

Journal of Buddhist Ethics

ISSN 1076-9005

<http://www.buddhistethics.org/>

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A Parallel Reading of Suzuki Shōsan's *Mōanjō* and
The Doctrine of the Mean

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Guiding the Blind Along the Middle Way: A Parallel Reading of Suzuki Shōsan's *Mōanjō* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*

Anton Luis C. Sevilla*

Introduction

Japanese intellectual culture is a *mélange* of many schools of thought—Shinto, many forms of Buddhism, Confucianism, and so on. However, these schools of thought are distinct in approach and focus, and key ideas of one school may even be found to be in contradiction with the key ideas of other schools of thought. Many have deliberately tried, with varying degrees of success, to reconcile these schools of thought, academically, politically, and so forth. But amidst these attempts, one that stands out for its uncontrived naturalness and vitality is that of Zen Master Shōsan.

Suzuki Shōsan (鈴木正三, 1579-1655) was a samurai serving under the shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu. Although his thoughts and teachings remained fiercely loyal to his master, Shōsan left military service and became an unaffiliated monk and Zen teacher. Although he has fallen into relative obscurity in our present day, he is known by a few for the fierce

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martial spirit of his practice, epitomized by his “warrior’s glare zazen”—a unique brand of religious practice greatly influenced by his experience as a retainer. He also greatly championed the notion of carrying out Buddhist practice within the secular world, a fact that may be of interest considering the rise of engaged and socially-involved Buddhism in contemporary scholarship.

In his writing, Shōsan exhibits a capacity to naturally and vitally harmonize the spirit of the various schools of thought in his day—Confucianism, Pure Land Buddhism, and Shinto among others—all on the foundation of a very personal and immediate practice of Zen Buddhism. These schools of thought were and continue to be influential schools of thought in Japan, and a resolution as uncontrived and fundamental as that which Shōsan exhibits is worth pursuing.

In line with expounding upon Shōsan’s resolution of these schools of thought, in this article I wish to focus on his engagement with Confucianism. As shall be discussed more thoroughly further on, Shōsan is usually portrayed as a champion of Buddhism, eager to reassert Buddhist supremacy over and against the rising influence of Tokugawa Confucianism. What I wish to suggest in this article is that perhaps Shōsan’s work is best read together with, instead of in opposition to, Confucianism. I wish to explore the possibility that Shōsan’s Buddhist thought is something that is *essentially* compatible with and thoroughly inseparable from his own approach to Confucianism.

In order to explore this notion, this article will examine the connection between Shōsan’s *A Safe Staff for the Blind* (*Mōanjō*, 盲安杖)¹ and the Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸). We shall begin with an overview of both texts, focusing on the lesser known work by Shōsan. After this, we shall pave the way with a brief exploration of various basic similarities between the two works. Then we shall proceed to areas of direct dialogue, where Shōsan appears to write in *direct response* to themes

discussed in *The Doctrine of the Mean*. We shall end with points of contribution: insights by which Shōsan's tract can be seen to contribute to Confucian thought, but also sections of the Confucian classic that can aid the modern reader through problematic areas in Shōsan's thought.

Overview of the Texts

In the first full length study on Suzuki Shōsan in English, Winston King introduces *A Safe Staff for the Blind* as the first of Shōsan's written works, written in 1616 while he was still in military service, two years prior to his self-tonsure (141). Shōsan subdivides the discussion into ten sections, with headings reflective of the main charge of each section. The section headings are as follows:

1. That joy lies in knowing birth and death.
2. That one must know himself by reflecting upon himself.
3. That one must in all things achieve sympathy with the mind of others.
4. That one must practice, in good faith, loyalty and filial piety.
5. That one must discern his own lot in life and know what is his natural endowment.
6. That virtue lies in avoiding dwelling upon anything.
7. That by forgetting himself one must guard himself.
8. That one must be firmly resolved to take great care when alone.
9. That by destroying the mind one must cultivate the mind.
10. That one must give up petty gain and achieve great gain. (Suzuki and Tyler 31)

Let us briefly go over the basic flow of Shōsan's discussion in *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. Shōsan begins this tract in the first section with an exhortation to realizing one's own mortality, vividly portraying the inescapable occurrence of death in this dewdrop life. The theme of finitude is carried

on to the second section with a discussion of sin and moral finitude. In the third section, Shōsan builds upon this awareness of limitedness, paving the way for a discussion on opening oneself up to others, a notion that is gradually developed along clearly Confucian lines in the fourth and fifth sections. From the sixth section onward, Shōsan attacks the fundamental problem of self-attachment from several directions, seeking to give full concreteness to the basic point he has driven forth so far: That only on the ground of a full awareness of our mortality and finitude can we truly open ourselves up to others and be free to carry out our duties to the full extent of virtue, untrammelled by suffering and self-attachment.

Throughout the text, there are countless references to overtly Confucian virtues such as trustworthiness (信), loyalty and filial piety (忠孝), sincerity (誠) and benevolence (仁). But what stance does this text take toward Confucianism in general? King provides the only English language commentary on the *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, and he develops a primarily oppositional relationship between Shōsan and Confucianism in this moral tract. Let us briefly survey his points.

According to King, the *Mōanjō* was written as a proselytizing piece for a fellow samurai who considered himself a Confucian (141-142). King finds support for this original proselytizing intent in how he interprets Shōsan's statements, and writes, "It indicates that Shōsan's energies and thought were already directed toward the major goal of his life: to demonstrate convincingly that Buddhism, contrary to Confucian slanders, was preeminently useful in and for this world" (emphasis supplied) (142). Comparing *A Safe Staff for the Blind* with another of Shōsan's writings, *Christianity Crushed*,² King also writes, "There is no grandiosely scornful 'logic,' [in *A Safe Staff for the Blind*] but rather an eloquent exposition of some of the basic themes of Buddhism, *always in implicit contrast to what Confucianism is lacking*" (emphasis supplied) (142).

