

**THE PHILOSOPHY OF NISHITANI KEIJI
1900-1990**



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1900 – 1990

Lectures on Religion and Modernity

Translated, with an Interpretive Commentary by
Jonathan Morris Augustine
and
Yamamoto Seisaku

With a Preface by
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PREFACE

Anyone who has had the opportunity to be in a class taught by Keiji, or who has had the privilege of a conversation with him, knows well that he was, first and foremost, a philosopher. He would grapple with every question by rigorously exploring the pros and cons of a potential answer, with the result that one could not help but be caught up in his sustained search for clarity and understanding. Sometimes no answer was available, as in a conversation I had with him two days after the loss of his beloved wife. He had insisted on keeping our appointment, in spite of his evident pain. So, sitting across a tea table from him, he reflected that “death was a very difficult problem. I have taught about death for years, but in the face of it, it remains a very difficult problem.” We talked about his loss, and this now-embodied problem led him to reflect anew to try to locate a philosophical, as well as an emotional place to rest in the face of it.

His class lectures would often go on for hours longer than they were scheduled, and, even then, he would go with his class to a near-by restaurant where, over food and drink, the dialogue would continue. He knew well that dialogue, if genuine, has no end.

It is little wonder, then, that in the present series of lectures we find Nishitani trying to think through complex issues from the ground up. While he was open to new ideas, he remained convinced that with the loss of religion in modern secular society, something basic to our humanity had been lost. His search for an account of religion that was modern enough to be accepted by his generation bore evidence of the influence of three of his teachers: Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime and Nishida

(and Zen Buddhism), because he showed that human beings are not only individuals but manifestations of a transcendent emptiness or nothingness. Nishida's "identity of self-contradiction" forced acceptance of existence as a continual play of opposites, as in we live by dying and we die by living. He offered a logical analysis of just what is being claimed with the familiar refrain, "nirvana is samsara and samsara is nirvana": the everyday world is "divine," and, yet, divinity is to be found in and as the things of the world. Our actual experience of the world is contradictory. Tanabe and Pure Land Buddhism were influential because they stressed that coming to God or Buddha was not a rational or intellectual matter but one of faith and humility. Heidegger, because he saw with clarity how a scientific/technological perspective could overrun our humanity, disabling our precious interiority as well as our compassionate potential, Heidegger strove to keep our sense of transcendence alive, positing Being and not just beings.

These lectures by Nishitani serve to convey the importance of the sense of transcendence to us as individuals that includes the recognition that we are also a part of the greater, originating whole. The philosophical outlook that Nishitani sought to convey was one that reaches beyond science (while in no way diminishing science), materialism, and secularism. He argues that such a perspective is needed if we are to leap beyond Nietzsche's nihilism – a nihilism that we must accept as a condition of his and our age, and then to go through it to a vantage point which infuses our lives and our world with meaning, by providing a sense of actually belonging to the cosmic whole.

Nishitani urges that the awareness of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is not a search for truth but the result of an actual personal transformation. The transformation of the individual is what allows a change in "standpoint." The roads to such transformation can include serious philosophical inquiry that may bring one to seek transformation, but transformation itself is achieved through one or more of the Japanese "ways (*dō*):" meditation practice; the repetition of a prayer, along with genuine repentance;

the ways of tea, flowers, landscape gardening, calligraphy; the martial arts; and so on. All of these can be paths to enlightenment. And enlightenment, whatever else it might be, is the seeing of the oneness of all things while, of course, still recognizing individual things in their suchness.

It is this path that Nishitani calls to our attention, that present-day philosophy, science, technology, education, and general awareness has almost completely forgotten. It is a call to remember the inner depths which lurk beneath the surface chatter of present day society. In the final analysis, it is a Buddhist reading of transcendence that he offers, but he insists throughout that it is a sense of transcendence that applies to many religious or non-religious traditions. Nishitani is comfortable in accepting this sense of transcendence as a mystical understanding. It is a mysticism that is transcendent on the one hand, and immanent on the other; it is a reaching beyond, and a transformation of the everyday that is underfoot. Such an insight is gained solely through diligent practice, for the most part, a practice whose purpose is to transform the self. Only then is experience of the transcendent as the suchness of each and every thing possible. In this way the inner core of a person comes to the surface. It is unreachable through surface analysis, although a faint whisper may be present to remind us of who we are and of the need to seek our own personal transformation. Thus, these essays offer a significant and accessible account of Nishitani's mature thought. To read them is to enter into a genuine dialogue with one of the twentieth century's most significant thinkers. They both warn us of the dangers of modernity and offer a way forward that is capable of re-infusing our lives with meaning.

Robert E. Carter

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The struggle to situate Nishitani Keiji's lectures in their historical and intellectual context has allowed us to engage in dialogues with various scholars. We are especially indebted to Micah Auerbach, Lisa Grumbach and Martin Collicutt who read through the entire manuscript several times. And we are grateful to James W. Heisig for his works on the Kyoto School of Philosophy and his critical advice. Their suggestions enabled us to make the translation accessible to a wider audience and helped us determine the appropriate style. Since these lectures were delivered to specific audiences, we have tried to vary Nishitani's tone accordingly. We have left out three of lectures that were included in Volume XVI of the Nishitani anthology since the speaker repeats many of the themes and issues word for word.

My father, Morris Augustine, who has doctorates in moral theology and the history and phenomenology of religion was intimately acquainted with Nishitani. He related several of his encounters with Nishitani which we have included in Chapter One. He devoted much of his time to editing the entire manuscript.

Last but not least, we could not have completed this project without the meticulous reading of Penelope Schenck, Kai Marie Seltman Christina Michelle Augustine and Robert Sheehan. When we were deliberating whether to take the liberty to eliminate redundant passages, their pertinent advice enabled us to persevere. Though the format and style of Nishitani's lectures are quite different from what most people outside of Japan, are accustomed to we hope that the readers will overlook some of the philosophical inconsistencies and ponder Nishitani's insights on comparative religions.

Jonathan Augustine

Yamamoto Seisaku

CHAPTER ONE

CONTEXTUALIZING NISHITANI KEIJI

1. Introduction

Nishitani Keiji who is considered to be the last of the great thinkers of the Kyoto School of Philosophy is a controversial figure. Father Jan van Bragt who translated a volume of his essays argued that Nishitani was “the foremost Japanese philosopher of the second half of the twentieth century.”¹ Professor Notto Telle who personally knew Nishitani during his stay in Kyoto in the 1970’s claimed that Nishitani was “the most prominent representative of the Kyoto School.” Unno Taitetsu went a step further in his editor’s introduction to the conference on “The Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji.”²

For students pursuing religious studies, Nishitani’s book has found its place alongside the writings of thinkers like Kierkegaard, Barth, Tillich, Whitehead, Teilhard de Chardin, Kafka, Sartre, Camus, Freud, Jung, William James, and Buber.³

Interest in Nishitani’s writings and his influence on the Japanese intellectual community has by no means diminished, but a significant change in Western scholars’ perspective on the Kyoto School of Philosophy has emerged from around the 1990’s after a conference held at Nanzan University’s Institute for Religion and

Culture. The sixteen participants largely deconstructed the Kyoto School's agenda by focusing on the nationalism of its most prominent thinkers, including Nishitani, who were accused of collaborating with the Japanese military government during World War II. The essays that were published in *Rude Awakenings* are valuable because they reveal how these thinkers of the Kyoto school did not fully acknowledge the role they played during the earlier years of the war.

Nevertheless, there are those such as Mori Tetsuro and John Moraldo who describe Nishitani's worldview as extending beyond narrow Japanese nationalism. Mori argued that Nishitani focused on a view of every nation requiring self-sacrifice while emphasizing a global perspective of the Buddhist "no-self" and the Asian relativistic religious viewpoint.⁴ John Moraldo treated Nishitani from a more relativistic perspective.

I suggest that in the 1940s he [Nishitani] did not set himself up as an advocate of state or ethnic nationalism, but of a globalism that seriously mistook his nations' capacity to negate itself and overcome self-centeredness. If this was a case of mistaken judgment on his part, however, he never admitted as much not even when the Occupation forces had him suspended from his university post in a purge of intellectuals thought to have collaborated in the war.⁵

More recently in *Re-Politicising the Kyoto School as Philosophy*, Bret Davis states, "It is with regard to such elemental questions of personal and interpersonal existence that Nishitani's writings most compellingly continue to speak to us today."⁶ Another publication among the steady stream of works on the Kyoto School is *Overcoming Modernity: Cultural Identity in Wartime Japan*, published in 2008 by Columbia University Press.⁷ This collection of essays, including a key piece by Nishitani himself, shows the extent to which he and other thinkers collaborated with Japanese militarist government during the early years of war. As translators we have tried to make the reader aware of these contradictory perspectives. We hope that the lectures

and essays that are included in this volume will assist scholars in deciding where they stand in relation to what has been written about this complex thinker.

When thinking of Nishitani's ambivalent attitude toward Japanese nationalism, a particular incident comes to mind. In 1975, Professor Julia Ching, an expert on Confucianism, asked my father, Morris Augustine, to introduce her to Professor Nishitani. They were welcomed into Nishitani's home with his characteristic politeness and were soon engaged in conversation about Confucianism in Japan. Professor Ching, who must have felt at ease with Nishitani, mentioned to him that she had read in several newspapers only a week before about the renewal of the charges that Nishitani had supported the military government at the beginning of the war. Nishitani looked her calmly and quietly replied, "That is simply not true; I never supported the military government." Though this incident may be of little significance, it helped me understand that Nishitani himself did not feel responsible for his participation in these conferences.

Anyone who has read Nishitani before knows that his writings on the relation between religion and history are extensive. He has systematically analyzed the corruption of the church and Christianity's involvement in various wars and ethnic conflicts. Nevertheless, Nishitani's failure to seriously acknowledge the Japanese nation's responsibility as a whole as well as the role its religious sects played during the war is problematic. While many Buddhist monks and thinkers have left behind volumes of memoirs and essays expressing personal regret and guilt for upholding the propaganda of the wartime regime, even though they did not themselves participate in the bloody battles, in Nishitani's case, essays of this kind cannot be found.

The question that is of particular interest was how Nishitani's thinking was affected by the war. This volume of lectures may offer the reader some alternative perspectives because lectures are often a crystallization of an individual's insights,

beliefs and prejudices, and Nishitani delivered these speeches to an audience that was almost exclusively Japanese.

2. The Kyoto School of Philosophy

For those who are unacquainted with the writings of Nishitani Keiji, it is essential to situate him in the prewar intellectual climate of Kyoto University. Nishitani's teacher, Professor Nishida Kitarō (1870-1945), was the founder of the Kyoto School of Philosophy and set the direction and tone for thinking about philosophy and religion. Nishida began to make his mark as early as 1911 with the publication of his first major work, *An Inquiry into the Good*. This work won him immediate acclaim, and was followed during his tenure as Professor of Philosophy at Kyoto University by a series of important works that laid the foundations for what would become the Kyoto School of Philosophy. A decade or so later Watsuji Tetsuro and Tanabe Hajime formed the core of the Kyoto School along with Nishitani Keiji, even though many more thinkers were associated to one degree or another. Watsuji and Tanabe expanded the dimensions of the Pure Land Buddhist tradition to a school of thought that had originally been expounded by Zen. These four thinkers made valuable contributions to the comparative study of comparative religion and philosophy, but in the end, it was Nishitani whose post-war writings, lectures and personal contacts with his counterparts in the West made the most significant contributions to the role of philosophy in Japanese academia.

There are several reasons why this present volume of Nishitani's lectures and essays should be brought to the attention of Western scholars at this particular time. One reason is that never before in history have Asian and Judeo-Christian religions become so closely associated with one another as they are today. This is evident not

just regarding their understanding and friendly relations toward each other, but with regards to shared religious practices such as the forms of meditation and monastic life.

Having lived in Japan for decades and having written books and articles on the history of East Asian religion, I feel that religions in Asia, Europe and the Americas have been gaining more intimate knowledge of and respect for each other. In the case of postwar Japan, Nishitani and a few others who belonged to his circle revealed their understanding and appreciation for the validity and importance of Western religious faith, thought and research. These philosophy scholars added to this knowledge by analyzing various East Asian religious practices that to some degree refuted the generalizations that Western scholars had been making for decades.

Another reason for translating these lectures and essays concerns the present secular age. In the present volume one can see Nishitani's analysis of materialism and anti-religious worldviews of his own age, which parallels to a surprising degree what Charles Taylor analyzes in his Templeton Prize-winning book of 2007: *A Secular Age*.⁸ Today, just as was the case in the early 1900s when Nishitani was first introduced to the ideas of Nietzsche, the entire world seems beset with a wave of criticism fueled by the conviction that secular humanism and science are what is essentially needed for understanding and appreciating the known universe. Among many scholars today it is presumed that religion is more the cause than a cure for the violence and hatred that thrives in society. Richard Dawkins' *The God Delusion*, Sam Harris' *The End of Faith*, and a number of other similar works by eminent scientists have been on best-sellers lists for several years.⁹ Therefore, it seems reasonable to acquaint ourselves with arguments coming from an alternative perspective. Nishitani was, after all, one of Japan's foremost thinkers of the twentieth century who himself faced and provided answers to similar scientific arguments.

As mentioned earlier, during the post-war period in Japan, it was Nishitani who to a much greater degree than his three colleagues mentioned above formed personal contacts with some of the most prominent thinkers of western religious philosophy. He had dialogues with and learned from scholars and Protestant theologians including Martin Heidegger, Paul Tillich, and others. Nishitani was regarded as an influential thinker for presenting and analyzing Western religion and philosophy to the Japanese academic and inter-religious communities.

When Paul Tillich returned to the University of Chicago shortly after meeting with Nishitani in Kyoto in the summer of 1960, he declared in a lecture at the Low Memorial Library at Columbia University,

“A dialogue between representatives of different religions has several presuppositions. It first presupposes that both partners acknowledge the value of the other’s religious convictions. . . . If these presuppositions are realized—as I felt they were in my own dialogues with the priestly and scholarly representatives of Buddhism in Japan—this way of encounter of two or more religions can be extremely fruitful, and if continuous, even of historical consequence.”¹⁰

My father was fortunate enough to know Nishitani well and shared with him a deep interest in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger whom they discussed together on several occasions. He also recalled talking about their mutual interest in philosophy, religion and history.

3. The Historical Frame

Nishitani Keiji was born in 1900, lost his father to tuberculosis at sixteen and soon came down with the deadly disease himself. His was a situation not all that different from the one which had led Friedrich Nietzsche a little more than a half

century earlier to develop the worldview that God is dead. As Nishitani had studied, in a world entirely programmed by *wille zum Macht*, or the “will to power,” where both religion and the morality it sponsored became mere signs of the human inability to go “beyond morality,” the individual was supposed to face the fact that it is “the will to power” that really motivates societies’ moral decisions. As Nishitani explains, Nietzsche argued that the sensible thing for the individual to do is to embrace the Dionesian stance of the superman who makes his own rules. Nietzsche suffered immensely after the death of his minister father when he was only five. Left in the hands of equally severe mother and aunts, he was motivated towards embracing the anti-religious stance that led to his fame as a thinker. Nishitani began his early life in a not altogether dissimilar situation. Nietzsche slowly turned towards not simply a sacrilegious but a nihilistic view of the world, as Nishitani explains in his writings. After receiving a highly competitive education in the classics in the best schools of his time, Nietzsche ended up at age twenty-five as Professor of Classical Philology at the University of Basil. But at the age of forty-four he suffered a mental collapse from which he never recovered. In his books, Nietzsche elaborated upon the materialistic worldview that Nishitani analyzed.

Interestingly enough even before graduating from high school, Nishitani seemed to have unwittingly been following in Nietzsche’s footsteps, as some scholars speculate. He immersed himself in European philosophy and literature, especially that of Nietzsche and Dostoevsky. As he mentions in various essays, Nishitani who himself had been brought up fatherless was already tittering on the edge of a more or less nihilistic view of the world.

But when he commenced his studies as an undergraduate at Kyoto University his major teacher was Nishida Kitarō, the founder of the Kyoto School. Nishitani also attended lectures of the younger Tanabe Hajime. Both of these men were deeply familiar with and dedicated to the study of Buddhist thought, primarily the Zen tradition in the case of Nishida and the Pure Land tradition in the case of Tanabe.

They had also studied the whole range of Western philosophic tradition at that time. Since both of these men taught in the Department of Philosophy at Kyoto University, and since the Department mainly focused on European philosophy, Nishitani's primary focus became Western rather than Asian philosophy. After graduating, Nishitani spent more than three years studying directly under Martin Heidegger from 1936 to 1939 at the University in Freiburg in Breisgau.

Once Nishitani returned from Germany he assumed a position, initially as a junior professor, at the Department of Philosophy at Kyoto University. The founder, Nishida Kitarō, had become Chair of the Department in 1912 and had retired from the position in 1927. Nishitani himself had assumed his place as Chair of the Division of Religion (which was a sub-section of the Department of Philosophy) at Kyoto University in 1935. Ten years after hearing Heidegger's lectures on nihilism and reading his masterpiece, *Being and Time*, Nishitani began his own series of lectures on these subjects at Kyoto University from 1936 to 1941. One of the first books he published was a work on nihilism, which focused on the thought of Friedrich Nietzsche. Only in 1990 did a translation appear in English, under the title, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, a title that reveals the author's basic argument of the book. Graham Parks, one of the translators, observed in his introduction:

“Nishitani is distinguished from other members of the Kyoto School by the depth of his affinity with Nietzsche's thinking. . . . *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism* constitutes the first substantial introduction of Nietzsche's philosophical ideas to a general Japanese audience.”¹¹

A few years after Nishitani compiled these lectures, the war ended. Subsequently, he was expelled from his post at the university during the entire Occupation period. Nishitani had been driven through a gauntlet somewhat analogous to the one that Heidegger himself had experienced. As some scholars have argued, Nishitani may have briefly complied with the Japanese militarist

government's authorities, just as Heidegger had for a time espoused Hitler's Nazi party. Not only had they both been accused of having been in league with the aggressive militarist governments of their respective countries, but both had been deprived of their university positions, if only for brief periods.

In 1955 Nishitani returned to Kyoto University where he resumed the commanding post of Chair of the Department of Philosophy. Nishitani continued to hold this post until 1963 when he relinquished it to Takeuchi Yoshinori, but he continued to teach for several years at Otani University where he edited *The Eastern Buddhist*. Even after retirement, Nishitani resided in his home just across the street from Kyoto University allowing him to exert influence on his department until his death in 1990.

4. The Lectures and Essays

What is regarded as philosophy in a particular period is difficult to identify with for those from a different cultural heritage. We have not undertaken these translations in hopes of exporting or spreading the ideas of Nishitani and the Kyoto School. In fact, when we first began translating his works, we were somewhat dismayed by how unsystematic his lectures were. Often we felt that it was nearly impossible to discern the relationship between each of his sentences. In his analysis of comparative religions, little or no pretense toward neutrality is made. While Nishitani offers a critical interpretation of Christian theology, his explanation of Buddhist concepts such as "suchness" and "non-being" borders on magical realism. Nevertheless, we were interested in historically situating his position in the Japanese academic and religious community as a great thinker.

It is certainly interesting to see how a notable Japanese intellectual perceived Western religion and philosophy. Considering the limited amount of time Nishitani

spent in Germany, his effort to interpret the whole of Western philosophy is admirable. Those with a critical eye must consider why Nishitani took an extreme stance against the study of psychology, sociology, communism, Protestantism, and Western science in general.

We have tried to maintain Nishitani's somewhat meandering tone even though his sentences often sound unnecessarily wordy in English. Inevitably we have had to eliminate certain sentences and passages because Nishitani repeats himself frequently, in order to make himself understood by his audience. The lectures themselves are quite subjective and the reader may find it difficult to follow the logic in certain sections, but this is also what makes them interesting. In many lectures and essays the reader will find that Nishitani is not systematic or neutral enough in trying to establish methodologies that satisfy the critical standards of religious studies, but his idiosyncratic style tells us much about his personal beliefs and insights that cannot be discerned in longer works like *Religion and Nothingness*.

The lectures that the reader will encounter were taken from Volume XVI of Nishitani's complete writings, *Nishitani Keiji chosakushu*. They were delivered or directed to audiences ranging from Japanese university students, scholars, monks and nuns to young teachers. The lectures represent the essence of Nishitani's thinking and were presented over a period of some thirty years at various Japanese universities, research institutes and religious conferences. We have arranged the translations in roughly chronological order beginning with Nishitani's review of Father Rogendorf's article and ending with his last lecture that was published in 1982 so that the reader can follow the developments that took place in Nishitani's thought during his most active years.

“Religiosity in Japan”

Nishitani explained what motivated him to write this review in the preface of the academic journal *Kokoro*.

A member of the editorial board urged me in a letter to comment on this article. “You may have some dissenting ideas as a Buddhist,” the editor wrote, but to tell you the truth, I have always found myself in agreement with Father Rogendorf’s ideas. However, since his article is concerned with a broad theme, I cannot say that I agree with all the points he raised. Our differences are not influenced by my beliefs as a Buddhist, but as an individual who is living in contemporary Japanese society.

In his response to the Austrian Catholic priest’s article, Nishitani argues in 1957 that his essay is not written as a religious argument leveled against Father Rogendorf’s views. Nishitani claims that he wanted to have an open-ended discussion about the religious mind-set of the Japanese people. The essay has an oral quality suggesting that he delivered it in one of his lectures.

“Religion and History”

This essay, published in the FAS journal in three installments, was based on series of lectures delivered to the assembled members of the FAS in 1959. The FAS is an organization founded during the war by Zen Buddhists at Kyoto University, led by Hisamatsu Shinichi. Hisamatsu himself had been a student of Nishida and later became a professor in the Department of Philosophy at Kyoto University. The FAS was established by a group of students and faculty who wanted a broader context from which to analyze the teachings and practices of the Rinzai and Soto sects. To what extent Nishitani was involved in the FAS at this time is not clear, but he seemed favorably disposed towards their aims.

Nishitani takes up Arnold Toynbee's (1888-1975) major work "The Historian's Approach to Religion," which is contained in *A History of the World*. Nishitani spends the first half of his essay pointing out Toynbee's misconception of Buddhism. He then proceeds to explain his own reservations about the Christian belief in the eschatological events at the end of time. Nishitani states that he personally prefers the Buddhist view of the eternity of "nothingness."

"Religion and Rehabilitation"

This article which was based on a short lecture was published in the January 6, 8 and 9 issues of the *Chugai nippō* in 1966. Nishitani warns his audience about the price society pays for a worldview without religious foundation. He claims that most people cannot get beyond Kierkegaard's uncertainty and take "a leap of faith." There is a definite sense that Nishitani feels that theism is superior to atheism.

"Religion and Education"

This lecture is rather unusual among Nishitani's talks because it deals almost exclusively with the history and practice of educational theory in the West. In his characteristically long-winded manner, Nishitani begins with Plato and Aristotle, and their presumption that all matters related to philosophy, history and religion are an absolute indivisible whole. He then goes on to analyze the Christian era and shows how first Augustine and then Thomas Aquinas adopted the Aristotelian model. During the Middle Ages, the notion of leaving religion out of the school curricula was totally unthinkable. In the second half of the lecture, Nishitani focuses on several German educational thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and compares their notions to Nishida Kitarō's ideas on the subject.

