateless Gate or the Gateless Barrier.

Hakuin (1685-1768) is a Zen master of the Rinzai School. He is another master who collected and put the Koans into a systematic manner. As a result, there happens to be one thousand and seven hundred koans. Koans are also grouped in five categories: 1)

The body of truth, 2) Linguistic articulations of meditational experiences, 3) Koan which is difficult to pass, 4) Koan experience in daily life, 5) Beyond the state of Buddhahood. Koans are the gateless gates; that is why it is difficult to pass them. Once they are passed, state of Buddhahood converges with the state of Satori.

Meditation is useful to focus the mind on one point. The achievement of concentration for about twenty minutes is a general expectation from meditation. There are lots of techniques to do that. For example, in yogic meditation mantras or yantras are used. Zen meditation (Zazen) is very simple to practice. The practitioner follows and counts the breath from one to ten, and once again from one to ten. This empties the mind while denoting the paradoxical nature of Buddhism: to try not to think; not even to not to think. Once it is managed, there will be no counting after reaching the emptiness. Koans naturally come to mind.

The purpose of kōans for Zen students is to become aware of the difference between their minds and faiths. Once a Zen student becomes aware of his/her mind as an independent form, the kōan is transferred from the senselessness into the sensefulness, allowing the purpose of teaching to be realized.

The nature of a Koan is very close to that of creativity. Pure mathematics, which is a method of discovery, is not different from the koanic zen method. There is a story telling how Poincare, a French mathematician who lived in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century made his mathematical discoveries:

Poincare “described how a second wave of crystallization, guided by analogies to established mathematics produced what he later named the Thate-Fuchsian Series” (Pirsig, 267). He left Caen, where he was living, to go a geological excursion. The psychological changes travelling brought about made him forget mathematics. Once, he was about to enter a bus and at the very moment he stepped on, it suddenly became

visible for him that the transformations he had used to define fuchsian functions were identical to those of non-Euclidean geometry. This sudden realization had nothing to do with his former thoughts on the matter of question. He did not verify the idea, but went on having a conversation in the bus; yet he felt a perfect certainty. Later he verified the result at his leisure. (Pirsig, 267)

A later discovery occurred while he was walking by a seaside bluff. It appeared to him with just the same characteristics of brevity, suddenness and immediate certainty. Another major discovery took place while he was walking down a street. Others eulogized this process as the mysterious working of genius, but this cannot be described with such a shallow explanation. He tried to fathom more deeply what had happened (Pirsig, 267).

In conclusion, it can be argued that a scientific or philosophical problem is somewhat a koan as well. Scientists usually contemplate on a particular problem while walking, sleeping, and dreaming, i.e. in each and every moment of their daily lives. Eventually, the solution reveals itself. This sudden moment of discovery takes place as a salvation, as a Satori. In other words, when the mind is ready for it, the solution is ready to disclose itself as well. The very nature of this process is similar to that of a koan, which initially disturbs the usual flow of one's mind by a problem made up of words, and then allows the mind to unfold the problem by carrying it beyond the realm of the words, the logical, and the reason.



## CHAPTER V

### WITTGENSTEIN AND ZEN

#### 5.1 An Overview

The possible relations of the philosophies of Zen and Wittgenstein have been approached from different points of views. As is explained before,

Zen utilizes all the intellectual oddities that tend to stymie our ordinary way of seeing the world. Contradiction, paradox, identity of opposites, and even common, ordinary garden-variety nonsense are all central in the method. But the method itself is only a means to an end. The end to which the method is employed is to bring one to see the world as it really is, to shock one out of the indolence of conventional thought. (Harwick, 227)

Wittgenstein also utilizes very strict propositions and stimulates the reader to think about them deeply. Such ways in which Wittgenstein's methods interrelate with Zen have been mentioned beforehand. This chapter will discuss these issues in detail by focusing on the two books (*Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*) of Wittgenstein as well as Zen. Some generalizations can be made about the two philosophies in question as an introduction. "The method of Wittgenstein is an aid in helping us overcome the inadequacies of the conventional ways of looking at our language", says Harwick, and he adds that "his method, similar to the method of Zen, is devised to lead one to a 'direct grasping'" (Harwick, 223).

Harwick compares the methodology of Wittgenstein to the methodology of Zen. Both methodologies aim at showing the result directly. In order to get the result which

includes reality, truth, understanding, feeling and the combination of all, the reader or the practitioner should break the habitual way of thinking.

Even though the *Tractatus* is a well systematic work by Wittgenstein, in relation to his life experiences and his philosophical studies, it can be claimed that Wittgenstein did not follow a linear path. Besides, he did not want to construct a strict system. In this respect, it seems contradictory but the systematical construction of the *Tractatus* was to destroy the whole philosophical problems which have been put forward by the philosophical history so far.

There are numerous articles which were written on the relationships between Wittgenstein and Zen. Some focus on the methodology, some study the concepts of egolessness, emptiness and thusness and these have become the major topics identifying the similarities between Wittgenstein's philosophy and Zen philosophy. Harwick claims that

[t]he techniques of Zen attempt to accomplish such an overcoming. The aim of the method is not to construct a body of intelligible concepts; it is specifically devised to avoid such a procedure. It would be erroneous to characterize Wittgenstein's position as anti-intellectual or a-systematic in the same sense that these terms are applied to Zen. For Wittgenstein, the problem of method is equally complex, but follows from a distinctly different line of development. (Harwick, 228)

Wittgenstein, as Harwick implies, was not an anti-intellectual in the same sense Zen proposes. However, he was not an intellectual in the ordinary sense, either. It is well known that Wittgenstein was an anti-academic. He refused to adopt academic titles. He never felt content in the academic circles.

Alain Badiou calls Wittgenstein as an anti-philosopher in his article "Wittgenstein's Anti-Philosophy" (Badiou, 2). He argues that Nietzsche, Wittgenstein,

and Pascal are anti-philosophers. The simple definition of anti-philosophy is the kind of philosophy which is against itself. This is exactly the same philosophy Zen promotes. Thus, Zen can also be called anti-religion or anti-spiritualist. Philosophy is always the heir to anti-philosophy. (Bosteels, 187)

Here, if the Zennist method is adopted, the statement by Bosteels should be converted as: “Antiphilosophy is always the heir to philosophy” and the result achieved is neither philosophy nor anti-philosophy.

Wittgenstein asks this simple question in *Philosophical Investigations*: “What is your aim in philosophy?” (*PI*, §121). Simple questions are the questions which are always difficult to reply. As if a Zen master answers the question of his pupil, Wittgenstein replies his own question by using a strong metaphor: “To show the fly the way out of the fly bottle” (*PI*, §121). To get out of the bottle is like salvation or breaking the vicious circle. In Zennist terms, that is the space where there is no good or no bad, no positive or no negative, it is the absolute itself.

Wittgenstein points out that “Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything” (*PI*, §126). Then, such a question can be asked: What does the philosophy do if it does not explain anything? All the philosophers attempt to describe the world and life. Wittgenstein “leaves everything as it is” (*PI*, §124). He breaks the fundamental reason of making philosophy which is anti-philosophy.

