

何も灰の積み重ね残らないようにそれを破壊しなさい

**Zen and the Art of Nuclear War**  
*An Indictment of Modernity's Final End*

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Man and Nature

## I n t r o d u c t i o n

Eugen Herrigel writes in his book *Zen in the Art of Archery* that upon leaving Japan, his Master and archery instructor gave his best bow to Herrigel. The Master advises,

When you shoot this bow you will feel the spirit of the Master near you... When you have passed beyond it, do not lay it up in remembrance! *Destroy it, so that nothing remains but a heap of ashes.*<sup>1</sup>

There is a profound dichotomy between Traditional warfare and that of Modern warfare. In Traditional warfare, when a weapon has ceased to have purpose it is completely destroyed. In Modern warfare, a weapon finds its greatest purpose when it destroys completely.

Zen, as an expression and form of Buddhism, is part of a vast network of the architecture of Traditional civilization. As this is the case, we might substitute Zen for any number of other manifestations of the traditional world when delineating a Way in opposition to Modern Man. We could also speak of the Traditional versus the Modern, in and of themselves, or perhaps be far more specific; Shogun versus trench warfare for example, or nature mysticism versus the cult of material (and/or scientific) Teilhardism, so defined by Wolfgang Smith.<sup>2</sup> Why, then, shall we choose Zen? And why shall we call upon Eugen Herrigel's book? In the Japanese Zen Martial Arts we find concise methods of warfare that are absolutely distinct to the warfare of Modern Man and the radicalized dualism that poisons him.

Dualism as an understanding of reality is no novel conception. Zen Buddhism's very constitution is to eradicate any notion of existential separation with all of reality. Given that Zen is as old as it is, we should assume that, at the very least, Zen has been aware of Man's natural assumption of his participation in a dualistic reality. A quick glance at any Traditional sacred text or philosophy will confirm that eradicating notions of dualism has always been the preeminent goal of the "old days."

Dualism in and of itself is both a philosophy and a way of being, neither mutually exclusive, and both equally misguided. It has to do with holding to a hard-and-fast distinction between a variety of united forms, the most important being the separation of Man from the natural environment. This serves also to divide the ego-self from the True Self, and the Cosmos

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<sup>1</sup> The words in italics are the English for the Japanese characters on the previous page.

<sup>2</sup> See Smith's *Teilhardism and the New Religion: A Thorough Analysis of the Teachings of Pierre Teilhard De Chardin*.

from God.<sup>3</sup> In Zen, dualism is a condition of logical analysis, a trap that, while avoidable, is a direct manifestation of conditioning, social, or otherwise. Zen believes that the irreducibility of form<sup>4</sup> is contrary to the (faulty) human reasoning that the world operates logically and that our definition of a thing exists within that logical spectrum. As Dr. Suzuki puts it in *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism*:

... breaking up of the tyranny of name and logic is at the same time spiritual emancipation; for the soul is no longer divided against itself. By acquiring the intellectual freedom the soul is in full possession of itself; birth and death no longer torture it; for there are no such dualities anywhere; we live even through death. Hitherto *we have been looking at things in their contradicting and differentiating aspect*, and have assumed an attitude toward them in accordance with that view, *that is, more or less antagonistic*. But this has been revolutionized, *we have at last attained the point where the world can be viewed, as it where, form within*. (Emphasis added)<sup>ii</sup>

The goal of Zen is apprehension of unbroken reality in a decidedly experiential form via systematized Master/Disciple instruction. The experience in which that apprehension takes place is known as *Satori*. Dr. Suzuki:

Without (*Satori*) there is no Zen, for the life of Zen begins with the “opening of *Satori*.” *Satori* may be defined as intuitive looking-into, in contradistinction to intellectual and logical understanding. Whatever the definition, *Satori* means the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistic mind.<sup>iii</sup>

*Satori* is in a sense the fully realized moment of witness to the Truth, the true Self’s affirmative apprehension of That Which Is. In Zen, one apprehends *Satori* by an opening of the mind through transcendence of “logic,” as *Satori* is the collapse of the dualistic illusion.

