

VIEWS AND REVIEWS

Buddhism in the Contemporary World: A Public Lecture at Shinran Community Hall, Kyoto, April 11, 2016, Followed by a Dialogue with Professor Yasutomi Shin'ya, Otani University

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HELLO, EVERYONE. My name is Terashima Jitsurō 寺島実郎, and my area of research is sociology. Usually I give talks on topics such as “How Should We Look at the Japanese Economy Now?” or “World Structural Change and Japan.” But today I am going to talk about “Buddhism in the Contemporary World.” My interest in Buddhism began with my encounter with D. T. Suzuki, who had a deep connection with Higashi Honganji 東本願寺. Due to my work, I often have the opportunity to travel to the U.S. During such visits, I go to bookstores and look for books on Japan or Asia, and I always find books by D. T. Suzuki about Zen or the Asian mind.

Moving around across borders, I often wondered how we can best express ourselves to people who come from a religion or culture that is completely incompatible with our own value system. At such times, I began to think a lot about D. T. Suzuki, who intensely expressed himself in the space between Asian values and Western values.

Therefore, I wrote about D. T. Suzuki in one of my columns for the journal *Fore-sight* on the theme of “Our Predecessors Who Struggled with the Twentieth Century: The Year 1900; The Rise of Asia and America.”¹ Subsequently, Kyoto University Professor Emeritus, Ueda Shizuteru, told me, “Your article has done a remarkable job of capturing the true nature of D. T. Suzuki.”

Then we discussed some passages that I had cited from Ueda’s coauthored volume *Daisetsu’s Landscape: Who Was D. T. Suzuki?*² Through this connection, I became

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¹ Terashima 2000.

² Okamura and Ueda 2008.

a trustee of the Matsugaoka Bunko 松ヶ岡文庫 Foundation at Tōkeiji 東慶寺 in Kamakura. Thus, my interest in D. T. Suzuki gradually deepened, and that became my entrance into Buddhism.

After D. T. Suzuki, I next encountered Kūkai 空海 (774–835). In the summer of 2007, I gave a lecture at Kōyasan 高野山 University, sponsored by the *Mainichi shinbun*. The theme of my lecture was “Kūkai Living in the Contemporary World.” At first I declined the invitation, because Buddhism was not my specialty. However, when I learned that various eminent figures, such as Kobayashi Hideo 小林秀雄 (1902–1983) and Natsume Sōseki 夏目漱石 (1867–1916), had given lectures there in the past, my interest suddenly intensified. So, even as I was traveling around the world, I read through more than one hundred books on Kūkai. Reading the books in my own way, I felt that, if Kūkai were alive today, he would be considered a scientist, not someone in the humanities. Kūkai was a genius at theoretical construction.

Kūkai brought back from China more than just the texts of Shingon 真言 Buddhism. He also brought back the latest technologies in metallurgy, medicine, civil engineering, and so forth. In 828, Kūkai established the Shugeishuchi-in 綜芸種智院 at Tōji 東寺, sometimes called the School of Arts and Sciences, not only to propagate Shingon Buddhism, but also as a place for the common people to acquire technical skills and become self-reliant. Today it would be considered a technological vocational school.

As you know, at Kōyasan Kūkai also made the Daigaran 大伽藍, with the Konpon Dōjō 根本道場, as a place for Buddhist practice. In the center of Kyoto, he made a technological vocational school. At Kōyasan, located high in the mountains at an elevation of approximately one thousand meters and surrounded by deep valleys, Kūkai established a foundational place for propagating Shingon Buddhism. Kūkai’s life linked these two places. The more I learn about Kūkai’s career, the more I realize that he was someone with great conceptual ability in engineering.

Partly because of my Kōyasan lecture, I was next invited by Higashi Honganji to give a talk on the topic of “Shinran Living Now.” So I spoke on May 10, 2011, for the seven-hundred-and-fiftieth memorial for Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262). Compared to the towering genius of Kūkai, Shinran was an appealingly natural person. There was probably not a single day that Kūkai thought of himself as incompetent or as lacking ability. Kūkai lived his life with that sort of discipline. He lived his life with a spirit of “After Kūkai, there is no Kūkai.”

In contrast, Shinran did not live even one day thinking of himself as an exceptional person, did he? Calling himself “the foolish bald-headed one” (*gutoku* 愚禿), Shinran wrote astonishing things such as, “People are filled to the brim with ignorance and affliction. Our desires are countless, and greed, anger, wrath, jealousy, and envy are

overwhelming.”³ Shinran lived his life in the belief that it is impossible for people to save themselves.

However, Shinran surely transformed the paradigm of Japanese Buddhism. In other words, Buddhism, which had been brought to Japan in order to protect the state, was now transformed into a Buddhism for the common people. Once my attention was drawn to the attractiveness of the flesh-and-blood Shinran, I had more opportunities to talk about Shinran.

With this as the background, I was gradually drawn into the world of Buddhism. As someone who specialized in sociology, I wanted to understand Buddhism anew, objectively, and from the widest possible viewpoint. Recently, I have become more deeply interested in looking at religion in human history. So today I would like to talk about things from that viewpoint.

What Is a Human? A Consideration of Genetics

The title of today’s talk is “Buddhism in the Contemporary World.” But first I want to try thinking about what sort of era the contemporary age is, from the perspective of the history of life, or, human history. From my perspective, we cannot comprehend the contemporary age simply by looking at the current situation. If we do not delve deeply into history, then we cannot truly understand the contemporary world. If we think about the contemporary world from the perspective of human history, then we naturally see the important role of religion and Buddhism.