The above statements of Wittgenstein are very similar to the Zen concept of tathata. Tathata simply means suchness or thusness. In Zen, experiences are prior to definitions. Master Seppo answers his pupil’s question as: “Zen is a religion of nature.” (Blyth, 226). Everything is as it is in nature, and everything is in a great harmony.



Seppo puts the difference between Buddhism and Zen as: “Buddhism is Ten This and Five That, the dividing and subdividing of truth. Amid all this circumlocution and chattering, the simplicity of truth, its materiality, its thusness” (Blyth, 226).

Not only Buddhism but also other religions are systematic as well. They have got strict rules and regulations. They, as Seppo defines, make life difficult. Zen is not only anti-buddhist but also anti-religious in this sense.

In *Zettel*, a collection of Ludwig Wittgenstein’s thoughts compiled and edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. Von Wright, Wittgenstein states that “[t]he philosopher is not a citizen of any community of ideas. That is what makes him a philosopher” (445). Wittgenstein would have said this for the Zen masters because they are always open minded and are never the member of any community of ideas. American philosopher Warren A. Shibles wrote in his essay “Wittgenstein and Zen” that

the character and nature of the Koan and the Haiku are similar to Wittgenstein’s writings also in that contexts and concepts are combined which are not usually associated with one another [...] The rumor involved is [...] a kind of therapy which reveals where we go wrong. (Shibles, qtd. in Gudmussen, 72)

The opening statement of *Tractatus* is “The world is everything that is the case.” (*TLP*, 1). This opens the doors to a new world where everything is in harmony. And the last statement is “Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent.” (*TLP*, 7). This closes the doors of that wonderland. Zen practitioners believe that the life is timeless now and placeless here.” (Blyth, 208). In *Tractatus*, there is a Zen-like timelessness and placelessness. All the propositions have deep meanings where language finds its own character. Wittgenstein also emphasizes in his later work in *Philosophical*

*Investigations* that “every word has a meaning” (PI §1). Zen language also pushes the border of expressibility: “What is, is not; What is not, is” (Blyth 208).

Rupert Read who is an academician from the University of East Anglia defines himself as “The New Wittgenstein”, and he states that “Wittgenstein and Zen can mutually inform: on the methodology of philosophy, on time, on scientism and metaphysics – and so much on besides” (<http://www.rupertread.fastmail.co.uk/>).

A group of philosophers also call themselves as “New Wittgensteins” and they interpret his philosophy as a defending philosophy in the form of “therapy.” The New Wittgensteins, Stanley Cavell, John McDowell, David H. Finkelstein, Martin Stone, Cora Diamond, James Conant, Hilary Putnam, Juliet Floyd, David R. Cerbone, Edward Witherspoon, draw our attention to the therapeutic side of the philosophy. In the introduction of *The New Wittgenstein* Alice Crary writes:

Wittgenstein's primary aim in philosophy is – to use a word he himself employs in characterizing his later philosophical procedures – a *therapeutic* one. These papers have in common an understanding of Wittgenstein as aspiring, not to advance metaphysical theories, but rather to help us work ourselves out of confusions we become entangled in when philosophizing. (1)

Zen depends on therapy. Since art is like a therapy, it plays an important role in Zen. One must keep physical and mental health stealthy or heal himself by meditating in order to reach the satori. Language is the key point for keeping the mental health. Language affects the mind directly and the mind does the same to the body.

“Unless I wrote, I was going to die” says famous Turkish story writer Sait Faik Abasıyanık (1906-1954). Writing is like an exorcism. Some creative extraordinary

minds are like volcanoes and they need to take their inner power out. The reason why Wittgenstein did not commit suicide could be related to this fact.

If Wittgenstein was alive today, what he would say about the interpretations of the New Wittgensteins is a matter of question. Or it can be asked what Wittgenstein would have thought if he had read Zen koans and Mahayana texts. Although there are obvious parallel philosophical thoughts between the *Tractatus* and Zen philosophy and these will be examined in the following chapter, early Wittgenstein probably would have refused to admit these similarities if he had read about Zen. However, in the later period, he could have appreciated Zen way of thinking.

Some scholars broadened this subject. For instance, Thomas Tominaga compares the philosophy of Wittgenstein and Zen in relation to different stages as follows: (1) forms of life and uses of language; (2) everyday life and practical activities; (3) particularity and complementarity; (4) problems and solutions; (5) the inexpressible and resort to silence; and (6) private language and private sense (Tominaga, 134).

If the explanations of Tominaga are to be summed up with reference to the above statement, this means that since the form of life can become an important part of understandings of the different uses into which language is put, it becomes consistent with the approach of the later Wittgenstein. We can also infer that the forms of life pursued or cultivated by Zen can provide the proper contexts; settings that help us understand the particular uses of the language that is conducted by practitioners of Zen. It can be said that the significance of this connection lies in the two-fold flexibility of the later Wittgenstein. The later Wittgenstein also recognizes that there are many different uses and strategies that can be pragmatically advantageous to the goals and needs of the Zen practitioners. The significant thing about the second connection is its



pointing at the two ways of dealing with skepticism. For the later and mature Wittgenstein, the non-epistemological certainty displayed by the consistent following of the accepted conventions shows that the skeptic's position cannot be expressed and communicated without being meaningless and self-defeating, since it presupposes the common use of a public language the uses of which are socially binding. But for Zen a certain degree of pragmatic iconoclasm has to be exercised in order not to allow such conventions and it is no doubt that the skeptic's pronouncements interfere with the spontaneous and creative performance of everyday-life activities that are conducive to personal enlightenment.

In the third of the links, it is found that Zen is in agreement with the later Wittgenstein's injunction against the tendency to generalize and to reify universals without paying attention to particular cases and their individuating features (qtd. in Tominaga, 136). According to Zen the particulars can function as complements of each other, even though they may be different from each other. But for the later Wittgenstein, what is illuminating about the particulars of experience is that although they may possess different features, two or more of these particulars can have overlapping similarities, which would give rise to family resemblances without presupposing some metaphysical essence that must be common to all of them (Tominaga, 136)

In the fourth link, though, it could be spoken of the significance of this approach to the problems of life and philosophy the important thing that turns out to be is the previously tormented mind of the philosopher or the enlightened person. When the problems are dissolved, it is eventually brought to a peaceful state, which seems to be psychologically equivalent to the state of mind, being the characteristic of the enlightenment experience of wu or the identification with the way of wu-wei.

For the fifth link, it is asked whether silence in Wittgenstein and in Zen is the same or not. How shall it be interpreted? Tominaga answers:

Whereas the practice of silence for Ch'an and Taoism can be done spontaneously without the need to overcome the limits of logical description, the practice of silence for the early Wittgenstein is an inevitable consequence of being made aware of the limits of logical description. Although these two ways of practicing silence are not functionally equivalent, they seem to be complementary. On the one hand, the Ch'an and Taoist use of silence is intended to transcend the dichotomy between communication by words and communication by silence. And on the other hand, the early Wittgenstein's use of silence is intended to prevent us from transgressing the limits of logical description, beyond which propositional sense is inexpressible but at which the meaning and value of the mystical can be shown though it cannot be said. (Tominaga, 139)

Lastly, in the sixth link, lies a significant difference between the later Wittgenstein and Ch'an and Taoist practitioners. While the former has a great respect for the ordinary or familiar uses of language based on public criteria and social conventions, the latter intends to diffuse or minimize the limiting influence of such criteria and conventions, should they become barriers against spontaneous action for personal enlightenment.