Whereas Traditional civilization was not wholly committed to that dualism but instead was interested in overcoming it, presently, dualism has become the thesis of Modernity. With the rise of the Enlightenment and the Renaissance, Man found himself equally at odds with the condition of his soul and his relationship with his creator, and he began to systematize his notion of duality so as to give it ultimate credence. Again, as so many Perennialists and non-Perennialists have pointed out, Darwinism, the rejection of Heliocentricity, the collapse of traditional Western Church institutions, the Industrial Revolution, and the Urbanization of Europe, were not so much

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<sup>3</sup> Many traditions, Swedenborgism as one example, describe the belief in this duality as the *raison d’etre* of the human existence; a gift/curse that gives Man purpose, a thing to overcome. Other traditions describe it in the sense of an illusionary reality, such as *maya*.

<sup>4</sup> This is not a particularly “Zen” word but it does illustrate the point.

conscious choices/creations of Modern Man but reflections of the state of his Soul. It is only natural, therefore, that the philosophical discussion of the day would be equally reflective of Man's condition at that time. There is no individual who stands more towering in the West's movement towards a full-fledged dualistic reality than Rene Descartes. Descartes is responsible for defining in absolute terms the credo of Modernity, conceiving a reality in complete rejection of the Traditional World known as *bifurcation*, or radical dualism. Yet Descartes was only stating that which Modern Man desperately wanted to hear: That the world around him was separate from himself and devoid of any quality. In so doing, Descartes loosed the chains on the evil in Man's heart; Man no longer needed to view the realm in which he lived as either divine *or* intrinsically in cohesion with his being. As Gilbert Durand has stated, "Dualism is the great 'schizomorphic' structure of Western Intelligence." We might go one step further; it is not just the structure of Western Intelligence, but as well the structure of Western *Intelligencia*. The institutions propelling Western intellectual reality, its universities, its economy, and its governments, are completely built upon this radical dualism. The ramification of this turn of events is the state of Modern Man's soul, on display in his methods of war and the condition of his natural environment. We will return to that issue in a short while; for the time being, let us consider a Martial Art from the Traditional world, Japanese Archery.

Eugen Herrigel describes his ambition to visit Japan and learn the Way of Zen as a vocation of sorts. Indeed, he writes,

Even as a student I had, as though driven by a secret urge, been preoccupied with mysticism... but how does one become a mystic? ... Nowhere did I find anything approaching satisfactory answers to my questions... However I looked at it, I found myself confronted with locked doors, and yet I could not refrain from constantly rattling at the handles.<sup>iv</sup>

Herrigel was asked to teach philosophy at the University of Tokyo, and, knowing something of Japanese Zen, took the opportunity to seek out a Master that might assuage his soul's longing for a mystical apprehension. He is told that the way by which he might accomplish something of this goal is to take up one of the Japanese Arts associated with Zen. Herrigel thus decides upon archery, a traditional Marshal Art that in Japan is intrinsically linked to Zen practice. In Japan the Marshal Arts have a particular reality, as they are enveloped in the crux of the Zen notion of reality. Dr. Suzuki penned an introduction to Herrigel's book, in which he begins,

One of the most significant features we notice in the practice of archery, and in fact of all the arts they are studied in Japan and

probably also in other Far Eastern countries, is that they are not intended for utilitarian purposes only or for purely aesthetic enjoyments, but are meant to train the mind; indeed, to bring it into contact with the ultimate reality. Archery is, therefore, not practiced solely for hitting the target; the swordsman does not wield the sword just for the sake of outdoing his opponent... The mind has first to be attuned to the Unconscious.<sup>v</sup>