Looking at statements such as these and the overall tone of King's analysis, King can be said to have depicted a primarily oppositional relationship between Shōsan and Confucianism. However, despite King's assessment of *A Safe Staff for the Blind* as a proselytizing piece wherein Shōsan asserts Buddhist superiority over Confucianism, King notes that there are ambiguities in assessing Shōsan's view of Confucianism. King writes:

The Mōanjō seems curiously indirect. Only twice . . . is Confucianism itself explicitly mentioned. But obviously the object of the comparison is never in doubt throughout the work. Such an approach is not surprising, given the fact that Shōsan was not trying to convert his friend from an evil, heretical view, but from a shallower, less adequate philosophy of life (Confucianism) to a more adequate one (Buddhism): or perhaps better, to give him a Buddhistically reconstructed and based Confucianism. Nowhere is there even a suggestion that Confucian moral values are to be abandoned, only that they be universalized. (142)

The relationship between Shōsan's works and Confucianism is a complicated one, and in many ways I must agree with King's basic assessment of Shōsan's unquestionable support for and fidelity to Buddhism. Even in works such as the *Roankyō* (驢鞍橋), Shōsan does champion Buddhism and is clearly unhappy with the misperception that Buddhism is focused on death and is hence useless for this life, unlike Confucianism which is more directly applicable in one's present secular life.

However, despite my fundamental agreement with King's analysis, I think the portrayal represented above must be reconsidered on two points: First, is Shōsan at all indirect with regard to Confucianism? Second, is Shōsan merely asserting the superiority of Buddhism over Confu-

cianism? What I wish to develop in the succeeding sections is how *A Safe Staff for the Blind* can be seen as directly responding to and continuously in dialogue with Confucianism via *The Doctrine of the Mean*. And given this, perhaps it is more advantageous if we see Buddhism and Confucianism as supplementary and inseparable, even to the point of asserting that a study of Confucianism is necessary for penetrating into Shōsan's thought.

In order to develop the answers to these questions, we will be considering *The Doctrine of the Mean* alongside Shōsan's *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. *The Doctrine of the Mean* requires little introduction. It was composed around the fifth century B.C.E. and authorship is ascribed to Zisi (子思). As part of the Four Books of Confucianism, it has come to be considered part of the canon of Confucianism and was certainly a popular text amongst scholars in Tokugawa Japan. The thirty-three short chapters of this text focus on the way of the mean, and in developing this idea delve deeply into the virtue of sincerity (Jp. *makoto*, 誠) and the task of cultivating the people within a state. Perhaps unique to this Confucian classic is a sense of *naturalness* that pervades the discussion of each virtue and practice, an approach that suggests an attempt to reconcile Confucianism with more Daoist modes of thought (Ogyū 232 and Blocker and Starling 99).

Basic Similarities

Having gone through a brief overview of each text, let us proceed to an analysis of the basic similarities between the attitudes presented in Shōsan's *A Safe Staff for the Blind* and Zisi's *The Doctrine of the Mean*. In this section I will highlight three basic similarities, beginning with the structural relationship of Confucian values and Buddhist practice. From thence I shall proceed to a depiction of the common atmosphere of hierarchy, socio-politics and concern with respect to reputation. I shall end with some minor resemblances in the attitudes portrayed in both texts.

Confucian virtue and Buddhist practice

The first similarity I wish to consider is a structural one. How does Shōsan portray the basic relationship between Buddhist practice and Confucian values? Turning to a line from the first section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, we read the following. Shōsan writes, “A warrior, especially, must in his own life know birth and death. When you know birth and death the Way is automatically present. When you do not, humanity [仁], morality [義], propriety [礼], and wisdom [智] are absent too” (Suzuki and Tyler 32). In this passage, the four Confucian virtues are founded upon the Buddhist notion of knowing birth and death. Similarly, the fourth section entitled “practice, in good faith, loyalty and filial piety,” roots loyalty and filial piety (Jp. *chuukou*, 忠孝) upon sincerity, which is in turn grounded upon the Buddhist notions of selflessness and freedom from the three poisons. In the seventh section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, we have a direct reference to Confucianism. Shōsan writes:

The teaching that enjoins humanity [Confucianism]³ says that humanity is to forget oneself and to bestow blessings upon others; to save people from danger and to aid them in extremity; and to put sympathy first and have a compassionate heart. But because the ignorant man pleases himself and forgets others he is absorbed in greed, anger, and false views, nor does he reject evil karma or the passions. Not for an instant does his suffering stop, by day or by night. Mount guard attentively. (Suzuki and Tyler 48)

The previous passage captures the basic contours of Shōsan’s depiction of the relationship between Buddhism and Confucian values. Nowhere in *A Safe Staff for the Blind* does he oppose Confucianism or its values. Instead Confucian values are extolled and a Buddhist model is used to explain what may impede the path to Confucian virtue (the three poisons, passions, attachment) and how one may pave the way for becoming a virtu-

ous person (“mount guard attentively”) in *both* a Confucian and Buddhist sense.

Socio-political atmosphere

Emerging from this basic structure of grounding Confucian virtues within a Buddhist framework, we can also see inescapable similarities in the socio-political atmosphere of both *A Safe Staff for the Blind* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*. The first is a clear understanding of hierarchy. The notion of hierarchy and *unequal* power-relations is a distinctively Confucian notion, and it is clearly expressed in the teaching of the five relationships. In chapter twenty, it is written, “The duties of universal obligation are five . . . The duties are those between sovereign and minister, between father and son, between husband and wife, between elder brother and younger, and those belonging to the intercourse of friends” (Legge 78-79). Of the five constant relationships, only one is a relationship between equals. The other four relationships depict an unequal power structure, wherein obedience to one’s superiors and compassion for one’s inferiors is demanded.

Unlike the general exhortation toward equality found in most Buddhist teachings, Shōsan exhibits a very Confucian attitude of hierarchy and relations of power in *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. To raise a few examples, in the third section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, Shōsan exhorts people to be mindful of the generosity bestowed by superiors—heaven and earth, teachers, the lord of the land, and one’s parents (Suzuki and Tyler 37). Also, the development of trustworthiness, loyalty and filial piety in section four is developed largely with regard to one’s service to one’s superiors (Suzuki and Tyler 40-42).

Within this framework of socio-political hierarchy exhibited in both texts, we also find similar notions of political conservativeness. Throughout *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Zisi exhorts people to accept their

position in the socio-political hierarchy. This is exemplified in chapter fourteen where Zisi writes, “The superior man does what is proper to the station in which he is, he does not desire to go beyond this” (Legge 61). Later in the same chapter, he continues, “The superior man is quiet and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven” (Legge 62). In the later chapters, Zisi repeatedly warns that leadership belongs to those who have the authority to do so—sincere rulers and sages—and from the rest it is obedience that is demanded.