Obviously, the relative or qualified compatibility of Ch'an and Taoism with Wittgenstein is not an absolutely true claim but a fairly reasonable hypothesis that may be entertained for whatever merits and demerits. But since most of the connecting links discussed seem to relate to an acceptable degree Ch'an and Taoism to Wittgenstein and vice versa, it is significant to observe that the related aspects of Ch'an and Taoism share a tendency with Wittgenstein to show that they may not be as philosophically remote and incompatible as we may be led to believe without closer scrutiny (Tominaga, 142).

In Zen and Wittgensteinian philosophies, one cannot claim that the truth can be articulated. However, one cannot claim that there is an unsayable truth, either. Zen and

Wittgenstein both express the inexpressibility of reality by words by using the words; both emphasize how important to keep silence in order to feel the deep state of mind. Moreover, it can be recalled that Wittgenstein stayed in a hut in the fjords of Norway, probably spent days and nights without seeing anybody and talking to anybody, like a monk in a retreat. Then, both philosophies declare that whatever are the sayables, they must keep their silence about the unsayables.

Thus, it is crucially observed that unless the great Zen master Dogen, and (I would add) Nagarjuna, and Wittgenstein; who have brought Zen to the West are less subtle thinkers than I take them to be, they cannot be ultimately claiming that reality is contradictory, or that there are true contradictions. Because such a claim makes the secret of their practice seem too alike. A true contradiction is something true which one can put forward about the meaning of life. What Wittgensteinian psychology / therapy / 'philosophy' / spiritual practice and Zen spiritual practice / psychology / therapy/ thinking are interested in engendering is not anything about what one can say about any kind of truth.

In the previous chapters, Zen was examined in historical and philosophical perspectives. Also, the life and major contributions of Wittgenstein to philosophy was studied. Since it is difficult to confine our work with Wittgenstein and Zen, there are attributions to other philosophers from the West and the East. That is the reason why the focus of the study tends to relate with the other fields of study.

In conclusion, this chapter is an overview about the comparison of Zen and Wittgenstein and it may be easily observed that there are fundamental points shared by them. The method, first of all, is surprisingly similar even though they do not aim at attaining the same result finally. There is not any reference to satori in Wittgenstein's



philosophy, however both in Zen and Wittgenstein therapy plays a major role and this can be called as linguistic therapy. The language in Zen and in Wittgenstein is multi-dimensional which carries philosophy to the next generations/ Language reaches its own maximum efficiency and proficiency in both philosophies. Therefore, as language becomes alive, the philosophies remain alive as well.

## **5.2 Preliminary Notes of Wittgenstein and Zen**

Here, Wittgenstein's notes from the years 1914-1916 will be elaborated in terms of Zen philosophy. These notes are compiled into a book called *Notebooks 1914-1916* by Wright and Anscombe. In this section, the quotations from Wittgenstein will be discussed chronologically. Since Wittgenstein used some of his notes in *Tractatus* later; they can be regarded as the forerunner of *Tractatus*.

“This must yield the nature of truth straight away. (If I were not blind)” (NB; 29.9.14)

The aim of Zen is to get the truth as well as the reality, which should be attained directly. Wittgenstein's statement also contains a koan such as “what is the nature of truth”?

“Logic is interested only in reality” (NB, 5.10.14).

Wittgenstein was like a Zen monk. When he was 25 years old, he was searching for the reality. For him, logic was the way to approach the reality. Zen masters also used logical riddles and puzzles to arrive at the reality. However, Wittgenstein wanted to create a “strong” world. Zen masters are not interested in building the world, but they want to cross it over.

“A single word cannot be true or false in this sense: it cannot agree with reality or opposite” (NB, 5.10.14).

According to Zen, the notions of true or false are just mental discriminations resulting from education and habits. At this point, Wittgenstein separates the reality from the true-false dichotomy.

“Logic takes care of itself; all we have to do is to look and see how it does” (NB, 13.10.14).

It can be recalled that Wittgenstein somehow used the analogy “do not think just look” in his later masterpiece *Philosophical Investigations*.

“What can be said can only be said by means of a proposition” (NB, 30.10.14).

Wittgenstein enters the realm of sayability. He asserts that the only possible way “to say” something is through propositions.

“At this point I am again trying to express something that cannot be expressed” (NB, 22.11.14).

Language was never sufficient for Wittgenstein to express himself. Zen masters believe this inexpressibility too. They direct their pupils to not to express, but just experience.

“It is the dualism, positive and negative facts, that gives me no peace [...] But how to get away from it?” (NB, 26.11.14).

Wittgenstein had a restless mind. Dualistic thoughts disturbed him. He asked himself how he could get out of this situation. Zen masters are aware of the fact that the dualistic way of thinking never makes people happy. It should be overcome. Their method depends on disregarding the existing two poles.

“The proposition is a measure of world” (NB, 3.4.15).

Zen masters may ask their pupils about the measure of the world. According to Wittgenstein, it is the proposition. However, Zennists may follow by asking “how is the measure of heaven” or they may cry out “no measurement no world”. They believe that such replies are always more useful than regular answers.

“I have long been conscious that it would be possible form to write a book:”The world I found”.”(NB, 23.5.15)

Wittgenstein searched the reality. And he believed that he found it after writing the Tractatus. Zen practitioners search the reality implicitly or explicitly.

“How should we describe, e.g., a surface uniformly covered with blue?” (NB, 7.5.15)

This statement is a koan-like statement.

“I can only speak of them, I cannot express them” (NB, 5.5.15).

“Is language the only language?”(NB, 29.5.15).

Both in Zen and Wittgenstein, language is not only language. Language puts sets the limits to the world, to the reality, to the truth. Wittgenstein searched the capability of language as he searched the reality. In Zen, language is not sufficient for the ultimate truth.

“The key word still hasn’t yet be spoken” (NB, 3.6.15).

What is the key word for Wittgenstein? Can it ever been spoken? On the other hand, what happens if the key word is spoken? The key word would be unspoken. Otherwise it would be spoken. In Zen, masters probably would negate the key words: No key word to be spoken.

“What do I know about God and purpose of life?” (NB, 11.6.16)



Wittgenstein doubts and asks himself about God and life. It was mentioned that there is no God in Zen. However, there is purpose which is satori. There is no straight answer in Zen for the purpose of life. Zen masters may answer as “no purpose” by negating the question.

“That life is the world” (NB, 11.6.16)

This sentence by Wittgenstein takes us to the simple and real world of Zen.

“To pray is to think about the meaning of life” (NB, 11.6.16)

Zen meditation, which is called Zazen is practiced by Zen masters and practitioners to purify the mind. Zazen depends on the connection of breathing and mind. Then one can see the meaning of being and life. Here, to pray can be thought as contemplation or zazen.