There is a primary supposition here: That the Zen warrior does not engage in his craft for the sole purpose of killing or enjoyment, utility or aesthetic, victory or sentimentality. Suzuki continues,

In the case of archery, the hitter and the hit are no longer two opposing objects, but are one reality. The archer ceases to be conscious of himself as the one who is engaged in hitting the bull's-eye which confronts him. This state of unconsciousness is realized only when, completely empty and rid of the self, he becomes one with the perfecting of his technical skill... When this is attained, Man thinks yet he does not think.<sup>vi</sup>

There is a primary supposition here as well: That when so prepared in this state (a precursor to *Satori*), the warrior does not apprehend in the slightest degree even a hair's width of separation between him and his target or opponent; the craft thus demands the highest degree of respect for all parties of the engagement. Between the former and the latter suppositions the warrior is thus prohibited from engaging in his Martial Art for any reason other than the gravest circumstance. This includes practice, as Herrigel discovers in his six-year trial of learning the Art of Archery.

The ultimate goal of learning Archery as a Zen Martial Art is to experience *Satori*, to apprehend the singleness of degree in-between the archer and the target, so thus to apprehend the basic tenet of Zen itself. The path that Herrigel traverses to learn the art is tri-fold. First, he must learn to find harmony within. The Master instructs him to find concentration and steadiness of form through right breathing. Herrigel is then instructed on the proper form of preparing and taking the shot. Finally, he is instructed on actually hitting a target. He must come to realize that ultimately that which is standing between him and his ability to shoot and hit the target is his notion that he and the target are separate entities. Only by eliminating all manners of ego-self manifestations of thought, doubt, analytical process and tension may Herrigel enter into a state that truly comprehends the two previous suppositions of cohesion with, and respect for, the target and the craft; he must learn to shoot "spiritually." Suffice to say, though it takes many years, he is finally guided by his Master into the proper Way, and in so doing apprehends much that Zen is. Herrigel so describes the path,

If he is irresistibly driven towards this goal, he must... take the road to the artless art. He must dare to leap into the Origin, so as to live by the Truth and in the Truth, like one who has become one with it... if he survives its perils, then is his destiny fulfilled; face to face he beholds the unbroken Truth, the Truth beyond all truths, the formless Origin of origins, the Void which is the All; is absorbed into it and from it emerges reborn. <sup>vii</sup>

What should become clear is that the instruction and reality of the Japanese Martial Arts of Zen demand the highest principles of character, as well as a full apprehension of the Affirmation of the Reality of an Unbroken Whole. The utmost respect is paid to the craft, to the nature of its application, and to the object or individual to which it is engaged. There is no “unleashing” of the skill upon a victim, even as the skill itself could guide the warrior to vanquish any foe in the most comprehensive manner imaginable. Herrigel relates that his Master is able to split a bull’s-eye arrow in twine in the dark. What foe could withstand such a force? In what competition could the Master not find victory? Yet the Master is not concerned with victory in sport or with his ability to exact summary execution in battle. As he is an absolute *affirmation of life* itself, he cherishes life. His exposition of Zen demonstrates that it is no philosophy of nihilism, but instead exemplifies Zen as a seminal path to the archetypal Truths of the Traditional World.

#### T h e B l a c k A r t o f M o d e r n W a r f a r e

We return to the path that Man has taken in the past few hundred years. The state of his soul, such as it is divided against itself and its natural environment, has left it a barren wasteland, and the world that Man has shaped displays the truth of the matter. This is apparent in the current state of the natural environment, that is, of the earth itself. Equally as apparent is the manner by which Modern Man chooses to do battle. Warfare has been considered an “art,” often defined as chivalry, by all of Traditional civilization. War, as it is the antithesis of peace, is understood as unavoidable, primarily because of its role in the heart of Man. For this reason, the internal struggle, a microcosmic reflection of wars between tribes and nations, is considered the “Greater” of the two because it deals with the very nature of Man’s fall from, and destined return to, the peace of God in paradise. Just as Traditional civilization has made great strides in aiding Man in that struggle through guided systems like Zen Buddhism, macroscopic wars between men have too been so guided by chivalry. In Modern times, specifically as a result of radicalized dualism, the situation is quite alien to the past.