Turning to Shōsan, we must note that despite his training as a Rinzai monk, by no means does he entertain the validity of defiant freedom (as for instance when Rinzai struck his own master). Quite to the contrary, Shōsan continuously exhorts people to utter obedience. From the very first section, he writes, “Know well that it is to your lord’s generosity that you owe your very life, and serve him by giving him your body” (Suzuki and Tyler 32). In the fourth section, he even goes so far as to say that even if one is in the service of a “bad lord,” it is a product of one’s own karma and one needs to continue serving one’s lord with sincere and heartfelt loyalty (Suzuki and Tyler 41). In this manner, we see that Shōsan himself took a politically conservative and hierarchical position, very much akin to that which is suggested by Zisi.

Given this milieu of hierarchy and an exhortation to service of one’s superiors, naturally, there exists a tendency toward an attachment to esteem and a concern for how one is perceived and one’s standing in society. This problem is addressed very clearly in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, where it is written, “Though [the superior man] may be all unknown, unregarded by the world, he feels no regret” (Legge 55). Likewise, in his discussion in the fourth section, Shōsan criticizes those who are attached to the esteem that arises from their goodness and shows that virtue in loyalty or filial piety is something that must arise without this fixation on fame or profit (Suzuki and Tyler 40-41). In both texts, we repeatedly

find a demand to move from a total commitment to service, unfettered by fixations upon one's own reputation.

Minor resemblances in attitudes

Aside from the essential similarities in basic framework and socio-politics, we also see some minor resemblances to *The Doctrine of the Mean* in certain attitudes presented in *A Safe Staff for the Blind*: Vigorous and fierce perseverance, tempered by a sense of caution and shame.

The notion of self-cultivation depicted in *The Doctrine of the Mean* is one filled with vigorous practice. In the eighth chapter, Zisi writes, “[Hui] made choice of the Mean, and whenever he got hold of what was good, he clasped it firmly, as if wearing it on his breast, and did not lose it” (Legge 51). Also, in chapter twenty it is written: “He who attains to sincerity is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast” (Legge 88). Similar notions of a ferocious, almost warrior-like temperament are alluded to as well. In chapter ten it is written: “To lie under arms; and meet death without regret:—this is the energy of Northern regions, and the forceful make it their study” (Legge 53). Zisi continues, “The superior man cultivates a friendly harmony, without being weak.—How firm he is in his energy! He stands erect in the middle, without inclining to either side” (Legge 53-54).

These notions of fierce perseverance and vigorous practice are *definitive* of Suzuki Shōsan's brand of “Samurai-Zen.”⁴ Even before his exhortations to practicing Zen with the glaring intensity of a guardian king, which appear in his later writings, Shōsan's writing already bears this trademark approach in *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. His image for practice always involves “mounting guard,” “forceful reproach,” and the failure of practice involves “yielding,” “wavering,” “giving in.” In the seventh section, he mentions an anecdote, where the protagonist decries a demon saying: “There is a demon of ego-consciousness who can drag one down

to the eight major hells, and he is more horrendous than a hundred thousand of you put together. Have you seen *him*? Have you?” (Suzuki and Tyler 49). It is as if Buddhist practice consists of summing up one’s energy and throwing oneself in a fiercely committed manner into all-out war with the demon of the ego. Shōsan begins the ninth chapter saying, “Do not let yourself suffer because the dim mind obscures the clear, bright mind. Demolish the former at all times. An old saying runs, ‘Kill! Kill! Stop killing a second, and you shoot like an arrow to hell’” (Suzuki and Tyler 50).

But in both *The Doctrine of the Mean* and *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, this fervent and passionate commitment and intense practice is always coupled with a sense of shame and caution. In Zisi’s teachings, the superior man is always described as bearing a sense of caution and apprehension, watchfulness that is ever-mindful of the danger of falling from the course of the mean. There is also a sense of shame that presents itself as the root of energy or valor, which is one of the three universally binding virtues (knowledge, magnanimity/benevolence and energy/valor) that allow one to carry out the duties required by the five relationships. In chapter twenty of *The Doctrine of the Mean* it is written: “To be fond of learning is to be near to knowledge [知]. To practice with vigor is to be near to magnanimity [仁]. To possess the feeling of shame [恥を知る] is to be near to energy [勇]” (Legge 80 and Uno 123).⁵

Similarly, together with the notion of mounting guard is the notion of caution toward the three poisons and the various afflictions that assail the mind. The second section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind* is devoted to a careful analysis of the error of one’s own ways, ever watchful of the myriad forms of capitulation to egotism. Also, with equal resonance to both his Confucian and Pure Land Buddhist heritage, the notion of shame pervades *A Safe Staff for the Blind*—shame at the error of one’s ways, shame at the persistence of one’s ignorance, and also shame that drives

one to serve with faithfulness and integrity. For instance, in the fourth section, Shōsan writes: “Know that integrity lies in feeling shame not before others but before yourself in your own heart” (Suzuki and Tyler 40).⁶

In this section, we have examined the basic contours of both texts and seen how in many ways they prove to be fundamentally compatible. We have seen how in the structure of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, Shōsan never directly opposes Confucianism but instead extols Confucian virtues and founds these virtues upon Buddhist practice. Both texts are discussed from a socio-political frame of hierarchy and unequal power relations, where even the sense of political conservativeness and obedience are shared between the texts. And last, we discussed how even minor attitudes such as the character of fierce perseverance and the notions of caution and shame are resonant in both texts.

What this section shows is that there is *no* fundamental incompatibility between the two texts. Instead, there are many resemblances that suggest that the two texts can be reconciled. However, the facets mentioned above do not necessarily imply that Shōsan had taken the Confucian text seriously, nor do these similarities necessarily imply that he even read the text. As a samurai, he was certainly exposed to these Confucian virtues and the Confucian themes he discussed were likely to have been part of his everyday intellectual milieu. However, it is in the next section that I wish to suggest areas of *direct* dialogue, where perhaps the relationship between the two texts is more clearly attested to.