“I am either happy or unhappy, that is all. It can be said: good or evil do not exist.” (NB; 8.7.16)

Wittgenstein, here, escapes from the dualism. His happiness is not subject to good or evil. There is no good or evil in Buddha nature.

“Whoever lives in the present live without fear and hope” (NB, 8.7.16). Zen does not have anything to do with fear and hope. The only thing is to be there and then, here and now.

“Then the world itself is neither good nor evil” (NB, 2.8.16).

This statement is like a fourth statement of the fourfold logic, which is Buddhist logic. Wittgenstein denies two extremes: good and evil.

“What cannot be imagined cannot even be talked about” (NB; 12.10.16).

Here is the problem of the connection between the world of image and the world of language; or whether language can convey the imaginations or not. In Zen, this

problematic can be transformed to the question form: “Can what can be imagined be talked?”

“Is belief a kind of experience?” (NB, 12.10.16) and “Is thought a kind of experience?” (NB, 12.10.16).

Experience is personal. Therefore, belief and thought are personal whether they are expressed or not. Zen, with its paradoxical character, avoids believing and thought can deceive the practitioner and may become a barrier to the reality. The purpose of koan is to break that conventional way of thinking.

As a conclusion, there are many common points in the Zen thought and Wittgenstein’s preliminary writings. If attention is paid to the time that the notes were taken, it can be seen that it is the first two years of the WWI. In these writings, the influences of WWI as well as the books that were read by Wittgenstein have social, political and psychological reflections.

### **5.3 Wittgenstein, Zen and Mysticism**

Mysticism is derived from a Greek word “mystikos” which means “to conceal”. The word has been used to describe the thoughts related to the secret and occult ideas as well as experience in mostly by practicing religious rituals, meditation, and pilgrimage. The main aim in mysticism in all the religion is to unite with God or a supreme being. In this section, the role of mysticism in Christianity, Zen and Wittgenstein will be discussed.

Today it is generally considered that mysticism is mostly related to the Eastern religions such as Hinduism, Taoism and Buddhism. Especially the variations of these religions such as Transcendental Meditation, Scientism, Moon Sect, etc. have become so-called “new age religions” or ways of life adopted in the western world after the

Second World War. On the other hand, there are also Christian Mysticism, Islamic Mysticism (Sufism) and Jewish Mysticism (Kaballah).

For instance, in Christian tradition, Meister Eckhart (1260–1328) is known as a great mystic. Schopenhauer compared Eckhart's views with the teachings of Buddha. In his *The World as Will and Representation* he writes: “If we turn from the forms, produced by external circumstances, and go to the root of things, we shall find that Sakyamuni and Meister Eckhart teach the same thing” (Vol. II, Ch. XLVIII ).

Dr.Suzuki calls Eckhart as an “extraordinary Christian” (Suzuki, 2008, 2). In his book *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, he makes a lot references to the relation between Eckhart’s and the Buddhist ideas. According to Suzuki the concept of God makes these two different strands of thought close to each other. It has already been argued that there is no concept of God in Buddhism but in Eckhart’s Christianity “God is neither transcendental nor pantheistic.”(Suzuki, 2008, 9) In Eckhart, “God goes and comes, he Works, he is active, he becomes all the time but Godhead remains immovable, imperturbable, inaccessible” (Suzuki, 2008, 9). Godhead, the unity of the Trinity-Father, Son and Holy Spirit, could be regarded as satori in Buddhism.

The other similarity of Christianity and Zen is the concept of emptiness and avoidance of the extremes. Eckhart argues:

Perfect detachment is without regard, without either lowliness or loftiness to creatures; it has no mind to be below nor yet to be above; it is minded to be master of itself, loving none or hated none, having neither likeliness no unlikeliness, neither this nor that, to any creatures; the only thing it desires to be is to be one and the same. For to be either this or that is to want something. He who is this or that is somebody; but detachment wants altogether nothing. It leaves all thing unmolested. (qtd. in Suzuki, 11)



It is strange that Eckhart's thoughts seem similar to the philosophy of Zen. Suzuki says that Eckhart was under the influence of Neoplatonism, Avicenna (980-1037) who was a Muslim philosopher from Persia and Maimonides (1137-1204), who was a Jewish philosopher from Spain. It can be claimed that Eckhart's Christian mysticism is eclectic.

It is not known whether Wittgenstein read Eckhart or not. There is no evidence that he credited Eckhart's views, however there are two reasonable explanations that could be given. Firstly, Eckhart was a German and Wittgenstein might have heard about his studies during his middle school education. Secondly, Wittgenstein might have also been acquainted with his works through his readings of Schopenhauer.

Above all, one view is that the philosophies of the East and the West are totally different, having no common ground. The other view is that "there is no real difference whatsoever between Oriental philosophy and Western mysticism." (Kim, 19).

As is explained before, the fundamental aim in the mystic thought is complete detachment from the world; to liberate from the cycles of Karma, to deepen intrinsic connection to the world, to get innate Knowledge and to experience one's true blissful nature.

It is still being discussed whether Wittgenstein was a mystic or not. Wittgenstein got his analytic education from Russell and it is clear that Russell was not close to mysticism. Conze writes: "Russell was certainly not under the influence of either Pascal or Kierkegaard." (1963 112) On the other hand, Wittgenstein admired Schopenhauer who finds kinship relations between Christian mysticism and Buddhism. Engelmann also argues that "Wittgenstein was never a mystic in the sense of occupying his mind with mystic-gnostic fantasies" (qtd. in *Enchantment of Words*, 2006, 223).

Wittgenstein was a typical mystic neither in the Christian sense nor in the Hinduist or Buddhist sense. He writes: “Not *how* the world is, is the mystical, but that it is” (TLP, 6.44). He also writes that “[t]he contemplation of the world sub specie aeterni is its contemplation as a limited whole. The feeling of the world as a limited whole is the mystical feeling” (TLP, 6.45).

In this quotation presented above Wittgenstein uses a latin term “sub specie aeterni” from Schopenhauer which means “from the viewpoint of eternity”. Then, Wittgenstein prepares the reader for the next proposition: “For answer which cannot be expressed the question too cannot be expressed. The *riddle* does not exist. If a question can be put at all, then it can also be answered” (TLP, 6.5). In order to make the reader understand, Wittgenstein first mystifies the proposition and then dissolves it in a seemingly natural way which cannot be expressed in words.

Whether Zen is a mystical way of life or not is another question to be asked. For instance, the mystical side of Hinduism is dominant, it can be said that the early Buddhism was under the influence of Hinduism and mysticism. However, all the mystical rituals and regulations in Buddhism were eliminated by Mahayana school and as a result only mysticism remains for Zen to embrace.

The pedagogic system in the *Tractatus* is also similar to the Zen technique. Zen master is always aware of the questions and answers whether they are unquestionable and unanswerable or not. The pupil finds himself in a foggy atmosphere and the more the pupil meditates on the point the clearer the weather gets.

As a conclusion, in the study of Wittgenstein and Zen, the term mystic can be used in a different manner, not like a religious manner. It may be useful to make the

readers more open minded to any and use of the intuitive abilities. And, Zen as is often spoken beyond even itself, so is mysticism.