The greatest effect of the radical dualism in Modern Man's soul has been the complete disruption of his relationship with his exterior reality. That includes, for example, the natural world, the effects of which are obvious. It also includes his warfare. Traditionally, warfare was seen as a literal manifestation of the metaphysical war within. This had the effect of requiring a very particular attitude of the Traditional warrior; just as his inner demons were considered manifestations of himself, vanquished only through struggle and self-knowledge, so to his adversary had to be shown a particular level of respect, and their violent engagement had to exist within a greater context of restoration. It was helpful that the state of Man in those times was not nearly so divided and troubled as it is today. Modern Warfare is inevitably reflective of the state of the struggle inside of Modern Man, and just as with the state of the natural environment, the effect of radical dualism on Man's soul can be seen in the methods by which Man now wages war. I will discuss three such methods in an attempt to demonstrate that, whereas the Japanese methods of warfare, imbued as they were with a Traditional methodology such as Zen, could truly be called "Arts," Modern methods of warfare must be considered in absolute distinction and opposition to "Art." They are the evil manifestations of radicalized dualism and Modern Man's divided inner state; they are, in Traditional terminology, "Black Arts."

A Black Art, by general definition, is any practiced and studied form of human expression that is enacted in a mode of opposition to the Ultimate Truth of Reality, the "Mysterium Magnum," that is Reality's unbroken unity. We see now why the Modern radicalized dualism is so problematic: Its goals and means are ultimately governed by an anti-truth, an absolute falsehood. The ultimate manifestations of Black Arts are complete deviations from the True Path or Way, in the Traditional sense, harnessing the power of reality to the end goal of actualizing pure abomination. In such a case, destructive power is enormous, and traditionally this power is equated with "Black Magic."

A "black art of warfare" is one that fails to realize the unbroken reality that binds adversaries and their methods of warfare. Modern Man and his dualism demonstrate an evolution from the earliest black art of war, "Total Warfare," to Trench Warfare to Mechanized Warfare. The latter, with its application of a form of "black magic," is the precursor to the darkest of black martial arts, Nuclear Warfare.

Warfare, as we have said, traditionally takes place between warriors who understand their role and who practice a form of engagement which narrows the scope of their confrontation to do as little exterior damage as possible; most notably, these warriors are aware of the need for intense

preconditioning and disciplinary training. For such warriors, the line of distinction is specifically drawn between those who engage in battle, and those who do not. Though there are instances of wholesale slaughter of civilian populations in the Traditional world, traditional warriors did not consider a city's people to be soldiers, and as such, though killing them was un-chivalrous, there was no direct equation of civilians with the opposition's military arsenal.

In modern times, this is absolutely not the case. Total Warfare, a significant precedent for Modernity, does not envision a clear line of distinction between this or that man in terms of a "soldier" or "civilian." In Total Warfare, there is only "target." One burns a city and its people because they are considered a piece in the enemy's total war machine. This de-humanization of the enemy, and the wholesale slaughter of the adversary it allows, is without question a black martial art. It requires an absolute psychological division between one's own self and one's adversary, and thus rejects any supposition of a singular unbroken reality. Furthermore, it envisions an enemy in absolute and complete terms; any empathy for, or identification with, the enemy is considered purely sentimental.

Trench and Mechanized Warfare evolve out of all the same premises as Total Warfare, but add several new dimensions. First, in trench warfare, we find the complete dehumanization of both the enemy *and* the self. Whereas Total Warfare merely defines the enemy as something that must be summarily dispatched with, Trench Warfare goes one step further by supposing that one's *own* military apparatus exists to send as many men into the "grinder" as possible until the objective of "victory" is obtained. This form of self-denigration is only achieved when one understands the cost of human life, especially of one's own life, to be worthless.