Areas of Direct Dialogue

Having indicated the basic resonances between Suzuki Shōsan’s *A Safe Staff for the Blind* and the Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, I wish to now turn to themes within *A Safe Staff for the Blind* that may suggest a

direct dialogue with the Confucian text. There are three sections from *A Safe Staff for the Blind* that are pertinent to this discussion. The first is section four, “That one must practice, in good faith, loyalty and filial piety.” Next is section five, “That one must discern his own lot in life and know what is his natural endowment.” Last is section eight, “That one must be firmly resolved to take great care when alone.” These three sections will be discussed in parallel with corresponding sections of *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

Section 4: That one must practice, in good faith, loyalty and filial piety.

The fourth section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind* is the first section to take off on directly Confucian lines. In this section, Shōsan discusses two Confucian virtues which could be described as the two wheels upon which the entire system of a duty-driven Confucian society runs—loyalty (Jp. *chuu*, 忠) and filial piety (Jp. *kou*, 孝). Filial piety is the foundational value wherein service to one’s elders and one’s obligations to one’s ancestors is emphasized. This is the cornerstone of filial ethics. Loyalty on the other hand is the cornerstone of social ethics, and is a value that demands wholehearted service to one’s superiors and the society to which one belongs.

What Shōsan endeavors to do in this section is to show that merely *actions* that can be considered as acts of loyalty and filial piety alone cannot be considered as sufficient expressions of virtue. The true practice of loyalty and filial piety rests upon the inner virtue of integrity (*makoto*, previously translated as sincerity). Without integrity, one cannot act purely for the sake of duty and one is always drawn to various reprehensible and shameful acts. But what keeps us from the path of integrity? For Shōsan, the biggest hindrance to this consummate Confucian virtue is a problem directly confronted by Buddhism. The three poisons (greed, anger, stupidity), spiritual ignorance (Jp. *mumyou*, 無明)—all of these

manifest attachment to self, which hinders one from service to one's family and one's lord.

I agree with King when he observes how Shōsan has given Confucianism here a strongly Buddhist turn (153-154). By depicting the path of integrity as being barred by spiritual ignorance, Confucian virtue is grounded in Buddhist spiritual practice. But what I disagree with here is the assertion that Shōsan considers Buddhism *superior* to Confucian virtue. King writes, "Shōsan maintains that the *Buddhist* man-at-arms can be a better, more devoted vassal than a mere Confucian" (154). Certainly, Shōsan had problems with the virtue of a "*mere* Confucian"—one who merely carried out the external obligations so heavily emphasized in popular Confucian ethics. But would he not be equally, if not more so distraught with a *mere Buddhist*? A person who devotes himself merely to his own enlightenment without concern for service and societal obligations is most certainly reprehensible, according to Shōsan's teachings.

Therefore, although Shōsan is certainly supplementing Confucianism with Buddhist spirituality, I assert that it is even more evident that he is supplementing Buddhist spirituality with Confucian ethics. This becomes clearer when we take into consideration the consistency between his discussion and *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

Shōsan begins this chapter with a critique of superficial expressions of service. He opens this section with: "When it is fame and profit that drive us we have no integrity. Even they who please their lord and wait intimately upon him seldom have integrity. All that moves them is the greedy desire to improve their own fortunes" (Suzuki and Tyler 40). In the next paragraph, he directly links this to the social virtues: "It is not easy to follow with integrity the path of loyalty and filial piety. Even they who rush into the enemy ranks and who meet death there only act for fame and profits" (Suzuki and Tyler 40). What we read here is a criticism of a mere perfunctory engagement in acts of loyalty and filial piety.

If it is only personal gain that drives us and sincerity is not present, can this even be called loyalty or filial piety?

But although this is a critique of the most heavily championed Confucian values, it is by no means removed from Confucianism nor is it a critique of Confucianism as a whole. Instead, the relationship of loyalty, filial piety and good faith, and how these are rooted in integrity is a relationship that is expressed in *The Doctrine of the Mean*. In chapter twenty it is written:

When those in inferior situations do not obtain the confidence of the sovereign, they cannot succeed in governing the people. There is a way to obtain the confidence of the sovereign;—if one is not trusted by his friends, he will not get the confidence of his sovereign. There is a way to being trusted [Jp. *shin*, 信] by one's friends;—if one is not obedient to his parents, he will not be true to friends. There is a way to being obedient to one's parents;—if one, on turning his thoughts in upon himself, finds a want of sincerity, [*makoto*] he will not be obedient to his parents. (Legge 87-88 and Uno 135-136)

The links of a well-governed society, wherein loyalty to one's lord holds sway, is held together by trustworthiness and good faith (*shin*) amongst citizens. This in turn is inseparable from each person's private life, wherein this trustworthiness is first expressed as obedience and filial piety. But this entire network of relationships rests on an innermost notion of sincerity and integrity (*makoto*). Shōsan's assertion of the need to ground social ethics on the personal, spiritual virtue of sincerity is as much Confucian as it is Buddhist.

Let us turn to another parallel that appears within this section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. One of the most telling appeals to Buddhism ap-

pears toward the end of this section. Here, Shōsan appeals to a sense of naturalness in the virtue of integrity (*makoto*), writing the following: “There is nothing perverse about integrity. The man of integrity is simply the man who has nothing to strive after. There is a verse that runs, ‘One who is simply natural is a Buddha just like that. Should you see a Buddha, he is just a natural man’” (Suzuki and Tyler 42).

The passage quoted above represents a marked shift in the entire tone of this section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. The entirety of the section prior to this passage takes a strong and critical stance toward immorality. The notion of endeavor and the call for moral exertion ring clear throughout his discussion of loyalty, filial piety, and the need to give up oneself and walk the path of integrity. But arriving at the aforementioned passage, one finds the sheer weight of the imperative of duty counterbalanced by the notions of non-striving and naturalness.

The appearance of this passage points to an “ethics of non-striving,” a notion that I find to be particularly well-developed in Buddhist thought. Although religious and ethical practice necessarily demand effort and a fervent commitment to walking the way, this exertion must be distinguished from the striving that is found when we chase after our attachments. “Striving” in the latter sense bears within a certain *dissatisfaction* with reality and a *fixation* on a particular way that things should be. These twin movements of dissatisfaction and fixation are indicative of what is referred to in Buddhism as craving (Skt. *tṛṣṇā*), an attachment to the self that is manifested as closing up oneself from reality and an attempt to assert one’s will over things. Hence, in the end of the fourth section, Shōsan appears to warn us of the danger of embarking on the path of integrity, loyalty and filial piety from the ground of this dissatisfied, fixated and craving ego that is hungry to be seen as trustworthy, loyal and filial. Instead, it is from the ground of a dynamic acceptance of

reality and where it is called to move that we are able to truly, naturally and non-coercively walk the path of virtue.