Since we entered the twenty-first century more than fifteen years ago, two fields of science have progressed with breathtaking momentum. Needless to say, one of those fields is information science. As everyone knows, the Internet has expanded rapidly since the mid-1990s, and now there are developments in “big data” and artificial intelligence. Aside from the question of where this will lead, we are indubitably living in an era of progress in information technology. The second field of science that has developed swiftly is the life sciences. In tandem with developments in the technology of information science, research discoveries in the life sciences have also rapidly advanced. Even if you are someone who specializes in sociology or someone who is firmly treading the path of religion, if you live in the contemporary world, you have no choice but to be fully cognizant of information science and the life sciences. So, these two fields of science are even changing our perception of the world.

The question of what it means to be a human being has been answered on the level of DNA. In 2003, the Human Genome Project was completed. According to the results, the difference between our approximately twenty-two thousand human genes and the DNA of chimpanzees is only 1.2 percent. More recent research results

³ Shinshū Ōtani-ha 1978, p. 545.

show that, when the data is adjusted to consider individual differences, the difference between human and chimpanzee DNA is merely 1.06 percent.

I think that all people consider themselves to be superior, at the very least, to chimpanzees. Nonetheless, the difference in our DNA is only 1.06 percent. If you really think about it, the basic functions of living beings—eating, sleeping, and defecating—are not so different. If you choose to look just at the speed of travel, there are many animals that are faster than humans. Furthermore, it has been proven that chimpanzees are better than humans at perceiving and analyzing instantaneous images. In a Kyoto University experiment that tested the ability of humans and chimpanzees to remember numerals from one to nine that flashed randomly on a computer screen, the humans made several mistakes but the chimpanzees did not. For chimpanzees, this is a survival skill, enabling them, for example, to remember where the fruits are in a tree. They have the ability to perceive things and remember them, just like taking a photograph.

Even if the above is true, and human superiority resides in that 1.06 percent difference in our genes, just wherein does this superiority lie? Apparently, it is our language ability and our ability to understand the passage of time. In 2013, the psychologist Thomas Suddendorf published *The Gap: The Science of What Separates Us from Other Animals*.⁴ According to Suddendorf, it is only humans that question the meaning of their own existence or pose queries about the past. In short, it is only humans who have the ability to ask questions such as, “What is the purpose of my life?” and the ability to perceive time in terms of past, present, and future. It is thinking about the future that makes humans human. According to Suddendorf, monkeys live in the present; humans indulge in fantasies.

This special sense of time possessed by humans has closely affected human history. About sixty thousand years ago, our *Homo sapiens* ancestors began to move toward the Eurasian continent. This migration from their place of origin in the Great Rift Valley of Africa, with its giant forests, is called “the great journey.” People became smarter through traveling. For example, as people moved north, they gradually acquired knowledge about how to survive in cold environments. Next, about ten thousand years ago, some people began to shift from a nomadic hunting lifestyle to a settled agricultural lifestyle. Under these circumstances, needing to store crops for the future, people began to acquire a forward-looking sense of time. Such things have been verified through advances in the life sciences.

It is practically certain that *Homo sapiens* arrived in the Japanese archipelago around thirty-eight thousand years ago. Yet our image of the earliest period of Japanese history is the era of Himiko (also spelled Pimiko) 卑弥呼, which was only sixteen hundred years ago. That long interval in Japanese history, from the arrival of *Homo sapiens* to

⁴ Suddendorf 2013.

the age of Himiko, is not within the purview of most people. It was during that period that, for example, Japanese mythology was born. With continued developments in the life sciences, that ancient period is gradually becoming more visible.

What is Human Progress? Questions Raised by the Iceman

I am gradually getting closer to the topic of Buddhism. I want to talk about human progress. Does everyone know about the Iceman?

In 1991, a frozen human was discovered in a crevice in a glacier in the Swiss Alps at an altitude of about 3,000 meters. He is called the “Iceman,” or “Ötzi the Iceman.” A group of European scientists thawed out the frozen human and analyzed him. They learned that the Iceman had lived 5,300 years ago—3,300 years before the birth of Christ and 2,800 years before the births of Confucius and the Buddha.

Because the Iceman was frozen instantly, analysis of his body yielded valuable information that could not have been obtained from examining a dried-out mummy.

As one would expect, people today tend to be confident that they are more evolved than a human from 5,300 years ago. But the examination of the Iceman proves that they are wrong.

People probably imagine that the Iceman’s diet was not very delicious. However, the dissection of his stomach revealed that he ate a rich and varied diet. Also, the Iceman had some tattoos in places that are now known as meridian points in East Asian medicine, so it was surprising to discover that he had received healing treatments. Furthermore, before examination, it was assumed that the Iceman had accidentally fallen into the glacial crevice and died. But in fact he was murdered: an arrow was discovered in his body.

When I heard this story, I couldn’t help but ask: If there really hasn’t been that much progress in our lives, what after all is human progress?

My attention was drawn to the appearance in the world of people like the Buddha, Confucius, and Christ. Even for people today living in rich material circumstances, there is a big question: How to live one’s life? Even though the Buddha was born 2,500 years ago, what was the meaning of the appearance in the world of this person who queried his inner self?

