

# The Personal and the Impersonal in Religion<sup>1</sup>

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## I

THE problem of religion and science is the most basic one facing contemporary man. Once the thought was prevalent that religion would be overcome by the advance of science and would come sooner or later to its demise. Even now there are some who hold this view. However, if one is only slightly aware of the warp and woof of the thought development of the past one hundred years, he will probably know that such a simple view of the matter was already outmoded long ago. Above all, such an approach makes it impossible to understand man.

Science is not separate from those who engage in it. Moreover, the pursuit of science is only one aspect of human knowledge. For example, a scientist as a human being is confronted with "nothingness" like everyone else; doubt concerning the meaning of his own existence, as well as of the existence of all things, can arise within him. The dimension in which such a doubt arises, the dimension in which its answer may be possible, far transcends the realm of scientific pursuits. It is a dimension which opens up at the ground of human existence itself. Should one reply that all man's efforts ultimately come to nothing, and that it cannot be otherwise, it would mean that all things, including science, are fundamentally meaningless. Such is the answer of "pessimistic nihilism." However this answer, like the aforementioned doubt, does not belong to science, but to the realm of philosophy and religion. And in that realm nihilism is but one possible answer. Rather, today it is precisely the

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter Two of *Shūkyō to wa Nanika* ("What is Religion?") Keiji Nishitani, Sōbunsha, 1961. The second half of this chapter will appear in the next issue of the *Eastern Buddhist*. Professor Nishitani has made numerous revisions and additions for the present translation. Chapter One of this book has also appeared in English translation, in *Philosophical Studies of Japan*, Vol 2.

conquest of such a pessimistic nihilism which is the greatest task facing philosophy and religion.

As was mentioned above, even those who say that nothingness and the like have nothing to do with them, and that they are not worth consideration, will sooner or later be swallowed up by the very nothingness they so ignore. For nothingness is already present, menacing and unyielding, under their very feet. By avoiding nothingness they fall even deeper into its clutches. In the present day the problem thus includes an overturning of the view that religion will die with the advance of science, which by its very efforts to deny religion and to block the way of the religious quest has had the effect of inducing the question—i.e. the quest concerning the ultimate meaning of human life or man's existence—in an even more acute form. And therein the problem of nihilism looms large. In this situation science itself has become, on a more fundamental plane, a part of the problem.

However, as was said above,<sup>2</sup> modern science completely changed the old view of nature, and as a result, various forms of atheism arose and an indifference to religion in general was fomented, of which Sartre's atheistic existentialism is one example.

As regards all religions, but above all such a clearly defined theism as Christianity, the fact that the characteristics of the natural world have completely changed cannot be without relevance to any view of God. Unless the problem of religion and science attains a level that is fundamental enough to render the view of God itself problematical, then we cannot say that the problem has really been faced. It is as profound and serious as that.

In the past the laws of the natural world were regarded as the order of God, and within them was recognized the providence of God. The order of the natural world and the order of the human world were unified into one great "cosmic" order, a concept which means, in brief, that all things in the universe exist and can exist only by each being given its proper and essentially designated place in the whole. This order was thought of as something teleological. From another point of view, it was thought to prove the existence of God.

In this sense the problem of "order" has traditionally been a major one, as much for religion as for philosophy. Augustine, for instance, says in his *De*

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<sup>2</sup> Chapter One of *Shūkyō to wa Nanika*.

*Ordine*, VII, 19, "On the other hand, if God is just—as we are taught, and as we feel by the inevitable fact of order itself—then He is just by giving to each thing its own." In this, Augustine sees a "great order" and also recognizes "divine Providence." The conception of the cosmic order may be traced back much earlier to Plato and Pythagoras as well as to the *Upanishads*, and even farther to various ancient peoples. Even in modern times, such natural scientists as Kepler and Newton thought regarding their own study that by coming to know the laws of nature they were delving into the secret of God's cosmic economy.

As is well known, however, parallel with the establishment of natural science and the scientific world view, the conception of the natural world changed from a teleological to a mechanistic view, bringing with it a fundamental change in the relation between man and nature. This change was a process in which the view of the natural world became disengaged from the matrix of the religious world view. Especially symptomatic in this regard was the great Lisbon earthquake of 1755. Many of the English clergy, for instance, attributed its cause to the fact that the residents of that city were Catholic. The people of Lisbon themselves thought they had brought about the disaster by permitting heretics (Protestants) to reside in their city. But behind such controversies, the earthquake was a profound shock to the minds of many Europeans. The ill-feeling this event caused between Voltaire and Rousseau, and the treatise Kant wrote concerning the earthquake in 1756, belong to the chronicles of the history of philosophy. In his essay Kant attacked as blasphemous the notion that would view such a natural phenomenon as divine punishment, or would notice "a purpose of divine solicitude" therein, which he called a "mistaken, human teleology."