I agree with King when he states that it is the *Buddhist* way that so clearly articulates the need for reaching utmost sincerity—wherein one’s being naturally overflows into service and moral conduct from the ground of an opening up to reality beyond all the fabrications of attachment (155). But although Shōsan’s articulation refers directly to Buddhism, it is curious that *The Doctrine of the Mean* also contains an appeal to naturalness in sincerity, an appeal that is found immediately following the above-quoted passage on the relation of loyalty, trustworthiness, filial piety and sincerity. In chapter twenty it is written:

Sincerity is the way of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought;—he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way. He who attains to sincerity is he who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast. (Legge 88)

Seeing sincerity as the “way of heaven” (Jp. *ten no michi*, 天の道) (Uno 137) brings the virtue of sincerity toward the realm of naturalness (as in the word *ten’nen* 天然), to the realm of things as they truly and spontaneously are. Sincerity, which lies at the heart of loyalty and filial piety, is a virtue that, without the contrivance of effort and thought, without the artifice of chasing after an ideal of being a loyal servant and a filial son, arrives at a passionate and committed fulfillment of the good.

This appeal to sincerity and naturalness of virtue is something that *The Doctrine of the Mean* is well known for. The well-known Confucian philosopher Ogyū Sorai (荻生徂徠) who was born shortly after Shōsan’s

death actually suggests that Zisi must have written *The Doctrine of the Mean* as a Confucian response to Daoism (232).

Reading the discussion of Buddha as a “natural man” in *A Safe Staff for the Blind* in parallel with this section of Zisi’s text, it appears that Shōsan’s appeal to an ethics of non-striving is not peculiar to Buddhism, but is something that already received direct mention in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, within the same context of a discussion of the public virtues of loyalty, filial piety and trustworthiness and their relation to sincerity. Therefore, it is not unthinkable that instead of a critique of Confucianism, Shōsan is presenting a Buddhist parallel to Confucianism in order to develop a critical point already expounded upon in this key Confucian classic.

Section 5: That one must discern his own lot in life and know what is his natural endowment.

Let us proceed to the next section of Shōsan’s tract. In the fifth section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, Shōsan begins by characterizing four kinds of members of society (or perhaps four stages of moral development). He describes good people, ordinary people, ignorant people, and people of the lowest degree of ignorance and in doing so paints a concrete and resonant picture of how virtue can present itself in relation to one’s position in society.

Briefly examining the two opposite ends of the spectrum, we see the following: For Shōsan, good people are those who are thoroughly selfless and devote themselves to serving other people. They carry out their actions with loyalty, filial piety, compassion and good moral judgment. Even in high positions, they are unfettered by their own status (Suzuki and Tyler 42).

However, it is the other way around for Shōsan’s caricature of ignorant people. These people are entangled within themselves, fixated with

their own success. Yet they feel inadequate and resentful beside their superiors. Hence when misfortune befalls others, they feel relieved and happy that they are not doing so terribly. They are thoroughly caught up in how they want to feel and have no regard for what other people need of them and the duties they owe. They busy themselves trying to better their position in life, but they never serve thoroughly from where they are, and end up driving themselves into a horrible fate (Suzuki and Tyler 43-44).

Although Shōsan's examples do a fine job of concretizing his notion of the superior man, it is hard to be certain of what Shōsan means by the notion of "discerning one's lot in life" and "knowing one's natural endowment"—which comprise the title of this section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. And when Shōsan points to the fundamental error of the lowest kind of person, saying, "All this is because they simply cannot distinguish their own lot in life" (Suzuki and Tyler 44), it appears that Shōsan is addressing someone who has a particular understanding of the meaning of the phrase, "distinguish one's lot in life."

While this section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind* is certainly intelligible on its own, it becomes much clearer when it is read alongside the fourteenth chapter of *The Doctrine of the Mean*. Zisi begins this chapter writing: "The superior man does what is proper to the station in which he is, he does not desire to go beyond this" (Legge 61). What comprises a person's station is elaborated in the following way:

In a position of wealth and honor, he does what is proper to a position of wealth and honor. In a poor and low position, he does what is proper to a poor and low position. Situated among barbarous tribes In a position of sorrow and difficulty (Legge 61)

One's station comprises whatever situation one might find oneself in, beginning with one's position in society—a notion that was obviously important in the four-tiered class structure of Tokugawa Japan. The response to this station advised by Zisi is one of acceptance, without the dissatisfaction that leads to desiring to go beyond one's station. From this attitude, one is to find what is proper—the duties that are entailed within this station. Zisi continues: "In a high situation, he does not treat with contempt his inferiors. In a low situation, he does not court the favor of his superiors" (Legge 62).

Perhaps it is this attitude of acceptance for one's station and seeking out one's duties within one's station that is presumed by Shōsan when he exhorts his reader to "discern your own lot in life and know your natural endowment" (Suzuki and Tyler 42). Zisi writes, "Thus it is that the superior man is quiet and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven [Jp. *ten*, 天] while the mean man walks in dangerous paths, looking for lucky occurrences" (Legge 62). What we see here is that discerning one's lot in life is understood in a particular manner—not as finding what one wants to do (one's place under the sun, in modern parlance) nor as seeking to gain full use of the talents afforded by one's natural endowment—but instead as heedfully and selflessly awaiting the station that is bestowed by heaven (*ten*), nature or fate, and serving as best one can from there.

If we take this notion of awaiting, accepting, and serving from one's station as the presupposition offered by the notion of "discerning one's lot in life," then the thread that runs through the descriptions of the four kinds of people becomes clear. In the case of the various virtues that were ascribed to good people, we see that what holds these virtues together is an intrinsic attitude of service and acceptance that leads the superior person to serve *from whatever position* he may be in, unfettered by his position. And as such, one's station in life becomes the *point of de-*

parture for service instead of its end goal. On the other hand, in the case of the most inferior people, dissatisfaction and self-absorption pervade all the failings Shōsan attributes to them. And it is to this that they fail to distinguish their lot in life, in that in their opportunism and self-serving, they are unable to see how they are called to act within the present situation, and are unable to give themselves fully in service to and engagement with society.