#### 5.4 *Tractatus* and Zen

*Tractatus* is “epigrammatic”, “aphoristic”, “cryptic”, “oracular”, and even “Delphic” in style, says Raymond Bradley in his work *The Nature of All Being: A Study of Wittgenstein's Modal Atomism* (Bradley, viii). *Tractatus* is the book of superlatives: It is the most often quoted work in the 20th century; it is the most misunderstood work in the history of philosophy and it is the book of extremes that has been both appreciated and criticized at the same time.

*Tractatus* consists of seven chapters. Seven is a symbolic number in mystic traditions. It is regarded as a sacred number. In the Middle Eastern based religions, it is believed that God created the world in seven days. *Tractatus*'s being composed of seven chapters can be just a coincidence or a significant sign Wittgenstein intentionally used.

Friedlander gives us some clues about this cryptical nature. He declares:

Consider a work that is divided into seven parts, that open with the world as such, appearing out of nothing, and that ends with the withdrawal and silence of the creator, after all that could be done has been done. If the seven parts were the seven mythical days, this might be called a story of creation or be thought of in relation to the story of creation in the first chapter off the book of Genesis. (Friedlander, 36)

By dividing the *Tractatus* into seven chapters, Wittgenstein seems to allude to the myth of creation of the world in seven days. He also creates the world anew through the *Tractatus*. This is the reason why Friedlander's approach seems plausible.



Ross finds a connection between *Tractatus* and the writings of Parmenides. Parmenides lived in the 5th century BC (nearly in the same years with Buddha) in Elea, The Greek colony resided in the southern Italy. He is known as the Eleatics with Zeno. His fragments are called *Way of Truth* which was in fact a revolutionary writing in the ancient Greek World and influenced Plato as well. According to Ross, *Tractatus* would seem to be a reversion of an earlier, pre-Parmenidean era of philosophy, when the philosopher simply dictated his teaching, expecting others to assent merely out of respect for his authority. Ross adds another connection between “Wittgenstein and Protagoras, Pyrrho, or Hume, therefore enter into the mix of serious philosophy, even when we know that they will be productive of no positive results and represent no truly credible theory.” (<http://www.friesian.com/wittgen.htm>).

Since Wittgenstein and his work have different critical receptions, it has been almost 90 years, and the *Tractatus* has never lost its popularity. Even though formal logical system was apotheosized in the *Tractatus*, its power went out of logic. Positivists, the members and the followers of Vienna Circle had admired the work since the beginning of 1960s, and after the critical works of Conze and Suzuki, and the translations of the oriental texts, mystical dimension of the *Tractatus* was started to be discovered. The main reason of the misunderstandings of the *Tractatus* is its having been interpreted and also misinterpreted in different perspectives.

Furthermore, Wittgenstein was aware of the fact that *Tractatus* was misunderstood even by Russell who wrote the foreword for the book. In addition, the Vienna Circle gave considerable importance to *Tractatus*, despite the fact that they did not understand it properly, which made Wittgenstein nervous. As it is declared in the preface of *Tractatus*:

[This] book will...draw a limit to thinking, or rather -- not to thinking, but to the expression of thoughts; for, in order to draw a limit to thinking we should have to be able to think both sides of this limit (we should therefore have to be able to think what cannot be thought). The limit can, therefore, only be drawn in language and what lies on the other side of the limit will be simply nonsense. (Wittgenstein 27.)

In the preface of the *Tractatus*, Wittgenstein comments on his own work and draws a limit to thinking, or rather --not to thinking which seem to be the words of a Zen master. By showing the negations, Wittgenstein wants to be sure about the limits: Limits of thinkables-unthinkables; sayables-unsayables. According to him, language is the only tool to draw to limits. This also reminds us the twofold truth in Buddhism: conventional truth and the ultimate truth. However, Wittgenstein calls the other side of the limit as nonsense whereas Zen calls it satori.

The importance or the uniqueness of *Tractatus* to me is different. While on the one hand; it seems very usual that Wittgenstein, as being an extraordinary man, wrote an extraordinary book, on the other hand, when I come to think about the era during which *Tractatus* was written, while Wittgenstein was a soldier and even was captured at the Italian border, I approach the book from different perspectives. There is a sharp line between what is alive and what is dead. During the wars, people and soldiers feel themselves so close to death. As a soldier, one's duty is to kill and to capture the enemy. This is both sided; you can also be killed or captured. Wittgenstein, as being a son of a rich man, faces the possibility of death and the difficulties experienced during the war. This definitely affected his life and his philosophy. He also served the wounded soldiers in England during the Second World War. He was the witness of all the kinds of pain,

ache, and wound. As Susan Sontag argues, he “regarded the pain of others” (Sontag, 2004).

The publication and translation of *Tractatus* were not easy processes. Before the publication, Wittgenstein and Russell sent letters to each other. In one of these letters Wittgenstein writes: “Now I'm afraid you haven't really got hold of my main contention to which the whole business of logical propositions is only corollary.” (qtd. in Kremer, 147) They did not even agree on the whole book. Russell interpreted Wittgenstein's genius mind only one sided: that is from the view of logical positivism. The *Tractatus* was not a single sided book. Russell's introduction was not enough to show the spirit of the whole book so that Wittgenstein was dissatisfied with his long introduction. Wittgenstein was displeased with it because he thought that this introduction would result in a fundamental misunderstanding of the *Tractatus*.

Wittgenstein was not a talkative person. The very last sentence of *Tractatus* defines his character, “whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent” (*TLP*, 7). Whatever he wrote in *Tractatus* was written very carefully, and also in a systematic manner. *Tractatus* is like a Zen book or like a bible for many scholars. It can be interpreted many times, as it also gives inspiration to the reader. Engelmann writes: “Whereas Wittgenstein passionately believes that all that reality matters in human life is precisely what, in his view, we must be silent about” (Engelmann, 97).

Wittgenstein had always something needed to be solved in his mind. Whatever he did in his life was to dissolve the problematics. He did not want to solve the problem, he did not even attempt to give answer to the questions. His method was not a dialectic method. His students say that, in the classroom he sometimes finished the lecture without saying anything. Nonetheless, he focused on the capacity of the human intellect



and also capacity of language. The main problematic of Wittgenstein was language itself. He believed that the source of all the problems and problematics in philosophy depended on language. If all the problems of language are solved, all of the misunderstandings would vanish. "The solution of the problem of life is seen in the vanishing of this problem" (TLP, 6.521).

Even though Wittgenstein was educated in a very sharp positivist way, his way of life somehow was close to an ascetics or a mystic one. After the death of his father, he became a rich man. He and his sister inherited the money from their father. Wittgenstein preferred to donate all the money to the artists, poets, some foundations and trusts. He became penniless. He experienced a rich life at first, after his experiences at war, another life began for him. He wanted this new life to be simple and regular as the silence itself. Wittgenstein was in search of different things and he donates his money to the others in order to concentrate on his mental activities.

His fundamental issue was about the limits. Like an ascetic who walks on fire and fasts for days, Wittgenstein sought for the limits of language, world and the border between the sayable and the unsayable, the showable and the unshowable. For instance, he experienced poorness by donating all his money and chose to become an ordinary citizen. In this respect, Wittgenstein acts like Gautama Buddha who was also the son of the King who left his wealth and title behind and became a sage. It is obviously clear that the aim of Wittgenstein was never to become a sage or to set up a new sect or religion; however by preferring to experience the extreme, he aims to shape the capacity of the human intellect.