“Religious Mentalities in Pre-modern Japan”

This essay was published in 1961 in Takeda Kioko’s work, “The Objects and Methodology of Intellectual History: A Comparison between Western and Japanese Notions” (*Shisōshi no hōhō to taishō: Nihon to seiyō*). Nishitani claims that Japanese and Western religious consciousness is fundamentally different. Japanese consciousness is formed by a “single mental rope” made of numerous strands of thought woven together into a single fabric containing ideas derived from Shinto and Buddhist sects, as well as Confucian and Daoist elements of thought. Western religious thought, on the other hand, was traditionally unified by a single strand. Nishitani argues that religions in Japan in general are less rational.

“Religious Faith and Nihilism”

Delivered at the Tokyo branch of the Higashi Honganji Research Institute and published in Volume III of “Lectures on the Master Shinran” (*Gendai Shinran kōza*) in 1964, this lecture focuses on what Nishitani perceives to be the lack of a solid moral foundation in Japanese cultural history. Nishitani opposes the nihilism that thinkers like Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre describe in detail and instead advocates importance of the Buddhist notion of nothingness.

“Some Reflections on Mysticism”

This lecture was initially delivered at a study session that was held at Kyoto University in 1974. It was later published in Ueda Shizuteru’s “Research in German Mysticism” (*Doitsu shinpishugi kenkyū*) in 1982. Nishitani explains that the mystical union between God and an individual human being, without any intervention of theological ideas or rational thought, characterized mysticism in the West. Mystical

prayer was considered by theologians for centuries to be the highest form of prayer. Nishitani discusses some cases where religious experience goes beyond the knower-believer relation.

CHAPTER TWO

RELIGIOSITY IN JAPAN

1. Christian Conceptions

Father Rogendorf's article entitled "The Religious Mind-set of the Japanese People" appeared in the 1957 issue of the journal *Kokoro*. His article first deals with the religious mind-set, or rather, the lack of a firm religious consciousness among Japanese people today. Father Rogendorf argues that the reason why Japanese people do not believe in religion is due to their conception of religion itself. He traces this phenomenon back through the history of Japanese thought and at conclusion of the essay raises the issue of tolerance. I would like to consider each of these issues.

As for the religious mind-set of the Japanese people at present, I am in agreement with almost everything he says. He points out that "in Japan religion plays, officially and individually, a smaller role perhaps than in any other developed nation." He then goes on to say Japan is a thoroughly secularized country, perhaps even more so than the Soviet Union and its satellite states. I agree wholeheartedly with these statements. The Japanese lack of religiosity is an obvious fact, regardless of whether one is speaking of the intelligentsia or of the general public residing in urban areas. Father Rogendorf cites statistics gathered by the Japanese Ministry of Education concerning the religious attitude of individuals, residing in the six largest cities of Japan. According to this survey, 61.3 % of respondents stated that they have no interest in religion at all, while 30.3 % explained that they belonged to one of the Buddhist sects. The rest claimed to belong to one of the new religions or follow the Shinto or Christian tradition.

This research leaves issues related to those living in local small towns or villages unresolved. Takagi Hirō contributed an article entitled “The Reality of Japanese Religious Life” (*Nihonjin no shūkyō seikatsu no jittai*), to a series called *Lectures on Contemporary Religion (Gen dai shūkyō kōza)*. His article tried to synthesize research on the religious conditions of the local population in small towns and villages, which he gathered from 1948 to 1953. The statistics themselves are quite revealing.

Those who offer prayers at a Shinto altar:

- a. every day... 42%
- b. on a fixed day of each month ...14%
- c. on a fixed day as an annual event... 37%

Those who offer prayers at a Buddhist altar

- a. every day... 63%
- b. on a fixed day of the month... 17%
- c. on a fixed day as an annual event... 31%

According to Takagi’s study, most people claimed that they worshiped *kami* and Buddha figures enshrined in their homes. The majority visited tutelary Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples to which they belonged as a part of their regular annual activities.

Father Rogendorf’s article is based on a survey conducted by the Vienna Institute. Its general purpose was to sample public opinion and market trends in Austria. The survey considered issues concerning religious observance by asking how often people attended Catholic Mass. Of those asked, 37% replied, “the previous day,” 18% answered, “several weeks ago,” and 44 % replied, “once every few months or once in several years.” From these figures, it was concluded that 55% could be regarded as believers who practice their faith, and 44% as indifferent Christians, one third of whom, however, are still searching for something beyond mere marriage ceremonies or Christian funerals.

I would like to briefly compare these findings. In Japan those who pray at a household Shinto altar every day and those who do so on a fixed day each month make up 56% of the population. Of these, 80% perform their observances at a household Buddhist altar. My analysis may be quite rough, but let me tentatively add to these figures the aforementioned Japanese who reside in the six largest cities and divide that by half. The number of people who still could be considered to have some belief in Buddhism might be around 55%. Those people who reside in rural areas who have no interest in religion and hence do not worship at a household Buddhist altar may be estimated to be around 40%. The resulting figures seem to roughly correspond to those found in the survey conducted in Austria.

Of course, enumerating statistics in this way is problematic too. The survey conducted in the six largest cities focused on an individual's religious faith. The research conducted on people living in rural areas, in contrast, had no such restrictions. Among those living in rural areas, even those who were entirely indifferent to religion might still appear to be religious, because of claims that their families belong to certain Buddhist sects. This can be regarded neither as indicating family religion nor as evidence of personal belief. I am dubious whether their faith is acquired through an active choice. In fact, Takagi, who conducted the survey, admitted that it is likely that most of these villagers perform religious rites such as praying at the household Buddhist altars simply in order to maintain customs or in hopes of attaining worldly benefits. Thus their beliefs are entirely different in quality from the "personal" religious beliefs Takagi targeted in his research regarding the residents of the six largest cities. I am afraid that my attempt to compare these complicated mixtures of statistics may turn out to be meaningless. I certainly admit that there is reason for doubting my own speculations. Nevertheless, I think my conjectures bring up some important issues that need to be addressed.

Generally speaking, it is easy to see that at present, the religious life of most Japanese people is directed toward the pursuit of worldly benefits. Paying homage at

a Buddhist altar every day is an activity generally performed in accordance with the prescribed social custom. It is not surprising that this daily custom dulls the consciousness and mechanizes the worshiper's performance. Certainly praying every day reinforces this mechanization. But this is not the whole story. Is this act of paying homage every day different from the habit of washing one's body with cold water every morning? Naturally to the practitioner it will feel uncomfortable to cease performing this ritual. I think it is possible that the custom of praying at the altar daily gradually strengthens the mind and makes the act more devout. If we affirm this, then can we not suppose that the practice of paying homage every day involves something more than merely preserving a social custom?

Now let's consider the pursuit of worldly benefits. Many practitioners answered that they pray at an altar in order to express gratitude for the wellbeing of their families and for the prospering of their work. It cannot be denied that they have worldly benefits in mind. But can we really say that the manner in which they pray is oriented purely towards worldly benefits? Their attitude towards religion may not be exemplary, but such is the case of religious values for most ordinary people. Is it not true that most people in the West who go to Church every Sunday share similar sentiments when performing their own religious rituals? I think that in any age, personal religiosity self-consciously attained involves a deep and sincere commitment that only a minority of society can ever hope to espouse. I believe that the religiosity of the majority of people involves a mix of self-conscious realization and uncritical habit that can vary from one individual to another. This kind of common religiosity is sometimes held in contempt because it has not undergone intellectual scrutiny. But I think these seemingly simple practices involve a reverence many intellectuals who are indifferent to religion have overlooked. It springs up spontaneously out of the depths of the human heart.

My next point concerns the specific forms of religiosity prevalent in Japan, which can be quite distinct. Families set up both Shinto and Buddhist altars in

practically every home. I cannot think of a comparable custom that is widely practiced in the West. Buddhist domestic altars enshrine tablets dedicated to deceased members of the family. When praying to the Buddha at the altars, people believe that the souls of their deceased family members become one with the Buddha. At the same time they pray for the happiness of the deceased as well. There are various theoretical implications of household religiosity that still need clarification, but it's undeniable that these practices are widely maintained to this day. These factors prevent religion in Japan from becoming more personal or communally oriented, like other faiths that go beyond worship at household altars. Nevertheless, there are elements in that kind of communal religiosity that are also lacking in personalized faith. When Father Rogendorf states that, "Religion plays such a small role in people's lives officially and individually that one can hardly find a comparable example in other civilized nations," I think he makes a defensible point. But if one reflects deeply upon the Japanese household religiosity, one may come up with a different interpretation. Perhaps Father Rogendorf's own Christian affiliation has somewhat clouded his perception of religious phenomena in Japan. Taking into account the domestic religiosity of the Japanese household, as well as the conventionalized religious practices, we may find that the statistics earlier mentioned not so different from those gathered in Austria.

If one analyzes religion in Japan only from the perspective of one's own personal faith, various misunderstandings may occur. For example, some Christians in Japan argue that firmly established religions in Japan, such as Buddhism and Shinto, are household religions centered on the village community, and they therefore prevent people from being converted to other faiths. Their local religious identity stands in the way of a freedom to choose their own religious path. I think such an argument confuses the issues at stake. First of all, the freedom to choose one's religion is a legal and political matter. It is a right presumed in Euro-American countries as well as in Japan. The fact that there may be cases in which an

individual's choice of religion creates conflicts between the members of the household or between an individual and his or her village community is related to social customs. This kind of conflict can occur in any culture. If someone in a European Catholic household converts to Protestantism or vice versa, conflicts can also arise. If this same Catholic were to convert to Buddhism, then fierce disputes might occur, either within the household or in the local village community. When dealing with such conflicts, the law must uphold the right to freedom of religion and leave this matter up to the individual's conscience. In such matters there is hardly any difference between Japan and the West. That is why I have difficulty understanding those who argue that religious freedom is not exercised in Japanese households because of their peculiar practices.

Insofar as conversion is an experience that takes place within the individual's soul, the individual can make a personal decision about his faith. The fact that religious rituals have more or less become household traditions may degrade the vitality of religions. Thoughtless adherence can be seen to have a deteriorating effect. These factors are compounded by the fact that Japan adopted Western institutions and traditions uncritically ever since the Meiji era, and modernized too quickly. This in turn caused traditional religions to lose their legitimacy. As a result, Japanese people tend to be indifferent to institutional religion, a phenomenon we need to consider in more detail.

2. Relativity and Irrationality

Father Rogendorf suggests that relativity and irrationality are general characteristics of the Japanese religious views. Relativity refers to the idea that religion is not controlled by what is established. Since the value of religion is not

exclusively related to truth, it is combined with values such as beauty, comfort and human kindness; also, faith and doubt sometimes coexist in Japanese beliefs. Consequently, a cultural vacuum is created, in which secular ideologies become widespread. Although religion itself should not contradict rationality and be open to investigation, Japanese people have never explained their faith through reason. This is why Father Rogendorf considers irrationality to be one of the chief characteristics of the Japanese psyche and argues that its equilibrium is disturbed by a kind of cultural schizophrenia occurring in their thought processes. Since Japanese religion is relativistic and irrational, he makes the argument that people become detached from the life of the nation and are unable to participate in art, literature, education, politics, and law. The notions of the holy and sacred disappear and even such memorial holidays as Christmas become frivolous celebrations. Father Rogendorf thus finds that indifference has become widespread.

I basically agree with his perspective, but we must keep in mind that these are qualities that apply to Japanese people today. Things have not always been so. During the many centuries in which Japanese people were religious, they were neither relativistic nor irrational. This is especially true with regards to Buddhism and Shinto. People really strove to achieve a high level of religiosity through practice and thought. For Far Eastern religions in general, notions of absoluteness and rationality differ considerably from Western Christianity.

From the Buddhist perspective, the religious world is thought to possess that which brings all things under its control. The Buddhist notion of *shimyo*, which signifies “suchness” or “the ultimate reality,” is elaborated upon in the way that Christianity emphasizes “truth.” The only difference is that in Christianity, God is regarded as an absolute being and the absolute truth. God was regarded by St. Augustine as “the stable and unchangeable truth” (*stabilis veritas*), and St. Anselm conceived of the Creator as “the self-subsisting highest truth”, (*summa veritas per se subsistens*). In Christianity divine truth is both transcendent and absolute, so that

while subsisting in itself outside the realm of living things, it faces this world as the unmovable norm. God is the absolute being, and since He governs the world with omniscience and omnipotence, the divine truth contains both volitional and imperative aspects. Thus, we can say that God's transcendence and absoluteness can be conceived of in terms of the absolute distance that separates the world and human beings. Even when the "closeness" of God's presence is mentioned in relation to mysticism, for instance, I think there still remains an inseparable gap.

"Suchness," which signifies the way things are, has a double meaning. On the one hand it refers to an immutable and rational law, but it also conveys the sense of the "suchness of all things". The concept seems to be similar to the notion of absolute truth and absolute being, but actually it is qualitatively different from the concepts of truth and being as conceived within Western religious traditions. Moreover, suchness is not self-subsisting outside of the worldly and human realm. Absolute distance is not involved. Suchness contains the world and humanity, if heaven and hell are believed to exist. It requires things to be just as they are. It is a moment of absolute emptiness, something seldom found in pantheism. In fact, pantheism is an ambiguous notion itself. When taken to extremes, pantheism becomes a theory in which all things dissolve into gods. It is analogous to Spinoza's conception of divinity as one that tries to reduce the essences of things to God. Alternatively God can also vanish from all things and an atheistic naturalism can take root. Materialists sometimes try to use Spinoza's philosophy for these purposes.

In Buddhism, there is no ambiguity in the concept of true knowledge because it is tied to the idea of absolute emptiness. The Buddhist dictum "form is emptiness and emptiness is form" seems to give us an ambiguous impression that goes beyond ordinary rational logic. This Buddhist perspective has its own logic which lies beyond discursive thinking. In other words the logic of "*sive/non*" also has an entirely different rational law of existence. Form and emptiness are contradictory in the same way as existence and nothingness. But they are also similar in the sense that

while being contradictory, they are identical to each other. Emptiness is an absolute negation of form, and form is an absolute negation of emptiness.

Discursive thinking conceives of form and emptiness as subsisting by themselves and as combining to become one. It is as if they are the front and back of a sheet of paper. Even if one claims that there is only one sheet, the picture on the front and the blank side on the back can be conceived of respectively as being self-subsistent. A sheet of paper without two surfaces is beyond discursive thinking. From a Buddhist standpoint, if the picture on the front side is turned over and becomes the same as that on the backside, the “oneness” of the paper will include both the picture and the blank sheet.

Form is emptiness. This means that form is form to the extent that there is no end. And emptiness is form, which suggests that emptiness can be felt to the very tip of every strand of hair and to the termination of all activities such as seeing, hearing and thinking. As the Buddhist notion that the “five aggregates are all empty” (*goun kaiki*) suggests, information and subjective, and objective awareness itself are empty. Furthermore, this emptiness signifies that sight, hearing and thinking simultaneously work together.

Therefore, emptiness is not nihilism. When nihilism signifies nothingness, it conceives nothingness as a self-subsistent entity. This kind of nothingness can be perceived in an objective fashion. One cannot avoid maintaining the discursive mode of thinking inherent in reason while Buddhism has always tried to negate this objective conception of nothingness as something self-subsistent.

Father Rogendorf claims that epistemological doubt is immanent in Buddhism. According to the Buddhist perspective, salvation and emancipation are epistemological issues. It is said that people are saved by understanding emptiness to be the essence of all things. As I mentioned before, it seems to me that Father Rogendorf was thinking about the history of Japanese thought which made religious

perspectives relativistic and irrational, but I think that he may have some misunderstandings about Buddhism.

If emptiness exists behind all forms of existence, as Father Rogendorf suggests, then this is truly a desperate kind of skepticism. Skepticism has always existed in the West and East throughout human history. Even though this skepticism is understandable, it does not represent a Buddhist stance. Buddhism certainly emphasizes skepticism, but it is associated with negating the idea that the essence of things comes into being and passes out of existence as something permanent, self-subsistent and substantial. It refutes the value of attachments that make one seek support in seemingly substantial things that are connected with one's own existence. Skepticism is supposed to make one aware of human delusions.

Buddhism is concerned with showing the path to overcome both delusion and skepticism. People are often caught up in delusions while not being aware of them. They forget to question things and "become drunk on ignorance." They fall victim to disbelief and doubt and suffer from feelings of emptiness and nausea as if they were the aftereffects of a hangover. One of the purposes of Buddhism is to lead people to a secure position beyond doubt and disbelief.

Suchness signifies getting beyond the state of mind in which one realizes that emptiness lies behind the essence of all things. Such a stance still conceives of both "being" and "emptiness" as self-subsistent. This still involves discursive thinking. If one conceives of emptiness as something that lies behind the essence of all things, one is relying on the "ordinary" standpoint of nihilism. When I say "ordinary," I am referring to the nihilism expounded by Nietzsche, in which one is aware of the "nothingness" behind existence. Unfortunately, due to time limitations, I cannot get into this issue and explain the difference between Nietzsche's position and that of Buddhist perspective. However, I will say that the Buddhist position is associated with transcending the stance of nihilism.

Father Rogendorf states, “salvation and emancipation are conceived of as epistemological issues in Buddhism.” Epistemology can be classified as theoretical philosophy, since it is concerned with the source, structure and limitation of human knowledge. But I think this is merely an academic form of inquiry. Of course, such a theoretical inquiry can sometimes involve the salvation of the philosopher’s soul. But studies in epistemology are often conducted without any connection to the salvation of the soul, and hence scholars who are indifferent to religious matters carry out these studies.

For Buddhism the issue is not primarily a matter of learning, but an existential issue. Even skepticism does not question the value of learning. I feel Buddhism has always centered on the existence of the individual as a whole. Plato’s *Phaedrus* includes epistemological discussions, but the immortality of the soul is not regarded as an epistemological issue. A similar pattern can be observed in Buddhism. Take, for instance, the Buddhist doctrine of the interdependence of all things. There are various epistemological theories that fall under the rubric of the natural sciences. However, the core issue is centered on the transformation of individual existence that is achieved by emancipating oneself from delusion. The Buddhist dictum “form is emptiness” is not merely a theoretical exposition based on reason. It points to an existential truth beyond the comprehension of reason.

From the perspective of reason, both the knower and the object that one desires to know are regarded as self-subsistent. True knowledge is said to arise from the correspondence between one’s intellect and the object. But from the Buddhist perspective of form as emptiness, self-subsistence is eliminated. And since both the observer and the object that is known are non-ego (*muga*) according to Buddhist philosophy, the realm of *muga* can be expanded so that the egoistic subjectivity of the individual and the substantial objectivity of things are broken down. Form is emptiness signifies to the existence that arises in the realm of *muga*, and focuses on an existence that is selfless.

I stated earlier that while Christianity conceives of God as being absolutely self-subsistent, the self-subsistence of suchness consists in the completeness of everything as it is. The self-subsistence of suchness reveals itself under the guise of the non-ego. Non-egoistic existence is manifested in the self-subsistence of suchness. That is why Dōgen stated, “it is a delusion for the self to bear witness to all things. Taking the initiative to bear witness to oneself for all things is enlightenment.” Suchness, or the completeness in which everything is as it is, is not an objective form of existence, nor can it be grasped in an objective fashion.

The self-subsistence of suchness cannot be grasped by the egoistic subject. As soon as one tries to analyze it, its self-subsistence disappears. This is because the consciousness of the self becomes firmly established. The Gospel of John gives us Jesus’ message about being a witness thus:

I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of Him who sent me. If I bear witness to myself, my testimony is not true, there is another who bears witness to me, and I know that the testimony He bears to me is true. (Oxford Annotated Bible, John 5:30-32)

Jesus regards his own testimony as inauthentic and thus his egotistic self is abandoned. Nevertheless, this selflessness is dependent on his’ existence, which must comply with the will of God, the supreme Other. The difference between the Buddhist and Christian perspectives is striking when Dōgen states, “all things take the initiative in bearing witness to the self.”

I think that religious norms have a completely different quality in the case of Buddhism. Since in Christianity norms are supposedly based on the will of God, this process can be interpreted as theonomy or the divine origin of laws. According to the Kantian perspective, natural reason establishes norms and laws. Buddhist norms consist neither in theonomy nor in autonomy. They are not based on the supernatural

will of God or on the natural reason inherent to humanity. One can argue instead that it is based on Buddha-nature.

Dōgen wrote that practicing the Buddha-*dharma* should not be pursued for the sake of the individual, or for the sake of one's reputation. It should be pursued only for the Buddha-*dharma* itself. The Buddha's compassion for sentient beings is extended not to benefit Himself, nor for the benefit of others. This is one of the ways through which the Buddha-*dharma* can be cultivated. Dōgen's ideas imply that ascetic practice and having compassion for others are natural aspects of the Buddha-*dharma*. By practicing these principles, one bears witness to the Buddha-*dharma*. Dōgen explains that the Buddha does not force this testimony. Human existence itself should bear testimony to the Buddha-*dharma* through practice. It should not be demanded by anyone. One practices these things of one's own accord. The norm that is established is neither theonomous nor heteronymous. It can be identified as "the theology of non-theonomy" or "the heteronomy of non-heteronomy." I think perhaps this stance testifies to *sokuhi* ("sive/non").

In Christianity, God who is the absolute form of existence transcends all living creatures. In his self-subsistence, there is an absolute distance from the world of creatures. At the same time, it can be argued that in God's revelation, this absolute distance is shortened for mankind. As the Supreme Being God relates Himself to the world. For mankind, this relative relationship to God is an absolute relationship in itself. The relationship decides whether one gains eternal life or will be cast down into hell. The absolute relationship with the Supreme Being reaches its culmination in Jesus, who is the living incarnation of God. People are offered the choice of living in sin or being saved through faith in Jesus.

There does not seem to be such a revelation in the case of Buddhism. This is because revelations can occur only from a self-subsistent absolute. Suchness is not an absolute being, of course. If we must elaborate upon revelation in Buddhism, we

should say that all things are as they are, revelations of suchness. The Supreme being does not reveal Himself, nor is the absolute distance reduced.

Suchness is closer to anything that is near to it. This proximity is a closeness that transcends distance. It exists where one can step back from egoless existence that bears testimony to things as they are. It exists where the non-ego is prevented from disclosing itself. This is because the absoluteness which is inherent in suchness is not related to the idea of relativity. I think it is possible that the natural state of each and every thing is more remote than any distance and nearer than anything. For those who pursue the Buddha-way this remoteness can be realized, and for those who bear witness to the Buddha-*dharma*, this closeness can be achieved. This practice and testimony can be realized in the unity between remoteness and closeness. Unfortunately, I'm afraid, if these ideas were perceived apart from an existential perspective, they might degenerate into theoretical games. This could bring about the greatest possible degeneration for Buddhism.