The connection between the fifth section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind* and chapter fourteen of *The Doctrine of the Mean* becomes even clearer when Shōsan writes:

Although no one means to live badly, when the mind is not up to living well [and serving from one's station] one destroys himself as well [with his own dissatisfaction]. One is the like a poor man, for example, who fails to get away with living beyond his means. So do not undertake that which goes beyond your capacity and your station in life. In any case, once you have understood that it is a deficiency in your own mind [and attitude toward your position] which is causing your distress, you will at last be capable of compassion. (Suzuki and Tyler 44)

In this passage, we see Shōsan responding directly to the emotional predicament of one dissatisfied with his position in society. While the dissatisfied man is concerned heavily with his own status, he usually blames these dissatisfactions on things outside himself—that his unhappiness results from the ill-fortune of an undesired fate that has been cast upon him. But Shōsan says that it is one's own attitude, not one's position that causes distress and dissatisfaction.

This insight mirrors that of Zisi, who writes: “The Master said, ‘In archery we have something like the way of the superior man. When the archer misses the center of the target, he turns round and seeks for the

cause of his failure in himself” (Legge 62). The insight that allows an attitude of acceptance and service is the awareness that one’s dissatisfaction is caused by *oneself*, not by one’s situation. It is for this reason that the superior man, “rectifies himself, and seeks for nothing from others, so that he has no dissatisfactions. He does not murmur against Heaven, nor grumble against men” (Legge 62).

The first half of this section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind* can be seen to mirror the flow of Zisi’s reasoning in chapter fourteen of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, developing the notion of the superior man by contrasting him with those of lesser degrees of moral aptitude and showing how his way is rooted in his attitude toward his station and how that in turn is rooted in an awareness of the real cause of dissatisfaction—oneself.

The latter half of this section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind* develops the idea that, as with dissatisfaction, the disgust for the evil in the world is rooted in one’s own evil. Shōsan cites a verse, “If only it were others’ evil I find within my good! The evil of every man is my very own” (Suzuki and Tyler 45). For Shōsan, this is not a license to concern oneself solely with one’s improvement and simply let other people wreak havoc upon society. Instead, one must correct others faults *from the ground of acceptance*, instead of disdain for their evil. But Shōsan brings the discussion to a close back within the grounds of Buddhism, reminding the reader that even this rectification of external “evils” is still rooted in an acceptance of difference, as “willows are green and flowers red” (Suzuki and Tyler 45).

Section 8: That one must be firmly resolved to take great care when alone.

The last point of direct dialogue between the two texts is a very short section on inner life that curiously begins with the words, “Be firmly resolved to take great care [Jp. *tsutsushimu*, 慎む] when alone” (Suzuki and Tyler 49). In this section, Shōsan exhorts one to be careful of one’s inner

world. In an ethic where service and engagement with society is held in prime importance, there lurks a danger of living a double life—publicly committed to service, privately filled with self-serving desires. The notion of shame often degenerates into mere shame before *others* and concern for how one is perceived—a real danger within popular Confucian ethics. But Shōsan asserts, “Why, then, should you not feel shame toward yourself? You forget this truth and are ashamed lest others discover what is wrong in you, but the mind of others and your own mind are not separate at all” (Suzuki and Tyler 50).

Although Shōsan’s argument uses the Buddhist notion of one-mind and co-existence to rectify a common Confucian problem, the wording and focus of this section is curiously related to one of the more cryptic lines at the beginning of *The Doctrine of the Mean*. In the first chapter, Zisi writes, “There is nothing more visible than what is secret, and nothing more manifest than what is minute. Therefore the superior man is watchful [*tsutsushimu*, 慎む] over himself, when he is alone” (Legge 44 and Uno 51). From the context of the first chapter, this passage very cryptically alludes to how the entire text of Zisi will focus on the innermost things that lie in how a man stands before reality, as the ground of the entire manifest structure of Confucian ethics.

Given the similarities in the wording and topic of Shōsan’s and Zisi’s words, and the curious usage of “watchfulness over oneself whilst alone” as a central metaphor, is it not likely that this is a direct response and elaboration of this cryptic Confucian passage in lines congenial to both Buddhist and Confucian schools of thought?

* * *

In the previous section, we have discussed the areas of direct dialogue with Zisi’s *The Doctrine of the Mean* present in sections four, five and eight of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. In the discussion of section four, we saw how

the relationship between loyalty, trustworthiness, filial piety and sincerity that Shōsan asserts is something that is already detailed in chapter twenty of Zisi's work. Shōsan's Buddhist appeal to sincerity as the heart of an "ethics of non-striving" is something that is mirrored as well in this chapter with Zisi's exhortation to sincerity as natural and effortless virtue. In the discussion of section five, we saw how Shōsan's central concept of distinguishing one's lot in life is inextricably related to chapter fourteen of *The Doctrine of the Mean* and the discussion of awaiting, accepting, and serving from one's station in life. And as with the text of Zisi, Shōsan roots this attitude in an awareness that it is the self that is the source of dissatisfaction. And lastly, in the discussion of section eight, we saw how the central image of watchfulness over oneself whilst alone unmistakably resembles and develops a cryptic section from the opening chapter of Zisi's work.

From the basic compatibilities between the two texts presented in the previous section and the connections and likenesses examined in this section, what kind of relationship can we surmise from these two texts? First of all, given that Shōsan was a samurai who often commented upon Confucianism and that *The Doctrine of the Mean* is one of the Four Confucian Classics that were rising to prominence in Tokugawa Japan, I find it highly unlikely that he was unfamiliar with the teachings contained therein. Given the similarities in content and also in wording, I assert that it is certain that Shōsan had already read *The Doctrine of the Mean* by the time he had written *A Safe Staff for the Blind* and he definitely had some of the key ideas of Zisi's work in mind as he wrote. Furthermore, it is *highly possible* that Shōsan composed significant sections of his ethical tract in *direct response* to portions of *The Doctrine of the Mean*. If King's aforementioned suggestion is correct and Shōsan had indeed written this piece for a fellow samurai who was a self-professed Confucian, then it would explain why *The Doctrine of the Mean* could easily be used as a sub-text, with no need for direct mention, simply because the reader

was bound to notice the unmistakable references to Zisi's text.