According to the literature of early Buddhism, immediately before the Buddha’s nirvana, his disciples asked him, “How should we live after you have gone?” In response, the Buddha said, “Be your own lamp, and take the Dharma as your lamp.” “Be your own lamp” means to live according to your own light. I understand that to mean that we should not rely on other people and should think for ourselves. Then, “Take the Dharma as your lamp” means that you should firmly follow the Buddha’s teachings.

When we read these early Buddhist texts, it seems that the main point of the Buddha's teaching was to liberate oneself from one's inner afflictions. Rather than aiming at some sort of social revolution, Buddhism originally placed importance on achieving enlightenment through gazing fixedly at one's inner self. Since Buddhism had no clearly fixed tenets, various interpretations developed. Despite the fact that when Buddhism originally appeared in the world it was a religion that taught individual liberation, it also developed into Mahayana Buddhism, which taught that one could save not only oneself but others.

Christ was born five hundred years after the Buddha. Research is showing that Christ was influenced by the Buddha. Buddhism, born on the Indian subcontinent, was certainly transmitted to Palestine and thereby influenced Christ. With Christ's inspiration, Christianity, a religion of original sin and love, began.

In the *Analects* of Confucius, a disciple asked Confucius, "When all is said and done, how would you sum up the entirety of your teachings?" Confucius replied with one word, "reciprocity" (Ch. *shu* 恕; Jp. *jo*).⁵ The disciple asked what the essence of his master's teaching was, and Confucius responded with the word "reciprocity," which also has the meaning of "forgiveness." If there is no expanding of the heart, no love, no consideration for others, then there is no forgiveness.

The words of the Buddha, who was born in India and, as an ascetic monk, pursued introspective matters more and more deeply, and the message of Confucius, "reciprocity," occurred at almost the same time. In other words, the moment in human history that germinated teachings focused on a concern for others, forgiveness, love, and sacrificing oneself—rather than looking out for one's own benefit and happiness in society, and being focused only on one's own life—was 2,500 years ago.

Reflecting on History

For over sixty years, as has been discussed both among socially conscious Japanese, and at international conferences, postwar Japanese people have had a painful sense of being burdened with a number of serious flaws.

First, there is the flaw that comes from using the Mercator projection map to study world geography in the social sciences. Japan looks at the world under the impression that it is a country that faces toward America across the Pacific Ocean. This way of thinking does not take account of world geography in terms of the globe.

Because of this, postwar Japanese people are alone in having the impression that the Pacific Ocean side is the front of the country and the Sea of Japan side is the back. In prewar times, due to policies toward the Chinese continent, Japanese people looked toward the Sea of Japan side. Contemporary Japanese people, having looked at the

⁵ *Analects* (Ch. *Lunyu* 論語), ch. 15, v. 23.

world only in terms of America for the past seven decades, developed the impression that the Pacific Ocean side is the front and the Sea of Japan side is the back. It is very difficult to overturn this mistaken impression.

A second flaw is that there is hardly any understanding of modern history. This is due to the fact that, under the postwar education system, the baby-boomer generation—which includes me, having been born in 1947—had to choose in high school between world history and Japanese history, just one or the other.

Even students who chose Japanese history started with the Jōmon 縄文 and Yayoi 弥生 periods and ended breathlessly at the Meiji Restoration. Then they faced the university entrance exams, using self-study methods. Therefore, to a great extent, except for a few people who went deeply into the subject while at university, postwar Japanese people who are said to understand modern history in fact reach only the level of having read novels by Shiba Ryōtarō 司馬遼太郎 (1923–1996) or having watched historical dramas on television.

Teachers do not have the courage or competence to teach modern history head on because they could not avoid addressing the question of why Japan went to war.

The students who avoided modern history are now adults. If you think about it dispassionately, even though those adults dutifully fulfill their corporate roles, since they have no knowledge of modern Japanese history, if you ask them questions such as, “What is historical progress?” or “What is human progress?” it just doesn’t click. However, you cannot understand the current state of Japan if you do not look at the history of the world.

The Perspective from Seventeenth-Century Holland

In contrast to the postwar educational system in Japan, the mainstream approach in studying world history is to view the world as a single globe and not divide history into world history, Japanese history, Asian history, and so forth. In other words, the Japanese method of teaching history is out of synch with international standards. With this problem in mind, I am now writing a series of articles on the theme, “The Perspective from Seventeenth-Century Holland,” for the monthly journal *Sekai* 世界.⁶

In recent years, some of my discussions have been collected and published as books: *Portrait of Young Japan: A Trip to Europe in the Year 1900*⁷ and *What Can We Learn from the Twentieth Century?*⁸ In addition, as I mentioned earlier, I wrote *Our Predecessors Who Struggled with the Twentieth Century: The Year 1900; the Rise of Asia and America*.⁹

⁶ Terashima 2010a.

⁷ Terashima 2014.

⁸ Terashima 2007.

⁹ Terashima 2015.

In all of them, I was pursuing the question: “What was the twentieth century?” Next, I wrote on the topic, “What is postwar Japan?”¹⁰

In short, my study of seventeenth-century Holland raised questions about the twentieth century and about postwar Japan, but I thought I could go even further.

Seventeenth-century Holland was the cradle of the modern age. The three keywords marking the distinctive characteristics of the contemporary era are democracy, capitalism, and technology. The origin point of all three of these was seventeenth-century Holland. My articles look closely at the creation of the modern age through the lens of this country.