Wittgenstein perceives philosophy as an activity. This may be the reason why he published only one book during his lifetime. He claims:

The object of philosophy is the logical clarification of thoughts.  
Philosophy is not a theory but an activity.  
A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations.  
The result of philosophy is not a number of “philosophical propositions”, but to make propositions clear.  
Philosophy should make clear and delimit sharply the thoughts which otherwise are, as it were, opaque and blurred. (*TLP*, 4.112)

This approach is also close to the Zennist approach. Zen Buddhism never depends on the theory. The experiences of the masters or pupils are much more important than texts and books. So to speak, Zen is an activity. The aim of philosophy as Wittgenstein defines is to clarify the thoughts. It also sounds like Zen’s aim. The clarification of thoughts is prior to the clarification of mind which leads one to the illumination.

Wittgenstein’s claim that philosophy does not need more propositions is always valid both in the Western and Eastern World. There are enough and even more propositions, theories, paradoxes in philosophy. Therefore, the propositions are made to be clear.

The clarifications of propositions can be separated from clarifications of thought so that Wittgenstein’s famous propositions can be adapted to this situation which is expressed in the words: “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world” (*TLP*, 5.6). He builds his well-known link between mind and language implicitly once again.

According to Wittgenstein, in order to get rid of “opaque and blurred” thoughts, they need to be delimited. The aim of delimitation can be compared to the concept of emptiness in Zen. Both Wittgenstein and Zen are eager to find the way to reach the pure mental state where all the paradoxes and philosophical problems vanish through the clear thoughts and mind.

It is perceived that *Tractatus* was based upon which can only be shown. It may be seen as a contradiction; “What can be shown cannot be said” (*TLP*, 4.1212). Wittgenstein also tries to show but he does not explain what is mystical. This can also be experienced but again cannot be articulated.

The texts of Zen Buddhism are nearly two thousand years old and they have become more popular nowadays. Who understood or understands *Tractatus* in a right sense? In the Zennist viewpoint nobody as well as everybody understands that text. There is no one to measure how much Wittgenstein is understood and is not understood. Everybody has gained his/her own knowledge from Wittgenstein, a perception which is also valid for Zen. Blyth writes: “nobody understands Zen; nobody can explain it; writing books about it is effrontery and impertinence” (Blyth, 6) At this point, it is better to refer to Wittgenstein to define this confusing situation. Wittgenstein argues:

My propositions are elucidatory in this way: he who understands me finally recognizes them as senseless, when he has climbed out through them, on them, over them. (He must so to speak throw away the ladder, after he has climbed up on it.) He must surmount these propositions; then he sees the world rightly. (*TLP*, 6.54)

The above proposition is another zen-like proposition. Wittgenstein teaches his technique by putting the reader in a conflicting mental state. He believes that if the reader overcomes this conflict, then his propositions can really be understood whether they are senseless or not because that mental ecstatic state is not engaged with the sensefulness or senselessness in the sight of “the world rightly”. This zen-like proposition is exactly a Koan. The reason and the result are the same. Now, that is comparable to Shunryu Suzuki’s words as follows:



The most important point is to establish yourself in a true sense, without establishing yourself on delusion. Delusion is necessary, but delusion is not something on which you can establish yourself. It is like a stepladder. Without it you can't climb up, but you don't stay on the stepladder. (Suzuki, 41)

As is seen in the quotation above, both Wittgenstein and Suzuki adopt the same metaphor of “climbing” which indicates that in order to understand the meaning of the propositions you should have an all-encompassing point of view. That is, you should discover that these propositions are paradoxes which are in both ways true. If one has such a perception of seeing things through embracing these oppositions instead of drawing to the difference between these oppositions, he can understand the world rightly as Wittgenstein claims.

The proposition 5.621 of *Tractatus* argues that “[t]he world and life are one”. Oneness is one of the key words of the spiritual awakening. In the 12th century Sung-yuan writes that “Buddhism and things of the world become one” (Cleary, 105). Oneness is a key theme in Zen. Suzuki says: “there is no struggle in the fact itself such as between the finite and the infinite, between the flesh and the spirit. These are idle distinctions fictitiously designed by the intellect for its own interest” (Suzuki, 19).

In this respect, oneness is an important step in achieving harmony with the world. Wittgenstein also tried to lead a harmonious life. He often went to the silent places such as the fjords of Norway in order to feel this harmony with nature. His choice to become a teacher in the remote village and his intention of leading a monk's life in the monastery at the top of the mountains which is simple and silent draw a similarity to the way of living Zen philosophy promotes. It is not known whether Wittgenstein was equipped with the knowledge of the Zen master Yueh-lin's writings

from the 13th century, but his attitude indicates a resemblance to Yueh-Lin's words: "What is true speech? Ninety percent accuracy is not as good as silence" (Cleary, 104).

Suzuki makes a link between silence and oneness as: "tranquillity is meant singleness of purpose (or oneness of things), and by singleness of purpose is meant the entrance into the most excellent samadhi" (Suzuki, 91).

The very beginning proposition of *Tractatus* is also like a Zen master's saying: "The world is everything that is the case" (*TLP*, 1). This proposition reminds an important concept of Thathagata in Zen. Suzuki teaches us samadhi which is the state of the noble understanding of self realization that can be reached by the acceptance of Tathagatahood (Suzuki, 91).

The proposition 1.1 is "The world is the totality of facts, not of things." And 1.2 is "The world divides into facts." This systematic flux of the proposition in the *Tractatus* is not only logical but also didactic. Lao Tzu whose thoughts influenced Zen very much says in his Tao Te Ching: "True words aren't charming, charming words aren't true"(Lao tzu, 115). Since both Zen and Taoism give importance to the intellectual life in the West, it may be added that an English version of Tao Te Ching was published by the famous contemporary writer Ursula K. Le Guin.

In this respect, *Tractatus* seems like a Zen book from the beginning to the end. It is an attractive work with a highly mystical approach without any attachment to any established religion or any ideological institution. It does not advocate a single idea or does not attempt to prove anything. It seems to leave its interpretation to the reader. That is the reason why *Tractatus* attracts many people from who have different religious beliefs and different ideologies. This is what Zen does as well. At the very beginning of his article R. H. Blyth writes about Zen in his book *Zen and Zen Classics*: "The reader

of this book will be confused by it, but this is the destiny of man, since many are the roads, but all lead to the same conclusion, confusion" (Blyth, 3). There is no dogma, no ritual, no mythology, no church, no priest, no holy book in Zen. It is a religion against religion, philosophy against philosophy. *Tractatus* is more or less the same. Wittgenstein philosophized his ideas in *Tractatus* by anti-philosophizing. As Lao says: "People who know aren't learned, learned people don't know" (Lao, 114). People from different disciplines can read *Tractatus* to learn but the uniqueness of the *Tractatus* is that it does teach how to learn. The reader should use his/her intuition with the intellect.