Following all this, the natural world has come to bear more and more strongly the features of a world cold and dead, governed by laws of mechanical necessity, completely indifferent to the fact of man. To be sure, it is a world in which we are living, which is inseparably connected with our existence, but nevertheless a world in which we cannot live as "man", which excludes (and obliterates) our "*human*" mode of being. We can neither reject nor accept such a world. It is within such a paradoxical relation that the natural world has come to reveal itself to us.

As the man in Dostoevsky's *Notes from the Underground* says, not being able

to deny such a world and not being able to acknowledge it, man has no other alternative than to dash his head against it. Such a world leads man to despair. Only, as can be seen again in Dostoevsky, from within that despair itself an awareness of *nihilum* arises. This awareness of *nihilum* penetrates a depth which lies beneath the ground of the world scientifically viewed, with its natural laws and inhuman rationality; a depth where opens up a horizon which makes possible a freedom beyond all necessity and a life beyond all rationality—the horizon of “subterranean life”. For Dostoevsky, this awareness brought forth anew, together with the problem of nihilism, the problem of religion confronting it. And he was of course not the only person who became aware of this same complex of problems emerging from the depths of his own existence.

Thus, at present within the natural world, which has become indifferent to and paradoxical for human existence, and within its scientific laws, there unfolds a fundamental problem for all religions. Today a religion only based upon the old teleological view of nature is, at the least, inadequate. Again, however, is it after all possible to regard such an indifferent natural order as God’s order; an order that erases our “human” mode of being? Or is such an indifferent natural order altogether incompatible with the concept of God? Whether compatible or incompatible, it cannot help but breed a major problem regarding the old concept of God as well as that of man. However, religion has not yet confronted science in this fundamental way.

In the past, most religions have been motivated rather exclusively by “human” concern; by man’s various concerns about the matter of man. Their basis was, to use Nietzsche’s words, “human, all too human.” But this is perhaps no wonder, since religion is concerned with man’s salvation. However, to be concerned with man’s salvation, and to think that the foundation on which that salvation is possible remains within the realm of “human” concerns, are two different matters.

Today, a world indifferent to human concerns becomes a problem for religion, namely as a problem concerning the foundation of religion. The problem is this: when the relation between an insentient world and man and the relation between such a world and God are made the foundation of religion, what does the relation of God and man—that is, religion—become?

So long as the world could be seen as teleological there was no great difficulty here. It meant that the world was seen as being in fundamental harmony with

the existence of man in the world. That is, man was seen as the highest representative of all the things in the world; the world was seen with man as its center, and the meaning and *telos* of the world was thought of with the meaning and *telos* of human existence as its criterion. Here, accordingly, in the relation between God and man, the God-man relation became the axis, and the world was merely assigned to its periphery. This remained fundamentally the same whether the world was thought of affirmatively as God's creation or whether it was considered negatively as something to be repudiated. And from this view of the world, it became possible to think of the relation between God and man as having an exclusively human concern as its base and, then further, as something exclusively "personal".

When, however, the world becomes an indifferent world and, as mentioned before, confronts man with the paradoxical relationship in which he can neither abandon it nor abide in it, there the world, instead of remaining peripheral with the God-man relation as its axis, cuts horizontally across the vertical God-man axis, and becomes independent, a sort of horizontal axis in itself. In its relation to the human mode of being, the world came to take on the form of a paradoxical contradiction in place of a teleological harmony. At the same time, in its relation to God, the world could no longer simply be thought of as ordered according to divine providence or divine will. The world's absolute impersonality now appears as something qualitatively different from both human "personality" and divine "personality". It comes to be something which severs the "personal" relation between God and man.

In this world man is not simply personal. He is simultaneously completely material and completely biological, controlled by indifferent natural laws. The natural laws dominate the existence of every thing, whether non-living, living, or human. They dominate them with indifference, that is, without regard for the differences just mentioned, and, in particular, without regard for human interests.

For example, when a dog springs up and catches a piece of bread that has been thrown to it in mid-air, the movement of the man's arm, the motion of the thrown bread, and the action of the dog are all subject to the laws of nature. Whether atomic power kills millions or whether it is used for peaceful objectives, the natural laws at work display the same cold inhumanity, indifferent to human interests. Yet those laws govern the existence of everything, man as well.