For example, in the seventeenth century, Peter the Great of Russia (1672–1725) disguised himself and went to work for the Dutch East India Company. Specialists in Russian history often refer to this legendary episode. During the time that Peter the Great worked as an apprentice shipwright for the Dutch East India Company, European interest in Asia was very high. The Romanov dynasty developed ambitions in regard to the Far East. With the development of Siberia and other things, Russia rapidly expanded eastward.

Most contemporary Japanese people have the idea that Japan’s modern era began around the year 1853 when American Commodore Matthew Perry arrived at Uraga 浦賀. Actually, a half century earlier, in 1792, Adam Laxman (1766–1806) had arrived at Nemuro 根室. And in 1804 Nikolai Razanov (1764–1807) had come to Nagasaki seeking trade agreements with the shogunate. From that time onward, Japan was influenced by Holland via Russia. This is summarized in the first of my series of publications.

Furthermore, most Japanese people have a very faint understanding of American history. Their knowledge extends only to knowing that the Pilgrims arrived on the American continent in 1620 and that the thirteen eastern states achieved independence. They know almost nothing about the background of this fight for independence. Aren’t there some people who make the interpretation that, even though America achieved independence from England, America prolonged the spirit of the British Empire, because both countries use English?

In fact, the Pilgrims did not set out for America from England. Before they went to America, they spent twelve years in Holland as refugees.

Seventeenth-century Holland sought religious freedom from Catholic Spain. After an eighty-year war for independence, Holland became a Protestant country. Moreover, Holland was a republic. The Pilgrim fathers had taken refuge in Holland because Holland was a republic and a Protestant country that upheld freedom of religion.

The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guarantees freedom of religion. Surely, this mentality was inherited from Holland, not England. Nowadays, American politicians who say that Muslims should be driven out of the U.S. are shooting them-

¹⁰ Terashima 2010b.

selves in the foot. Do they not understand the First Amendment? Or do they understand the First Amendment and intentionally disavow it? Which is it?

The Revival of Religion

In this way, when we try to comprehend the contemporary age, it is very important to start with studying seventeenth-century Holland. I regularly follow how experts and specialists from all over the world grasp the current world situation, and I find a few rare cases of analyses by people whom I feel accurately grasp the circumstances.

Among them, one person I am paying attention to now is ninety-four-year-old Henry Kissinger. In 2014, he published the book, *World Order*.¹¹ There he writes that, for the first time in four hundred years, the world is confronting a structural turning point. You might be wondering why it was four hundred years ago, but that matches perfectly with my understanding. In short, Kissinger also brought up seventeenth-century Holland. He focuses on the Treaty of Westphalia, which was signed in 1648, about four hundred years ago. The Treaty of Westphalia concluded Holland's war of independence against Spain, which I referred to earlier, and at the same time the treaty marked the endpoint of the Thirty Years' War, the last religious war in Europe. The treaty meant that government would be independent from religion. Up until then, Europe had formed a system centered on the Pope. Accordingly, although religious conflict and religious discord would recur, the significance of the Treaty of Westphalia was that it brought about the independence of government from religion.

This was certainly the moment at which nation-states and the balance of powers and so forth—all the fundamental themes of modern political science and international politics—began to appear. According to Kissinger, the world has now arrived at the next structural turning point.

In short, a key factor shaping world politics is the revival of religion. Four hundred years ago, it seemed that government had succeeded in becoming independent from religion. Then, around 1990, with the end of the Cold War, it seemed that the conflict between socialism and capitalism was over and that the struggle between East and West had ended. At that time, with ideological conflict ended, it was thought that the world was heading into an era of great competition across national borders, with people, goods, money, technology, and information moving freely around the world.

However, while the ideological struggle between socialism and capitalism might have ended, conversely, previously suppressed conflicts in the name of ethnicity, religion, or ideology erupted. According to Kissinger, as we enter this new era, the world is facing a turning point for the first time in four hundred years. He says that the revival of religion is the great theme that must be confronted by us, now and into the future.

¹¹ Kissinger 2014.

The Conflict of Religions

If you look at the world dispassionately from a Buddhist viewpoint, you might think that the current Islamic terrorism and jihadism in Europe are a kind of madness that appeared suddenly. However, the terrorism that now frequently occurs in Europe is not something that started all of a sudden.

Over the course of history, conflict between religions has recurred. Of course, at the root of the confrontations, oil interests and political disputes are also factors, but if we think especially about Islam and Christianity, those two religions have been enemies over and over again.

To begin with, Islam and Christianity are both religions based on the Old Testament. Christianity came from Judaism, which took the Old Testament as its sacred scripture. Later, in the seventh century, Islam emerged from Judaism. Thus, while all had the Old Testament as their foundation, the three great monotheistic religions of the Middle East differed greatly.

Islam, the religion founded about six hundred years after the birth of Christ by the prophet Muhammad, denied the divinity of Jesus Christ. Christianity, for its part, treated Islam, which viewed Jesus as simply one of the prophets, as a bitter enemy.