Father Rogendorf emphasized relativity as one of the peculiar aspects of Japanese religions. The fact that the Japanese religious world cannot be established in and of itself without paying attention to the secular state of affairs can be seen as a sign of degeneration. But this degeneration has not occurred because the religious ideas of Buddhism are relativistic, but because the religious spirituality that had been shared by the Japanese people has diminished. I think we need to consider why this has occurred. And for this reason we need to briefly examine the history of Japanese spirituality in particular.

3. Positivistic Rationalism

Father Rogendorf claimed in his article that the main features of Japanese religious mentality are irrationality and relativity. He argued that while the average

citizen disregards rationality and dedicates himself to pseudo-religions that offer worldly benefits, intellectuals ignore religion on the grounds that reason should be the guiding force for humanity. I admit that his argument is quite relevant to the present atmosphere in Japan. With regards to Japanese people's attitude towards religion, there is a real split between the average citizen and the intelligentsia. Father Rogendorf identifies as the cause of this split the fact that ordinary Japanese people are not fond of logic and thus are reluctant to establish and clarify religious faith on a rational basis. Consequently, some people feel that two souls coexist in their mind. He feels that this kind of schizophrenia can be detected in contemporary Japanese thinking. This interpretation makes me to think of some related issues.

In my opinion, the split that Father Rogendorf alludes to is not a split that takes place within the psyche of the individual. Though there are some exceptions, many Japanese show enthusiasm for simple forms of worship and disregard rationality. If the person is an intellectual, he will defy religion in the name of reason. In either case, there is no division in the soul or the psyche. These two camps are respectively narrow-minded in their opposition. In a certain sense, the nation has been divided into two souls. A deep-rooted split such as the division between faith and reason does not occur within the soul of the individual. Needless to say, there is a deep gulf that divides ordinary people from the intelligentsia.

At least with regard to Europe, the tension between faith and reason has always existed. What is the origin of the split in the Japanese nation? Has it always existed or has it come into existence due to some disruption in familiar traditions? Father Rogendorf argues the former. If he is correct, then the split between the "commoners" and the "intelligentsia" can either be traced back to the remote past in the history of Japanese thought, or it has always been latent. I am inclined to think that the split has its origin in some disruption in the history of Japanese thought. No doubt this disruption occurred as a result of Western ideas that flowed into Japan.

What precisely was the origin of this disruption? I feel that the establishment of the natural sciences caused this disruption to some degree. To understand this further, we might confront the most difficult issue in the field of the philosophy of religions: the relation between religion and science or more generally speaking, the relation between faith and reason. These are issues that people have pondered over the ages, and they involve the opposition of ideologies that have been causing several problems. The division of the world recently into two camps, the so-called “free world” and “the Communist sphere” can also be attributed to issues concerning religion and science or faith and reason. Etienne Gilson asserts in *The Philosophy of the Middle Ages* that this issue had motivated the development of Christian thought in the Middle Ages. The same can be said about philosophy. Feuerbach states, “Only that which is sacred is true for theology and only that which is true is sacred in the case of philosophy.” Reason acquires truth through the power of natural reason instead of relying on supernatural revelation. It insists that only what is acquired through this rational process can be regarded as true.

But this tension between faith and reason was not limited to the opposition between theology and philosophy. Reason allowed science to become independent of philosophy and science has been perceived as the final and therefore authentic basis of reason. It is sometimes regarded as a realm of free inquiry where one can acquire truth. The notion that the knowledge of truth is objective was thought to be self-evident.

By contrast, in philosophy, ideas were conceived of as true features of reality. Reason was thought to consist in the of “viewing” these ideas, as was the case with Platonism. This kind of metaphysics could be interfused with Christianity. But already during the time of Aristotle, what constituted “knowledge” and “reason” underwent some fundamental changes, since they were beginning to adopt the stance of science. The history of philosophy teaches us that the transition from Platonism to Aristotelianism was accompanied by fierce intellectual disputes during the Middle

Ages. The basic reason for this can be seen in the changes with regards to knowledge and reason. Thomas Aquinas established a comprehensive system of thought which was designed to bring reason into harmony with faith. But in recent times as the natural sciences have become methodologically independent, the tension between faith and reason has become accentuated to the point of disrupting the relationship between religion and science. This disruption surfaces in the philosophy of science, which assumes that science is a philosophy without bringing it to critique in the Kantian sense where reason itself is carefully dissected. This trend has caused into turbulence in Europe in the form of atheistic materialism ever since the eighteenth century. The positivistic rationalism that Father Rogendorf discusses took root in such a secular atmosphere. I think atheistic materialism is one of the most extreme forms of rationalism.

The spirit of positivistic rationalism based upon the scientific perspective was born in Europe and consolidated modern European thought. European civilization expanded its sphere of influence and disseminated ideas to non-European countries. Its ideas became the driving force, which lead them on to modernization. These ideas are historically significant because this spirit of modernization has spread throughout the world. I think the severance of Japanese indigenous traditions brought about by the importation of the modernist perspective and its affiliation with European civilization has created the incoherent atmosphere that is prevalent in Japan today. This kind of outlook was originally absent from the history of Japanese thought. But for the time being I would like to set aside this subject because it involves various other complicated issues.

Instead, I would like to return to the conflict between faith and reason. There seems to be no easy way to resolve the tension between religion and science. It used to be taken for granted that within the framework of theology, there was the possibility that faith could transcend reason while allowing reason to clarify faith. But ever since philosophy started to "listen to the voice of science" and thereby

became independent of theology, the problem of faith and reason was transmitted from the domain of theology to that of philosophy. Philosophers ranging from Descartes to Hegel replaced the theology prevalent in the Middle Ages. They burdened themselves with the problem of the relationship between religion and science and failed to come up with a satisfactory solution. Since then, the spiritual world of Europe has suffered deep splits at its foundation. Alienation occurred between religion and philosophy, philosophy and science, science and religion and within philosophy itself.

I think Father Rogendorf's argument, which insists that faith itself is beyond rationality, is actually rationally grounded. For example, one can argue that Protestantism today tends to insist that the wholeness of a person as an individual (i.e., the ultimate place of his holistic being) lies in the disharmony between faith and reason instead of acknowledging the totality of the individual that is harmonized by faith with reason. Protestantism, Marxism and existentialism follow this trend and most scientists are indifferent to both religion and philosophy. This spiritual split which seems to have become accentuated in Europe is not unique to Europe alone. It is derived from the spirit of modernization which has spread worldwide. It could be argued that all non-European nations have been seduced by the spell of modernization and in the process they have come to resemble the European model. With regards to Europe and North America, because it was not necessary to accept the external pressure of dominant outside cultures, North Americans have been able to maintain unity that allows them to prevent serious schisms that may eventually occur.

Japan is an exception because it has made rapid progress through modernization and has transformed itself, externally and internally, into a Europeanized culture. Japan has suffered as a result of the severance from its own indigenous traditions. There is a serious division between the ordinary citizens and the intelligentsia. The former are still searching for their footing in religion. The

intellectuals follow European trends of thought. The gap between the two groups is difficult to bridge.

4. Faith and Reason

Father Rogendorf states that, “religious faith is not related to rational action. It involves the total devotion of the individual. Nevertheless, if one stops investigating faith in a rational manner, the inner balance of the individual can be disrupted.” Even though I agree with his basic idea, I think his assertion is more problematic than it seems. When he claims that religious faith is manifested in the devotion of the individual, does this not include reason as well? If faith has nothing to do with rationality, then I would question the assertion that faith detached from reason can constitute total devotion.

Father Rogendorf asserts that the harmony between faith and reason establishes a natural balance in human existence. At the same he states that faith that transcends reason forms the self completely. How can we reconcile these positions? There seem to be two kinds of totality: one that is connected with the transcendent rationality of faith, and the other that allows reason to clarify the position of faith.

Can these two really be compatible? Both perspectives make us suspect that his idea is contradictory. One might even say that the basic cause of the split between Catholicism and Protestantism is centered on these issues. Faith and reason have entirely different origins. The difference is usually described in terms of “grace” and “nature.” One can say that natural reason ultimately comes from God, but we cannot deny the essential heterogeneity of faith and reason. Therefore I think that the two kinds of commitments that I have described can both be seen through religious stances based upon faith.

With regards to the issue of faith and reason, there may be a third possibility. When I said that faith involves a person's totality, I asked whether or not reason could be included. If reason is included, because reason in the ordinary sense is heterogeneous to faith, it must transcend reason, so to speak. Reason must be established as something similar to faith within a super-rational realm. As a matter of fact, a third possibility emerged at a very early stage in religious history, one known as mysticism, in which the "knowledge of transcendent knowledge" was given recognition upon. Mysticism is based on silent contemplation, illuminated through "the divine light of grace." It advocates a mystical union that transcends the self. I think such a union with God represents "the knowledge of no knowledge."

To sum up what I've been saying, three kinds of religious commitment can be discerned. The first is the transcendent rationality of faith. If this position is taken to the extreme, it assumes the perspective of *sola fide*, which can sometimes become irrational. The second aims at achieving harmony between faith and reason while emphasizing the transcendent nature of faith. The third is mysticism, which finds in the transcendent quality of faith a path to spiritual wisdom (*gnosis*). Mysticism culminates in achieving a spiritual union with God. Perhaps the great thinkers of the Middle Ages such as Augustine, Anselm and Thomas included all three perspectives each in a different way, while developing their thinking on the basis of the second kind of commitment. These philosophers have a distinctively mystical style of thinking, not to mention their deep faith. In spite of such grand-scale philosophical ideas, when we take a broad overview, the issue of faith and reason still poses many problems. One of the reasons why I have insisted on the importance of faith and reason lies in the complex nature of the subject.

At this point I would like to consider the various stances of Buddhism. It is often said that the position of the Pure Land sects is similar to the faith-centered stances of Protestantism. But what about the other sects of Buddhism? If you would allow me to make an overarching generalization, I feel that Buddhism has much in

common with Christian mysticism that claims which the path of transcendent wisdom is opened up through faith.

Faith centers on listening undisturbed by any doubts to the Buddha's teachings and following in his footsteps. In Buddhism, this is thought to form the basis for bearing witness. In the beginning of the *Treatise on Great Wisdom*, Nāgārjuna interprets the concept of listening. "The great ocean which forms the Buddha-*dharma* has faith as its entrance and wisdom as its exit. One is supposed to listen with faith. If one's faith is pure, one can enter into the Buddha-*dharma*. If one does not have faith, one can never comprehend it." Nāgārjuna speaks of faith and wisdom as being united. What does he mean? Entering into the ocean of the Buddha-*dharma* implies that only faith triggers conversion enabling the total transformation of the individual. It also means that a person can enter into the frame of mind whose only aim is to be enlightened.

The individual should be determined to teach and guide sentient beings while practicing the Buddha-*dharma* himself. One can set out to acquire the great wisdom and compassion of the Buddha as one's own self-realization. The *Garland Sutra* states that, "one can enter the frame of mind which aspires to become enlightened precisely because one's faith is directed toward the *dharma* and *sangha* and one shows great respect toward the three treasures." In other passages, it is written that "faith is the beginning of enlightenment and the mother of all virtues. Faith is the first vehicle of the treasure house."

The notion that faith leads believers to enlightenment suggests that through deep faith, the wisdom that is itself one with Buddha's wisdom of enlightenment can be acquired. The starting point is the stream which flows directly to its goal. A realm in which one knows all things as they really are can be opened up through faith. Each step that one takes along this path is not detached from this place of wisdom. I think Faith is like a ship crossing the ocean, always aware of its position in the sea.

This unity of faith and wisdom is implied in the passage from the *Garland Sutra* which states that “when one aspires to attain enlightenment, one has already realized enlightenment.” There is another well-known account contained in the *Lotus Sutra* describing how a sea goddess who was the daughter of the dragon is said to have achieved enlightenment. The goddess possessed a jewel equal in value to all the treasures in the world. She offered it to the Buddha, and the Buddha accepted it. The dragon’s daughter claimed that her own enlightenment was attained more quickly than the time it took her to offer the precious jewel to the Buddha. It is said that the precious jewel symbolizes supreme wisdom transcending everything that exists in the world. The fact that she offered it to the Buddha signifies that faith and wisdom are unified. These sutras reveal that if one can attain even a moment of true faith, then wisdom equal to that of the Buddha can also be attained.

An Indian Buddhist scholar called Vasubandhu, who lived in the fourth century, addressed this point in *A Treatise on Achieving the Frame of Mind for Enlightenment*. When the great ocean came into being, at first it became a receptacle for various priceless treasure bowls. In the same way, when one’s aspiration for enlightenment is awakened, it becomes the womb from which all individuals and buddhas are born. It is also thought to be the origin of silent meditation and wisdom. When the trichilocosm first came into existence, it became the supportive ground for all sentient beings. Similarly, when this mind-set aspiring for enlightenment is first achieved, it can carry people reliably along, whether the aspirants are good or bad, whether their beliefs are true or false. Moreover, just as the number of sentient beings is infinite and inexhaustible, so is the great compassion that is inherent in this initial aspiration. It extends itself to all sentient beings without exception. This is like the empty sky that hangs over all things from which nothing can escape.

The initial aspiration toward enlightenment opens up the source from which all beings and buddhas are born. It is a realm where all sentient beings are protected and dependent. All things in the visible and invisible world can be realized. It is a

realm where suchness becomes self-subsistent. Human beings and the Buddha-*dharma* are equally selfless in this realm.

This realm is revealed through the Buddha's great wisdom and self-realization. This initial mind-set reveals that one has advanced to a self-realization at one with the Buddha's self-realization. That is why when one initiates this mind-set that seeks awakening, one has already begun to realize enlightenment. This awakening signifies emancipation. The Buddha's wisdom is not fundamentally different from this initial awakening. It goes without saying that such wisdom is not ordinary knowledge based upon natural reason. Since it is wisdom that arises from a person's total transformation (i.e., his existential conversion), it negates and transcends ordinary rational knowledge. It is wisdom belonging to the Buddha's realm. For this reason Vasubandhu states in his writings that the Buddha's realm is beyond conception or imagination. "It can be understood only through unfathomable wisdom and is completely beyond the conception of discursive thought. A bodhisattva who for the first time initiates the mind-set of awakening is able to enter into the Buddha's realm because he believes in the Buddha's words."

5. Non-discrimination

If we assume that faith in Mahayana Buddhism is tied up with the wisdom of *prajñā* which transcends ordinary rational intellect, it can be argued that faith has some points in common with mysticism. At the same time, I feel that there is a great difference between these two concepts.

In the mystical union, thought by philosophers to be the culmination of mysticism, the soul is believed to merge with God and enter into a state in which one forgets one's self. Plotinus, who first provided mysticism with a systematic framework, conceived of absolute oneness with God as a realm transcendent not only

from the sensory world but also from the intellectual one. He claimed that when the human soul enters into union with this absolute entity, it completely leaves itself behind. The resulting ecstasy signifies a withdrawal from the world. To go beyond oneself and everything that exists in the world is often described as emancipation (*gedatsu*) in Buddhist terminology.

Such a mystical union is not equivalent to rational knowledge as established within the world. Although it is a state of self-oblivion, it includes knowledge that transcends rational knowledge. That is one of the fundamental characteristics of enlightenment. Nevertheless, there is a tendency for mystics to conceive of mystical union in its emotional aspects. As a matter of fact, this state is often described as a kind of intoxication. This seems to have been the case for Christian mysticism in particular.

I think mysticism has suffered undeserved criticism. Some say that mystical union is merely a subjective experience or that it is simply an emotional state of mind. This criticism seems to be directed against the notion that mystical union signifies a union with God whose existence is regarded as absolute. Of course, ecstasy consists in being absorbed into this absolute entity. It sometimes takes on emotional qualities so that the individual feels as if he were enraptured with the divine being. At the same time, there is a tendency for the "knowledge of no-knowledge" to become concealed. Knowledge itself ends in God and is unable to develop further. As a result, it seems easy to get caught up in emotion.

Similar tendencies can be observed in Plotinus' ideas. It is certainly true that the Supreme Being is not conceived of as an absolute being in Plotinus' writings. Since Plotinus supposes that all things exist within the world, the Supreme Being who transcends everything cannot be said to be a living entity. However, the Supreme Being is conceived as the culmination of all forms of existence. That is to say, above the provisional sensory realm, there is an intelligible world, which is composed of idea-like beings, which exist above this intelligible world. Knowledge

culminates in self-negation and proceeds no further. Ecstasy, therefore, is often accompanied by emotional feelings.

The Buddhist stance that “form is emptiness and emptiness is form” is fundamentally different from God’s position as the Supreme Being. The so-called wisdom of *prajñā*, which signifies the knowledge of unknowing, is also the wisdom of non-discrimination. It is a wisdom achieved through emancipation. This wisdom can be developed further. Without leaving the emancipation perspective behind, it returns to the self and the world from which it detached itself. Returning to the intelligible world or to the sensory world without having merged with the Supreme Being, it can once again engage in the activities of the soul. It can be argued that one elevates the spirit and these worlds into a single unified entity. This is because Buddhism is based upon the idea of non-discrimination. The development of this kind of wisdom is evident in the Buddhist “consciousness-only” theory. One acquires wisdom by transforming consciousness. According to this doctrine, consciousness ranges from sensation and ordinary consciousness to the realm of super-consciousness. These realms are delusional, but they are negated and thereby transformed into four kinds of wisdom. Even though these levels of consciousness are the source of all delusions, transformation brings forth wisdom where all things are realized as they actually are, in accordance with their essence.

The true forms of existence appear like images reflected in a mirror. One kind of wisdom is an understanding where one is able to observe one’s self, the other, and all things in their true features so that they are essentially non-dual and equal in their suchness. This can be achieved by projecting one’s consciousness onto the object that one is examining. Another kind of wisdom is one in which the individual is able to observe all things in their true forms. All things occupy their own places of existence respectively, so that they can be discriminated from each other. When the consciousness filtered through the five senses is transformed, one can acquire wisdom that allows the individual to engage in appropriate forms of

conduct. Basically, I want to emphasize that the wisdom acquired through emancipation penetrates not only the transcendent realms, but also the sensory ones.

It goes without saying that the development of such wisdom is accompanied by human emotions. For instance, faith arising from an existential transformation is often regarded as a delightful state of mind. The fourfold wisdom that I mentioned in fact abounds in great compassion, which is similar to the concept of *agape* in Christianity. But perhaps the development of the fourfold wisdom I have just mentioned cannot be seen in ordinary mysticism or the forms of mysticism practiced in Christianity. I think it might possibly be something unique to Buddhism. It is quite common that the great mystics of Christianity achieved union with God at the bodily level through their practice in the physical world. But I think there have been few cases in Christianity in which this development occurred in the realm of wisdom, arising out of the ecstatic state in which one escapes oneself. In my opinion, the fundamental reason for this difference lies in the fact that in Christianity the individual relates to God who is regarded as the absolute being. In Buddhism, one can retreat into the realm of suchness where all things are realized in their “whole-one” relationship. One comes to know one’s self in this realm of wisdom.

The fourfold wisdom that I have been talking about does not have much in common with knowledge based upon natural reason. It is a standpoint that negates both the position of reason and the sensory perception of the world while letting them both remain as they are. Needless to say, it is a formidable task to try to maintain this stance of wisdom. Since the practice of silent meditation is neglected today, it will be difficult for people to gain such wisdom. As the world entered *mappō*, or the final age of the *dharma*, the “faith-only” stance of Pure Land Buddhism became popular. As I mentioned earlier, this perspective is similar to Luther’s *sola fide*. But this faith-only perspective includes the “emancipation-wisdom” which is inherent in Buddhism.

In Zen Buddhism there is a belief that the Buddha's enlightenment can be directly attained within a person's living body. According to this idea, known as *sokushin jōbutsu*, the Buddha-*dharma* is immediately realized in the sensory realm. This stance is posited on a faith that is separated from wisdom. While this observable in certain doctrines, this stance possesses some irrational characteristics. All the stances I have mentioned so far arise from faith through the realization that during the final age, the distance it takes to achieve emancipation becomes absolute and irrelevant. Their common tendency toward faith is based upon beliefs and notions that exist within the sensory world.

The fact that Japanese medieval Buddhism achieved a new kind of existence and was provided with creative vigor is due to its spirit of absolute negation. The Pure Land sect views faith as being furnished by the Buddha to foolish human beings who are at a loss. By pursuing one's belief in the absolute other, one is able to tread on the Pure Land path of absolute negation. If one deviates even a little from this path, then the chanting of the Amida's name will take on a more magical quality.

The same thing can be said about the idea becoming a Buddha in one's very own body. Due to the directness of these doctrines, it is very easy to lose the spirit of absolute negation. These ideas can easily take on magical and superstitious qualities. Such ideas spread quickly in medieval times, and at present they have become the source from which many new religions have come into existence.

As I have mentioned earlier, many Japanese intellectuals support scientific reasoning and have become indifferent to religion. In using the term "indifferent," I'm alluding to the period of the extinction of the *dharma*, which is said to occur long after the age of the final *dharma*. The significance of the sciences as opposed to religion might well be argued to be the beginning of the period in which the *dharma* itself is extinguished. Nevertheless, I personally think that the natural sciences and the human sciences, including psychology, are capable of becoming an appropriate media through which the Buddhist religion can acquire new knowledge. Although I

think that Buddhism should take this opportunity, I cannot get sidetracked on this topic now.

In contrast to the indifference of intellectuals, most people lean towards reliance on established religions, which have been ambivalent about seeking self-awareness. The practice of such established religions has been transformed into more of a social custom. Of course, some people are becoming enthusiastic about the new religions. Others have experienced a disruption in their religious beliefs. Father Rogendorf pointed to the irrational quality of Japanese people's religious beliefs as one of the causes of the disruption. I would like to shed some light on this point because I feel that the concepts of faith and wisdom in Mahayana Buddhism differ from those in Christianity and other religions. Father Rogendorf's arguments are therefore not applicable to Mahayana Buddhism. Among the traditional religions of Japan, Buddhism has occupied the central position. Throughout the history of Buddhism in pre-modern Japan, the idea that "form is emptiness" spread among the intelligentsia as a generally accepted idea, and this idea exerted its influence on Zen Buddhism.

Zen Buddhism takes a fundamentally negative attitude toward the discursive rational intellect, but it is certainly not irrational. Buddhist sects rely on faith in the supreme other because they believe that they are living in the final age of the dharma. Such faith, when separated from wisdom, has irrational elements, but I doubt that it results in religious indifference or trifling.

It is possible for irrationality to be accompanied by intense religiosity, as sometimes happens in Japan. Protestantism also exhibits this tendency. Today Protestantism and Catholicism form the backbone of Western religiosity. I suggest that the intelligentsia's indifference toward religion and the average citizen's tendency to seek only worldly benefits from religion were caused, not so much by Buddhist teachings, but rather by changes in external historical circumstances. Perhaps the fact that Buddhism exerted less influence in the period preceding its

modernization has something to do with this change. Father Rogendorf deals with this change in circumstances by tying it to the history of spirituality in Japan.