If Wittgenstein had written in a logical positivist way, I am sure, today, Wittgenstein would be the historical character.

In the proposition 6.41 Wittgenstein points out: "The sense of the world must lie outside of the world. ... *In* it, there is no value, - and if there were, it would be of no value". (TLP, 6.41)

According to Zen thinking, social codes depending on opposites such as good-bad, beautiful-ugly, true-false are just traditional beliefs. In Satori, there are no dilemma, no paradox, and no contradiction. The mood of Satori, if Wittgenstein's terminology is used, lies outside of the world. Satori is absolutely the sense of the world. Wittgenstein also uses the Buddhist negation as "*In* it, there is no value", however he follows formal logical rules as conditional method: "- and if there were, it would be of no value". And this can be the second negation according to Buddhist view.

### **5.5 Zen and the *Philosophical Investigations***

"Wittgenstein's later work is a reaction to the early view he developed under the influence of Russell and which culminated with the publication of the *Tractatus*"



(Warnock, 67). As Warnock mentions, Wittgenstein's famous book that basically rejects *Tractatus* was published after his death, in 1953. Russell reacted to these new works of Wittgenstein by stating that "[t]he later Wittgenstein [...] seems to have grown tired of serious thinking and to have invented a doctrine which would make such an activity unnecessary" (Russell, 161).

The systematic in *Philosophical Investigations* was more or less the same with the one in the *Tractatus*. All the passages or fragments were numbered. However, the passages in *Investigations* were longer than that of *Tractatus*. In this work, Wittgenstein discusses the problems of logic, semantics, philosophy of mathematics and philosophy of the mind. The use of language was, according to Wittgenstein, called as the later Wittgenstein, the reason of the philosophical problem. He puts lots of important concepts into the philosophy of language, such as "language games": of those games were the ones by means of which children learn their native language as a language game (7, 5). He aimed at bringing words back from their metaphysical to their everyday use (116, 48).

Caraboolad sees *Investigations* in his work as Zen manual of Therapies for those Afflicted with Various Diseases of Philosophy. The *Philosophical Investigations* not only shows striking similarities to Zen thought but also can be thought of as adding to the understanding of Zen. The converse is also true in that an understanding of Zen can aid the student in attaining further insights into the *Philosophical Investigations*\_"\_" (Caraboolad, p.128)

Scholars find more resemblances between Zen philosophy and *Philosophical Investigations* than between *Zen and Tractatus*. This point will be elaborated later in

detail. Now, the reason why Wittgenstein changed his main direction, or rather his dimension, is going to be examined.

Wittgenstein had a restless mind. He was hardly satisfied intellectually. He tried to escape from his condense mental activities, that is why he went to the mountain village. He gave an effort to remain an ordinary human being. As a genius, he could not escape from himself and he created new approaches in philosophy. His experiences directed him to find a new way. His frame of mind may have changed but his character did not.

The below paragraph written by Wittgenstein shows that he sounds like a Zen master.

Philosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything -since everything lies open the view there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, for example, is of no interest to us. One might also give the name 'philosophy' to what is possible before all new discoveries and inventions. (PI, §126)

And he puts forward his basic view of philosophy: "There is not a philosophical method, though there are indeed methods, like different therapies" (PI, §134). Philosophers, like scientists, look for the best solution, the best result for certain problems. It can be argued that Wittgenstein is an exception in his not searching to achieve the ultimate result as he never believed in the best or the absolute solution. What he did was trying to construct one way to destroy all of the problematics by saying that this is not the unique way.

*Philosophical Investigations* are full of koanic sentences. For instance: "I can exhibit pain, as I exhibit red, and as I exhibit straight and crooked and trees and stones - that is what we call "exhibiting" (PI, §313); "Can one think without speaking?" - 'And what is thinking?'- Well, don't you ever think? (PI, §327); "Is thinking a kind of

speaking” (PI, §330)?; “Imagine people who only think aloud” (As there are people who can only read aloud.) (PI, § 331); “Would it be imaginable that people should never speak an audible language, but should still say things to themselves in the imagination” (PI, §344)?; “These deaf-mutes have learned only a gesture-language, but each of them talks to himself inwardly in a vocal language” (PI, §248); “Is a sum in the head less real than a sum paper” (PI, § 366, 115e); “The mental picture is the picture which is described when someone describes what he images” (PI, §368).

As is understood from the examples above from *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein points out the relation between speaking and thinking. This issue is closely related not only to the philosophical and scientific life but also to the democratic life. Can “freedom of speech” be thought apart from “freedom of thinking”? Furthermore, the blockage of expressions of feeling either because of the social and political taboos or because of the psychological reasons can cause stress and depression. This is valid not only for a person but also for a society as well. Performance arts are a way to “Catharsis” and also Dionysiac and Ecstatic rituals in ancient Greek as well as traditional societies of Africa and Oceania have done for that purpose.

Wittgenstein makes us open our minds, our imaginations, which may help us to cure ourselves. He is a kind of Zen master stimulating his pupils’ minds to make them enlightened beings. In this context, it can be considered that similar to the way in which one gets Buddhahood in a Zennist sense; one can perhaps be cured by eliminating the philosophical problems as well as mental pains. What happens when a man suddenly understands?” (PI, §321). By this statement Wittgenstein pushes us the borders of satori. If one understands suddenly, it is the illumination where there is no good and bad, no beginning and no end: absolute void with full of bliss!



Wittgenstein's radical conception of philosophy is exemplified in his treatment of the salient questions in the philosophy of mind – questions about the nature of the mental, about the 'inner' and the 'outer', about our knowledge of ourselves and of others. It is vindicated by the extent to which he sheds light upon what puzzles us, and thereby dissolves or resolves our problems (Hacker, 15-16).

The distinction of inner and outer worlds or the disharmony of inner and outer world is a cause of psychological problems. Wittgenstein, as Hacker mentioned, uses salient questions to open the way to mental activity.

The meditation practice is the heart of Zen. In order to find the balance between the dichotomies, it is important to concentrate and make the mind calm. The dualistic conceptualization is habitual and often creates both mental and physical handicaps so that as Harwick says: "The techniques of Zen attempt to accomplish such an overcoming. The aim of the method is not to construct a body of intelligible concepts; it is specifically devised to avoid such a procedure" (Harwick, 227-228).

Harwick makes a warning at this point: "It would be erroneous to characterize Wittgenstein's position as anti-intellectual or a-systematic in the same sense that these terms are applied to Zen. For Wittgenstein, the problem of method is equally complex, but follows from a distinctly different line of development" (Harwick, 228).

D. T. Suzuki shows this type of dualism in the following way:

We believe in dualism chiefly because of our traditional training. Whether ideas really correspond to facts is another matter requiring a special investigation. Ordinarily we do not inquire into the matter, we just accept what is instilled into our minds; for to accept is more convenient and practical, and life is to a certain extent though not in reality, made thereby easier (Suzuki, 2008, 112).

