

Seminar:

Zen, D.T. Suzuki and the Nazis

24. Mai, 14.15-15.45, Seminarraum 304 der Evangelisch-Theologischen Fakultät,
Universitätsstr. 13-17.

The first American to make direct contact with D.T. Suzuki in postwar, occupied Japan was Albert Stunkard. Stunkard recalls the circumstances of his meeting with Suzuki as follows: “I was working in Tokyo as an army medical officer at Sugamo Prison, providing medical care for the men who were being tried for war crimes by the International Military Tribunal for the Far East. . . . One of the prisoners, later to become recognized as a religious thinker, was Graf Duerckheim, a German. He used to talk to me about Zen. One day he mentioned Dr. Suzuki, with whom he had studied, suggesting that I visit Dr. Suzuki at his home in a small town not far from Tokyo.”

Although only mentioned briefly, I recall wondering who Graf Duerckheim was, and why he had been imprisoned as a suspected war criminal? Far more importantly, I wondered why a suspected German war criminal had been studying with D.T. Suzuki during WW II?

The purpose of this lecture is to share the ‘discoveries’ made in the process of researching this question and the larger question of Nazi interest in Zen and Buddhism.