However, we find that Shōsan's attitude is hardly adversarial, in what may be a direct response to Zisi's text. Quite the opposite, the themes taken up within *A Safe Staff for the Blind* are fully compatible both in background and approach to Confucianism. Even the particular topics, wordings and lines of argumentation appear to borrow heavily from *The Doctrine of the Mean*. Hence, what I would like to suggest here is that perhaps it would be advantageous for scholarship on Suzuki Shōsan to proceed in a manner that sees Shōsan's thought as one that is compatible with and benefiting from serious Confucian scrutiny. Although Shōsan is certainly Buddhist, much of his Buddhism is so unmistakably carved from a Confucian grain. Thus, an understanding of Confucianism may aid understanding Shōsan, and vice versa.

Points of Contribution

I wish to end with some brief suggestions concerning the possibilities for mutual contribution between the thought of Shōsan and Confucianism, as exemplified by the common ideas expounded in both *A Safe Staff for the Blind* and *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

Shōsan to Confucianism: sincerity and the Buddhist way

In his quest to show the fundamental unity of the Buddha Dharma and the World Dharma, one of Shōsan's greatest accomplishments was his concretization of social virtue on the innermost ground of selfhood. In *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, Shōsan expounds on public virtues, many of them Confucian ones—loyalty, filial piety, trustworthiness, service, compassion, courage, and so on—but is always careful to show the two-way relationship that these have with the inner virtue of spiritual freedom. On one hand, virtuous acts are important for cultivating and returning to this primordial sense of spiritual freedom, for removing attachment to

self and dispelling the ignorance that obscures the Buddha Mind. But on the other hand, it is this spiritual freedom that is the foundation for true service. For Shōsan, enlightenment manifests, not as spontaneous outbursts without regard for social norm, but instead naturally and spontaneously flowers into goodness, compassion for one's fellow human beings and service within society. Hence, he is able to wed Confucian ethical virtues with Buddhist spiritual virtues in a mutually complementary manner.

Grounding ethics upon inner spiritual virtues is hardly unique to Shōsan's synthesis. It can be said that the entire drive of *The Doctrine of the Mean* was to show how the entire system of public ethics—from the largest scale of ruling a nation to every interaction within the five relations—is rooted and finds its perfection in the innermost virtue of sincerity. But a particular problem besets Confucianism; sincerity does not seem to be something that can be taught. This is a problem that deeply troubled Ogyū Sorai, whose remarks we have mentioned earlier. In his *Benmei*, he writes:

Sincerity refers to what issues from the center of one's mind and heart, without depending on thought or effort. If you wish for sincerity in the least, you begin to think and strive for it. For this reason, sincerity cannot be achieved deliberately. Therefore, the teachings of the early kings and Confucius addressed notions such as loyalty and trustworthiness but never mentioned sincerity since it cannot be taught. (Ogyū 229)

However, this concern is precisely what is addressed by Shōsan's synthesis of Buddhism and Confucianism. The most relevant passage is found in the fourth section of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. Shōsan writes:

When bewilderment exceeds integrity, no amount of clearing away will get rid of it. Your practice of humanity and of morality will have no integrity, no matter what exhortations you subject yourself to. All this happens because you are blocked by the six roots and bewildered in yourself, and therefore your integrity is obscured. Give your self up twenty-four hours a day and enter upon the path of integrity. (Suzuki and Tyler 42)

In this crucial passage, Shōsan interprets integrity (*makoto*) as a value that is opposed to bewilderment (*mumyou*) and hence brings integrity from the realm of ethical values to the realm of spiritual values in Buddhist soteriology. This brings the expertise of Buddhism in psycho-spiritual training to bear upon the more practical and socio-ethically developed Confucianism. In Buddhism for instance, discourse on the paradox between practice/effort and no-self/spontaneity can be said to be more extensively developed. From here, I think the possibility of “cultivated naturalness” or “becoming what you are” in Zen Buddhism comes forth as a particular approach to Ogyū’s problem of “acquiring” sincerity.

Confucianism to Shōsan: ethical enlightenment and creative transformation

Although it is common to pay close attention to Shōsan’s contributions and critical comments with regard to the Confucian thought of his day, I would like to stress the importance of seeing how Confucianism can help one through various problematic areas in Shōsan’s thought. One particular area that I find to be greatly problematic in Shōsan’s thought (as a whole and in *A Safe Staff for the Blind* in particular) concerns the notion of creative freedom.

Shōsan’s thought is undeniably politically conservative—a quality that has been detailed in earlier sections. This conservativeness opposes coercive self-fixation so heavily that it can fall to the opposite (and

equally problematic) extreme of capitulation to the pre-existing order of things. This is most apparent in the first, fourth, and fifth sections of *A Safe Staff for the Blind*, where he exhorts selfless service to such an extreme that it becomes almost unquestioning of one's lord and the given social order. It is in response to this character that scholars such as Herman Ooms have laid heavy criticism upon Shōsan. One particularly strong criticism reads as such:

On the one hand, [in Shōsan's thought] we see a negative value-perception-action cluster of political initiative culminating in death; on the other, the religious practice of guarding an undifferentiating mind to instill political acquiescence and achieve purity—a summation of the ideology that unifies all Shōsan's teachings. Perhaps the most salient aspect of Tokugawa society was the hierarchical social and political cleavage between rulers and ruled. Shōsan's stance toward this reality is that its political truth should not be objectified as such in thought but should be misrecognized through religious significations. (Ooms 253)

Even the most devout Shōsan scholar must consider these claims, for Shōsan's advocacy of selfless service can be so extreme that it neuters the self into total, infertile capitulation. However, I feel that this is inconsistent with, among others, the life of Shōsan where he himself opposed the order of things, risked death by becoming a monk, and had more than a mouthful to say about how the samurai class was acting, how the land should be governed, and so on. Hints of a possibility for creativity can be seen for instance in the fifth chapter, where Shōsan writes,

There is a verse which runs, "If only it were others' evil I find within my good! The evil of every man is my very own." Let this

verse be a mirror for the mind. Nevertheless, it does not mean that we should allow all faults. It tells us to grasp the real teaching and to correct . . .⁷ faults with compassion. (Suzuki and Tyler 45 and Suzuki *Suzuki Shōsan* 56)

It is possible to interpret this passage as hinting that from the ground of true understanding (of the *Dharma*) and freedom from selfish dissatisfaction, it is possible to actively rectify our faults and the faults of others, and in so doing take part in an active sense of social transformation. However, this reading is definitely underdeveloped in *A Safe Staff for the Blind*. But it is possible to turn to *The Doctrine of the Mean* for a more thorough development of this notion.

