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DIALOGUE

Shinran's World

SUZUKI DAISSETZ, SOGA RYŌJIN,
KANEKO DAIEI, AND NISHITANI KEIJI (*moderator*)

INTRODUCTION

On April 17, 1961, four of the most eminent Japanese Buddhist thinkers of this century gathered on Mount Hiei for a three-day dialogue on Shin Buddhism. This event was one of several commemorating the 700th anniversary of the death of Shinran Shōnin (1173-1262), the founder of the Jōdo Shinshū or True Pure Land sect, otherwise known as Shin Buddhism. Two of the participants were leading figures from within Shin Buddhism, Soga Ryōjin (1881-1976) and Kaneko Daiei (1875-1971). Suzuki Daisetz (1870-1966), well known for his work in Zen, also had a deep interest and knowledge of Shin. In fact, at the time of the discussion, he was engaged in the task of translating Shinran's major work, the *Kyōgyōshinshō*. The discussion was chaired by the philosopher Nishitani Keiji (b. 1900) who, like Dr. Suzuki, has trained in Zen but is also deeply knowledgeable about Shin Buddhist thought. The dialogue was later published as a book entitled *Shinran no sekai* (Shinran's World). Though it was recorded nearly a quarter of a century ago, the issues discussed are just as relevant today. At times highly philosophical and at other times thoroughly down to earth, their views manifest a profound religious awareness. In this first installment, they go deeply into the problems of expression and meaning involved in the art of translating Buddhist works.

KURUBE SHIN'YU

* This installment was originally published in *Shinran no sekai* (Kyoto: Higashi Honganji, 1964), pp. 3-23.

Shinran's World

Language and Spirituality

Translating Religious Writings

NISHITANI: Dr. Suzuki, could you relate some of your thoughts regarding the translation of Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō*?

SUZUKI: Well, rather than thoughts I had specifically concerning the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, these would be my general impressions concerning the expression of Eastern thought or Eastern ways of thinking in European languages.

Two types of literature might be distinguished here. On the one hand, there are erudite works like the *Kyōgyōshinshō* which are not simply expressions of faith but contain quite a bit of theory, and on the other hand there are works intended more for the public at large.

The Chinese way of thinking differs significantly from that of the Europeans. It is unlike that of the Indians as well; the Chinese, in many ways representative of the East as a whole, tend to think in more concrete terms. They must have had great difficulty in translating Sanskrit, and many of the concepts they came across were no doubt completely alien. I always use *nyo* 如 as an example. The Buddhist concept *tathata* 'suchness' represented by this Chinese character is rather abstract, and I doubt the Chinese originally had anything like it in their own vocabulary. Thus I find the choice of this character to be quite ingenious.

And there is the character *hō* 法 'law' for the Sanskrit *Dharma*. This, too, was a skillful adaptation, but *Dharma* is quite troublesome; it is sometimes aptly characterized by *hō*, but at other times might be better represented by *dō* 道 'path', 'the Way'. With the advancement of Buddhist scholarship, such matters as the relationship between *ki* 機 and *hō* 法 had to be taken into account, making the usage of the individual

LANGUAGE AND SPIRITUALITY

characters more complex.¹ Then there are such two-character words as *chie* 智慧, the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *prajñā*. This is another term which presents a big problem for today's translators, just as it did for the ancient Chinese. They combined two characters of similar meaning, *chi* and *e*, apparently feeling that neither was sufficient in itself. When even this proved inadequate, they resorted to *hannya no chie* 般若の智慧, in which the first two characters transliterate the original Sanskrit *prajñā*, and the last two represent an attempt at translation.

This term, *hannya*, or *chie*, is one of the most difficult to translate into the languages of the West. "Intuition" is not very suitable. "Transcendental wisdom" has also been tried, but I have misgivings about both "transcendental" and "wisdom." "Insight" has also been used, but it doesn't really fit either. The difficulty lies in the fact that *prajñā* is not discriminating knowledge, but non-discriminating knowledge. There are even problems with calling it non-discriminating knowledge because the word "knowledge" implicitly signifies discrimination; the Indians certainly showed their ingenuity in applying the term *prajñā*.