6. Syncretism

Father Rogendorf's approach is to trace the origin of relativity, indifference and irrationality prevalent in Japanese religious concepts, as well as people's attitudes, by examining the history of Japanese thought. He acknowledges that there is an astonishing degree of pluralism in Japanese religions and identifies the main cause of this pluralism to lie within the thought process of Buddhism itself. Admittedly, the Japanese people's attitude of compromise and other complex factors can explain their religiosity. In general, I am in agreement with his perspective. Buddhism is not based upon the positive affirmation of a single historical event, such as the revelation of God in history, as be observed in Judeo-Christian religious thought. Rather, Buddhism is based on emptiness. As I have mentioned earlier, this "emptiness" is an emptiness that transcends its relation to "non-emptiness." It is an absolute emptiness that negates even emptiness itself. It has very little to do with the skepticism and epistemology that Father Rogendorf mentions.

Transcendence is inherent to all religions. In Christianity this transcendence manifests itself in the form of a God who is a self-subsistent Supreme Being. The belief in Jesus Christ, whose relation to the Supreme Being is indispensable, is also an essential component. In Buddhism, absolute emptiness is equivalent to emancipation. As I have mentioned earlier, suchness manifests itself in the concept "form is emptiness and emptiness is form," which is the wisdom of emancipation. In Buddhism this wisdom of emancipation itself is transcendence.

One of the greatest differences between Buddhism and Christianity lies in the attitudes that they adopt toward other religions. It is quite natural that Christianity,

worshipping one personal and volitional God, sometimes adopted confrontational stances toward other religions and cultures. One has to admit that there is a tendency in each religion to let the opposition between itself and the other to be accentuated to the point where it seems that what is at stake is a choice between the truth and deception. Christianity sometimes refuses to recognize the legitimacy of the other. Since ancient times, Christianity has been known to exhibit such an unbending tendency. Its opposition to other religions has sometimes been seen as a battle against the devil.

In so far as Buddhism is concerned, there have also been cases in which conflict with other religions was seen as absolute opposition between truth and deceit. However, the Buddhist authorities did not refuse to admit the *raison d'être* of their opponents. This is because Buddhist thinkers often use the argument that even deceit manifests truth at its core. The relative opposition between truth and deceit is underscored by absolute truth that transcends this relativity.

The Buddhist sutras state that the gods and *devas* who had been the objects of worship in various Indian religions were delighted when they heard the sermons of the bodhisattvas and the Buddha. They became believers and increased their own virtue, pledging themselves to protect the *Dharma*. It is said that even Devadatta, who was once an enemy of the Buddha, will eventually become a Buddha in the future. Other religions are seen as basically not departing from the Buddhist truth to which they will return after self-realization occurs. The gods of other religions were not destroyed but were believed to eventually achieve emancipation. The absolute negation exercised against them manifested itself through letting them return to absolute emptiness. They will adopt a new form within the Buddha *Dharma*.

I think this stance naturally developed out of Buddhism. The attitude that Buddhism took toward Confucianism and Daoism when it was brought into China and that which it adopted toward Shinto and Confucianism in Japan seem to be derived from the same spirit. Syncretism is one of the outstanding features of

Buddhism in encounters with others religions such as Shinto. The Buddhist-Shinto syncretism that occurred in Japan was more than a simple mixing of religions. I think it involved a self-conscious attempt on the part of Buddhism to have Shinto maintain its beliefs, while altering their forms. The Shinto gods were regarded as buddhas and bodhisattvas who had transformed their appearance for the purpose of saving sentient beings and who could be regarded as embodiments of the Buddha. For this reason, I think the pluralism that existed at the time of this encounter was not simplistic syncretism, but an attempt by Buddhism to unify both religions through common truths they deemed as absolute.

The effort to systematize Confucian and Shinto principles of politics, morality, and ethics while establishing the Buddhist foundation for emancipation from the secular world had begun during Prince Shōtoku's rule. Shinto and Confucianism both had religious elements built into their systems. The Buddhist concepts of wisdom and compassion which are closely connected with self-renunciation (*muga*), blended naturally. I think it is possible to say that the Confucian concepts of heaven (*tian*) and benevolence (*renai*), used to interpret political ethics, were seen in terms of *muga*. The mirror, seen as one of the sacred treasures, is a symbol of the *kami's* virtue. It is also seen as representing the spirit of *muga*, because it reflects all things onto itself while possessing nothing of its own. This spirit of unselfish love had been transmitted since the establishment of the Japanese state. In my opinion it was Buddhist emancipation, as transcending humanity and the world, which interpreted Confucianism and Shinto in this way. The pluralism seen in the history of Japanese thought allowed Buddhism, Confucianism and Shinto to maintain their distinct roles while unifying in certain aspects. In a sense these three religions could exist side by side within the soul of each individual.

Whether this synthesis was good or bad is quite another matter. ● One weakness of such syncretism is that for ordinary people it is quite difficult to overcome superstitious and magical elements, thereby elevating their religiosity. The

other shortcoming that comes to mind is that Confucianism and Shinto eventually proclaimed their independence from Buddhist thought and adopted anti-Buddhist attitudes. Obviously, this created further divisions in Japanese thought among the intellectuals of the Tokugawa period. Under these circumstances, the co-existence of the three religions came to be viewed simply as social custom.

It cannot be denied that these negative factors accentuated the fundamental characteristics of emptiness. A similar pattern can be observed in the relationship Buddhism had with Daoism, Confucianism and other popular religions during Song dynasty (960-1279). By contrast, Christianity destroyed various ancient religions while incorporating what it found useful from these cultures. This might well be conceived of as a strength rather than a weakness, but I think that comparing the merits and demerits of religions raises a whole set of problems that cannot easily be resolved.

I'm personally more interested in the relation between religion and culture. It seems to me that there existed to some extent entirely different cultural standards between Western culture from the time of the grand scale migration of the fourth to eleventh centuries (*Völkerwanderung*) and the corresponding Chinese (Wei, Jin, Northern and Southern Dynasties) and Japanese (Nara to Heian) cultures. Perhaps these different standards have something to do with the attitude that Christianity adopted toward heterodox cultures and that which Buddhism took toward Chinese and Japanese cultures. Following this period in history, science developed and a rich culture blossomed in the West, but along with these developments, there emerged a growing tendency for people to become indifferent or even opposed to Christian faith and theology. I'm afraid that this tendency perhaps will only increase in the future. Christianity can no longer afford to take a passive stance. I think Christianity should cultivate a new attitude toward popular culture and science.

There was also a noticeable difference in the way these two religions define themselves. Christianity established a single canon of honored scripture, called the

Bible, as fundamental to its identity. Buddhism, on the other hand, allowed sutras unlimited increase, as Watsuji Tetsurō explains in his article appearing in the August 1957 issue of *Kokoro*, with Buddhist sects often become strongly opposed to one another, as if belonging to independent religions. This is somewhat different from denominational relations within Christianity. Success in establishing a single canon of scripture lies in the fact that Christians believe the will of God presiding over history, from the creation of the world to the resurrection of Christ, is reflected in their sacred text. So perhaps we can argue that the oneness of a personal God as the Supreme Being enabled the development of a unifying scriptural canon to be organized.

By contrast, Buddhism did not come into existence by proclaiming certain historical facts to be the foundation of its faith. Buddhism arose out of the Buddha's realization of the true path to enlightenment and from the attempt to bear testimony through the practice of the *dharma*. The Buddha's way cannot be furnished from the outside. The Buddha-mind, achieved through emancipation, can only be handed down from "mind to mind" so to speak. It is separated from the realm of language. The Buddha *dharma* cannot be grasped by words only.

But it is precisely this stance that caused the unrestricted increase in sutras. Even the texts of the Mahayana, which profess to be sacred scriptures, are written in the style of the sutras. One may choose to see them as mere formulations of spiritual literature, but if one tries to interpret sutras from a religious perspective, it could be argued that they were written for the purpose of self-realization. From a religious perspective, the *dharma* expounded therein is not different from that of Śākyamuni Buddha. This at least is my opinion. Such an unrestricted increase in scripture could only occur in Buddhism.

Zen Buddhism, on the other hand, advocated that the Buddha's teachings have been handed down through means other than the sutras. One can become a buddha by seeing into the depths of one's own nature. The Rinzai sect went so far as

to declare that the sutras are nothing more than scraps of paper. This was a position unique to these Japanese sects. The two positions, standing in direct opposition to each other, are basically derived from the same source. What is more, various Buddhist sects have been established as upholding specific sutras and paying homage to certain buddhas. Possessing their own objects of worship and sacred scriptures, these sects are independent of and even opposed to each other, as if they were different religions. This unusual phenomenon distinguishes the Japanese form of religious pluralism. The problems that such decentralization created are plain to see. In Catholicism, various religious organizations are united under the one and only church. Since this weakness is concerned with the very nature of Buddhism itself, it cannot be overcome easily. In order to alter the present situation, Japanese Buddhism will have to undergo some fundamental changes in relation to its history.

In spite of these deficiencies on the part of Buddhism, I am reluctant to analyze the nature of these two religions in terms of a simple inferior-superior dichotomy. For example, I am still unsure about the merit of claiming that the Christian canon and scriptures are a single entity. The concepts of God's creation of the world and of the historical role that Jesus played as the incarnation of God are unacceptable to most intellectuals today. I also find these claims unacceptable, at least in their traditionally expounded forms. And I think intellectuals should not necessarily be blamed for becoming cynical. Circumstances resulting from important historical developments have made intellectuals adopt such an attitude. Unless one interprets the whole history since the Renaissance as a decline into decadence resulting from secularization, the disparity between the stance of the intellectuals and the believers brings to light the problems inherent within Christianity. I am not arguing this because I am a believer who is trying to defend Buddhism.

I have attempted to briefly describe the nature of pluralism in the history of Japanese thought. I wanted to show that pluralism in case of Buddhism was more

than a superficial phenomenon, while tracing the source of its deficiencies. If this pluralism were truly superficial, then a void would have been discernable.

Father Rogendorf argues that pluralism caused the deterioration of religion in Japan, and secularization consequently emerged as a separation of culture from religion. But if this dynamic were true, how can one explain the works of Saigyō, the Buddhist poet (1118-1190), Zeami, the No-dramatist (1361-1443), Sesshū, the painter (1420-1506), Rikyū, the tea master (1522-1591) and Bashō, the haiku poet who understood the fleeting quality of life (1644-1694)? Can one detect the decline of religious sensibility in the works of these individuals?

The way in which Buddhism relates itself to indigenous cultures is different from and incompatible with the attitude of Christianity. Father Rogendorf also stated that secularization in contemporary Japan was connected with the cultural policies of the Tokugawa Shogunate. He thinks that secularization thus occurred in two ways, distancing religion from culture. Even if we assume that this is true, the Neo-Confucian school of Zhuxi and Wang Yangming, immensely influential at its time, emphasized the metaphysics of *xingli*. Such schools of thought portrayed human nature as conforming to rational and metaphysical laws that hold sway over the universe. They emphasized spiritual peace, deriving some ideas from Zen Buddhism, which played a role similar to that of Stoicism in the West. In this respect, I cannot help but think that the secularization of this period was qualitatively different from what we see in contemporary Japan, which is non-metaphysical and is disinterested in spiritual peace.

I think Dutch studies (*Rangaku*), which opposed Confucianism with its spirit of “practical science,” stimulated secularization in Japan. It’s conceivable that the secularization that emerged in modern Japan was caused not so much by the pluralism engendered by history, but by the scientific method introduced into Japan through the new methods of *Rangaku*. I’d like to explain this further, but I cannot elaborate on this now.

Finally, I would like to also briefly touch upon the issue of tolerance, which Father Rogendorf referred to at the end of his article. I think that the most important issue in this thoroughly secularized society is the fact that culture is becoming separated from religion and religion is becoming estranged from culture. This is fatal for both religion and culture. There is basically no difference in Japan and Europe with regards to this issue. This is because the culture of the modern age is more or less the same all over the world. Therefore, it is a common problem for religions all over the world. The main challenge that all religions confront today is not other religions, but the fact that modern culture has become homogeneous throughout the world. The way in which each of these religions confronts modernity depends on their basic difference in stance. What is essential for religions such as Christianity and Buddhism is to recognize the valid strengths in other religions and to open up to the positive aspects that are absent in their own faiths. This will involve a kind of tolerance not destructive of their particular faiths.

CHAPTER THREE

RELIGION AND HISTORY

1. Toynbee's Approach

In *A Historian's Approach to Religion*, Arnold Toynbee asserts that the greatest gulf in culture confronting society today is not reflected in the opposition between capitalism and communism. Despite this profound opposition, it cannot fundamentally affect the future of humanity itself. Probing into the origins of these two ideologies, one can distinguish their mutual affiliation with the West in general and the Judeo-Christian tradition in particular.

An opposition so deep-rooted as to affect issues concerning humanity as a whole, however, is the divergence between Buddhist and Western-Judaic thought. Toynbee postulates that the gulf separating these two ideologies constitutes the basis of all other economic and cultural opposition. At first, this religion-based opposition does not seem to correlate with the opposition between capitalism and communism, but there may be potential consequences of which people are not generally aware.

Toynbee argues that Buddhist thought has distinguishing characteristics as follows. First, the seasonal quality of nature and the rhythm of the universe are viewed as being cyclical in Buddhism. Secondly, there is the concept of the impersonal *dharma* holding sway over the universe as well as humanity. This concept shapes the Buddhist view of nature and history. By contrast, according to Judeo-Christian thought, historical time proceeds in a straight line, the whole of it

presided over by a personal Being. History is provided with meaning through the intellect and human will.

Incidentally, according to Toynbee Buddhism possesses one exceptional characteristic. It offers the possibility of transcendence of the innate egoism all sentient beings, including humans possess. Toynbee affirms that Buddhist thought has great merit in this respect. When one says that the rhythm of the universe is cyclical and presided over by an impersonal *dharma*, one puts emphasis not so much on the individual but on the universal. Thus, individual beings merge into the universal, transcending self. But from such a perspective, the meaning of history becomes irrelevant. Since nothing new ever happens, the same events are endlessly repeated.

On the other hand, in Judeo-Christian thought, history is regarded as the narrative of humanity, one having a commencement, following a clear story-line, and reaching a climax and denouement. As historical time elapses, various dramatic crises occur, there being alternating periods of calm and upheaval, leading ultimately towards resolution. Thus, history is conceived of as a drama in which individuals become the actors. What presides over this drama is the transcendent will of God. The will of a personal God holds sway over individuals who move about within the drama.

History is seen as possessing its own inherent meaning, though it is not immune to the self-serving interpretations of humanity. This feature can clearly be seen, for example, in Judaism's claim of its Israelite adherents being God's chosen people. In the Israelite religion, egocentrism is prohibited as a sin against God, but the very individuals who repent this transgression before God and submit themselves to the divine will still possess a collective consciousness of being the chosen people. Though this mind-set can provide their history with meaning, it is ultimately indistinguishable from egoism.

History itself is self-centered, with individual personalities and groups trying to dominate and redirect the course of human events. How does religion fit into this picture? In Western religions, examples of egocentrism crop up constantly. If perchance these impulses are periodically suppressed or overcome, transgression still remains in the idea of being God's chosen people. Implicit is the idea that God discriminates against other peoples. The Israelites project onto God their own unconscious desire that God should not prefer other peoples. This point was made long ago in Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach's critique of religions. In spite of the fact that self-centeredness is prohibited, it crops up constantly throughout human history.

I personally think that there are various problems with Toynbee's perception of Buddhism in general and Mahayana Buddhism in particular. His view that the movement of the universe is cyclical and simultaneously presided over by an impersonal *dharma*, as well as his idea that history is deprived of its meaning, are conceivable from a Western perspective, but I think it remains problematic nonetheless.

2. Cyclical history

Cyclical movement where history becomes meaningless and time is recurrent is a mythical characteristic of religion. Philosophies that tend to put aside myths—Plato's philosophy and Greek philosophy in general—are still prone to conceptualizing time as moving cyclically. In nature, the four seasons reoccur and time revolves, always according to pattern. Even the solar system returns to its starting point and repeats the same orbit ad infinitum.

In ancient Japan, when new rice was harvested, the Emperor and his court drank *sake* brewed from that rice. This ceremony took place every year, since it

was believed that *sake* possessed regenerative power. The magical power inherent in rice was thought to enable self-preservation and to assure regeneration. Even today, rice is closely connected with vitality. The vitality of the soil, obtained through consumption of rice helps support human existence. By virtue of the fact that the Emperor and his subordinates drink shared *sake*, the political unity between the sovereign and his subjects, as well as between official branches of the government, is renewed. As a result, the country and its citizens form a unified political relationship as a single community.

The whole, constituted by these differing relationships, is renewed once a year. This is the purpose of the annual ceremony. Unless it is properly performed at the predetermined time, life itself cannot be assured during the subsequent year. Through the performance of this ceremony, the economic prosperity of the nation is secured for the upcoming year. But since the ceremony's efficacy gradually recedes over time, it must be performed again the following year. These state ceremonies are performed in accordance with prescribed rites.

History is conceived of as a repetition of recurrent patterns. For one to deviate from these patterns would be seen as an act of defilement. From the religious view, defilement follows abandonment of prescribed rites. It seems to me that this is an essential feature of Hinduism and Buddhism as well even though we know that both of these religions also have metaphysical and speculative views of the universe. In the West, the fact that the consciousness of history emerged from the Jewish people brings up interesting issues. Life itself came to be seen in a historical context in subsequent periods.

According to Christian doctrine, it is said that kindness and justice distinguish individuals who follow the path prescribed by God. But from the very moment of conception, people are also thought to be sinful, straying from this path. Sin constitutes an essential element of human nature. Individuals are also thought to possess an awareness of sin. According to the concept of original sin,

individuals are seen as having rebelled against God and also as having turned aside to a self-centered mode of existence. The awareness of sin appears in conjunction with the self-realization of one's being.

I feel that this consciousness of freedom did not manifest itself in the cyclical worldviews of earlier mythical religions. It made its appearance in Judaism, which emphasized the self-realization of the individual. Time ceased to be cyclical and became progressive, with each new moment being seen as something unique and creative.

History is conceived of as interplay between the awareness of the individual as a self-sustaining sinful creature and the certainty of his self-centeredness. Religious salvation is said to occur when original sin is washed away, or when the person becomes reconciled with God. Religion takes account of the individual's awareness of sin, freedom, and historicity. The individual's realization of sin and freedom exist together as the foundation of history.

According to Christian theology, sin is washed away by Jesus Christ through his suffering, death and resurrection. This transcendent act of redemption takes eschatological form, positing an end to all history. At the root of this eschatological thinking lies a belief in the end of the world, which was prevalent in Zoroastrianism even in the period prior to the emergence of Christianity. This mind-set is presented in Zoroastrianism in mythical form. When the world reaches the termination of its cyclical patterns, it will perish in flames and make way for the coming of a new world. We cannot find the theme of recurrent cycles in Christian theology. Nevertheless, the end of the world is discussed in Christianity.

With early Christian theologians treating eschatology quite literally, believers, thinking that the end of the world was at hand, were paralyzed by fear. This theory of the end of history may be difficult for us to comprehend today, although there are those who still think eschatology quite important. But its significance is dependent upon interpretation, as eschatology can be interpreted in

diverse ways. Even so, there are those who have difficulty in giving credence to it as a view of history. When the academic field of history was established, eschatology got little recognition from scholars.

In a certain sense, history does not have an end, certain new patterns and rhythms emerging in every era. A conspicuous example of unending history is the idea that human progress will continue indefinitely. This way of thinking which became prevalent in the eighteenth-century Europe, stands in marked contrast to the eschatological approach to history. There is some merit to these ideas from the Enlightenment. It is certainly arguable that progress can be measured in history. Naturally the end of the world when all beings will be brought to divine judgment is not the main concern in modern times. Nihilism, as expounded by Nietzsche, demonstrated that Christian eschatology, as well as the concept of God as the ultimate judge, had lost persuasiveness. The more secular view of history in which mankind is perceived as constantly progressing was also subject to serious criticism. Nietzsche's concept of nihilism raised doubts concerning both of these perspectives.

Buddhism and other Eastern religions in general share a positive attitude towards the meaningfulness of history. Nihilism, on the other hand, postulates the meaninglessness of all things, and hence history is itself deprived of meaning. In the case of Nietzsche, an eternally recurrent worldview is established. Nietzsche expounded upon the merging of all processes through which every individual creates something historically new. One cannot easily dismiss Nietzsche's notion of the eternal return as being ahistorical. Although Nietzsche's worldview involves recurrence, I think his interpretation of history should not be evaluated positively.

The end of history can be postulated in the religious sense at a supra-historical level. It can be realized in the awareness of an individual's historical being. This is different from the end of history in which fire and brimstone are

predicted, and all human beings will perish. It is difficult for me to believe that the end of history will occur with the Second Coming of Christ. I prefer to think that there is neither a beginning nor an end to history. If there is an end to history, then there must have been a beginning.

3. Karma

I doubt that the notion of time generally held in the East and especially in Buddhism can be explained through Toynbee's notion of recurrent movement. I believe that underlying recurrent movement, there is time, which has neither a beginning nor an end. Even though it is generally supposed that such recurrent processes must be finite, such recurrence can continue *ad infinitum*.

The Buddhist maxim "from the past without beginning" is somewhat ambiguous, but the idea that time has no beginning and end appears in the Kantian concept of the antinomies. I think that the question of whether there is a beginning and an end to the world is very difficult to deal with at a theoretical level.

In Christianity, history is always conceived of in terms of an individual's historical self-awareness. History is the context in which the individual strives to reach redemption. For this reason Christianity conceives of history as the process of redemption. A force outside of history, namely God, appears in the midst of history and the redemption of humanity is thereby achieved.

God is personal and conceived of as an agent presiding over history with His will and wisdom. The world is perceived as having a definite beginning and heading toward a definite end. Eschatology therefore is intertwined with the conception of God as the Ultimate Being. The notion of history, presided over by the Ultimate Being, prescribes the essential identity of every human being.

I think we need here to consider some key Buddhist notions. I am particularly interested in the Buddhist concept of *karma*. I, for example, exist in my present condition because of my *karma*. My existence is predicated on my parents' existence, and my parents' existence, is in turn predicated on their own parents' existence. In this way, we are able to trace ourselves all the way back to the distant past. Similarly, my children are my descendents, and my grandchildren and their children will continue this chain of existence towards the unforeseeable future. In the final analysis, we must trace ourselves back to an incomprehensible age before the emergence of human beings and all other living things, even before the formation of the earth and the solar system itself.

If we explore our social network further, we find an infinite number of horizontal (spatial) relations. Behind one's personal actions, ties, and relations, exist what has been from the past without beginning. All things come into existence interdependently and in coordination with one another. The sum of all *karmic* relations exists with no beginning or end. *Karma* is what determines us.

In my present existence, there is "the whole" that is connected to me through *karmic* relations, enabling me to conceive of all mankind. Each of my activities appears, becoming one with the undulating motion of the totality of relations that have been continuous from the past without a beginning. It emerges out of the background of the infinite totality with no beginning and no end. This therefore cannot be clarified through circular or recurrent ways of thinking. It is possible that the meaning of history can be made clear through *karma*.

While individuals are determined by the endless series of *karmic* relations, the world of *karma* allows each individual to be born as something entirely new, in the sense that he includes within himself individual freedom. While the undulating motion of all relations is conceived of as endless causality, the contention that it does not have a beginning indicates a past predating all pasts that can be conceived of.