Zisi's text contains one of the most developed discussions of creativity in Confucian literature, one that can be directly tied to the notion of acceptance of and service from one's station. In the fourteenth chapter of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, the notion of discerning one's lot in life was captured in the line, "Thus it is that the superior man is quiet and calm, waiting for the appointments of Heaven . . ." (Legge 62). But what are these appointments of Heaven? Is this merely the pre-existing order of things?

In the seventeenth chapter of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, it is written, "Thus it is that Heaven, in the production of things, is sure to be bountiful to them, according to their qualities. Hence the tree that is flourishing, it nourishes, while that which is ready to fall, it overthrows" (Legge 67-68). Zisi ends this chapter writing, "We may say therefore that he who is greatly virtuous will be sure to receive the appointment of Heaven" (Legge 68).

What we read here is that the appointments of heaven are not merely the givens of life. Not merely the class we are born to or the lord that we serve. Part of the holding-sway of Heaven is in the qualities of

men and the development of virtue within them. And for those who are of great virtue, it is to far more than obeisance that they are called.

In the later chapters of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Zisi begins to expound on sincerity as the ground for creativity. In chapter twenty-three Zisi writes: “It is only he who is possessed of the most complete sincerity that can exist under heaven, who can transform” (Legge 94). Also, in chapter twenty-five, Zisi states: “The possessor of sincerity does not merely accomplish the self-completion of himself. With this quality he completes *other men and things also*” (Legge 97).

Although throughout *The Doctrine of the Mean*, Zisi exhorts us to be subservient, to be aware of the demands of relations upon us and to fulfill our responsibilities to our fellow human beings, sincerity is something that, while allowing us to be able to genuinely fulfill our duties, also carries us beyond duty. This exaltation of sincerity culminates in the penultimate chapter of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, where it is written:

It is only the individual possessed of the most entire sincerity that can exist under Heaven, who can adjust the great invariable relations of mankind, establish the great fundamental virtues of humanity, and know the transforming and nurturing operations of Heaven and Earth;—shall this individual have any being or anything beyond himself on which he depends? (Legge 114-115)

Although sincerity is the ground upon which filial piety, trustworthiness, loyalty, and the entire system of duty and responsibility in service are founded, sincerity is the gateway to *perfect creative freedom*. Hence, if we are mindful of the original intent of *The Doctrine of the Mean*, by no means is the imperative for service and a letting go of self a capitulation to the order of things. Instead, it is an act of freeing oneself from the encumbrances of selfishness, delusions about one’s isolated existence, greed and dissatisfaction. But when we are free from the trappings of

self and are able to move with society as a whole, we are also free to transform the world, not from the ground of dissatisfaction but from the compassion that nourishes each being into self-completion.

In the previous section, we discussed several possibilities of mutual contribution between Shōsan and his ethical tract, *A Safe Staff for the Blind* on one hand, and Confucianism, particularly Zisi's *The Doctrine of the Mean*, on the other. We showed how Shōsan's work contributes to Confucianism in that it shows how spiritual freedom and social virtue can be mutually cultivating. And of particular interest was how *A Safe Staff for the Blind* brings the entire corpus of self-cultivation in Buddhism to bear upon the possibility of cultivating spontaneous sincerity. We also showed how the notion of creative freedom on the ground of sincerity developed in *The Doctrine of the Mean* can be used to go beyond excessive political conservatism found in Shōsan's thought.

Conclusion

Suzuki Shōsan penned *A Safe Staff for the Blind* at the very beginning of his intellectual career, but for some of his followers, it remained an important writing until the very end. Perhaps an essential part of its importance lies in how it dealt with key forces within the intellectual milieu of his time, particularly Neo-Confucianism. This can be seen in the basic resemblances as well as unmistakable parallels between *A Safe Staff for the Blind* and the Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, which suggest that Shōsan was well-aware of, if not directly responding to, the Confucian text. But more important than any archeological connection between two texts, I wish to encourage and contribute to a genuine and mutually deepening *dialogue* between these two important schools of thought. I have suggested several possible avenues by which Buddhist thought in general, and Shōsan's thought in particular can contribute to deepening and grounding Confucian ethics; and simultaneously, how Confucian thought might pave the way for an understanding of Shōsan

that allows his rigorous practice of self-mastery to truly, freely and creatively flower into public service.

Suzuki Shōsan, warrior, thinker, and teacher, lived, taught and struggled with the notion of the unity of the teaching of the world and the teaching of Buddha. In a time of ossified rules, where skeletons of once-vital ideologies have become rigid and constricting, in a time where non-dualistic spiritualities are finding it difficult to be applicable in a world too busy for a hermit's religiosity, would it not be a most precious thing for us to let his old words speak anew, amidst the voices they were meant to harmoniously resound?

Notes

1. Tyler translates *Mōanjō* (盲安杖) as “*A Safe Staff for the Blind*” (1977), and King translates it as “*A Trust-Worthy Staff for the Blind*” (1986). I shall be using Tyler's translation of the title, as he provides the only complete translation of the work. Please note that King refers to this book merely by its Romanized title “*Mōanjō*.”
2. A translation is available in George Ellison, *Deus Destroyed: The Image of Christianity in Early Modern Japan*.
3. Tyler indicates the reference to Confucianism in the endnotes of his translation.
4. “*Samurai-Zen*” is a line used by King to describe Shōsan's practice.
5. Occasionally, Uno's (medieval) Japanese translation of certain words and phrases from *The Doctrine of the Mean* is provided, in order to provide the Chinese characters (in most cases identical in the classical Chinese and in the Japanese translation) and to facilitate anyone who wishes to directly compare it with Shōsan's text, which is also written in medieval Japanese.

6. Original reads “心に心を恥じて” (Suzuki 54) literally “to be ashamed of one’s heart in one’s heart.” The character for shame is identical to the Japanese and the classical Chinese texts of *The Doctrine of the Mean*.

7. Tyler translates this line as “correct our faults with compassion.” However in the original, the word “our” does not appear, hence this line considers both our faults and the faults of others.

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