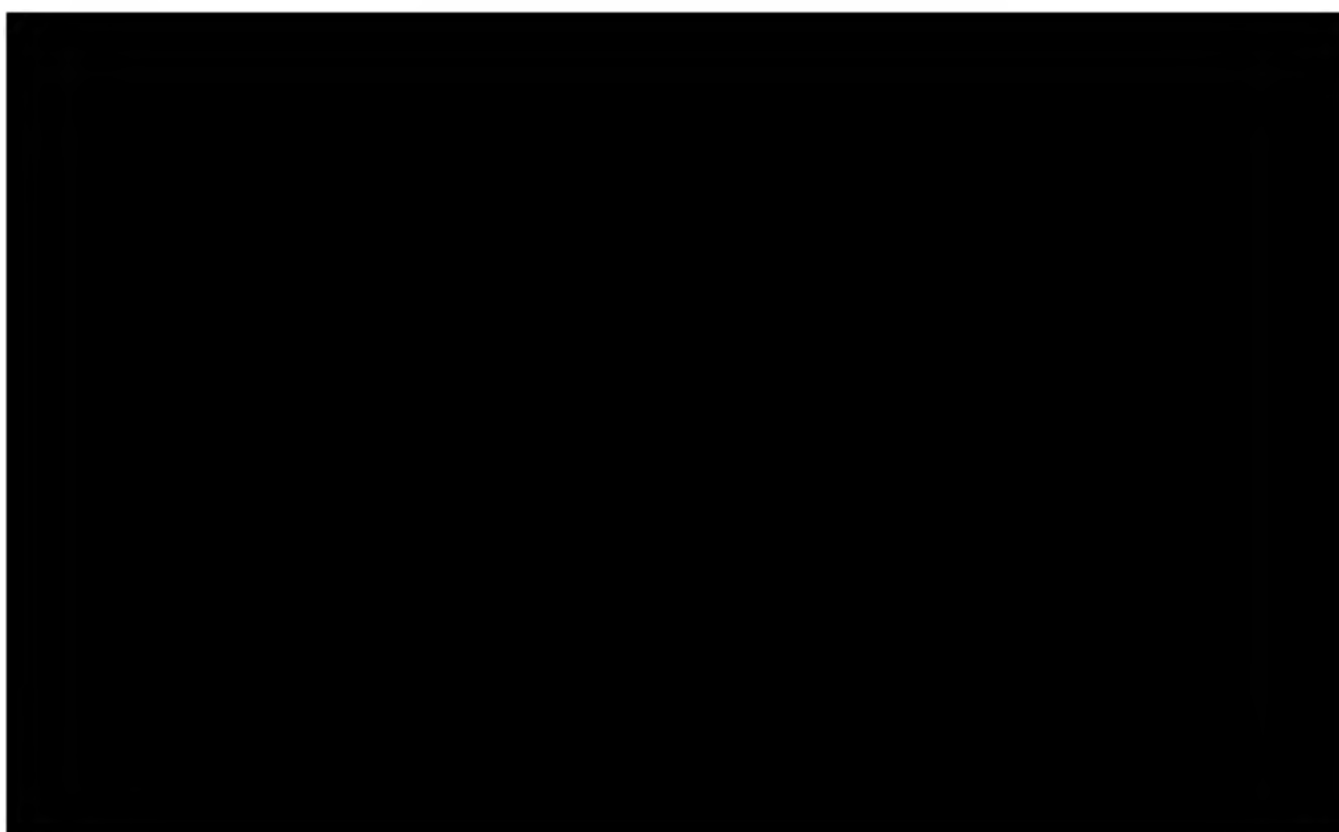
There are even more problems with the term *bodhi* 'enlightenment'. In one sense it is interchangeable with *prajñā*. The Chinese either transliterated this term as *bodai* 菩提 or translated it as *dō* 道. Is there a suitable equivalent in the West, perhaps used in philosophy or theology?

NISHITANI: I'm not sure . . .

SUZUKI: I haven't found any, either. How was it that the Chinese were able to interpret this term so successfully? My feeling is that if one is able to understand *bodhi*, then one has grasped the essence of Buddhism.

If I might bring in my own philosophy, I would like to say that the

¹ Elsewhere, D. T. Suzuki writes: "*Ki*, originally meaning 'hinge', means in Shin especially the devotee who approaches Amida in the attitude of dependence. As long as his self-power is involved, he stands against Amida. *Hō* is 'Dharma', 'Reality', 'Amida', and 'the other-power'. This opposition [between *ki* and *hō*] appears to our intellect as contradiction and to our will as a situation implying anxiety, fear, and insecurity. When *ki* and *hō* are united in the *myōgō* as 'Namu-amida-butsu', the Shin devotee attains *anjin*, 'peace of mind'." From *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1969), p. 116.