In 715, only one hundred years after its founding by Muhammad, the Islam of the Umayyad Caliphate (661–750) had expanded militarily, conquering lands as far away as the Iberian Peninsula (present-day Spain and Portugal). In 732, forces of the Umayyad Caliphate crossed the Pyrenees, invaded France, and battled with the kingdom of France. It was at that time, with European countries having cemented a union to fight against invading Islam, that the sense of Europe as a “Christian community” was solidified. I think that this battle was the first stage in the conflict between Islam and Christianity. On Islam’s side as well, since Muslims were treated as enemies, they had no choice but to fight in order to survive. In order to recapture Mecca, Muhammad brought religion, government, and the military together into a single entity. The founder himself stood at the head of the troops, leading the battle. This formed the basis for the misunderstanding of Islam as a violent religion as exemplified at times in the phrase, “The Koran in one hand and a sword in the other.”

The second stage in the conflict between Islam and Christianity was the two-hundred-year period starting in the eleventh century. This time, it was the Christians who repeated the slaughter, aiming to recapture the holy city of Jerusalem under the banner of the Crusades, attacking Palestine and other places in the Middle East. Through this process, with Christians and Muslims viewing each other as implacable enemies, their identities as having to fight in firm solidarity against the enemy were established.

The third stage of conflict was the war between the Ottoman Empire (1299–1922) and Europe during the “Age of Discovery.” The Age of Discovery commenced because Europeans were forced to open up sea routes to Asia that circled around the Cape of Good Hope in southern Africa and the Strait of Magellan, due to the fact that the Ottoman Empire’s control of the Middle East meant that Europeans were blocked from conducting trade through the Mediterranean Sea. In 1529 and 1683, the Ottoman Empire besieged Vienna, then considered the heart of Europe. Vienna was twice surrounded by Ottoman troops (one hundred twenty thousand in 1529 and one hundred fifty thousand in 1683), and each time Vienna was driven to the verge of surrender. However, with the approach of winter, with agreements among Christian lords and various other factors, Europe somehow managed to push back the Ottomans. After that, the Ottoman Empire gradually declined. Its last remaining territory, Anatolia, eventually became the Republic of Turkey. Yet even now one hears anecdotes about European mothers disciplining their children by scaring them with the words, “The Turks are coming.” It shows that the pressure of the Ottoman Empire became a kind of trauma for Europe.

We’ve looked at the conflict in Europe between the Muslim and Christian communities. It is within the last one hundred years that the fourth stage of the conflict has developed. Exactly one hundred years ago, in 1916, against the background of the First World War, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was concluded. The Sykes-Picot Agreement was a secret pact between the two great powers of Europe, England and France, to partition and control the Middle East after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

I have seen in a museum the actual map that was used for the agreement. There was a line drawn in red pencil, marking which part belonged to England and which part belonged to France, dividing up the countries as though they were distributing trophies. Today those lines are still the artificial national borders drawn in the Middle East. In other words, a hundred years ago, the Middle East was twisted around by the tyranny of the great powers, Europe and America.

At the beginning of this century, 9/11 occurred, and U.S. President Bush, in a fit of rage, plunged into the Middle East with the Iraq War. Then, having piled up many corpses, the U.S. withdrew from Iraq. Next, President Obama took the stage. From this flow of events, the U.S. lost its power to control the Middle East, and as a result, Islamic jihadism gathered strength. Simply just looking back on these trends, we should think that both sides are to blame. Hatred breeds hatred.

The Role of Japanese Buddhism

In our current world situation, where murder in the name of religion is rampant, the position we take is very important. In particular, a Buddhist system of values—a way

of thinking that does not divide and conquer, does not use thesis, antithesis, and synthesis, does not construct a logic premised upon oppositions, but rather values a feeling of wholeness, like a circle—is extremely important for the future.

As I said at the beginning, Japan established Buddhism in the seventh century as a religion that protected the state. I enjoy visiting Asukadera 飛鳥寺 and Okadera 岡寺, both in the Asuka area of Nara. Okadera is called “Kūkai’s temple.” It is known as a temple that protects against misfortune, while Asukadera is a temple important for the transmission of Buddhism to Japan.

If we look at the situation in the seventh century, we see that Buddhism began in Japan as the religion of the Soga 蘇我 clan. Therefore, Asukadera was not a temple for the emperor, but rather, one for the Soga. With connections to Prince Shōtoku 聖徳 (574–622) and others, Buddhism took root in Japan as the religion for the state. As I described above, Kūkai, who brought technology from China, appeared later.

The important point was the paradigm shift that Japanese Buddhism underwent in the twelfth century. Through Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212) and Shinran, Buddhism transformed into a religion of the common people. D. T. Suzuki, who said, “The outer is wide, the inner is deep,”¹² was originally a person of Zen, but he praised Shinran’s achievements. Suzuki felt that within Shin Buddhism lay one of Japan’s greatest contributions to the rest of the world. In the world of Japanese thought and religion, there had never been anything so creative or open to the world. It was only Shinran who was so different—because Shinran had a freshness and intensity in terms of his power to turn Buddhism into a religion entirely for the masses. That was Suzuki’s view, and I truly agree with him. Shinran’s thought is original, and it strongly raises questions for world thought and culture.

If I may dare, I would now like to touch on Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282). My family has belonged to the Nichiren school for generations, so of course I have great respect for Nichiren, and sometimes I feel like having discussions with Nichiren priests. Sōka Gakkai 創価学会 and Risshō Kōsei-kai 立正佼成会 both originated from Nichiren’s teachings, and people connected with Nichiren are interested in politics because their founder was as well. In his *Risshō Ankoku Ron* 立正安国論, Nichiren criticized the *nenbutsu* 念仏. In short, according to Nichiren, although the teaching that the evil person is the true object of Amida’s vow is acceptable, a person will not be saved by chanting the *nenbutsu*. Nichiren tended to be someone who thought that we must make changes within this world.