The mechanization of this process represents the beginning stages of the introduction of black magic into the fold. No longer is Modern Man content to merely slaughter his enemy *and* kin wholesale, but now he does so in an abominable process of iron clashing with iron. This form of alchemy has always been judged the lowest. No longer do men face men on the battlefield, but instead scientists engage each other with an ever-increasing diabolical array of weaponry. This allows not only for the scale of war to exponentially increase, but also for the level of training a soldier requires, and thus his level of discipline, to all but disappear. When a man can kill dozens in a manner of seconds with the mere squeezing of his index finger, what training or discipline could we hardly expect to endow him with, except of course with greater aim. When a man can kill hundreds with the push of a button from miles away, or thousands from the safety of the sky, even prior to splitting the atom, he has achieved a very great skill in the black arts indeed. And

now we can understand why this scientific sophistication can lead only to something far greater and far more devious. For though the V-2 rockets and bomber airplanes of the Second World War rained fire down from the heavens, the “science” under-girding their operation was child’s play in comparison to the final goal of Modern Man’s inhumanity, so caused by his radicalized dualism. This final goal can be nothing other than the devious black magic of dividing into two what should naturally only be one: The atom.

The atom, as Dr. Wolfgang Smith has observed, is not a corporal entity, but does have a physical reality in and of itself. Smith has shown that the atom possesses a physical reality that is, by theophanic analogy, demonstrative of the process by which all of reality comes into being in united form. As such, the division of the atom is to be considered an act that is contrary, in the most absolute of senses, to nature and to reality’s unbroken wholeness; that such an act is the scientific basis for nuclear weaponry is an indictment in and of itself.

Simply put, the very foundation of nuclear weaponry is Modern civilization. In fact, these weapons are proof of the “thesis” or goal of Modern civilization. In a sense, we could say that the “Dao” of Modern civilization is nuclear warfare. That is, the entire civilization is actively engaged in the creation and perpetuation of nuclear warfare as *the* form of war that it is most attuned to wage. The entire apparatus of the civilization must collude to create, sustain, and utilize nuclear weaponry. Every piece of that civilization must work together to ensure that the proper financial backing, scientific expertise, and of course military necessity, exist to engender the existence and need for the deployment of a nuclear arsenal. Nuclear weapons have no actual reality independent of Modern Man, and merely are the end result Modern Man’s civilization. Without that civilization, there could be none of the complex interactions and circumstances by which nuclear weaponry may exist and find purpose.

Metaphysically speaking, we have already scraped the surface of the greater meaning behind nuclear technology. The atom’s division, and nuclear weaponry, is so reflective of pervasive and institutionalized radical dualism as to be a cohesive part of that dualism’s existence. In fact, without it, such technology and weaponry cannot exist. The scaffolding that supports it must be in place, and the nature of that scaffolding must cross certain bridges and make certain steps so that the suppositions that fasten the scaffolding are well cemented. These suppositions are merely the further radicalized theses of Total Warfare and Mechanized Warfare. Interestingly enough, this process is entirely contingent upon an “evolutionary” development, which makes nuclear technology all the more deviant. For whereas life itself has no need or want for evolution,

the most devious of technologies and their application would be nothing without the evolution of Modernity and radicalized dualism.

Indeed, nuclear technology is due precisely to the evolution of ideas that began when the last vestiges of the Traditional World broke down, and were replaced with the Modern World, so endowed as it is with its principle thesis, dualism, and its principle creation, nuclear weaponry. And both the thesis and creation are so abominable, so deviously powerful, and so contingent upon the evolution of “science,” requiring so much foresight and societal support for mere existence (let alone utilization), that their designation is clear. Nuclear weaponry is nothing other than the black martial art’s application of the blackest of magic.