Members of the discussion at Mount Hiei; from left, Nishitani Keiji, Kaneko Daiei, Saga Ryōjin, and Suzuki Daisetz

truly concrete is the truly abstract; the abstract is none other than the concrete, the concrete is none other than the abstract. Even though the Chinese tend to see things in concrete terms, I feel that they were able to understand such matters as *prajñā* and *bodhi* through this correspondence of the concrete and the abstract.

In ordinary usage, concrete and abstract terms are regarded as quite different. Abstract nouns did not originally exist in Chinese. In order to translate abstract Buddhist concepts, the Chinese added the character *shō* 性 to a concrete noun. *Busshō* 佛性 'buddha-nature' and *hosshō* 法性 'dharma-nature' are examples of this. In Sanskrit the suffixes *-tā* or *-tvā* are added, producing words like *buddhatā* and *dharma-tā*. In European languages as well, abstraction is expressed through the use of suffixes, as with *-ness*, *-ship*, and *-hood* in English. The suffix construction does not exist in Chinese, so when *shō* 性 was added to *butsu* 佛, readers must have found the resultant combination difficult to comprehend. They would have asked what was meant by *butsu* and *shō* as individual characters. Such difficulties as these hindered the Chinese for centuries in their attempts to understand Indian thought; in fact it was not until the Sui and T'ang dynasties that they really began to grasp the meaning of these terms.

The Passage of Words

SUZUKI: The same kinds of problems arise in translating the *Kyōgyōshinshō* into English. As I said, when the Chinese could not convey the meaning of the original Sanskrit in a single character, they often used a compound of two characters. *Chie* is one such example, and whoever conceived it had a specific significance in mind for each of the characters, *chi* 智 and *e* 慧. In this way various interpretations became associated with the compounds depending on the understanding of the individual translators, and this inherent complexity of meaning makes it impossible to find suitable equivalents in English.

Even more difficult than *chie* is *hōben* 方便 'skillful means'. Just what is meant by *hō* and *ben* individually is very difficult to determine. Other terms such as *gyakutoku* 獲得 'realization', it seems to me, could have just as well been translated into Chinese by either character alone. Perhaps they just wanted to reinforce the meaning. There were probably various factors involved, and they make the translation of these terms into English very difficult.

Hongan 本願, which is the Chinese translation of the Sanskrit *pūrva-praṇidhāna*, is another case in point. *Hon* corresponds to *pūrva* and *gan* to *praṇidhāna*, and the latter we translate into Japanese as *negai*.² *Negai* expresses the feeling that one wishes to acquire something because it is lacking in oneself, or aspires to fulfill a wish not presently realized. In modern Japanese it is something like *kibō* 希望 'hope'. It is often translated into English as "desire" or "wish," but these are not adequate, and "will" overemphasizes intent.

Gan 願 of *hongan* is unlike any of these preceding terms. If Christian terminology were adopted, "prayer" would be the closest, but this word is so heavily laden with traditional Christian thought that it would take hundreds of years before it became properly Buddhist, that is, until it came to reflect the meaning of *gan* in its usage. The standard

² *Hongan* refers to Amida Buddha's forty-eight Original Vows, which were made when Amida commenced his training as Bodhisattva Dharmākara incalculable aeons in the past. These vows, made to help all beings attain Buddhahood, are also known as *seigan*. *Sei* is read as *chikai* in Japanese and means something like "vow." *Gan* is read as *negai* and is in some sense akin to "prayer."

SHINRAN'S WORLD

translation today seems to be "vow." I cannot recall whether it was Nanjō Bun'yū or Takakusu Junjirō who first used "vow"; the Sanskrit scholars of the West tend to use "prayer." This latter term is very awkward, while "vow" is really closer to *chikai* 誓い. I even have doubts as to whether the Chinese grasped the meaning of *gan* when they first began using it. After hundreds of years, actually more than a thousand years now, this term has become imbued with the meaning it was originally intended to convey.

SOGA: Since my knowledge of English is rather limited, I don't have much of a feel for the term "prayer." I have the impression that it refers to supplication. If that is indeed the case, the meaning of *seigan* 誓願³ needs some clarification to see how it contrasts with "prayer."