Therefore, the Nichiren school can easily be connected to nationalism. With its interest in politics, it tends to head in the direction of bracing the national spirit by using any means to disseminate the “True Dharma” (*shōbō* 正法) and to eradicate the

¹² “*Soto wa hiroku, uchi wa fukai*” 外は広く、内は深い。Suzuki 1963, p. 106.

nenbutsu. Rather than take an approach that explores how people live as individuals, it tends to lean toward the homeland and nationalism. This is due, in the first place, to its origin. An inclination toward nationalism and politics is an inherent component. I am not saying it is right or wrong. However, this is one tendency that can be seen.

Shinran has significance in a way that is different from Nichiren. I think that the paradigm shift brought about by Shinran is extremely meaningful in the religious realms of the world.

There is a simplistic tendency to think that Japan should naturally cooperate with international society in opposing terrorism and war. But when we think about the position of Japan, based on Buddhist thought, which is not premised upon divide and conquer, I think it is foolish for us to go full steam ahead and enter a conflict on one side or the other, when there is no need to embrace the conflict in the first place.

For example, concerning the problem of Palestine, there is absolutely no need for Japan to support one side or the other in the battle between Palestine and Israel. Furthermore, in the conflict between Islam and Christianity, which I discussed earlier, there is no need to support one side or the other. Instead, wouldn't it be better for Japan to value its detachment, in the positive sense of the word?

Earlier I talked about the revival of religion in the contemporary world. In such an age, Japan must, I think, make a statement—with an appropriate sense of detachment—to the effect that it values dialogue among religions. While the highest leaders of various religions might meet together and communicate, I think the time has come for them to firmly tell young people that murder based on hatred is wrong. At such a time, I think Japanese Buddhists must play a very big role.

In October 2016, the Asian Conference of Religions for Peace (ACRP) held a symposium commemorating its fortieth anniversary at the International Conference Center in Kyoto, and Shinshū Ōtani-ha 真宗大谷派 was one of the central participants. Making some observations on the importance of religion, I gave a keynote speech, which was about religion from a strictly sociological viewpoint, but I felt that I had to say something, especially about the role of Buddhism.

Time is up, so my talk will end here. Thank you very much.

Dialogue with Professor Yasutomi Shin'ya

Moderator. Now, based on Professor Terashima's lecture, Professor Yasutomi Shin'ya 安富信哉, Director of the Doctrinal Studies Research Institute of Shinshū Ōtani-ha, and Professor Terashima will hold a discussion. First, may I please ask Professor Yasutomi to speak?

Yasutomi. Thank you very much, Professor Terashima. I deeply value the way your talk today covered a broad expanse of time and space, tracing back through the history of life and the history of humanity. Listening to it awakened my intellectual excitement. Furthermore, you spoke about Shinran and D. T. Suzuki, people with whom we have a connection, from a vantage point that is wider than our usual sectarian point of view. We could hear about a lot of things from a very broad perspective, so it was a good opportunity to learn.

When you spoke about the investigation of the inner self as being one of the great values of Buddhism, I thought about how the statue of Maitreya Buddha in a half-lotus contemplative pose was particularly esteemed at the time that Buddhism entered Japan. And I think that connects to D. T. Suzuki's statement "The outer is wide, the inner is deep."

Today, we tend to use the word *shisaku* 思索 instead of *shii* 思惟 when referring to "contemplation." Nowadays, contemplation has become very weak. I was born in 1944, so Professor Terashima and I are of the same generation. I think there is a little overlap. When we were young, students had a saying: "Spending half a year with De-Kan-Sho, De-Kan-Sho." It meant that they valued contemplating what they read in the books of the philosophers Descartes, Kant, and Schopenhauer. However, I think that the feeling weakened after Japan's defeat in World War II, starting with our generation. Given that situation, I would like to ask Professor Terashima once again about the meaning of thinking about things, especially in regard to Buddhism.

Terashima. As Professor Yasutomi just asked, if I talk about thinking about things, there are some Buddhist words that are thought-provoking. When a person like me, coming from sociology, reads Buddhist books, there are some words that give me a rather odd feeling. What I mean are terms like "the power of seeing sound" (*kannonriki* 観音力) and "the power of hearing the light" (*monkōriki* 聞光力).

The camera company Canon started out as "Kannon camera," because the word Kannon 観音 (as the name of the bodhisattva) is well known to the general public. I thought it was just a way of saying, "Thank you, Kannon," and I hadn't really thought about the meaning of the word Kannon.

But when you think about it, "Kannon" is a strange word. I thought it was odd that "Kannon" is written as "to see sound." A sound is not something you "see"; it is something you "hear." So how could it be "to see sound"? Also, there is the Buddhist term, "to hear the light." Conversely, I thought, isn't light something you see? What could it mean to hear the light? From a sociological, surface observation, I decided that Buddhist words are not scientific.

As a matter of fact, I did some further reading on this topic, and I think I got some hints about what Buddhism is thinking in regard to terms like these. That is, I realized that the name Kannon ("to see sound") means to see sound and also to hear a sound

that cannot be seen—that is, it means being able to perceive things that, superficially, cannot be seen. It is the power to detect even things that cannot be seen.