The fact that it does not have an end indicates that there is an endless future as well. This endless past and future can exist within the present moment.

Out of this endless past and future, emerges this present moment, one of freedom and creativity. Nevertheless, this freedom is egocentric. *Karma* is sinful action, sharing some commonalities with the idea of original sin. The individual's act is determined by causal necessity associated with the endless totality of all relations. It involves a kind of freedom that is bound by destiny. By saying this, however, I do not mean there is no freedom. This freedom whereof I speak is a freedom arising out of the determinative power inherent in causal necessity. Its unrestrained action creates the undulating motion of new causality. It is a *karma* that gives birth to more *karma*.

As Toynbee explains, religions based on recurrent cycles, including Buddhism, are fundamentally different from Western religions wherein the meaning of history is brought to fruition. I feel that the concept of emptiness in Mahayana Buddhism has features that do not belong to either camp. I think that among the various Mahayanist Buddhist perspectives that analyze *karma*, there are striking differences between Pure Land and Zen Buddhist schools of thought. Yet both have commonalities as well. The historical perspective and that which is beyond history are combined into one. Mahayana Buddhism possesses the possibility of transcending everything to achieve non-selfhood.

Nietzsche and Heraclitus were philosophers who analyzed recurrent patterns of time. They emphasized the significance of activities going beyond the teleological conception of history. They called these activities play. One often comes across the term "a human at play" (*homo ludens*). This was considered to be the highest form of existence for a human being. It is similar to the Buddhist idea of the "Samādhi of play" or "being completely absorbed in play." I think "pure play" can be observed in time without beginning or end. The totality of relations from the endless past towards

the endless future can be considered as play. The self is emancipated from self-centeredness.

The idea of *karma* as play indicates that each occasion is regarded as a one-time occurrence in historical time. In Christianity, people speak of God's creation of the universe, Adam's eating of the forbidden fruit, and the birth and resurrection of Christ. They also speak of the Apocalypse and the sounding of trumpets announcing the cosmic cataclysm and the Second Coming of Christ. All of these events are expected and are considered to be the most important moments in the history of time. In Buddhism, on the other hand, every moment of historical time and of daily life should be regarded as having its own inherent worth. I have argued that this is a unique way of perceiving history and time.

CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGION AND REHABILITATION

1. Alienation

The loss of humanity is a phenomenon that is clearly visible in society today. Human alienation has obviously become a serious problem. The absence of humanity can be felt by nearly anyone in contemporary society. Various ideas about how this occurred have been put forth. Contemporary companies and factories have undergone structural changes as they organize and enlarge their scope, but they have lost sight of the delicate web of human relations in the process. As a result, these organizations have come to acquire the characteristics of a rigid functional system. When this happens, individual workers are often deprived of their humanity. They are transformed into cogs of a machine. At present, this state of affairs is evident in our schools and homes as well. Furthermore, various societal institutions have come to be seen as objects for academic scrutiny by the social sciences.

This transformation can be seen as part of a major trend visible throughout modern history. It exerts influence not only on our social institutions but also in the cultural and spiritual realms. We can say, as many scholars have already noted, that the basic cause of this revolutionary change can be attributed to the rise of naturalism in Western history.

The triumph of naturalism was accompanied by the complete emancipation of people from traditional religions. It was an emancipation from old worldviews. It

freed people from a view of humanity that had religious faith at its center. It led to the secularization of society and culture. For Buddhists the goal of transcendence was laid aside. Consequently, faith came to be almost universally regarded as mere superstition. Moreover, religious faith was seen as an obstruction to the advancement of reason. It was dismissed as a distortion of human emotion. Faith came to be regarded as a deep obsession that misled the mind.

Today, the multitudes perceive faith in this way, but they no longer experience the deep sense of liberation people felt at the beginning of the modern period. The naturalism that emerged over a century ago was motivated by a desire to break the religious spell that had held sway over our minds for several thousand years.

For humanity as a whole, naturalism objectified the self-conscious mind that dissected everything in an analytical fashion. This led to the emergence of naturalism in the field of literature and the establishment of psychology as a new academic discipline. It also opened the path to the development of psychoanalysis. The influence of naturalist literature and the practical application of psychology in all realms of society are unmistakable. The manipulation of the masses through commercial advertisements and political propaganda goes hand in hand with the development of mass-communication. It is not surprising that Freud exerted considerable influence on American society.

I sense that all these developments were based on a purely mechanistic view of nature. Even in societies that traditionally valued history, mechanistic ideas took over the economic and political arenas. Consequently, it became possible to conceive of social upheavals in terms of calculated revolutions. This mechanistic view of nature formed the basis which allowed the social sciences to thrive as a genre of academic study.

2. Mechanization

Our tendency toward mechanization is so obvious that we sometimes fail to recognize it. In an *Asahi* newspaper article that appeared at the end of last year (1966), a well-known physicist who is a friend of mine presented an interesting argument concerning the mechanistic theory of humanity. He presented a thought experiment to explain things from a unified scientific viewpoint. Unfortunately I cannot get into all the details here. In light of our computer-dominated society, one has to admit that this mechanistic theory of humanity is taken for granted. In fact no matter how vehemently one argues against this mechanistic view of humanity, using religion or common sense, it is not easy to theoretically refute all its arguments.

When one goes beyond the formal framework of the theory, however, the matter becomes quite simple. Anyone will lose interest in living, if he is regarded as nothing more than a cog in a machine. For the sake of convenience, let us disregard intellectuals who have their own opinions on this matter. They are willing to look at all things scientifically, *except* at themselves. The more people think that only scientific truth is absolute, the more they lose interest in living. For example, if a scientist were to give faint praise to an individual saying, "You're a perfect machine." I am sure that individual would take offence, not finding such kind of perfection desirable. It really doesn't make life worth living.

In fact that individual might even commit suicide, since such a life would be too tedious. An individual cannot accept himself merely as a cog in a machine. The basic humanity of the individual threatens to disintegrate. Even for an individual who is sincerely devoted to science, the human component is still important since that person "believes" in science. Such an individual finds himself through science. When the mechanistic theory of humanity becomes the ultimate scientific truth, however, the individual may end up committing suicide. Such a suicide can be

regarded as the ultimate manifestation of the will of the individual who believes that scientific truth is the only real truth. In fact, in the act, the individual gives testimony that he is not a mere machine. I view this as a testimony to the truth of self-worth. In the transformation that takes place from “being” to “nothingness,” the dialectic between scientific truth and human truth manifests itself. The “self-will” that consistently emerges alongside “nothingness” can be felt by those who are cognizant. This is more than simply a mechanical process.

I highly doubt whether a machine can ever know the fact that it is a machine. In order for us to know our own “being,” we have to be able to see the whole of our existence, from past through present and into the future, as a unified whole. Unembellished knowledge of “nothingness” always underlies the fact that one knows one’s being. Is it possible for a machine to be able to mechanically conceive of “nothingness” as it really is?

But let’s leave these questions aside for the time being. To advance our argument a step further, I would like to consider whether a machine can become conscious of its own destiny as a machine. Could our imagined machine transcend its own destiny and reach out for non-existence at one stroke, as an individual does when he commits suicide, realizing that life has no significance? If we can conceive of a machine with such potential, it obviously would transcend the normal conception of a machine. A machine cannot comprehend the paradox of being a machine. When this kind of logic is followed to its ultimate conclusion, it collapses. Recognizing the self-contradiction of its own being is contrary to the very essence of a machine, and such a machine cannot exist. In the case of a human being, however, the alienation of his own being is not paradoxical. Only a living person can contemplate the deep-rooted destruction of his own being.

The further people are mechanized, the more negative they become toward their own existence. People tend to lose interest in their lives, and come to doubt there is any meaning in existence. A negative attitude towards life begins to develop

at the depths of their very being. This is where the difference between a human being and a machine becomes apparent. A robot is not capable of having a concept of life, nor does it have either interest or disinterest in life. This is why it is called a robot. Although mechanization is normal for a machine, for a human being, mechanization threatens his very essence with a series of irresolvable contradictions.

Dehumanization can be seen in all aspects of the modern world. When one argues in favor of a mechanized society, one should remember that a human being can never be a machine and that machines themselves have their limitations. An individual has his own essence even though it may be caught up in numerous ambiguities. The essence of an individual is predicated on that person possessing a will to remain true to the self, no matter what that involves. But a machine exhibits its own limitations because it is unable to possess itself.

The term "self" encapsulates a being capable of expression through use of the phrase "I am." All individuals think in terms of "I," and the other person becomes "thou." Individuals authenticate personal existence in this way. An individual strives mightily to preserve this subjective and personal "self" through all the self-contradictions that human existence entails. While sometimes losing sight of his true self-identity amidst the various swirling contradictions, the individual always tries to establish and promote his self-identity. In hopes of overcoming *nihilum*, one tries to return to the self and affirm one's being.

Such thoughts and processes are inconceivable for machines. What Heidegger attributes to a human being, an existential condition that "hangs over the abyss of nothingness," can never be properly said of a machine. No machine, of course, is eternal. It eventually disintegrates, as is the case with all things existing in the universe. In this respect, we can say that there is always nothingness underlying every machine.

No matter how frequently machines are used to replace human beings, and no matter how well machines perform "human functions," they will be unable to replace

the individual's unique mode of "existence." This is the limitation of a machine. If a machine could really exist as a human being in the genuine sense of the word, it—or rather he—would surely choose not to be a machine at all. When alienation becomes accentuated due to mechanization, individuals really need to affirm their own identity. Committing suicide is hardly the way to accomplish this. We need to validate our own existence as individuals.

The rehabilitation of individuals today must be achieved by each individual. Each person must become his true self. This must also be achieved through realizing one's own individual "being." This is the reason why our primordial "being" is considered so important in contemporary religious thought and philosophy.

3. Rehabilitaiton

Today most problems concerning human rehabilitation have been caused by the absence of humanity. But what is humanity anyway? This rehabilitation, whatever form it may take, must imply that individuals can recover or encounter their true selves. Otherwise, any attempt to rehabilitate the individual will lack conviction.

I pointed out earlier that alienation and the absence of humanity were basically caused by the tendency toward mechanization in nearly every aspect of life. Even in spheres that seem to have escaped mechanization, human alienation can be detected. The trend toward mechanization has advanced by appearing to embrace human elements that it had originally rejected. Human alienation and the absence of humanity become increasingly pronounced as the tendency toward mechanization increases. In fact, mechanization has reached such proportions that it resembles a kind of madness.

The most outrageous examples can be seen in the thinking of juvenile delinquents and in their unrestrained behavior. Sexual liberation occurs as a form of

naturalism. It begins with the notion of free sex, which recognizes no limits. The same casting off of all restraint can be seen in many other areas of modern life. Disrespect for the law is a common occurrence today. People try to be free from restrictions by emancipating themselves from law. All laws and norms seem to have lost their foundations. People try to find their true selves through the pursuit of negative freedom.

These ideas are made manifest by students parading through the streets and struggling with the police. Typically they belong to specific organizations, and subscribe to distinctive ideologies. Nevertheless, when one observes their rebellious behavior in the streets, there seems more to it than merely passionate commitment to a particular ideology. They search for identity by rioting and shouting loud slogans. In reality, such activities are only slightly different from the behavior of businessmen who hang out at bars on their way home after work. They also closely resemble those who join crowds strolling along the main streets of Ginza or Shijō. All these people are in fact desperately searching for something. They feel a need to free themselves from the rigid structures of work, school and family. At the base of these dissatisfactions and irritations exists a deep latent anxiety, an anxiety that is connected with their very essence. Provocative dancing and street demonstrations are just some of the desperate activities of individuals who are trying to find themselves.

These very activities manifest human alienation and the absence of humanity that is all too common in contemporary society. In fact in the process of trying to find their true selves, such individuals actually end up losing themselves and their human essence. The vague sense that human beings are machines troubles them, but such negative activities cannot help them recover or encounter their true selves.

The way to discover one's true self can be found only in religion. The way many intellectuals try to conceive of everything scientifically while ignoring the self is inauthentic. It cannot produce anything but confusion. From ancient times, religion alone has prepared the way for individuals to encounter the self. Authenticity of the

self, belief in the individual and faith in the *dharma* have been elaborated by Buddhism in order to bring self-understanding. Pure Land Buddhists argue that even were we to pass through the fire which destroys the thousand worlds, if we pray to Amida Buddha, he will remove all obstructions. St. Paul says, "It is not I that live, but Christ that lives in me." This expresses the manner through which Paul encountered his true identity. Surely these are good examples of ways to achieve rehabilitation.

To realize this for oneself depends on existential self-awareness. In order to achieve self-confirmation, one must follow paths such as the ones I have just described. But to do this a person must have considerable self-confidence. This is not self-deception. A Buddhist aphorism explains that "showing self-confidence induces us to have confidence in others." The mind that pursues the way is essential, the mind with sincere aspiration for Buddhahood. Without this, no matter how earnestly one tries, one's efforts will come to nothing.

I would like to end by posing a question. What kind of mental attitude and structural organization should religions adopt today to confront the problems I have just discussed? No matter how one chooses to address the question, I feel that religions must allow each individual to realize his own intrinsic self-worth.

CHAPTER FIVE

RELIGION AND EDUCATION

1. Foundations

I have been asked to deliver a lecture on the relationship between education and religion, but I may not be able to fulfill your expectations completely. This is because I have not had enough time to study the problems of education. So I'll deal with the topic simply by offering what comes to my mind, and will welcome criticism afterwards.

I would like to say that religion involves education at its very foundation. Since ancient times, the continuity of religion depends on handing down, from person to person, religious faith and the teachings that constitute the contents of faith. Those who firmly grasp the essence of a particular religion teach its most valued principles to others, bringing them to mature understanding. I would like to consider whether there is something fundamentally religious at the roots of education itself.

After examining philosophy in the West and the East, I think it is not unusual for religious themes to be found in education. Let's consider, for example, Socrates and Plato. In Plato's philosophy, education very clearly comes to the fore, as is well known. The theory of *ideas* underlies Plato's philosophy. In the *Meno*, for example, Plato poses various questions to a person living in ignorance. Eventually the philosopher induces this individual to understand the theory of geometry on his own. He tries thus to demonstrate that mathematical truths are immanent in the mind of the individual. This provided the foundation for his earlier theory of *ideas*.

As you know, what I've just been describing is known as the Socratic method. One can draw out of a pupil what he innately possesses but has not yet become conscious of. It is a method that is designed to let the student become conscious of his own mind. Hence, education, in its most basic sense, is linked with one's attempt to search for philosophical knowledge. Conversely speaking, philosophical knowledge is the medium through which a person develops himself. In this way, philosophical knowledge is connected with the attempts through which an individual, while being taught, reveals what he already possesses within himself, thereby bringing himself into authenticity as a human being. This may well be characterized as an "existential" experience. Philosophy is an activity through which an individual can become a better human being. This process is established through relationships between individuals who teach one another. According to Plato, education is tied up with philosophy. In *Phaedo*, it appears that his interest extends from the teacher-student relationship to the knowledge of God. God is regarded by Plato as the absolute good. His philosophy goes so far as to contemplate God as the absolute good, who possesses absolute beauty.

In Aristotle's philosophy, the progress from potentiality to actuality constitutes the nature of being. That which is contained within the seed of a tree develops into a pine or a cherry tree. The nature of a pine already exists within its seed. Aristotle's theory assumes that what develops dynamically constitutes the nature of an entity.

A full-grown pine tree is the product of the development of its seed. Given this interconnection, we can say that the *energeia* (actuality) in a full-grown pine tree passes over into another so that it becomes its seed, the *dynamis* (potentiality). *Dynamis* develops into *energeia*. This also holds true for human beings. A child is born from an adult, and this child in turn becomes an adult from whom subsequent offspring stem. This dynamic relationship, connecting one individual to another, is vital to the nature of a living organism. Aristotle also brings up the subject of

teaching. Teaching is an occupation through which person who knows nothing is rendered capable of knowing an object. The capacity to know (potency) gradually develops until it is realized in a being capable of knowing words. One does not, however, develop this capacity through one's own initiative. An individual whose knowledge is actualized teaches another person who has potential, so the latter may achieve a state of awareness where knowledge can be attained.

The philosophies of Plato and Aristotle have been transmitted throughout the history of the West. St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, who represent the culmination of philosophy in the medieval period, both wrote treatises concerning the role of the educator. These treatises deal with issues of education and raise questions concerning what it means to transmit knowledge from one person to another. They also expounded upon what it means to cultivate an individual from within. The center of Christian teaching is concerned with the relationship between the individual and Jesus Christ. Christ is conceived of as the teacher of humanity. Consequently the question of how souls are saved through Christ is raised. One should note the fact that St. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas developed their ideas on the basis of Aristotelian philosophy. From what I have been discussing, it is evident that education, philosophy, and religion have been intimately interconnected with each other from the outset. Now I would like to turn to relevant trends in more recent times.

2. Natura Naturans

In my view, Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827) and Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782-1852) were intellectuals who played important roles in the philosophy of education. Pestalozzi developed his theories based on what he considered to be the essence of the individual. This is really quite similar to

Froebel's concept of human nature. Froebel also conceived of children as remaining pure, just as they were when God first created them. He emphasized their state of emotional and physical innocence. Froebel demonstrated that an individual could realize what it means to be a genuine human being.

Spinoza used the phrase *natura naturans*, which means cultivating nature: the source from which all things emerge. This idea passed from Spinoza (1632-1677) to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832), and it is said to be the basis of Goethe's view of nature. I also believe that individuals emerge from nature, which is regarded as the creative power in the aforementioned sense.

Nature produces things in an orderly fashion, forming the foundation for education. A baby sucks his mother's breast in harmony with the order of nature. Out of the interrelation of a baby with its mother, infantile emotions develop, which gradually evolve into feelings, affection and gratitude towards parents. The order of nature that presides over the foundation of the relations between individuals forms the basis of education.

Pestalozzi emphasized the importance of the household and theorized that the greatest strength of education arises from transmitting values. He felt that the more society becomes like a household, the more the love inherent in the relationship between parents and their children will come to the fore. The power of education lies in the affection between one individual and another, an affection that takes root in nature itself. We can say, for example, that various demands that children make spring from nature. I think nature constitutes the basis for education, an education that consists in the cultivation of virtue by which an individual can grow to become a mature adult. A child lives in a state of nature, in all its grandeur. But he doesn't comprehend that he is being educated spontaneously through pursuit of his daily activities. Human nature develops out of the interconnection between nature and the environment.

The concept of human nature, or the essence of the individual, is deeply related to God. The connection with God is immanent in the reciprocal relationships among people. According to Pestalozzi, God bears the closest relationship to human beings from among all his creatures. A person achieves humanity through the relationship between man and God. Viewed from this perspective, God is something beyond finite comprehension, something remote from human beings. But in Pestalozzi's opinion, the relation of individuals to God endows individuals with humanity. God is the power that creates and brings into unity the bounteous whole of nature out of which people are born. Insofar as people emerge out of nature, their innermost essence is realized through relationship with nature's source or center.

Pestalozzi argued that God is what human beings have to find within themselves. Perceiving oneself as an individual implies grasping oneself in relation to God. The essence is connected with what constitutes the ground of nature as a whole. To see God in nature implies that there is God within the individual. Apparently, to know God within oneself enables one to see the divine outside of oneself. We can argue that religious mystery is hidden within the depths of the world at large on which society itself is based. Pestalozzi continually emphasized that there is divinity in the connections between people.

Froebel also wrote several short essays in which he expounded his philosophy of education. He thinks that when people live their lives in accordance with nature, they develop in such a way that true humanity can be cultivated from within. What's more, all depends upon their relationship to God. In the case of Pestalozzi, life itself forms the font of education. Through the process of living, an individual finds guidance to the nature of education itself. Pestalozzi makes us believe that our relationship to God is reflected in every activity of our lives.

The next question I would like to address is what it means to see the world from a religious perspective. I personally think it means that an individual with a desire for realizing his authentic and existential self becomes conscious of living

within the world. To grasp the self in this way is tantamount to understanding the world in a religious sense. I would like to introduce Nishida Kitarō's notion that in daily life the focal point of the self-expressive world comes to realize itself. The relationship of this self to God becomes apparent, and the ground of the world rests in this relation to God.

Pestalozzi describes knowing one's self and being aware of one's relationship to God, while seeing the world from within, in terms of love and wisdom. One's relationship to other people is also one of love. Nishida argues that love is knowledge, and knowledge is love. Love is the source of relations between the self and God, the self and nature, and the self and the other. Love implies that one comes into contact with divinity from within, realizing this intuitively. It should not, however, be taken to imply objective observation.

Froebel discusses the concept of intuition, which is vital in the wake of divine creation. Intuition is involved in perceiving the way through which God creates and preserves all things. Froebel intends to convey the idea that one realizes within oneself the divine power of *natura naturans*. I feel that Froebel's position is similar to Nishida's notion of "action-intuition." When Nishida states that to act is to see and to see is to act, he is not referring to the state of ordinary consciousness. Nishida argues that unless ordinary consciousness is discarded, one cannot see things authentically. One thinks, as well as acts, by becoming one with all.

In Nishida's first work entitled *An Inquiry into the Good*, he refers to pure or immediate experience. In Nishida's view, to see or to act implies going into the depths of experience to reflect oneself upon it. This act is a self-expression to the world, just as the world reflects itself upon us as humans. It is the same with Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's concept of a monad. The fact that we ourselves are an expression of the world, places our action within the context of the world. I am fond of the idea that "the world is at work." Let us suppose that ripples disturb the surface of the sea. In each of these ripples, the sea as a whole is reflected. In this respect, we

can say that the whole is at work. This is the same as the ground out of which we see or act. While Pestalozzi speaks of love or wisdom and Froebel elaborates upon intuition in the wake of divine creation, they seem to be saying similar things.

Self-realization is involved in every action through which we discover the world. This means that the world is in us and reflects itself upon us. All knowledge takes its departure from this point. In this sense, we can say that wisdom involves self-realization, through which we know ourselves and simultaneously know our relationship with God. The relation that each person bears to the world and to nature is realized out of the depths of the relationship between the self and the Absolute. Thus our action takes on the form of love. Love and knowledge are inseparable from each other.

I hope what I have said makes things a little more transparent. It is really quite similar to Nishida's notion of "action-intuition." While our mundane relationship to the world and to nature arises out of our every action, it is thoroughly interconnected with all action of the world. It arises embracing the world as a whole within our relationship to God. This is why I chose the metaphor of the sea. The fact that a ripple occurs is due to the action of the sea as a whole. And within this single ripple, the sea as a whole is reflected.

3. The Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher is essential to the thought of Pestalozzi and Froebel. We create and form ourselves through our relation to the environment. The source of our relation to the environment lies in the relationship we bear to God, i.e., the Absolute who comprehends the whole world. In the sense that individuals are shaped by their environment and, in turn, shape the environment, they live in the world as

instruments of God. This is what Pestalozzi had in mind in referring to education as stemming from love. According to him, the teacher becomes a tool of divine love through which God creates things. For Froebel, education is a process in which the teacher becomes a medium through which other individuals develop themselves. It follows that “educational love” imitates “the divine love of creation.” So far as education is concerned, a teacher’s essence forms a pupil as a human being.