The forty-eight Vows of Amida Buddha are all statements of the conditions for attaining enlightenment as well as expressions of the vow to fulfill them. In Shin Buddhism the Eighteenth Vow is particularly important: "If. . .the beings in all quarters of the universe. . .desire to be born in my land and say my Name even ten times with true and entrusting mind, but should still fail to be born there, then may I not attain supreme enlightenment."⁴ The first part of this and all the other Vows, in which the conditions are laid down, is a concrete expression of *gan* or *negai*. The second part represents the standpoint of *sei* or *chikai* and means, "If I can't fulfill my own conditions, then I will not become thoroughly enlightened, a real Buddha." However, the first part already includes the second insofar as it embodies the aspiration to fulfill the given conditions. The second part includes the first insofar as there is already an awareness of what the conditions are. Thus *negai* and *chikai* are fundamentally one. All forty-eight Vows are expressive of this unity.

SUZUKI: Exactly. It must have taken a long time for the Chinese to sense this unity.

³ See note 2.

⁴ For a list of all forty-eight Vows and a discussion of their significance, see D. T. Suzuki, "The Shin Teaching of Buddhism," in *Collected Works on Shin Buddhism* (Kyoto: Shinshu Ōtani-ha, 1973), pp. 36-77.

LANGUAGE AND SPIRITUALITY

The Transmission of the Living Essence

SOGA: The Chinese probably did their first translations without too much reflection. But as the number of translations increased, the readership did as well; where there were ambiguities, later scholars researched the matter until the fine points were clarified.

SUZUKI: It was in just this way that the meaning of *gan* has become fairly well-defined. This took the Chinese hundreds of years of experience and reflection. Thus, rendering *gan* into English is not simply a matter of translating it as “vow” or “prayer.”

SOGA: Doesn't this term prayer have similarities to *chikai*?

SUZUKI: I feel that it is closer to *negai*. A prayer is an earnest desire directed towards God.

SOGA: An earnest desire directed towards God?

SUZUKI: This actually has a twofold meaning. A prayer made to God with the expectation of the fulfillment of one's desires, a prayer which demands a positive response from God, is not authentic. There must be no expectations. It's not a true prayer if one has some idea such as: “If I plea to God, he will surely hear me.” There are some theologians who say that in real prayer, there is no God who hears and the devotee has no means of even pleading.

NISHITANI: Though not necessarily all of them . . .

SUZUKI: Yes.

NISHITANI: Such an interpretation exists, but there isn't any common agreement yet in theological circles . . .

SUZUKI: Common agreement? There must be significant differences even among Buddhist scholars on the interpretation of *chikai* or *seigan*. I have my own ideas about the meaning of *seigan*. I don't know how others have interpreted it, but my approach is to return to its philosophical origins.

In the beginning there was emptiness. I do not mean the beginning of time, but the beginning in the logical sense. Emptiness began to move within emptiness. No one knows why it started to move, and there's no need to ask. Emptiness began to move, and this movement is what is referred to as *gan*.

NISHITANI: Of course there are various problems implied in that.

SUZUKI: This is indeed where things get rather complicated. I would

SHINRAN'S WORLD

like to translate *gan* tentatively as "vow" and then see if anything needs to be added to qualify it.

NISHITANI: Yes.

SUZUKI: God was said to have decreed in the beginning, *Let there be light*. What made him say that was his *gan*, his vow. You might not say this if you weren't a Christian, but such matters are irrelevant for Buddhists. At any rate, in terms of Christian thought, God's first words, *Let there be light*, constitute God's vow.

In Buddhism there is the statement, "In salvation there is no one to be saved" (T'an-luan, *Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land*). Even though it is said that all sentient beings are to be saved, there are no sentient beings to be saved, and hence no Buddha who saves. It is in this way that the activity of salvation functions. "Vow" and "prayer" could be receptacles for this kind of understanding, but the matter of giving it a name comes after the fact and involves the long process of imbuing a word with the flavor of the reality it represents.