As Hacker also reminds, the problem of the 'inner' and the 'outer' arises at this point. This is a very ancient dichotomy that almost all religions have been interested in: The relationships between body and mind. This is also the main interest of Hatha Yoga. Ha signifies the sun (physical body) and Tha signifies the moon (spiritual body). This dualism inspired the fundamentals of Cartesian philosophy. Descartes believed that a human being is composed of a body (res extensa) and a mind (res cogitans). Hackers also points out a person's innermost self, in which his essential identity resides, and to which he refers when he uses the first person pronoun 'I', in his mind or soul, res cogitans (Hacker, 14). Descartes, who was a rationalistic thinker, always puts the mind before anything else. His famous proposition "cogito ergo sum" or "I think, therefore I am" shows that the experiences or res extensa can easily deceive people. Descartes expressed his radical thoughts and also his doubts in his "*Meditations*", which must have been written as a result of deep contemplations. Cartesian scepticism comes to a paradoxical situation in Zennist arguments. As Zen Buddhist monk Katagiri Roshi (1928-1990), who came to the US from Japan and who made a lot of contribution to the western philosophy by means of a Zennist approach states that: "I have been reading your Descartes. Very interesting. 'I think, therefore I am'. He forgot to mention the other part. I'm sure he knew, he just forgot: I think, therefore I'm not". (<http://www.sloperama.com/advice/lesson47.html>)

The position of Wittgenstein in this dualistic situation may be questioned. According to Monk, everything depends on the spirit in Wittgenstein's perspective (p.309). It is also known that Wittgenstein was a man of details. His works were a result of his obsessively analytical mind combined with his spirit. As he puts forward by his

own words, “Where our language suggests a body and there is none: there, we should like to say, is a spirit” (PI, §36).

*Tractatus* renders dualism fruitful by making thought, sense and understanding part of the very working of propositions. Without these, language would revert to the status of mere propositional signs. Dualism is present in any Tractarian picture and therefore in every proposition of natural science.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

This study examined the philosophy of Zen and the philosophy of Wittgenstein comparatively on the basis of historical and biographical perspectives. There are, of course, similarities between Zen philosophy and the works of Wittgenstein. However, the main issue is whether these similarities, as Conze defines, are “genuine or spurious”. This thesis tried to go beyond this dichotomy and illustrated with examples from the basic Buddhist texts and from the life and works of Wittgenstein if these resemblances are genuine or spurious.

Wittgenstein’s approach to philosophy is extraordinary. He always asks bizarre questions like a Zen master and makes strong arguments. Depending on the twofold concept in Zen, practitioners believe that one of the ways to pass over the conventional truth is to deconstruct the habitual way of thinking. Eventually, a certain mental state will be reached, in which all the dilemmas, all the extremes vanish. This unspeakable state of being is called “satori” and is experienced individually. It is clear that Wittgenstein does not believe the twofold truth. Also, he never attempted to reach and experience satori. However, although the purpose of philosophizing is different, the methods of Zen and Wittgenstein are somehow close to each other. Wittgenstein asks: “What is your aim in philosophy?” (*PI*, 309). And answers: “To show the fly the way out of the fly bottle” (*PI*, 309). It can be said that the fly in the bottle is the conventional truth; whereas the outside of the bottle is the ultimate truth. Or is the fly the philosopher

and the bottle the habitual way of philosophizing? Wittgenstein also writes that “[p]hilosophy simply puts everything before us, and neither explains nor deduces anything.-Since everything lies open to there is nothing to explain. For what is hidden, is of no interest to us” (*PI*, 126). In Zen there is nothing to explain neither. That is why Zen sayings, mottoes, dialogues, poems, stories are so short: They all point the reality in a direct manner. Zen is also interested in what is to be seen and said. Zen eliminates the esoteric tendencies which can be found in the roots of it.

During war time, when Wittgenstein was in his mid twenties, the most important book for him was *Gospel in Brief*, which is written by Tolstoy. Tolstoy wrote this book when he was 51 years old, after deeply studying Buddhism, Christianity and Islam. His main purpose was to find a way out of his depression. Tolstoy “omitted the accounts of Christ’s birth and genealogy, the miracles, and the resurrection. He also left out most of the material about John the Baptist. He removed all the supernatural events and everything he found difficult to believe or which he regarded as irrelevant” (Schardt, Bill and Large, David, 2001).

Not surprisingly, after some years, in 1930, Wittgenstein wrote that: “What is good is also divine. Queer as it sounds, that sums up my ethics. Only something supernatural can express the Supernatural.” (Wittgenstein, 1980, 3) The following statement of Wittgenstein is close to the Zennist definition of truth: “You cannot lead people to what is good; you can only lead them to some place or other. The good is outside the space of facts” (Wittgenstein, 1980, 3). So to speak, Wittgenstein was interested in religion in a realistic way. Also, Schopenhauer’s words must have influenced Wittgenstein in the same manner: “Philosophy, as a science, has nothing

whatever to do with what should or may be believed, it has to do only with what can be known” (Schopenhauer, 65).

The unorthodox and non-hierarchical movements in the West and around the world were influenced by Zen during the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The members of Beat generation, which was the most anti-authoritarian movement, practiced Zen meditation and wrote poems and fictions. Wittgenstein’s life is full of the “anti”ness. He could have been an engineer or a good inventor; but he refused this and rather directed himself to theoretical studies. Moreover, he denied the heritage from his father. And he never got on well with Russell and Vienna Circle intellectually. He even became “anti”-himself and created a whole new philosophy called the later Wittgenstein.

Following the introduction chapter, which basically compared Zen and Wittgenstein, the biography of Wittgenstein is presented in this study. This section was an attempt to understand why and how Wittgenstein created his philosophies and what made him such a unique philosopher. The educational background as well as the writings and books of Wittgenstein were presented.

There is no doubt that in order to understand Zen better, one should go deeper into the roots of Zen, which are Hinduism and Buddhism. In order to do so, sources of Zen such as Nagarjuna and his masterpiece Karikas and the quotations about the life of Buddha by the contemporary famous writers were presented historically. In this chapter, the fundamental concepts of Zen such as sunyata and thathata were explained. The great Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna and Wittgenstein were compared to each other as well. Since they play an important role in the construction of Zen, Taoism and Yogacara traditions were also mentioned.



In the fourth chapter, Zen is examined by using examples in terms of its poetry, language usage, paradoxes, koans and logic. The methods of enlightenment in Zen were investigated with the experiences of Zen masters.

The fifth chapter, which is the focus of this study elaborates Wittgenstein and Zen. Mainly three books of Wittgenstein were compared to the Zenist point of view in this chapter. The first book used in the study is the *Notebooks* of Wittgenstein. The statements in this book can be understood as a forerunner of *Tractatus*. The second and the third books are *Tractatus* and the *Philosophical Investigations*. Even though Wittgenstein did not follow the same path in these books, there are again resemblances with Zen Buddhism.

This study also gives place to various quotations from both Western and Eastern philosophers. Their ideas are very important to get the main point of this comparative study, which claims there are significant similarities between the philosophies of Wittgenstein and Zen. On the other hand, not only philosophers but also modern writers such as Kerouac, Hesse, Pirsig and Guin, who were influenced by Zen were helpful to examine the issue in question.

This study is an attempt to make a small contribution to the ongoing discussion, which seems to be endless. This effort could be meaningful as it is made from a geographical location where the East and the West meet or the East and the West separate.

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