Educational love creates humanity since it is closely connected with teaching. The teacher transmits the spirit of love to his pupils. From the pupil’s perspective, he inherits and transmits this love to others, as taught to him by his teacher. Because love is an act of cultivating individuals, this act is transmitted through education.

Genuine humanity is achieved by loving other human beings. Thus, education aims at passing this humanity on from teachers to pupils. In other words, the essence of a human being is handed down from teacher to pupil through practical experience. This allows pupils to evolve as human beings. Education becomes the medium through which pupils form themselves by their own initiative. I believe that a teacher’s love for the individual is further transmitted from person to person, mirroring divine love. I think it resembles the divine love which allows rain to fall and sun to shine on both the good and the bad as the Bible suggests. It does not allow rain to fall only on some and not onto others.

Encompassing the universe as a whole, this spirit of love constitutes the foundation for establishing the whole universe as it is. It is what enables a bamboo shoot to become a full-grown bamboo. The attitude of a true teacher consists of a love that is absolutely equal. A teacher should love his pupils as they are, without discriminating between the clever or the dull. The act of teaching consists in loving pupils, each according to their own needs. In its depths such love reflects the basic power of the universe.

To speak from a Buddhist perspective, the intent of a teacher may well be described in terms of “non-ego” (*muga*). If one becomes completely identified with

muga, then love can come forth. One must strive to be without the self. Of course this is difficult to achieve, but one is expected to make utmost efforts in this direction. Christianity has at its heart reverence for God, the basis of selfless love, the purpose of which is to nurture individuals. Such selfless love is transmitted from person to person. As individuals come to reflect genuine humanity, they are truly formed as humans.

While an individual seems to act on his own initiative, the truth is that the individual is moved by the stream of life. In this way education takes root in the activities of nature itself. Nature, which forms relationships between people, is the source from which education emerges. Education is linked with nature which encompasses humans. When one tries to teach by putting aside the educational impulses inherent in nature and acting only in compliance with one's own ideas, then this education becomes quite artificial. Such an education would be based on arrogance and devoid of love.

An educator is one who helps others engage in self-teaching activities, which are rooted in human nature. Teaching must mirror the impulses inherent in nature. Furthermore, an educator teaches himself by teaching others. Such reciprocity is based on love and wisdom. Humility and submissiveness are required of a teacher in order to comply with nature's demands. Religion has priority over education. Individual action should be carried out in harmony with God, and the act of learning through which human beings are educated can be conceived of as eternal.

Obviously, the view of education I have just described has undergone gradual evolution. The way we view humanity and the world has undergone changes as well. One reason why this has occurred is due to changes in society brought about by the development of the sciences since the industrial revolution. This development has also had great influence upon changes in human knowledge itself.

This is because society as a whole has come to regard individuals as being defined by their various talents or functions. Society has come to perceive

individuals by giving priority to their specific skills or professional capacities rather than to their essence as human beings. Consequently, the process of acquiring specific skills has become important. This means that priority is no longer given to cultivating personal excellence, but to the demand that pupils should play specific roles or functions after graduation. As a result, professional schools have quickly sprung up.

Prior to this development, the main emphasis of education had been placed on cultivating virtuous individuals. This was thought to be most essential. Society was based on the relationship of one individual to another, but the priority on the individual was gradually devalued. Instead, the state and society were given higher priority. Since specialized functions are needed in a variety of operational systems, it follows that the individuals themselves are controlled by the functions they serve. In such cases, the inner essence of the individual is not given much consideration. Society or the state becomes the master, and individuals become mere functionaries within a system.

A shift away from the concept of essence to that of function has occurred. Education primarily aims at the development of individuals who are capable of functioning in society. Individuals are required to be able to work efficiently. Their individuality and introspective qualities are of secondary consideration. When individuals are required to be overly efficient in their work, serious problems inevitably occur.

Nowadays, I fear that teachers and students come into close contact much less than before. They do not encounter each other in a responsive way. I'm afraid that students and teachers sometimes fail to recognize each other's existence. Reciprocal relationships contribute to the nurturing of each person's essence. But when individuals lose sight of the meaning of existence, they become part of the machinery through which they function in society. Due to these circumstances, the

humanity of the individual gradually disappears and the person becomes a mere cog in the machinery.

Education does promote the advancement of people's skills and their ability to function in society, but it is also important that each person be firmly established in his essence. One needs to make sure that the inner essence of each student is qualitatively significant. Nishida argues that "form determines form." Naturally, he does not mean visible form. Nishida also explained that "what is created also ends up creating." A child who is educated to become a man of character cultivates the character of others when he becomes an adult.

However, human beings can also be transformed into machines. Society itself can become a great machine. The novel *Twenty-Five O'Clock* expounds upon modern technological society as a hybrid given birth to by human beings and machines. Under such circumstances, the humanity of the individual is not given its due weight. Consequently, spiritual activities of people are simply studied through psychology, and human relationships are analyzed through the methods of advanced sociology. Though I think that psychology and sociology are useful branches of learning, they nevertheless cannot account for emotional pleasures and sorrows. These are realms which cannot be communicated to others easily. They are spheres of profound emotions and intense sensations. For example, a person cannot easily communicate to others his own distinction between hot and cold.

The state of mind that becomes an object of study for psychology is comparable to a dead botanical specimen. I personally am more interested in the realm of life that can be felt in the experience of subjective existence, a realm that is often dismissed in psychology. Objects of study in psychology are similar to flowers collected as specimens. They are deprived of their natural perfume. There are, of course, many good studies in the field of sociology. But sociologists seem to lack a sense that their subjects are living. The specimens that are examined in psychology and sociology seem to be deprived of their perfume. When sociologists analyze the

relationships between parents and children, they are likely to encounter the limitations I've just mentioned. The fact that a plant is truly alive can be felt through its vivid colors and aroma. These things can only vaguely be expressed in sketches and paintings.

4. Self-realization

When it comes to educational issues today, there are so many dilemmas that are difficult to resolve. As I have stated earlier, I have the impression that education today is becoming more mechanistic. I'm particularly concerned when thinking about the cultural crisis in Japan and the loss of humanity that is evident everywhere. How should we overcome our present predicament? The basic problem has much to do with the tension between what humanity really is and the threat of mechanization. Nishida tried to confront some of these issues.

Humanism, which I referred to earlier, adopted "the stance of continuity" in order to comprehend humanity. Absolute negation was a position not considered by the advocates of humanism. In Nishida's philosophy, negation plays a significant role in almost everything. When human beings come into contact with God or relate themselves to nature and the world, the relationship is not uni-dimensional. As Nishida suggests, every individual (*ko*) establishes himself as an individual by the negation of the whole (*zentai*). At the same time, the individual is also negated by the whole. By the very fact that the whole affirms itself, the individual is also negated. The whole and the individual stand in contradictory relationship. Nevertheless, in order for an individual to establish himself, the whole must be negated. Likewise, in order for the whole to be established, the individual must also exist. The whole and the individual negate each other, but in negating each other, they must also posit each other, allowing for each other's existence. This is why in Nishida's philosophy

these seemingly contradictory concepts can be unified. In this respect, I think there is a great contrast between Nishida's philosophy and the stance of humanism.

We should not try to grasp society or the state objectively, but deal with them as if they were "predicates of a sentence," to borrow Nishida's phrasing. We perceive these entities as realms into which we were born but which we will leave when we die. Thus we come to understand humanity through intensifying self-awareness. We can also try to grasp the world as a "predicate." I think that this is a new way of looking at the world. Actions can also be conceived accordingly as *poesis*, or acts that produce or create. Individuals can certainly still serve functions in society. But in so doing, they must not lose sight of their nature. Human essence or the person as a whole is regarded as serving a function in the world or in God, and therefore becomes a creative force in the world. At the same time the individual reflects the world within himself.

Since absolute nothingness can be understood as the basis for everything, we can argue that the world is established as the self-determination of absolute presence. The basis of the world is the basis for our own being and action. Everything that we do is affected by absolute nothingness and human subjectivity.

Pestalozzi and Froebel claimed that the function of human education is to teach pupils while allowing them to work. I feel that Nishida's idea tries to do justice to their perspective. Nishida's position may be of considerable interest. He certainly made an effort to clarify the problem underlying education of how to view individuals.

I hope that further investigation of the issues I have just expounded upon will offer some new insights on education. We need to reestablish the traditional way of perceiving an individual and synthesize it with our modern perspective on education. Pestalozzi's concept of the individual who becomes an instrument of God offers these new insights.

CHAPTER SIX

RELIGIOUS MENTALITIES IN PRE-MODERN JAPAN

1. Understanding of Reality

Because I majored in Western philosophy, I am not as well acquainted with contemporary Japanese intellectual history, making me a little hesitant to give this talk. I have been requested to lecture in particular on the methodology of Japanese thought, but not being an expert on this subject, I fear my talk may disappoint listeners. Still I will make the attempt.

Japanese religious thought is, as is well known, very complicated and multifaceted. Yet it seems to possess a flowing unity. It has characteristics that are quite different from those of Western religious denominations united under the banner of Christianity. Japanese religious thought includes concepts derived from Shinto, Buddhism and Confucianism, which though distinct, are all closely associated with each other. Similarly, I think there are some commonalities among the diverse elements of Japanese religions. Concerning religious consciousness, I would like also to focus on some similarities with Christianity. Naturally, these ideas are my own, this simply being one way of approaching the topic.

I am interested in the particular mentality that has formed the foundation for synchronic religious systems. I want to explain religious consciousness in terms of a special sense of reality. Philosophically speaking, the sense of reality that I would like to elaborate upon refers to the understanding of being. I am interested in a state

of consciousness prior to philosophy or reflective thought, a state in which reality comes to be perceived through consciousness.

It seems to me that in the case of Christianity, the unveiling of reality is grasped in the concept of God. God is “the most real being” (*ens realissimum*). Though this concept is stated in philosophical language, it seems to imply a consciousness that knows all that exists. I think that a certain special sense of reality inhabits this concept. It suggests that the reality of all things is supported by God’s reality. All beings are created by God and are provided with their essence, being sustained by Him.

In the case of Greek philosophy, which differs considerably from Christianity, it seems that philosophers conceived of reality as something to be understood through the intellect, in the wider sense of the word. Plato’s *ideas* had a direct impact on later periods as being the most representative of Greek philosophy. Before Plato, Pythagoras had supposed numbers to be the essential forms of all things. Such theories can be regarded as attempts to find behind things a reality expressed in the form of rational laws. These laws are seen as universal. They hold sway over all things and are capable of being understood through the intellect. One can say that contemporary science developed from this approach. For the natural sciences, reality is better represented by natural laws.

In the Christian worldview, all reality is brought together in God, and God is the object of faith. Reality is disclosed through faith which lies beyond the intellect. On the other hand, according to Greek philosophy, the “reality of being” can be grasped by the intellect. Being is said to exist through rational laws as something unchangeable.

In the case of Japan in particular, how is this reality generally conceptualized? It goes without saying that our present way of perceiving things has been westernized to a great extent. In spite of this, Japanese thinking remains bound up in tradition in a way that is different from that which is intrinsic and proper to

Westerners. Furthermore, in Japan, there is a great gap between the intelligentsia and the so-called “common people.” For example, with the exception of those who are affiliated with universities, Japan is a society made up of people who have never read the Bible. While these two classes physically reside in the same country, their minds inhabit spheres that differ widely from one another.

How are these perceptions of reality interpreted by the traditional Japanese religious consciousness? This cannot easily be explained because that consciousness is oriented neither toward one God, nor toward any other intellectual stance. I think the dimension in which all beings exist is one beyond daily experience, one that transcends the way we relate to ourselves in our mundane lives. To put it another way, it is a dimension that breaks down the familiar in our daily lives, allowing us to step outside. It is a realm in which we come directly into contact with the reality of all beings. We cannot grasp this true reality in its transcendence by means of our intellect.

From my point of view, it is erroneous to think that the mundane perception of reality existed solely in the so-called “primitive religions.” It actually has very little to do with the mythic mode of being that existed in those cultures. It seems that this sense of reality lies hidden beneath representations stemming from ways of self-interpretation.

I think we need to distinguish *mythos* from mythology. Mythology, including Greek myths, seems to be fantastical and unscientific. Nevertheless, I feel there is a special sense of reality hidden beneath the surface of these myths. It must have been a sense that existed in some simpler form. Let’s suppose, for example, that we catch a glimpse of something very beautiful. If we see a beautiful flower, the relationship we have towards it has a quality quite different from that of our daily experience. Ordinarily, there is one’s self and the being before one’s self; the former stands over and against the latter, whose being is perceived as an object. The self catches a glimpse of the object, contemplates it and then moves on to engage with it. We

comprehend this being through our own initiative. This seems to be the case both volitionally and intellectually. In such cases, it is one's self that engages with the object.

On the other hand, when one directly experiences beauty, the implications are quite different. In this case, it is being that approaches us and comes to have a hold on us. It penetrates our consciousness, moving us. Ordinarily, we relate ourselves to an object whatever way that suits our purpose. But when an object comes to have a hold on us exuding beauty, our self tends to disappear. The object approaches us, and we are incapable of imposing our will on it. Awe is felt in the face of beauty. What I basically want to convey is that beauty can move us profoundly.

When we glimpse something of profound beauty, we are captivated and thrilled by it. At such a moment the being of the thing surfaces and presents itself to us. This differs from ordinary perception, being more fundamental than our practical relationships to things. When a dimension outside mundane experience opens up, then that object of true beauty appears in its full reality. Intervening from within, it possesses us.

As mentioned earlier, what I have been speaking about so far holds true not only for beautiful things. The term "beauty" has a very narrow meaning for people today. In aesthetics, for instance, beauty is distinguished by sublimity and solemnity. There is a reason for this distinction. To use a typical example, I turn to Mt. Fuji, which has been extolled from ancient times. It is beautiful, and also perceived as something sublime. In a poem composed by Yamabe no Akahito the term "venerable" (*kamisabi*) is used to refer to this feeling. It gives us a sense of something not of this world.

The awareness of being perceived within beauty also relates to one's sense of reality. When a beautiful thing captivates us, it presents itself, coming into direct contact with us. We are awed by it. At this instant, we contact our true self and

become aware of our own being. The reality of the object and that of our self merges into a single awareness. Philosophically speaking, the issue of "being" or "consciousness" can be accounted for by returning to this awareness. Rudolf Otto, in his *Idea of the Holy*, analyzes this awareness from a different perspective. He observed that within numinous experiences, the *fascinans* (fascinating), *majesta* (majestic) and *tremendous* (awe-inspiring) are combined into one.

The notion of power is often used by historians in conjunction with the concept of *mana*. A special kind of power was obviously latent in religious ceremonies performed by primitive peoples. The basic significance of agricultural ceremonies in ancient times depended on the vitality or generativity inherent in seeds. In their daily labor, even primitive farmers must have employed agricultural techniques passed down through the ages. In every age, farmers plow the soil, sow seeds and store farm produce. But despite such tried but true methods, farmers still remain anxious. Even after rice plants sprout, farmers can't be sure of their viability. To assure that crops grow and produce rice, farmers feel the human dimension alone to be insufficient. Human effort alone cannot extinguish anxiety. Consequently, they call upon a power from a far higher plane to assure the vitality of rice plants.

This power assures the being of the rice plants' fertility. The divine power, conceived of as a spiritual force possessing mysterious transcendence, furnishes the reality. It is mysterious in the sense that it renders rice plants capable of possessing genuine being. In other words, it is not until a certain extraordinary potency or miraculous power within the rice plants emerges that they can be furnished with genuine reality.

For plants to continue to produce rice, they must possess this special power. In order to assure this power, various magical rites are performed. After evoking this efficacious power, a farmer can acquire peace of mind and feel the certainty of existence. For this reason, primitive agricultural ceremonies evoke the feeling of the reality of all beings.

In the case of magical rites, the concept of power is quite primitive. But from it develops higher modes of understanding. For instance, the idea of the “holy” arises out of the concept of “power.” The holy becomes a god in the wider sense of the word. Religious rituals rather than magical power became common over time. According to some historians, magical and religious aspects were originally connected with each other.

2. Venerable Beauty

The reality of being thus presents itself with a mysterious quality that possesses us through its own initiative. In this sense, being itself fascinates and attracts us. The same holds true for beauty. We lose ourselves when we are attracted to it. We feel that there is another aspect that holds us at a distance. This aspect exhibits a way of being that is “wholly other” and extremely different in quality from what we experience in our daily lives. Beauty has both these aspects. I think that in ancient times, people felt the divine in the depths of beauty. A good example of this can be observed in Platonic philosophy. We cannot approach the divine lightheartedly. A solemn and sometimes majestic matter is called for. This power fascinates and attracts us, but at the same time it keeps us at a distance. Being awed by “beauty” or the “holy” is similar to experiencing an electric shock. It feels like a radiating circle of power so to speak. If a person has an exceptionally dignified appearance, his dignified manner will overshadow his surrounding, and may prevent others from approaching him light-heartedly. The same is true of something beautiful. Ordinarily, scholars who are engaged in the study of religion speak casually of the divine possessing power. But when discussing these matters, they are far from the immediacy of reality and are merely concerned with intellectual analysis.

I believe that this immediate experience of reality forms the basis of Shinto. Of course, Shinto has evolved over centuries, but this reality in the aforementioned sense can be detected in Shintoism. I have no knowledge of the origin of the word *kami*. Nevertheless, it seems to me that things that evoke “venerable” or “sacred” emotions, such as those one feels when one views Mt. Fuji, are the source from which the concept was derived. A feeling of reality beyond one’s daily experience can be experienced at such moments. The concept of *kami* arises out of this special sense of reality. By reflecting upon this feeling, it can be transformed into conceptualized ideas. I think Shinto arose out of this direct awareness of reality.

Religious practitioners since ancient times have relied on efficacious rituals to ground their lives. Through the agricultural rites described earlier, people believed they were enhancing cultivation being aided by mystical powers. This of course is very different from trying to enhance production by means of water and fertilizers. But they still hoped to invigorate the earth itself.

Incidentally, through the writings of the ethnologist Yanagida Kunio (1875-1962) I discovered that there are many people who use the prefix *ari* (“to be”) in their names: *Arihara Gohei*, *Ariyoshi*, and so on. There are also many place-names with the same prefix. According to Yanagida, the term *ari* signifies the gods being near. The sacred Shinto tree, *Cleyera ochmocea* exemplifies this divine quality. The gods draw near the tree, and the tree becomes charged with mystical power. A radiating circle of energy is believed to emerge from the center of the tree. The being of the gods and that of the tree are not conceived of as being separate. I think a special feeling arises when the true being of the tree emerges. Trees, rocks and human beings are conceived as fields of power into which the gods can descend. The being through which a thing truly reveals itself is combined with the being of the gods.

3. *Arinomama*

In Japanese religions, the phrase *arinomama* means “all things are just as they are.” The meaning can in fact vary depending on the circumstances, but *arinomama* can be a place or an object in which the religious dimension emerges. Let us consider some implications for Buddhism. As is well known, Buddhism cannot be equated with the religiosity of Japanese folk religions. This difference can be grasped through the dictum “form is emptiness.” “Form” is meant to refer to “being” in its widest sense. It gives expression to an intuitive awareness of reality. As is repeatedly stated in Zen Buddhist texts, “willows are green, and flowers are red.”

Emptiness is a realm wherein we become aware of the genuine reality of things. Simultaneously, it is also a realm where we become aware of ourselves. By stating that an individual becomes aware of himself, however, I do not imply so much the “ego,” but the “self of the non-ego.” Thus, we can say that the realm of *arinomama* where an individual becomes aware of the reality of these things is a place where we become aware of our own true selves. Self-awareness occurs when the individual arrives at a moment in which “being” comes to realize itself. “Being” cannot be disclosed unless we come to self-realization. This kind of realization has nothing to do with the world of the senses, nor does it involve the extrasensory world.

The disclosure of emptiness is described in Buddhism in terms of “wisdom,” in consisting in knowing that things simply are as they are. In fact it has little to do with the discriminative intellect. It is not the knowledge one gains when one grasps an object of one’s own will, nor when a subject perceives a thing as an object. Instead, we should imagine acts that negate and reach beyond the intellect, in which we come into contact with the authentic being of an object. This is the realm of

Buddhist emptiness. One comes to know oneself in a way that transcends the intellect. Such is the nature of true self-knowledge. To put it succinctly, transcendence occurs in the form of emptiness. This contrasts sharply with Shinto. The negation of being and the elimination of human striving, including the intellect, are essential. One engages directly in the act of knowing.

Actually, the Shinto perspective is also different from what is ordinarily perceived as being based on the intellect. Nevertheless, Shinto is not established through negation that takes the form of true self-knowledge. This is the reason why the Shinto perspective is different from that of Buddhism. All the same, Shinto and Buddhism both emphasize the notion of *arinomama*. What we need most is to return to the state of things as they are.

As I have stated earlier, in Zen Buddhism *arinomama* is illustrated through the notion that a willow is green. Even in Pure Land Buddhism, emptiness is strongly emphasized. As is well known, in Pure Land Buddhism it is believed that “even a sinner is capable of salvation,” (*akunin shōki*) which is to say, that the individual can be redeemed just as he is—as a sinner. The character for *ki* is also used in the dictum, “human beings and the Buddha *dharma* are one” (*kihō ittai*). These dicta connote the fact that human beings are intrinsically sinful. In Christianity, original sin necessitates God’s salvation in the same way that evil karma can be extinguished by Amida Buddha in Pure Land Buddhism. In the latter belief system, sinners can be welcomed into Amida’s Western Paradise if they chant his name sincerely. I think this is essentially a gift provided for humanity.

Arinomama also evokes images of Pure Land Buddhists who are known as *myōkōnin* (virtuous persons). They are praised as “white lotus flowers amongst the defiled.” Many such holy persons are to be found among the illiterate living in the countryside. I think if my Christian friends could become acquainted with these individuals, it could help strengthen their own faith. From the Tokugawa Era to the beginning of the Meiji Era, the discipline of chanting the name of Amida Buddha

seems to have been rigorously practiced by farmers living in the countryside. Large numbers of believers would gather together, sustaining each other's faith. Listening ardently to sermons at temples for many years, they eventually acquired peace of mind. Such discipline was widely practiced throughout Japan. As a result, many *myōkōnin* appeared in the community, manifesting extraordinary faith. *Arinomama* is repeatedly used when describing these individuals. In Christianity, however, a sinner is redeemed by means of his faith and God's grace.

For Pure Land Buddhists, faith in other power is essential. One never gains redemption through one's own merits. If even the slightest feeling remains that one will be able to achieve redemption through one's own efforts, it is not true faith. If one excuses one's own sinfulness, arguing vehemently that salvation can still be granted through the grace of the divine, then one's intention will not be pure. A person who argues in this way is giving priority to himself. While asserting that his redemption rests in the Buddha, the individual sees the Buddha's saving grace only within his own mental framework. While claiming to accept the benevolence of the absolute other power, he is still lacking in genuine faith.