So it is difficult to say now whether "vow" is really the best translation. But for the translation of the *Kyōgyōshinshō* I have to make a choice, however tentative. I am deliberating between "original vow" and "original prayer," and have even considered "will." This is not the merely psychological will to which we usually refer when using the term, but rather its source, or the fundamental will. This use of the word "will," though, is based too much on my own interpretation, so I am thinking of using "original vow."⁵

Chie presents similar problems. *Hannya no chie* 'prajna-wisdom' refers to the knowledge of no knowledge. Everything is known; knowing everything, nothing is known. This is my explanation. In Christianity there is the term "omniscience." This does not refer to the knowledge of each thing individually: a bowl as a bowl, a dish as a dish, an orange as an orange. It is knowledge of reality as a whole, though in speaking of "the whole" we are already limiting ourselves; it is knowledge which knows and yet does not know. When asked what makes it possible to say such a thing, all answers are futile. This knowledge is present before one even thinks of speaking. Shin Buddhism also recognizes this. Here is where we return to fundamentals,

⁵ Actually, Dr. Suzuki finally opted for "original prayer" in his translation of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

LANGUAGE AND SPIRITUALITY

and again where matters become rather involved.

Form Is Emptiness, Emptiness Is Form

SOGA: What you've been saying isn't explicitly stated in the writings of Shinran Shōnin himself, but can be found in T'an-luan's *Commentary on the Treatise on the Pure Land*.

SUZUKI: Yes.

SOGA: In that work it is stated, "One ought truly to know the three attainments in which the adornments are attained by the vow-mind . . . because it is stated that these are in essence the entrance into the one Dharma." This means that the three attainments constitute the entrance into reality as it is, that they are therefore the adornments of the vow-mind. It is further stated, "The One Dharma is called the Pure, the Pure is called the true and real wisdom, and is therefore the uncreated Dharma-body." These quotations from T'an-luan's *Commentary* appear in the fourth fascicle of the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, "Chapter on Realization." Shinran has thoroughly grasped the meaning of T'an-luan's words, and that's why he quotes him.

SUZUKI: That's right. He quotes him and goes on with his own explanation. Then—I'm afraid our discussion is wandering a bit—we must clarify the standpoint of Shin Buddhism in terms of the greater context of Mahayana Buddhism.

NISHITANI: Many important problems seem to be emerging at this point in the discussion, and I'm sure many other things need to be said, but we appear to have lost our focus. I wonder if it might not be a good idea to take up the issues one by one, as we did with *chie* and *hongan*.

SOGA: This goes back to what has already been discussed, but the One Dharma, the Pure, and the true and real Wisdom, or the uncreated Dharma-body, are called "the three expressions." T'an-luan's *Commentary* states, "These three expressions mutually interpenetrate one another. As to the principle upon which this is based, it is called Dharma." This Dharma is the same as the One Dharma. For a clue to the reason why it is called Dharma, we can turn to the phrase, "because it is the Pure." Dharma is the Pure because it is untouched by human discrimination. It is originally pure. Next, "As to why it is called the Pure, this is due to its being true and real Wisdom, the uncreated Dharma-body." This is the manner in which these expressions

SHINRAN'S WORLD

mutually interpenetrate.

Further he states: "As for true and real wisdom, this is the wisdom of reality. Because reality is formless, true knowledge is no knowledge. The uncreated Dharma-body is the body of Dharma-nature. Because Dharma-nature is tranquil, the Dharma-body is formless. But because it is formless, it cannot be without form. Thus the Dharma-body possesses the major and minor characteristics of an Enlightened One. Because it is no knowledge, it cannot be devoid of knowing. Thus omniscience is true and real Wisdom. To describe wisdom as being true and real elucidates the fact that wisdom neither functions nor does not function. To signify the Dharma-body as being uncreated elucidates the fact that the Dharma-body is neither form nor not-form. Since it is not negation, the negation of negation is affirmation!"

SUZUKI: It is so. One cannot say it's this way or it's not this way. It is divorced from such discrimination.

SOGA: T'an-luan goes on to say, "Where there is no negation, this is called affirmation. It is affirmation by itself; again, affirmation does not wait for negation." Affirmation does not wait to be negated.

SUZUKI: Just so. "It is not affirmation, it is not negation. It stands beyond negation."⁶ *Shōjō* 清淨, 'the Pure', really means "the Absolute." It's not that there is an affirmation and a negation which stand in relative opposition to each other. It is the affirmation wherein there is neither negation nor affirmation. I use this kind of logic as the basis of interpretation when translating. This is especially pertinent in the case of *shōjō*. Its meaning is clearer if translated as "the Absolute" rather than as "the Pure."

SOGA: *Shōjō* refers to purity.

SUZUKI: However, when *shōjō* is translated into ordinary terms, it's most easily understood as "the Absolute."

NISHITANI: But what about using "purity" in context, as in the case of translating a work of some length. A given passage could be translated so as to cause "purity" to be understood in the sense of "the Absolute."