Now, once the nuclear weapon has actually been used, one of two possibilities exists. The first has already occurred; if only one “side” of a war has nuclear weapons to deploy, at the very least Modern Man’s fate is not entirely sealed. For as we have said that the “Dao” of Modern Man is in a sense nuclear technology and weaponry, what we really mean to say is that *the Final End of Modern Man and his dualism is his self-destruction*. And whereas in the first scenario such cataclysmic self-destruction does not transpire and the earth cannot finally be rid of him, in the second possibility Modern Man’s final end is in fact achieved. For whereas the perennial goal of the Traditional world is the affirmation of life, the perennial goal of the Modern world is the affirmation of *mutually assured destruction*. The man who is transformed by Zen is said to have passed through the “fire of truth.”<sup>viii</sup> Could we call the fire of the mushroom cloud anything other than the “fire of falsehood?”

#### C O N C L U S I O N

An obvious question arises: Is such a thing as nuclear self-destruction thus inevitable, given the status of Modern Man’s divided soul? In the past fifteen years, the answer has been well answered in the negative. The state of the natural environment is such that Modern Man (astonishingly!) is still finding a way to destroy himself, even as the threat of thermonuclear apocalypse has faded with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Indeed, unless another great nuclear power rises to confront the United States with the threat of a war to end all wars, a nuclear war today will likely be “localized.” Be that as it may, Modernity is still doing a profound job at perpetuating its thesis, its Final End. And in the case of the wholesale devastation of the natural environment, Modernity has assured a far more painful self-destruction. That is to say nothing of the massive proliferation of small arms that weekly kill more than Hiroshima.

On the subject of Hiroshima, there is surely a profound link between Japan's extraordinary modernization after World War Two and the plain fact that the Japanese are the only people on earth to have felt the lick of nuclear fire. Witnessing modern Tokyo is clear evidence that the tomb of Traditional Japan is also the birthplace of the nuclear age. Such are the times we live in.

The title of this paper is meant to shock. Perhaps the reader asks, "Is irony appropriate in the discussion of such matters?" But we should be shocked. Our present situation is not accidental. We are in the midst of the most complex and grandiose suicide imaginable. In the Traditional World, the methods of the Perennial Philosophy served to annihilate the ego in order to expose only pure consciousnesses as the light of humankind. In the Modern World, a dualistic existence serves to annihilate consciousness in order to further unleash inhumanity. Will the methods of the past come to our rescue? Can a resurgence of Traditional Forms stave off what otherwise is plainly inevitable?

Let me offer this: Eugen Herrigel was preeminently handicapped when he traveled to Japan to learn something of Zen through the Martial Art of Archery. He was a student of modern philosophy who had only the slightest inkling of mystical realities. He was well trained in the use of firearms, and by his own admission this made learning archery in the Japanese form far more difficult. He lived in Japan as the nation was steadily mechanizing. Altogether the likelihood of his success was exceedingly remote. And yet Herrigel's experience and success, so chronicled in *Zen in the Art of Archery*, stand as firm testimony to the possibility that Modern Man might overcome himself and transcend the radical dualism that poisons his soul. If humanity is to find any salvation and stem the tide of inevitability, it must follow Herrigel's footsteps and apprehend the Affirmation of Life that is at the heart of Zen Buddhism and all other Traditional methods.

If he does not, the earth may regardless look forward to the peace that will follow Modern Man's destiny fulfilled as he disembowels himself in sacrifice to his prized dualism at the altar of the blackest of magic.

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<sup>ii</sup> D.T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (New York City: Grove Press, 1964), 30.  
<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid*, 58.  
<sup>iv</sup> Herrigel, 13.  
<sup>v</sup> *Ibid*, vii-viii.  
<sup>vi</sup> *Ibid*, ix-x.  
<sup>vii</sup> *Ibid*, 81.  
<sup>viii</sup> *Ibid*, 9.