One must focus one's eyes on the Buddha alone from the bottom of one's heart. One should turn toward the light radiating from Amida Buddha. If an individual stays self-preoccupied, then that individual only possesses a limited degree of faith. Rather, one should confess to being a sinner and pursue faith and gratitude wholeheartedly. One can be redeemed even though one is a sinner. The *myōkōnin* must have employed these means toward achieving their goal. But I will speak no further on this matter, since I've already been talking too long.

In Shinto as well as in Buddhism, a complicated syncretic doctrinal system emerged. The special sense of reality, the primordial characteristic underlying these multilateral forms, is quite interesting to me. This sense of reality arises prior to thought. It cannot be grasped at a theoretical level.

I was asked to talk about methodology, but what I have been discussing so far seems to precede methodology. If one chooses to talk about intellectual ideas concerning Japanese religion and the arts, I think one has no choice but to deal with these matters. I admit that there are many other views left unconsidered. At any rate, I think that various significant features of Japanese culture can be understood in terms of this special sense of reality. I believe this applies to the Japanese arts—painting, sculpture, poetry, and so on. Let me recite one of my favorite poems by Basho: “Seeing the sun shine through the fresh green leaves. Oh, how venerable!” It is a typical example of this sense of reality, signifying the sacred moment when the sun shines through the leaves. Overtones of veneration can also be detected in Basho’s use of the word *nikkō*, evoking “sunshine.” The phrase *hi no hikari* is connected with the famous sight of *Nikkō*. The warlord Tokugawa Iyeyasu (1543-1616) is enshrined as a god at *Nikkō* temple. His deified power and benevolence are also believed to be enshrined at *Nikkō*. In this verse, Bashō was able to evoke to all these geographical and historical aspects as well as sunshine itself. One may view the poem as mere word play, but I personally think that it evinces a special feeling that heightens reality.

The reality one experiences when one confronts the sight of fresh green leaves stretching as far as the eye can see, coupled with their brilliance reflected in the sun is something that takes us near to the ultimate reality. It is enough to awaken in us a religious sense of reality.

Those who lived during Bashō’s time displayed naive religious veneration of Tokugawa Iyeyasu, who brought the internal military conflicts of Japan to a peaceful settlement. They deeply revered him and enshrined him as a god. So this complex feeling that I’ve been describing was associated both with historical facts and with the beauty of the sun illuminating the leaves. I think we can detect a sense of reality that is further enhanced by religiosity. It seems that the world of nature and history are mingled to produce this special atmosphere. By capturing the mood that

prevailed in Japan and succinctly expressing the cultural sensitivity of that period, Bashō enabled people to return to their religious depths, the primordial basis of culture.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RELIGIOUS FAITH AND NIHILISM

1. *Nihilum*

I think that nihilism and faith have become difficult issues to deal with. Therefore, I would like to focus on these issues. It seems reasonable to say that the question of nihilism is a perennial problem for humanity as a whole, not just for contemporary society. It is said that everything that exists is transient. This doctrine constitutes a very basic way of looking at things, a mode that is distinctively Buddhist. Another way to consider the same issue is to assert that there is nothing that does not perish. To say that everyone must die is similar to saying that everyone was once born. Those who are born are destined to die, and they have been living with that destiny ever since birth. The same thing is true not just for human beings but for all sentient beings. In fact every kind of being, living or non-living, is destined to perish. There is nothing existent in the universe that does not perish. Nothing can last forever. If this is so, then beneath all that exists, the notion of nothingness can exist.

Everything is said to be transient. Everything changes from being to non-being and from non-being to being. Birth and death inherently exist in living organisms and this is but one manifestation of the universality of transience. Explaining this doctrine of universal transience is one of the goals of Buddhism. According to Christianity, God is said to have created all things out of nothingness. The idea that everything that exists in the world was created implies that it came out

of the *nihilum*, and this leads to the notion that everything in this world is destined to return to nothingness. *Nihilum*, emptiness, and transience are dealt with in almost all religions in one way or another. It seems somehow that each religion must come to grips with these issues.

I think the Buddhist notion of karma and the Christian notion of guilt are, in fact, both related to the issue of *nihilum*. People forget their finitude and overlook the fact that they are destined to perish one day. Instead, most people try to assert themselves. I think that karma and sin are fundamentally connected with individuals' compulsion to be egoistic. This tendency to forget their finitude and stubbornly assert themselves is deeply rooted in their attachments. A sort of unfathomable compulsiveness lies at the core of their being.

Perhaps the ultimate question for humanity is how to live life. How should one go about the task of living in the best way possible? Religion is essentially concerned with the manner in which one can attain a righteous life. The reason why this question is continually raised has to do with the fact that everyone leads deceptive lives. I feel that we live this way because we forget how fragile we are and fail to ascertain the true nature of humanity. Thus our lives continue to be fundamentally distorted.

Buddhism views these problems in terms of evil passions, ignorance and arrogance. When I speak of arrogance, I am referring to an attitude latent in the depths of human existence. I think this is the basis of "guilt" or "karma." Guilt, of course, can result from a violation of rules or laws. This kind of wrongdoing arises out of a person's attempt to forget his authentic nature and live in a reckless self-centered manner. However, when karma is expounded upon in Buddhist texts, it also implies that no matter how honest a person appears, karma still lies hidden within his life. All these problems point to the failure to become aware of *nihilum*.

The term "nihilistic" is often used in secular society. One speaks of a nihilistic mood or a nihilistic person. Nihilism refers to a phenomenon that arises as a

consequence of utter dissatisfaction or frustration of desires. Therefore, this kind of nihilism disappears in most cases when desires are gratified.

I feel that our oblivion to *nihilum* is caused by the burdensome desires endlessly pursuing us. When these desires cannot be gratified, we are liable to become nihilistic. We forget the *nihilum* that is hidden at the core of our own being. In other words, we continually fail to see the true essence of our own being. This is where karma comes in. Karma has us in its grip whether we live by gratifying our desires or not. Whether one lives a nihilistic life or the opposite, ultimately the same result will occur. Both of these lifestyles are based on karma. I think that in either case, our difficulties are related to our oblivion to *nihilum*.

I think that such oblivion is in reality a manifestation of the most deep-rooted emptiness. The situation is analogous to one's awareness of having a disease. When in denial and living under the illusion of wellness, one neglects attending to one's health, living in such a way that allows the illness to spread.

Guilt and karma are more than just transient phenomena. It is emptiness itself that makes them quite real. Mistaking them for illusions, we continue to act as if they are meaningless. Phantoms seem emptier than void, and thus an even more intense emptiness manifests itself through karma. This is why in Christianity guilt is said to be more deadly than death itself. Death can refer not just to perishing of the body, but the death of the person's spirit. I have pointed out that even while a person lives, death is always latent at the core of one's being.

Nihilum has traditionally been expounded upon in connection with issues of birth, death, and karma. How *nihilum* manifests itself is quite complicated and difficult to understand. Recently a modern worldview advocating *nihilum* as the basic truth of the universe and human life has taken hold, with the realization that everything lacks meaning and therefore nothing really matters. This worldview has become fashionable in various contemporary circles of thought, where it has come to exert great influence. Nietzsche, Sartre and the school of contemporary

existentialism advocate this principle in one way or another. In existentialism, *nihilum* is given positive significance and is expounded as the position that all human beings should take.

I would like to distinguish between *nihilum* as it is used in its ordinary sense and the more fundamental meaning of the word that I have been describing. For instance, doubting whether human life has any meaning can render a person nihilistic. This nihilistic stance can be observed in various forms since ancient times, as well as in contemporary society. Looking at the problems facing the youth today, I think people are plunged into despair through their unhappy experiences. This despair can be discerned by the fact that many crimes and suicides are perpetuated by the younger generation.

There are also cases in which people of the older generation are plagued by nihilistic sentiments. It is often said that in Sweden, where the welfare system is reputed to be the best in the world, the number of cases in which older people commit suicide is higher than anywhere else. They have less anxiety about their lives and are able to live comfortably even into their old age, because the welfare system is highly developed. But it seems that for this reason, the elderly feel that their lives are meaningless. So I think that even in highly developed societies today, nihilistic sentiments thrive.

Of course this is not really the whole story. Some people claim that only those who have experienced meaninglessness can live authentic lives. This is contemporary nihilism. I think we need to delve more deeply into the basis for this kind of nihilism and consider its origin. It seems that various things lure people into thinking in a nihilistic way. This is because the elevation of the self has become more pronounced than in the past.

In Western society the democratic virtues of freedom, equality, and human rights are extolled. Every human being is said to have the right to live and to possess freedom of speech, choice of religion, and so forth. A person who enjoys total

freedom cannot be bound by anything and in return cannot restrain others. In feudal times, a very different way of thinking prevailed. During those times, there was a privileged warrior class in Japan. Anyone belonging to this class could kill another person without being convicted of murder. This conflicts with the contemporary view that everyone has a right to live. Nevertheless, in those days a warrior probably respected human life more even though he could kill potentially without consequences.

In modern literature the egotistic self plays a central role. Modern literature analyzes the various forms of consciousness and the complicated motives that operate from within. It portrays all human relationships, including love affairs, from a subjective point of view. It focuses only on the conscious thoughts and actions of the lovers involved. Furthermore, modern literature portrays characters whose thoughts and actions are essentially self-centered. The authors of such works usually share a similar mentality. When we compare such literature to that which prevailed in ancient times and in the Middle Ages, we can see a striking difference. In modern literature, thoughts and actions of characters seldom go beyond self-interest, individual rights occupying a central position. There is no difference between the self and the extolling of freedom; one is always concerned with the self.

As noted earlier, what differentiates modern philosophy from what was popular in ancient times is that subjectivity receives considerably more attention in the modern age. Descartes is credited with paving the way for modern philosophy and is praised for expounding his thesis, *cogito ergo sum*. This seems to be self-evident, but in fact it has immense significance from a philosophical perspective. The term, "I think" (*cogito*) can be used in a wider sense. It can refer not only to thinking about things in one's head, but also to things one hopes for.

When an individual feels something, he immediately knows in a rational manner what it is. In other words, he wills something and at the same time he is immediately conscious of willing it. The term "F" refers to being conscious of

directly knowing something. Admitting that something undeniable and certain exists, the individual asserts, "I am." The fact the individual thinks is the something that he cannot possibly doubt. He is in pursuit of something certain, which is able to serve as the basis of all knowledge. Up until this time, Descartes and other thinkers in the West continued to argue that God was the fundamental reality. But nobody had direct evidence of this. God was traditionally regarded as the center of reality. In mathematics, it was thought that the common assumption that "one plus one equals two" must be unmistakably certain. But some argued that we might be imagining such a thing, rather than knowing it. Or perhaps some evil spirit might be inducing us into believing "factual" phenomena.

The fact that one exists can be felt internally, making one directly aware of it. Even though doubt may be cast on everything, one cannot doubt the fact that one doubts. This self-awareness is beyond any doubt. No matter what one does, one is always in direct contact with oneself.

This seems to be nothing of special import. But if we compare it with the views of mankind that had traditionally been expounded by various philosophies and religions, we can say that it is quite exceptional. Modern philosophy would not have developed without this subjective mode.

The empirical philosophy advocated by Locke and Hume, which became prevalent in England, is similar to Cartesian philosophy. What is certain is that the individual subjectively experiences, sees, and hears things. This is the basis of all other theories. Philosophy takes its departure from this point. In the history of Western philosophy, the theories of Emanuel Kant occupy a central position because subjectivity is given special consideration. I think self-consciousness holds a central position in modern thought.

2. Subjectivity

I pointed out that self-assertion was considered sinful in the past. But in recent times, the attitude of subjectivity has exhibited an aspect quite different from that of karma. Finding positive significance in the self has become important. In recent times, people have tried to ignore the guilt associated with transgression. A new sentiment that enabled the individual to live for himself was extolled. In former times, when a person strove toward self-fulfillment as the primary goal in life, this was regarded as unwholesome and likely to produce bad karma.

From the perspective of Buddhist faith, the position that enables one to live positively cannot, after all, be separated from karma and the ignorance mentioned earlier. This position does not ignore *nihilum* and emptiness. Of course I'm not arguing that one should abandon or negate things which enable a person to live positively. Faith should revitalize the individual.

Earlier I discussed the subjective attitude of individuals, which is related to issues of morality, art and science. An individual's potential for growth develops and is strengthened by culture. The potential for growth is something to be seen as positive. This view is diametrically opposed to that of karma. Our modern perspective also contrasts with the Buddhist one that regards the self to be impure because the inhabited world is impure.

This subjective view of the individual presupposes that life in this world has value. According to this view, a person's talents should be developed, cultivated, and strengthened to their maximum potential. The intellect and the will of the individual should be elevated to enrich life. Culture, through which various forms of knowledge, learning and art flourish, is the product of affirming this potential of the individual..

With regard to morality, we are encouraged to be faithful to the self. Morality must arise out of our conscience. For example, Kant argues that if all one is required to do is simply to obey the commandments, true morality can never really exist.

According to Kant, this kind of living is heteronomy or a lack of morality. Morality must be based on the individual's freedom. Moral laws by which one should conduct oneself can be found in reason that exists within one's self. In other words, the laws that one should obey come forth from inside the self. The individual is both the lawgiver and the one who obeys the law. One must comply with the inner voice of conscience. Moral law is not seen as coming from God or the Buddha; it is inscribed upon one's reason. This is exactly how Kant describes the self-regulation of reason. The same kind of autonomy constitutes the basis of morality that has become prevalent in recent times.

Even in the sciences, the subjective quality is apparent in experimental methods. This experimental approach involves observing nature. It attempts to describe nature, which is always in motion, through human observation. We try to compel nature to reveal its secrets, but nature is unlikely to reveal such things if left untouched. If we ignore nature, its laws will never be disclosed in scientific fashion. If water in the river remains still, we cannot scientifically investigate the flow. In a laboratory, water is reduced to its immovable form. This is something that can never be found in nature. In a laboratory we can only observe water from certain perspectives experimentally.

Experimentation on animals raises similar issues. The scientist can inject a mouse in such a way that enables cancer to develop. Observing cancer as it naturally occurs in living animals does not seem to be good enough. People feel the need to manipulate nature. One scientist induced cancer by repeatedly pouring tar into the ear of a mouse. This scientific method forces nature to disclose what lies within.

This experimental method shows how an individual steps inside of nature through his own subjective observations. In this way he is often able to control nature. It is only from this perspective that the scientist is able to examine nature scientifically and get to know it in an objective fashion. The subjective self is bound up with how the sciences have been established.

Subjectivity can do more than to make us realize transience and guilt. If we open our minds, we will realize our eventual extinction. We will understand that we cannot free ourselves from karma and ignorance. We must understand that all human cultural endeavors—art, science, and the like—can never be free of karma.

One cannot deny that our civilization in recent times has relied on mechanization for the spiritual advancement of life. Due to the mechanization of the means of production, more progress has been made in recent times than in the past thousand years. Even though tremendous progress has occurred, the issues of karma and transience remain as a hidden aspect of self-realization. Not surprisingly, *nihilum* is a problem that remains unresolved. I feel that religion can address these issues because the subjective quality of self-awareness evokes emptiness.

3. Tathāgata.

Western culture has spread all over the world. The source of this penetration has its roots in the Renaissance. That movement was characterized by the revival of learning. The other important factor that we should consider is the rise of the sciences, particularly the natural sciences. In ancient times, science was united with philosophy; there was no clear-cut distinction between them. However, in recent times, science has become independent of philosophy. Science has its foundation in the positivistic spirit and the experimental method.

There is another development that I'd like to consider. Luther and Calvin paved the way for a new kind of Christianity. Luther declared faith to be primary. Faith, of course, rests on the subjective inner-mind. Luther insisted that faith cannot take root unless we confirm the teachings of the Bible via our own subjective religious conscience. This attitude towards conscience exerted its influence on ethics and morality through Puritanism and various other Protestant movements. The

individual's relationship with God was transformed into the perspective of the individual who experiences conflicts within.

I think generally speaking that secularism can be regarded as a recent trend. The main feature of secularism is the tendency to reject the position of faith. Society today is obviously moving in this direction. The sciences have allowed people to make tremendous progress, but nihilistic tendencies keep cropping up. *Nihilum* is experienced because we lack a solid foundation for our being. There is no firm ground on which to rest our feet. We are lured into searching for something that will provide meaning to our lives. Yet we are often unable to discover our inner selves. The answer must be provided somehow from the external world that surrounds us. Nevertheless, we know that everything that exists in this world is destined to perish. All is finite. Nothing in the world is able to furnish the ground for existence through its own power.

We are living, but there is nothing solid to rely on as we move through life. Solid ground cannot be found in this world because the world is composed of visible things that possess form. Because all things with form are destined to perish, they cannot give us solid ground to rely upon. The basis of life should be established from a transcendent realm—one that transcends things, even the world itself. When searching for meaning in our lives, we may come into contact with this transcendence. We may then come to know that we are allowed to exist. This is where faith arises.

Even though we enter the world thanks to our parents, their inadequacy in providing meaning to life is evident. Rather, the source of meaning is transcendent. This source is something infinite as opposed to something finite. This being is called the "Tathāgata," to use Buddhist terminology.

Some people assert that time has continued without a beginning. It continues endlessly from the indefinite past to the indefinite future. Infinite numbers of things have occurred and will continue to occur. But what allows all things to exist comes

from self-awareness. Encountering the Tathāgata means coming into contact with the foundation of existence itself. This can also be called faith. I think faith is not something devised by humans. It is not an experience that can be fathomed by the human intellect. This is the reason why faith is said to be a gift of the Buddha. And the Buddha's wisdom is said to be beyond knowledge.

Ordinarily, when we ponder, the self engages in thinking, and the object considered is thought to exist "on the other side," so to speak. This is called objective thinking. We think objectively when we consider various matters outside ourselves, for example, when an astronomer observes the heavenly bodies or when a psychologist or a novelist analyzes human motivation. But such objective analysis is entirely different from understanding the compassion of the Tathāgata. It is not that one knows in any objective fashion, but that one comes into contact with that something which allows one to be. Therefore, knowledge of the Tathāgata is not related to objective thinking; rather, it is a kind of subjective self-awareness. I think it is a form of knowledge whereby one can attain a more genuine level of self-awareness. One basically knows oneself since one is allowed to. This is not the same as reflecting upon various things in an objective fashion.

A well-known saying by the Zen master Nanquan explains, "it is the mundane state of mind that serves as a path." When another practitioner asked Nanquan how he knew this, the master replied, "If one turns one's mind to it, the path immediately defies the seeker." In Zen Buddhism, the idea that something exists simply as it appears frequently. When one attempts to learn more about something, one immediately misses the mark. This is why, when a Buddhist monk is practicing meditation, he often suffers a blow from his Zen master. If an individual is thinking on his own initiative, then understanding disappears. But when he does not make an effort at thinking, revelation sometimes occurs.

The wisdom of the Buddha is mysterious, the Buddha-mind being unfathomable. Its secrets are hidden from the intellect. The mind of compassion

discloses the mind of wisdom. Wisdom and compassion are united as one. While the Buddha-mind is revealed, it is incomprehensible. When one tries to comprehend it through thinking, it will always conceal itself. One's own rational mind is a hindrance. It closes off the Buddha-mind.

Enlightenment seems to be quite different from the self-awakening of Zen Buddhism. One comes to be enlightened, I feel, because one is allowed to. Ordinarily an individual presumes that he can know reality directly through the mind and the senses. He thinks it exists just as he observes it. But when he truly encounters reality, he stands on solid ground. Enlightenment is the experience of what Kiyosawa Manshi called the Infinite Absolute. Those who agree are committing themselves to the Absolute Other, known as *tariki* in Japanese.

I feel that religious faith implies genuine self-awareness. It does not imply knowing oneself by means of one's intellect or by becoming conscious of oneself. The Tathāgata is immediately accessible and can be directly known. To encounter the Tathāgata means to become aware of oneself in a way that allows one to live authentically. I feel that knowledge of self-awakening can be found in genuine faith. And I think that where true faith discloses itself we find the ultimate source of all life. Genuine self-awareness can only occur by committing oneself to the power of the Absolute Other.

Religious self-awareness does not arise from a subjective outlook, whether expressed in the guise of science or culture. Normally an individual tries to go through life maintaining a fixed outlook. But this subjective attitude will lead to emptiness or *nihilum*. Scientists and those engaged in cultural activities do not realize that *nihilum* lurks at the root of all of their respective activities.

In Nietzsche's writings on nihilism, the perspective of self-awareness is clearly stated. He was able to identify the deep-seated *nihilum* thriving at the root of morality and science. Nietzsche dared to assert that God is dead. Nihilism arises from the self-awareness of *nihilum*. These ideas developed out of the natural sciences

during the Renaissance. But this does not mean, of course, that the sciences are of no value. I simply want to state that these perspectives are insufficient in themselves.

According to nihilist perspective, since *nihilum* is grounded in nothing, a limitless freedom can exist for humanity. The nihilism I am discussing is that expounded by Nietzsche and Sartre. Why did nihilism make people think that an individual could possess limitless freedom? I think it was because Nietzsche was reacting against the Christian notion of freedom. Before Nietzsche's time, it was believed that an absolute God allowed man to be free. Still, it was assumed that nothing entitled individuals to live within that freedom without any restraint. People began to speculate that Christianity failed to comprehend the radical manner in which individuals could live in total freedom. Due to the constraints of Christianity, the full potential of culture, science and morality fail to be realized. Christian conceptions seemed insufficient for energizing humanity as a whole. But nothing was really left to replace Christianity as a solid basis for modern life.

As this subjective perspective slowly took over, God was eliminated, and *nihilum* came to be seen as the ultimate foundation for humanity. *Nihilum* further came to be seen as the hidden foundation for science, culture, and morality. It was regarded as the ultimate expression of subjectivity and freedom. But to return to the Buddhist perspective, I feel that human beings possess dharma nature hidden in their very essence. But living in accordance with dharma nature cannot be achieved on one's own. People are busily engaged in various activities, but all of these things take place of their own accord. Those who know that they are allowed to live and do so in a natural way can accept life as it is. I think this is what Kiyosawa Manshi meant by "allowing senseless things to become sensible." While seeing things from the vantage point of "other power," he tried to develop an explanation that reflected the modern world.

I would like to make one last comment about religious faith. We can argue that the subjective position of the individual can be experienced through the

perspective of faith if each of us recognizes that we are allowed to exist. In the past, the subjective position used to be called “self-power,” (*jiriki*) but according to Kiyosawa, the Absolute Other renders the self capable of being itself. Perhaps we should consider these ideas further when we think about the role of religious faith.

CHAPTER EIGHT

SOME REFLECTIONS ON MYSTICISM

1. Mystical Union

How can mysticism be defined? Opinions may vary among scholars. We will assume, at least for the time being, that mysticism is a kind of religiosity that arises out of an experience usually described as *unio mystica*, or “direct mystical union with the divine.” Accepting this definition, we will illustrate several distinct characteristics for the scientific study of religions.

First of all, we should note the universality of mysticism. Mysticism, as has often been pointed out, is a very specific form of religious consciousness, though traditionally regarded as a religious phenomenon only rarely observed. However, as the science of religions emerged in the late nineteenth century, it became apparent that this is not entirely accurate. Today, mystical elements are seen as universal, being observed in all religions. Still, some religions are clearly grounded in mysticism. It has been widely recognized in academic circles that mysticism is an element common to all religions or religious phenomena. Buddhism has a mystical element. In fact, we can say that mysticism is one of the central features of Buddhism.