SUZUKI: That's the way I would like it to be. The term *shinjitsu* 真実, 'true and real', presents similar problems. In my own words, this refers to things as they exist *sono-mama* 'just as they are'; *shinjitsu* is the

⁶ A quotation from T'an-luan's *Commentary*.

LANGUAGE AND SPIRITUALITY

aspect of things *sono-mama*. Reality in itself, things as they are—this is what is meant by *shinjitsu*. But it won't do to translate this into English as "reality." So *shin* was interpreted as "true," *jitsu* as "real," and the result was "that which is true and real," an awkward translation at best. According to my understanding, however, this becomes "things as they are," or "as-it-is-ness." The significance of *shinjitsu* does not reveal itself without the use of such peculiar expressions.

As one more example, let us examine the phrase, *Hosshin wa jakumetsu nari* 法身は寂滅なり. *Hosshin* is *Dharma-body*. *Jakumetsu* ordinarily means something like "quiet," "tranquility," or "stillness." These do not point to its real meaning, which again refers to things *sono-mama* 'just as they are'. Going a step further, this is emptiness. There is the phrase, *Hosshin musō* 法身無相, which means, "The Dharma-body is formless"; because it is formless, it is not without form. My interpretation of this is that the body of emptiness is emptiness itself; furthermore, it reveals itself as both body and function. It contains infinite possibility which functions without functioning. Individual particulars emerge, yet these particulars are not individual things. This is called "emptiness."

It should be clear then, that the formulation, "Form is none other than emptiness," must be accompanied by "Emptiness is none other than form." Form is emptiness, emptiness is form. People usually stop at the stage of "Form is none other than emptiness," but in truth, as form is emptiness, so emptiness is form. Again, zero is infinity, and infinity is zero; becoming is being, being is becoming. However things may appear from the standpoint of philosophy, the matter is clear when thus stated. This manner of expression follows the style of classical Chinese. In terms of the formulation, "Emptiness is none other than form," Shin Buddhism emphasizes the aspect of form rather than resting in emptiness. This is the basis from which I proceed in explaining Shin Buddhism.

Between East and West

NISHITANI: Interpretation seems to occur inevitably when translating such works as the *Kyōgyōshinshō* and the sutras into European languages.

SUZUKI: That's right.

SHINRAN'S WORLD

NISHITANI: Here's an opportunity to interpret these ancient works not only for contemporary Westerners but also for the Japanese, who have become highly Westernized. Furthermore, these works are not only interpreted for the contemporary reader, but are also interpreted from the standpoint of the contemporary world. We assume this standpoint naturally, whether we are conscious of it or not. New interpretations emerge. Do you agree?

SUZUKI: Yes, that's why this is not really translation. It's not that a Western interpretation emerges either; that which lies at the foundation of Eastern thought is interpreted in terms of the languages of the West. These languages are in turn interpreted on the basis of Eastern ways of thinking.

What does this mean? Well, these days students and scholars often say that the East has no philosophy, no aesthetic principles. This may be true in a sense, but that does not indicate a lack of development in the East. The East has eschewed frivolous philosophizing, and has instead pursued matters existentially. As an example from the arts, we can look at landscaping. Japanese gardens are fashioned so as to bring peace to one's soul after the day's work. The garden does not exist apart from the frame of mind of the one for whom it is intended. This is the kind of aesthetics at work in the East. It is likewise with philosophizing, playing the biwa, or playing the samisen; these become vehicles for spiritual cultivation. This is the Eastern way of life, and it would be a great mistake to label this as good or bad. It's just that such things exist in the East, and are what set it apart from the West.

I recently heard that a famous Indian musician was approached by an American recording company. I don't remember whether he was the composer or performer, but he apparently said he did not create his music for such purposes as they had in mind and refused their offer. His music was something borne forth from his innermost heart, and not created to be "music" per se. This is the spiritual basis of the East. That's why I want today's young people to pause before they conclude that the East is inferior.

NISHITANI: Today's youth are finding it increasingly easier to understand English than classical Japanese. This may provide them with an opportunity to examine and understand what lies in the East through the translations now emerging.

SUZUKI: That's what I've really wanted in my own writings.

LANGUAGE AND SPIRITUALITY

SOGA: However, there are points of both difference and similarity between the West and the East. If they were totally different. . .

SUZUKI: That's right.

