The Ideas of the "Followers of Zen" in J. D. Salinger's Fiction: With Their Development and Limitations

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Salinger's fiction often describes characters who aim to reconcile spirituality with secularity in order to live a spiritual life in secular American society. With the purpose of achieving this goal, he seems to use the notion of "indiscrimination" in Zen, which signifies the transcendence of all dualism, and therefore enables one to transcend the opposition between spirituality and secularity. This thesis defines the characters who seek to transcend the opposition between spirituality and secularity by means of the concept of indiscrimination as the "Followers of Zen" adopting D. T. Suzuki's term, considering his considerable influence on Zen discourses of America in Salinger's time, and the strong possibility that he actually read at least one of Suzuki's books. In the light of this concept, this thesis aims to suggest more explicitly a previously overlooked correlation among his works, and the ideological shifts of the writer underlying the surface of his themes, so as to uncover the limitations of Salinger's ideas, considering the characteristics of Zen discourses in America from the 1940s to the 1960s.

For the "Follower(s)," transcendence of self-consciousness is one of the most important themes, because transcending any discrimination depends on the transcendence of the dualism between self and other. In "The Inverted Forest" (1947) and "A Perfect Day for Bananafish" (1948), Salinger underlines the difficulty of transcending self-consciousness. By describing the "Follower" who fails to achieve the transcendence of self and succumbs to the secularity of the world, Salinger criticizes the secular American society, and highlights the impossibility of indiscrimination. In *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) and "De Daumier-Smith's Blue Period" (1952), Salinger describes the "Follower" who succeeds in transcending self. In these stories, an epiphany represents indiscrimination as the experience of a spiritual moment by the secular protagonist. However, Salinger raises some new problems: the limitations of such salvation as a form of personal experience, and the exclusion of the "Follower" after salvation because of the remaining conflict between American society and Zen. In "Teddy" (1953), Salinger creates a transcendent character who embodies his

ultimate ideal, and explores the life of the "Follower" after reaching indiscrimi-
nation. Although Salinger's strong critical tendency contradicts indiscrimina-
tion, he shows a new tendency to try to enlighten the secular American society
with Zen-like values, which is the turning point in the context of the "Follower."
In "Seymour: An Introduction" (1959), he introduces a metafictional structure,
and makes the writer inside fiction realize his ideal of pursuing indiscrimination
through the act of writing. In addition, this structure directs readers to seek
salvation inside fiction, showing Salinger's social reforming tendency.
Nevertheless, he falls into the double-standard of limiting his readers to the
ideal reader. Such a defect implies that Salinger, depicting the "Follower," who
intends to transcend dualism with the concept of indiscrimination, has a funda-
mental contradiction in his thought. In "Hapworth 16, 1924" (1965), although
he tries to enlighten his readers, his critical tendency reappears and contra-
dicts the theme of indiscrimination. This suggests that the concept of
"Follower" comprehends a dualistic mode of thinking. Actually, D. T. Suzuki
had transformed Zen Buddhism into a form of Zen which has an affinity with a
dualistic, Western mode of thinking. Because Salinger was influenced by
Suzuki's Zen, the ideas of the "Follower" are based on dualistic ethical values
as a product of the Zen discourse of America from the 1940s to the 1960s,
although he intends to transcend dualism in the same way as postmodernists.
At this point, he shows the limitations of the period in being unable to recognize
the dualistic concept of westernized Zen in his time.