A second feature of mysticism is its *Unmittelbarkeit*, or “immediacy.” Mysticism is directly related to human nature. This concept is central to Heidegger’s philosophy but is difficult to define. The concept of immediacy reflects an

individual's capacity to be in immediate contact with reality, no thoughts interfering with reality. Hence, mysticism enlarges the concept of *unio mystica* to include the possibility of direct living experience. In other words, it is not just a transcendent experience. More fundamentally, it is *erfahrungsmäßig*, or "in immediate accord with our experience."

With regard to Christian mysticism, it clearly does not involve the physical body alone, though purification of the body is a prerequisite for the soul to enter into *unio mystica*. Generally speaking, for such a state to be reached, contemplation alone was also considered to be insufficient, and religious discipline was required. Such discipline could never be achieved without a soul's involvement in the practices of the physical body. I think in the case of Christian mysticism, these practices are rarely possible without one's residing in a monastery or a convent.

2. Indirectness and Immediacy

Indirectness is also an important feature of religion in general. It emphasizes the difference between subject and object, making a clear distinction between the self and the world, while relating them to one another. Indirectness highlights the immediacy that characterizes mysticism. In order to understand mysticism, it is good to compare it with faith-based religiosity.

There are two types of religions based on indirectness. One type relies on "willing belief." The other type is metaphysically-grounded religion, which posits knowledge (*wissen*), intellectual awareness or divinely inspired intelligence. Both kinds of mysticism can be found in Western religions. Where these religions are concerned, God is conceived of as the transcendent foundation of the world. He is the absolute subject and the object of human volition. The individual's body is seen as created in the image of God. Nevertheless, an individual can rebel against divine

will by virtue of his desire to be free. The history of humanity has unfolded with each person following his own will, often in direct opposition to that of God. Consequently, each individual is burdened with guilt. Human nature itself has been corrupted, and the individual's relationship to God is obstructed. Thus, a seemingly insurmountable rupture between God and humanity has occurred. Humanity is not reconciled until God intervenes.

God is regarded as the Transcendent Other over humanity and all creation. But a mediator between God and mankind is needed, someone in whom the transcendence of God can assume the physical form of a mortal man. Since this mediator is both a volitional subject and also a personal being, a relationship between him and humanity can develop through faith and love. Such type of religion is based on indirectness or a relational mode. Certain features of the Judeo-Christian religion cannot be explained simply by indirectness, though. There may be cases where a kind of immediacy going beyond indirectness contributes to faith.

I myself am interested in the type of mysticism that relies on knowledge (*logos*). One might object to a religiosity that is based on the intellect alone. But the religiosity that I am interested in involves a metaphysics that arises when the intellect goes beyond mere logic.

In addition to offering salvation, religion has the aspect of satisfying the human desire to fully comprehend the universe. For this purpose, many religions offered mythological creation stories, which also predicted the final destruction of all life. But when the transformation from mythology to *logos* occurred in early history, the necessity for portraying the universe scientifically became apparent. However, since science could offer only objectively verifiable facts concerning the universe, it was unable to fulfill what had previously been the role of religion. I personally think science is unable to satisfy our speculation concerning the meaning of life and of the universe as a whole.

The original task of metaphysics was to reveal the logical structure of the universe through rational and spiritual concepts of reason. Aristotle, unlike thinkers who relied on facts alone, is considered a theorist for whom knowledge involved contemplative methods for exploring the meaning of human existence. At the same time, Aristotle explored the underlying principles governing the universe. Thinkers like Aristotle began to search for a more universal cause or principle grounding all other causes. Philosophers tended to delve deeper and deeper. But this did not and could not continue *ad infinitum*. Rather, metaphysicians eventually came to presume a truth called the prime agent, which causes everything else in existence.

According to such logic, knowledge exists as a result of learning, originating in and taking its departure from sensory data. This logic proceeds inferentially through a series of causes or principles, eventually arriving at primary causes that can be encompassed by abstract ideas. According to Aristotle, all forms of learning arriving at “primary causes” in this theoretical fashion can be considered the science of nature.

For Aristotle, the term “being” can be taken to indicate a human being who is conditioned by possessing certain qualities, but the term is also applicable when speaking unconditionally, in the sense of something that simply is. This ultimate Being is a being unconditioned by qualitative aspects. Thus, the pursuit of knowledge, probing into what really “is” by considering its primary cause, goes beyond the capabilities of the sciences. All beings descend from the prime agent.

That study which aims at knowledge of the primary cause of all things is called metaphysics. Opinions are still divided on the question of whether the object of metaphysics is simply being in general, or whether the primary object should be a universal concept, such as God. When the latter position is taken, the ultimate being is the prime mover, eternal and immovable. Consequently, we cannot say whether metaphysics is a theoretical philosophy or a special form of ontology concerned with the theory of God.

Once early Christianity spread through Western Europe, its advocates began to seek a way to unify their ideas with Greek philosophical thought in order to formulate the doctrines of the Church. Christian thinkers, using rationality as a way of defining the divine, appropriated the notion of the primal cause of all beings. In the early Middle Ages, philosophies associated with Christianity and promulgated by St. Augustine and others, elevated the knowledge of God and the soul to the pinnacle of philosophical thinking. Metaphysics became primarily a special form of ontology, the aim of which was to know God by means of the intellect. By reason of these historical developments, metaphysics, the ultimate focus of which is transcendence, still retains a religious flavor.

The metaphysical urge to rationally conceptualize the prime cause of all beings has played an important role in Europe, disguised indirectly as a form of religiosity. Thus metaphysics, God and humanity are all conceptualized as generic ideas. When they are reduced to logical deductions, relations between all beings can be nothing else. Hence, man's search for the knowledge of God in the metaphysical sphere is carried out indirectly, not only in Aristotle but also in Descartes.

The rational spirit itself is a manifestation of a higher stage of awareness that permeates plant and animal life. The world of nature is seen as centering in the development of the modes of awareness of living things. This differs from metaphysics. Yet, they are often seen as identical. Inasmuch as this outlook on life differs from that of reason, this stance of immediacy, which goes beyond indirectness, crops up time and again in metaphysics. This immediacy, which is none other than mysticism, underlies metaphysics and is found conspicuously in the philosophy of Plato.

Religions of faith and those involving metaphysics are based on forms of indirectness. What specific features belong to this immediacy and how do these features differ from the stance of faith and metaphysics? Whereas the immediacy inherent in religions of faith manifests a strong element of the human will, the

immediacy of metaphysics manifests knowledge. In the case of mysticism, this immediacy can be in accord with the practitioner's mood or emotions. God and man have a personal relationship despite their separation from each other. The individual desires to eliminate separation by abandoning his self-will. God presides over human knowledge and values, but at the same time He exists beyond all of these mundane concerns.

The immediacy of mysticism does not arise out of human will or the intellect, both of which treat God and man as two opposing agents. Mysticism springs from human longing for the union of God and man. Various names such as "love," "intuition" and so forth describe the state of mystical awareness. But it is worth noting that these words are not used to imply intellectual striving. Rather, mystical awareness goes beyond reason and will, which presuppose the duality of God and man. In order to enter into the mystical state of immediacy that is our present focus, the individual must focus on the inner self by controlling passions, and renouncing the ego.

Plotinus calls the mystical state *ekstasis*. A novel written by Ariyoshi Sawako (1931-1984), which elaborates upon the state of ecstasy, has been enjoying high acclaim recently. But how should mysticism in contemporary society be understood? I will attempt an answer to this question.

Viewed from a historical perspective, religions are described in terms of specificity. To describe them as unique phenomena that sprung forth at certain times and places is inevitable if one adopts the history of religions approach. The objects of worship in each religion, without exception, have specific names. At Yoshida shrine, located near my residence in Kyoto, the thunder god is worshiped. The thunder god is worshiped throughout Japan, but also by primitive peoples all over the world. However, over time, this generic thunder god was given the name of *Takimikazuchi-no-Mikoto*. Similarly, the sun god was given the name *Amaterasu* in Shinto. In this

way, natural phenomena with universal characteristics were furnished with particular names and deified as gods for the sake of the general public.

This is not the case merely with polytheistic folk religions. Also in the case of monotheistic religions, gods are provided with specific names. Adherents of a particular god form faith-based communities, one such community being the Catholic Church. Catholics form spiritual communities wherein the individual and fellow believers are filled with the divine spirit. In order for a community to survive, formal organization is always needed, and in order to make an organization function, *logos* must underlie it. In Christianity, the Church is regarded as a spiritual community in which the truth, as first revealed by Jesus Christ to his Apostles, is passed on to believers. It is considered to be the realm in which the divine will is realized on earth. These beliefs have given the Church power and authority over its devotees.

A religious community is often linked to the name of its founder and mediator—as is the case of Christianity and Jesus Christ, for example. In Buddhism as well, the religious community and the Śākyamuni Buddha cannot be separated. It is furthermore essential that a religious community associate itself with the name of a specific divinity in order to possess religious authority. In world religions such as Christianity and Buddhism, spirituality consists of the deeply felt awareness of possessing its own specific truth. The awareness that each religion has of its own truth manifests the specificity that is evident in all religions.

Among the forms of mysticism prevalent in the West, I'm particularly interested in German mysticism. The fact that it emerged out of the more universal form gives it special significance, even within the contemporary society. Nevertheless, German mysticism takes on a form that is quite different from that of the late Middle Ages.

In orthodox Christianity, human will plays a prominent role. When Jesus Christ preached his message of grace, God's omniscience and providence were

experienced by the multitudes. The will and the wisdom of Jesus Christ became God's will and wisdom. God, in Christianity, is represented as the Trinity. This image of God, rather than being simple and direct, is multifaceted. The essence of God is said to have been revealed through Christ to the Church. It was later proclaimed that there is no religious truth outside that of the Church. Here is seen an attempt to elevate a specific deity to universality while sanctifying the hierarchical order of the Church. A similar phenomenon can be observed in Islam.

Christianity was restricted by the structure of the Church and by its volitional concept of God. Mysticism was often seen as developing outside the mainstream of Christianity. Despite the fact that mysticism was publically criticized for its heterodox practices, various schools of philosophy were drawn to mysticism. From the eighteenth century onward, when the absolute authority of Christianity began to weaken, the draw of mysticism also lost its power. Undoubtedly this was partly due to the weakening of authority of Christian dogma, which was likewise in decline. The very existence of God was called into question in the modern age when non-religious or anti-religious viewpoints came into prominence. This negative trend challenged the concepts of God and humanity that had constituted the basis of metaphysics.

In the Middle Ages, the individual was seen as a creation of God, and even the mind was not regarded as arising out of nature. Rather, the human mind was created in the image of God and provided through God's goodness. The nature of humanity was also perceived as it related to the divine. But the existence of a teleological order designed by God was doubted from the late Middle Ages onward.

The individual suddenly found himself in possession of a mind free to think as reason directed. Out of this purely human perspective rose the desire of the individual to detach from all authority. It was during the period of Enlightenment that the individual's longing for independence and subjectivity became explicit. One might argue that the individual became aware of the fact that all conscious activity is

expressed by means of the word “I.” Hence, the awakening of the modern individual to the ego signaled the distancing from traditional religion. The notion of the independent human being emerged. This egocentric perspective, instead of a world created by God, came to be accepted.

The world became comprehensible through rational knowledge alone. A uniform structure apparent in the natural world was uncovered, and as a consequence, the natural sciences emerged, independent of religion. The establishment of the natural sciences led further to the development of the science of history, which attempted to interpret history according to rational principles. In the nineteenth century, rationalism began to exert an influence on the natural sciences. That is why evolutionary theories prevalent today have achieved prominence.

Western metaphysics primarily concerned itself with God, the world and humanity. I have been considering the transformation that the concept of God underwent in the modern world. The fact that humanity asserted independence from God allowed humans to define themselves according to their own insights. They discovered principles on which to establish themselves, independent of religion. This brought them the assurance that individuals could be self-sufficient in the world, without any resort to God. As a result, God’s direct authority was rejected.

As society modernized, the concept of God as a transcendent being gradually became disregarded and people began to regard God as a phantom. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, the existence of God has been questioned from a variety of perspectives. Many scholars in the natural sciences have made negative statements about God using materialistic arguments. In the place of religion, new theories were developed claiming that individual sufferings might be resolved through advances in scientific technology and political ideologies.

The saving power inherent in God’s grace came under scrutiny. God’s grace was perceived to be illusory. It was Nietzsche who elevated atheism to a philosophy by reflecting on rationalism. He viewed the anti-religious worldview as a necessary

consequence of European history. His irreligious stance had come to be seen in a positive light. European public opinion began regarding the idea of the existence of God as strange and unbelievable. Many people came to believe that human beings naturally desire to be free. I think it was these tendencies that promoted atheism.

As the new perspectives of modernity developed, the soul (*pneuma*), which had been the center of European mysticism, was displaced. In contemporary society, the notion of life is only understood biologically, as it relates to plants and animals. However, according to ancient Greek philosophy and Christianity, life was understood in terms of the unification of the body and the soul.

The Greek concept of being brought everything together into a unitary relationship with the world. In ancient times, life was not regarded merely as a biological concept. Aristotle defined the soul as an important principle of life. The relationship between two individuals could be thought of as an intimate connection between one psyche and another. The connection between the nation and individual citizens acquired a moral significance. Nation is a concept associated with a particular segment of human society, connected through vital relationships, such as territory and kinship. Individuals of a nation feel a communal bond since the same life force that is flowing through them can also be felt in the nation as a whole.

Over time, the love between Christian peoples was broadened to include the relationship between God and mankind. A Christian was seen as someone who died to his sinful life and returned to God through his belief in Christ. Anyone who entrusted himself to God could gain eternal life. Achieving union with the personal God signified the life of the Holy Spirit (*pneuma*). *Pneuma* is the same power that permeates the three persons of God. This *pneuma* enlivens the soul of a believer. It pervades the believer and constitutes a personal relationship between God and the believer. *Agape*, in the Christian sense, signifies an individual becoming one with God through *pneuma*.

In Christian mysticism, the unity of believers with the Church is expressed through the divine spirit. But as people came to regard scientific analysis as the ultimate criterion for truth, the idea of love between mankind and God was seriously undermined, and the notion of *pneuma* was abandoned.

Because people lost their connection with *pneuma*, modern life could only be interpreted in mechanistic and materialistic ways. Reason as expounded as *Geist* by Hegel in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit* was not taken seriously, while gradually, the analytic aspects of reason gained popularity. In short, the mystic immediacy of experience that binds everything together lost significance.

In order to investigate mysticism today, we need to rethink the significance of concepts such as *pneuma*. The mystical outlook presupposes that the individual possesses insights that were formerly known to the soul. This notion does not signify a soul in some general sense; it must, rather, be the principle that constitutes the “self” for each individual. The soul cannot take the form, for example, of the “Cartesian ego.” The Cartesian notion of the ego as a thinking being, *res cogitans*, indicates a conscious entity, which subsists outside the world subjectively. The soul in the mystical sense constitutes the basis of life for all things. It must transcend the division between subject and object.

In recent times, human nature came to be distinguished from that of all other animals, since it is rational. I think the self is posited as absolute, something that can never be substituted for other subjects. Subjectivity can be thought of as an aspect of human personality. Because the relationship between the self and the other was not clearly defined by Descartes, the personality inherent in ego was not given proper attention. In my opinion, the notion that one actually is a conscious self has led to social isolation.

This strict demarcation between self and the other was a prerequisite for the establishment of the concept of personality. Viewed from a moral perspective, all individuals should be credited with will so that everyone is worthy of respect.

Individuals should follow rational laws but rise above the distinction of the self and the other. But this is in theory, since individuals are sometimes subject to the will of others. The personal distinction between the self and the other is in fact left intact. Nevertheless, I believe there exists a sphere beyond any distinction between the self and the other.

In Christianity, the personality of the individual can be seen as reflecting the image of God when the individual obliterates his ego through faith and helps others. He can be seen as being filled with the spirit of God. The difference between self and the other are eliminated.

As we know, all living organisms are composed of smaller particles. Each cell, of course, is wrapped in membrane and can be distinguished from other cells. Cells form the pathways through which nutrition can pass. Aristotle regarded nutritional intake as specific to life. He also conceived of the soul, as presiding over the functioning of the individual. In both human beings and in other organisms, the physical body, insofar as it has material existence, is separate from the soul. The physical body is separate from the soul, but at the same time it is also identical to the soul.

The dual relationship between body and soul is strikingly evident in the relationship between man and woman. In a romantic relationship, the physical differences between man and woman and the states of their souls cannot be easily separated. The household is established based on love between man and woman. Incidentally, having a physically attractive body was a prerequisite for *eros* in Greece. In human love, the physical body and the soul are joined in harmony. That is to say, one aspect is based on the distinction between self and the other, while the other obliterates this distinction.

In the view of Plotinus, however, when one moves from the soul (*psyche*) to intelligence (*nous*), three elements can be observed: the loving, the loved, and the act of loving. All three exist in the same "world-soul" or *nous*. When human love occurs,

the distinction between the self and the other disappears, *nous* now replacing soul. Similarly, in the mystical union that occurs through the Body of Christ one is also capable of eliminating all distinctions between self and other, even though separate distinguishable souls are encountering Christ in separate physical bodies. Thus, initially the soul resided in an individual physical body, distinguishable from other souls.

A different concept of the soul appears when considering the Christian notion of *agape*. This love presides over our entire cosmos by giving form and order to the world as a whole. This is the “cosmic soul” expounded in ancient times. Borrowing ideas from Plato and Aristotle, Plotinus expounded further on the idea of the “cosmic soul.” This soul is omnipresent in the universe and can be regarded as similar to *nous*, since it always exists as a unified force.

While the self appears as a unique personality or an ego when analyzed rationally, this same self can appear as a “soul,” according to mystical thought. Such a soul is seen as central to all life. But in modern philosophy, Fichte’s concept of feelings (*Empfindlichkeit*) resembles Plotinus’ idea of the soul, though I cannot get into this in great detail here.

3. Pantheism

When we search for a way to revitalize the concept of the soul in a manner germane to mysticism in the modern world, what comes to mind immediately is the concept of “world-soul” (*Weltseele*) described by Schelling and Goethe. Rationalist thinkers posited scientific truth as setting nature in opposition to the ego. They saw self as being a part of the material world, the world being conceived of as coming into existence without creation by an intelligent subject. Opposing the subject-object

dualism that had been popular since the seventeenth century, Schelling endeavored to affirm the separate identity of all conscious selves, while seeing human beings as individual conscious selves, arising directly out of nature itself. He held the view that the ego, as a philosophical principle, has to overcome its own finitude having arisen through being determined by other separate objects. Such an ego has to strive, over an indeterminate period of time, towards becoming “absolute ego” by freeing itself of all individualizing determination. Schelling maintained that the ego desires to authenticize itself by becoming simply part of the cosmic “Spirit” (*Geist*).

Ceasing to be part of the world of unconscious beings, the spirit elevates itself by becoming completely conscious. This route to the self-awareness of “spirit” is a process whereby the spirit moves among other selves and is ultimately produced by continual determination objectifying itself. In the process of “everlastingly becoming,” it must continually undergo new transformations. Schelling conceived of nature as a spirit, with the absolute subject developing copies of itself. According to Schelling’s understanding of “spirit,” nature creates objects that become active beings, helping to produce spirit itself.

Because nature is itself a product of the life-force inherent in the spirit, it is an object which goes on producing itself, being both organic and reproductive in nature. It can be thought of as *natura naturans*. Viewed from the perspective of productivity, nature is not a mechanistic source based on subject-object dualism, but rather a dynamic and vital, living and life-giving source. It exists prior to any subject-object opposition. Hence, the organic nature which Schelling elucidates is indistinguishable from the inorganic, but it includes nature as a whole.

Nature’s positive energy gives rise to creativity and the preservation of life, while its negative energy draws back towards destruction and re-creation, thus maintaining a balance. This is the tug-of-war out of which all life and action spring. Nature is organic and forms the entire world into a single system which Schelling

referred to as the “world-soul.” Though it sounds quite awkward in translation, this is a critical concept.

The “world-soul” posited by Schelling as the vital principle of all nature is neither primordial nor based on pure consciousness. This principle can only be understood with reference to an earlier worldview held prior to the development of opposition between materialism and idealism. This worldview, portraying nature as manifesting the “world-soul” of Schelling and Goethe, can be called pantheism. So with the help of modern scientific formulations, the philosophic concept of soul inherent in mysticism has taken the form of pantheism.

Giordano Bruno (1548-1600) and Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) helped mold Schelling’s thinking, enabling him to consolidate his thoughts on pantheism, claiming that all things are immanent in God. But pantheism is often misinterpreted to mean all things in nature are God. Spinoza’s dictum, “God is nature,” is often thought of as a classic example of pantheism. But Schelling defends Spinoza, who clearly distinguished between God and all God’s creation. I think pantheism is neither theism, which defines God as a transcendent agent outside of nature, nor atheism, which identifies the soul with the physical body and eliminates God from nature itself. Pantheism, as reflected in the concept of the “world-soul,” philosophically transcends the opposition between idealism and materialism. I think it is a position that goes beyond religious debate in which theism and atheism oppose one another.

Humanity in modern times seems to have fallen into an irresolvable predicament, not knowing how to reconcile the conflicting perspectives of philosophy and religion. But Schelling’s notion of pantheism is of great import in this regard. He was searching for common ground on which to retrace steps to a perspective prior to the opposition between idealism and materialism, theism and atheism. Thanks to Schelling’s attempts, I think it is still possible to rediscover the spirit of mysticism today.

Notes

¹ Jan van Bragt, *Religion and Nothingness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), vi.

² The conference was convened in 1984 at Smith College to discuss Nishitani's most acclaimed work *Religion and Nothingness*.

³ Taitetsu Unno ed., *The Religious Philosophy of Nishitani Keiji*, (Berkeley, Asian Humanities press, 1984), vii.

⁴ Tetsuro Mori "Nishitani Keiji and the question of nationalism," James W. Heisig and John C. Moraldo, eds., *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School and the Question of Nationalism*, (Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1994). 325-326

⁵ John Moraldo, "Questioning nationalism now and then: a critical approach to Zen and the Kyoto School," *Ibid.*, 355-356

⁶ Christopher Goto-Jones, ed., *Re-Politicising the Kyoto School as Philosophy*, (London and Leiden: Routledge and Universiteit Leiden Press, 2007), 41

⁷ Richard F. Calichman, ed., *Overcoming Modernity: Cultural Identity in Wartime Japan*, (New York, Columbia University Press: 2008).

⁸ Charles Taylor, *A Secular Age* (Cambridge, MS: Harvard University Press: 2007).

⁹ Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006). Sam Harris, *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004).

¹⁰ Paul Tillich, *Christianity and the Encounter of the World Religions* (New York: Columbia University Press: 1963), 62. One of the participants among of the Buddhist priests and scholars that Tillich mentioned was Nishitani.

¹¹ Graham Parks, *The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism*, trans, Graham Parkes and Setsuko Aihara (New York: State University of New York Press: 1990) p. xix.

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