SOGA: When we speak of differences, a commonality must be presupposed. It's after all the latter from which differences emerge. Commonality is in fact more basic; it is equality.

NISHITANI: Which means that there is something here which Westerners can grasp as well.

SOGA: If there were an essential difference between the East and the West, then there would be no basis for mutual understanding. In any case, it's a single foundation out of which diverse histories and traditions arose over a long period of time and in various lands. It's this basic unity which is important, since it is this which makes it possible for Westerners to come to an understanding of our thought.

SUZUKI: Yes, that's it. This is the approach necessary for making Shin Buddhism understood.

SOGA: The basis is one.

SUZUKI: It must be made known that in the East such a thing as Shin exists, a tradition different from Christianity. Though the two may seem similar at first glance, they are in fact not at all alike. I don't think a mutual understanding between East and West is possible unless this is made clear.

NISHITANI: That's true not only for people of the West. If Westerners come to understand, then today's Japanese will as well.

SOGA: It's true with anything. It must be taken once to the West and then brought back again. Even something as Japanese as Shin Buddhism cannot be understood by the Japanese simply as it stands.

NISHITANI: To borrow an expression from Shin Buddhism, this could be called *gensō-ekō*, 還相廻向 'the transference of merit in the returning phase'. [Laughter]

SOGA: It is through the interpretation of Westerners that we will really come to understand ourselves. That's the way the Japanese have been throughout their history, isn't it? Right now the other side is seen as being on top, and so we are struggling to catch up. The other side looks down on the East a bit as well. But not so far in the future, they may come to appreciate the greatness of the East. Though they have had a sense of superiority until now, by virtue of "the transference of merit in the returning phase" this feeling will dissipate and then things

SHINRAN'S WORLD

will be all right, will be healed. I think such a time will come.

NISHITANI: We must work in that direction.

SOGA: It's no good to criticize and disparage each other. Each must properly see the other's standpoint and give it due respect. If we can understand each other in this way, then neither is better or worse. Everything is all right if we are equal. There's no need to be superior.

In Understandable Terms

NISHITANI: This may bring us farther and farther into the future, but actually, it can be dealt with as a present concern as well. I was wondering about those like myself, the general public which isn't knowledgeable about traditional religious studies or Buddhist thought. Is there some interpretation to which we might have recourse, something which might give us a real feeling for the teachings? There is a genuine need for this.

SOGA: The *Kyōgyōshinshō* might not meet such a need, but wouldn't a work like the *Tannishō* be readily accessible even to the Westerner.⁷

NISHITANI: It is easily understandable to contemporary Japanese. It is very widely read.

SOGA: It's quite accessible to both the Japanese and Westerner alike, I should think.

NISHITANI: Yes, the readership of the *Tannishō* is not limited to Shin believers. And then there is the Christian Bible, quite a curious phenomenon, but it is universally read.

SOGA: It should be quite accessible to the Westerner as well.

NISHITANI: Yes, the readership of the *Tannishō* is not limited to Shin believers. And then there is the Christian Bible, quite a curious phenomenon, but it is universally read.

SOGA: It's something on the order of a national scripture.

NISHITANI: It's not just Christians who read it; the average Japanese reads it as well. This certainly hasn't made them believers, but it seems people do find various passages in the Bible highly appealing. I imagine that for the most part their reading of it is rather deficient, but it has a

⁷ The *Kyōgyōshinshō* is Shinran's most important philosophical work. The *Tannishō* contains statements made by Shinran which were compiled by his disciple Yuien.

LANGUAGE AND SPIRITUALITY

certain universal applicability. Whether the *Kyōgyōshinshō* can be read in such a manner . . .

SOGA: All the passages Shinran quoted in the *Kyōgyōshinshō* are accepted as the words of Shinran himself, but his own words exist in the work apart from the quotations. So I think that we can clearly distinguish between the two.

NISHITANI: This is a question of personal interest for myself, and concerns the quoted passages within the *Kyōgyōshinshō*.

SOGA: They are properly called *monrui* 文類 ‘scriptural passages’, rather than quoted passages.

NISHITANI: I wonder if we can assume Shinran accepted the contents of all the *monrui* as true.

SOGA: He accepted them all. These *monrui*, which are not simply quoted passages, are all taken from the scriptures. For this reason we can assume that he accepted them all. He wouldn’t have arbitrarily accepted some passages while rejecting others.

TRANSLATED BY MARK UNNO