“The power to hear the light” refers not only to hearing what can be heard but also to hearing, sensing, and accepting even what cannot be heard through the ears. This heightened sensitivity might be the true core of a Buddhist. The “power of seeing sound” and the “power of hearing the light” raise the question of how we would perceive the world through a sensitivity that hears the inaudible and sees the invisible.

Thus, recently I have become keenly aware that saying “Kannon-sama” is not so simple. But perhaps this is a very important standpoint from which to think about the meaning of Buddhism for today’s world. I was reminded of it as I listened to Professor Yasutomi talk about the importance of contemplation, so I mentioned it.

Yasutomi. I see. The full name of Kannon is Kanzeon 觀世音 Bodhisattva, or the Bodhisattva Who Sees the Sounds of the World. We are saved by “the power of seeing sound.” Shinran also used the term “power of hearing the light” in one of his *wasan* 和讃. The ordinary person is born in the Pure Land through the power of hearing the light [of Amida’s wisdom].

As for the human senses, seeing and hearing are very important. The Eightfold Correct Path found in early Buddhism starts with Correct Seeing (or Right View). In other words, we must see things correctly, as opposed to having mistaken views. So for Buddhism, seeing things correctly is extremely important.

Throughout Buddhist history, there has always been a “Buddhism that sees” (*miru bukkyō* 観る仏教). For Buddhism, seeing can also be called observation (*kansatsu* 観察) or observing phenomenal *dharma*s (*kanbō* 観法). Shinran developed it into a “Buddhism that hears,” evolving from observing phenomenal *dharma*s to hearing the Dharma (*monbō* 聞法).

Zen and other schools of Buddhism emphasized contemplative practices. These practices were too difficult for the common people, but they could hear the Dharma. Such is the deep profundity of hearing. I think this is a big thing for humans. In his later years, Shinran wrote in a letter, “My eyes fail me.” Still, I think Shinran listened very deeply.

With Shinran’s transformation of the *nenbutsu* from something one said just for oneself to something that one could hear, at a stroke Buddhism spread to the common people.

Professor Terashima presented some very interesting viewpoints on seeing sound and hearing light, and he has raised some big questions for how we think about Buddhism. *Terashima.* In connection with seeing sound and hearing light, I wonder, as time goes on, how we perceive, not just superficially, the way things shift as the world changes. In other words, knowing the world is a very difficult thing.

Japan's information environment is rapidly becoming more and more fragmentary. On news programs, commentators are often asked to speak for a minute and a half. There is a very limited amount you can say in a minute and a half.

In modern times, it is very important to think about world events in a substantial way. When I try to comprehend the world, I think that it is indispensable to have a global viewpoint and at the same time to study history. This global viewpoint can be said to have been brought about by Apollo 11.

A human being first stood on the moon in 1969. Before then, Japan was probably still living in an age when some people still argued that a rabbit lived on the moon. But the instant Apollo 11 sent images from the moon, people with all sorts of viewpoints recognized the undeniable reality that the earth is a single planet floating in space.

No matter how people had imagined the moon before then, even if some people thought that Kaguya-hime かぐや姫 returned to the moon, the moment we saw NASA's *Earthrise* photograph, showing the earth rising over the far side of the moon's horizon, we recognized that the earth on which we live is a single planet. This is a big thing that those of us living in the contemporary world share in common.

So it was at that moment that a *global* viewpoint appeared. When we think about things from an "international" perspective, we think about harmony between nations, or international relations, premised upon nation states. A fresh new *global* way of thinking emerged, which understood the earth as a single planet, to consider ecological problems or the explosive growth in population.

By the way, as I was talking about earlier, we might have thought that the era of continued ideological conflicts had been vanquished by means of the Treaty of Westphalia, but religious and ethnic conflict returned again. Until quite recently, even people who understood the seriousness of global ecological problems were drawn toward nationalism and prone to saying things like, "Just that one country cannot be forgiven."

Now what does all this mean? It is important to think about your own options, and Japan's options, based on the latest world politics and economic trends, while taking to heart Shinran's worldview. To put it another way, in thinking about Shinran, we must try to comprehend the world based on something that might be called a spiritual core.

If you think about it, despite the fact that the 2011 tsunami and nuclear disaster caused many Japanese people to question whether the postwar way of doing things was correct, in recent years we have what might be called the "Happy Because Stocks Went Up Syndrome." Really, although I've said that we must discuss what true happiness is, people are happy when stocks rise and unhappy when they go down, and they consider this to be the only problem. Shinran questioned whether we should live only chasing after our own interests. In the present day, we must take a hard look at the light and shadow of modernism, while at the same time having an intensely reflective

consciousness. It is extremely meaningful to think about Shinran's way of living. He offered to people in the Kamakura period, through the encounter with the *nenbutsu*, a fundamentally new way of life, which could be called absolute egalitarianism.

Yasutomi. It's as though, with modernism, we lose our grip on sanity and lose our spiritual core, isn't it? In his writings, Professor Terashima frequently uses the term "return to sanity," and I think that is especially significant. Buddhism is "returning to sanity." Religion is not originally something that leads to madness; rather, it is "returning to sanity."

Earlier we talked about outer space, and it made me think of Ellison Onizuka, an astronaut. He ultimately died in the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion. When he viewed Earth from outer space, he wondered, "Why are there national borders on that beautiful globe?"

He was a third-generation Japanese Hawaiian, and while probably experiencing various forms of discrimination, he studied hard and, in the end, became an astronaut. Actually, his spiritual foundation was Shin Buddhism. His ancestors' home temple was located in Ukiha うきは City, Fukuoka Prefecture (Kōfukuji 光福寺, Ōtani-ha). It is said that he took home a rock from the temple, stating, "This is my roots."

He saw things from the viewpoint of the universe, didn't he? In other words, it was a viewpoint that put the earth into perspective, and it made me think that the further away we go from it, the more valuable it becomes.

Terashima. Conversely, I would like to ask Professor Yasutomi something. Connected with what I said earlier about D. T. Suzuki, Kūkai, and Shinran, as I have moved around in international society, I could not help but face questions such as, "What is a Japanese person?" or "What are the Asian values that are the root of my own way of thinking?" So I struggled to seek my own position by studying Asian thought.

The Japanese people of the Meiji period, faced with the overwhelming power of the West, gritted their teeth and adopted the mentality of "Japanese spirit, Western learning" (*wakon yōsai* 和魂洋才), meaning that Western technology could enter Japan, but they would not lose their Japanese spirit. But with new developments steadily appearing—for example, American financial supremacy—Japanese people lost that mentality, I think.

Among the books written by Professor Yasutomi, several are about Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903). Kiyozawa studied Western philosophy at Tokyo University and then became a key person at Higashi Honganji. He was someone who reflected upon Asian or Buddhist thought while facing Western philosophy head on. At first glance, it seems that Kiyozawa's *seishinshugi* 精神主義 was a form of defiance, but when I read your writings, I wondered how Higashi Honganji had produced such a person. May I ask you about that?

Yasutomi. D. T. Suzuki is very famous, and we have a lot of his writings. In contrast, Kiyozawa Manshi does not have such a high profile. But I think he was someone who thoughtfully observed the world.

As Professor Terashima said, there are some misconceptions about Kiyozawa's advocacy of *seishinshugi*. "Yamato damashii" 大和魂 (Japanese spirit) has also been considered as something like *seishinshugi*, but when Kiyozawa talks about *seishinshugi*, he means something different. In other words, he means looking within.

Actually, there is recent book on *seishinshugi*. It is *Cultivating Spirituality: A Modern Shin Buddhist Anthology*.¹³ I think the English phrase, "cultivating spirituality," is a good translation for *seishinshugi*.

Terashima. Indeed.

Yasutomi. Cultivating spirituality. In Buddhism, the spirit is sometimes called the "field of the mind," so *seishinshugi* means cultivating the mind field.

In the Buddhist scriptures, there is the following story. Śākyamuni was walking in a farming village. Somebody saw him and said to him, "I am cultivating the rice fields. Why aren't you working?" Śākyamuni replied, "I am cultivating the field of the mind." Similar to this story, the English "cultivating spirituality" also has the sense of nurturing the mind, so it is a very meaningful translation.

Because Kiyozawa Manshi died young, he was not widely known during his lifetime. But recently he has been attracting the interest of not only scholars of religion or philosophy but also of people in the social sciences.

In 1893, the World's Parliament of Religions was convened in Chicago. Kiyozawa's first work, "The Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion," was translated and distributed at the Parliament. This was the first step in Kiyozawa's becoming known in America. D. T. Suzuki looked at the book and thought that the title seemed rather odd.

Kiyozawa and Suzuki never met in person. While Suzuki was someone who looked deeply on the inside and widely on the outside, Kiyozawa, although he stayed in Japan, was also someone who looked deeply on the inside and widely on the outside.

Terashima. Kiyozawa Manshi died at age forty, and thus I had thought that his influence was limited, but listening to you, I learned how deep it was.

Kiyozawa was born in 1863 and died in 1903, two years before the Russo-Japanese War. After that, Japan was heading toward World War I. I think that investigating that five-year period of World War I, starting in 1914 and ending in 1919 with the Peace Conference at Versailles, is very important for understanding contemporary Japan.

¹³ Blum and Rhodes 2011.

I think this is the key to understanding why, during that five-year period, the people of Japan, immersed in an atmosphere of nationalism, participated in the war. Nowadays, seven decades after World War II, people often say, “War is a tragedy” or “Never again,” but there is almost no discussion about why the country headed to war. The reason for this is related to the fact that most Japanese people today pay no attention to the history of the modern era, as I emphasized earlier.

If Kiyozawa had not died in 1903 and instead had lived another fifty years, I wonder what words he would have left us from those fifty years.

Japan approached the opening of the country and the Meiji Restoration amid fears that Japan itself might be colonized. However, Japan won the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) and began to have a certain arrogance from around the time of the beginning of World War I. In 1915, Japan presented to China the Twenty-One Demands, which were overtly colonialist. After the Chinese government revealed the contents of the Twenty-One Demands, anti-Japan sentiment flared up, and Britain and the United States protested. Despite the fact that international public opinion increasingly viewed Japan as untrustworthy, in the end, China accepted some of the demands.

If Kiyozawa had lived to see Japan acting that way on the international stage, I wonder if Kiyozawa, as a leading thinker in Japan, with such intellectual depth, positioned between Western philosophy and Asian thought, could have significantly changed the country’s way of thinking. That is why I asked Professor Yasutomi about Kiyozawa. Listening to what he said about Kiyozawa, I feel again the depth and breadth of his range of vision. Thank you very much.

Moderator. Professor Terashima and Professor Yasutomi, thank you both very much. We would have liked to hear more, but our time is up. So we must end your dialogue here. Thank you very much.

(Translated by Elizabeth Kenney)

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