## THE EASTERN BUDDHIST

Religions until now have emphasized exclusively the aspect of life. "Soul" has been seen only from the aspect of life; "personality" and "spirit" also have been understood with life as the basis. But life from the beginning is one with death. All living things can, just as they are, be seen from the aspect of death.

In Buddhism, perhaps in Christianity at its early stages as well, there is a method of meditation called the "death-skull contemplation". A death-skull lying in a heath of pampas grass has been frequently depicted by Japanese artists. For instance, Bashō, the great haiku poet, has a haiku with the following preface, "In the house of Honma Shume there hangs on the wall of his *Nob* stage a painting portraying a *Nob* scene with a group of skeletons with flutes and hand-drums. Indeed, can the face of life be any different from this play? The ancient tale of using a death-skull for a pillow and being unable, fatally, to distinguish dream from reality also wants to illustrate our life." The haiku is this:

Lightning flashes—  
Close by my face  
The pampas grass!

The poet, in one of his wandering tours, one day was obliged to pass the night in a wild field, when lightning flashed and instantly he saw himself lying on a grass field and saw some pampas grass close by his face. Here, no doubt, the Buddhistic "skull contemplation" and the traditional topic in art form the background of this haiku. But what is new here is that a living man sees himself, as he is, in the image of the skull in the pampas grass. This poem thus does not simply refer to a skull in the pampas grass. There is a Zen saying, "Dead skulls all over the field." This field is, for example, the Ginza or Broadway. The time will of course come when they will become fields of pampas.

". . . one of his disciples saith unto him, Master, behold, what manner of stones and what manner of buildings! And Jesus said unto him, Seest thou these great buildings? there shall not be left here one stone upon another, which shall not be thrown down."

Mark 13:2

But there is no need for buildings to actually crumble and turn into fields of pampas grass. One can see the Ginza just as it is in all its magnificence as a field

of pampas grass. It can be seen as a photograph with double exposure. In fact, such a double exposure is the real image. True reality is twofold. In a hundred years not one of the people, young or old, male or female, now walking the Ginza will still be alive. But, as is said, "one thought-instant is 10,000 years; 10,000 years is one thought-instant." Seen in the lightning flash at such a thought-instant, in the light of such a "mental eye," the actuality of a hundred years hence is already an actuality today. Thus one can see in a double exposure the living, just as they are, healthy and walking, as dead. "Lightning flashes—/ Close by my face/ The pampas grass!" is also a poem about the Ginza.

This kind of double vision can be found as well among modern Western poets. T. S. Eliot has written:

Unreal city  
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn  
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
I had not thought death had undone so many.

He took the last line, which describes the procession of the dead in Dante's *Inferno*, as a description of the people "flowing over" London Bridge. For him the actual London before his eyes appeared as "unreal," that is, as dead. (In the latter part of "The Wasteland" not only London but Jerusalem, Athens, and Alexandria, the centers of the development of Western culture, are called unreal. The double-viewing eye is directed into history as well.)

Such a double exposure is the true view of reality. Reality itself requires it. Here spirit, personality, life, and matter are all seen together. They are not separate. The same reality can be seen from various tomographic sections: spirit, personality, life, and matter. Each tomographic section possesses reality. But the root-reality is just *that* which is seen as the whole of all the sections superimposed. It is not that only one of the sections is true and all the others reduced to it. Reality is not to be seen through such a reduction. The aspect of life and the aspect of death are both equally real. Reality is that which appears as life and as death. It is life, it is death, and at the same time, in itself, is not life, and not death. It is to be called the non-duality of life and death. How this reality is to be considered is a problem for later consideration. At present it may simply be said that the sectional cut which reveals the death aspect of reality is what has heretofore been termed "life" by religions. In such religions

soul, personality, spirit and the like have been seen exclusively from this aspect of life. The same applies even to God.

From ancient times calamities, both natural and man-made, were often said to be divine punishment or the wrath of God. The destruction of Israel was viewed by the Prophets as the whip of God's wrath upon a people who had turned against Him. The sacking of Rome by Alaric was regarded by Roman Christians and Non-Christians alike to be a divine punishment, each attributing the responsibility to the faith of the other. These examples show that the order of nature and history had come to be considered teleologically from the perspective of the personality of God, and that the relation between God and man had come to be understood mainly as a "human" concern. But the laws of the natural world, while they dominate both life and matter and govern our life as well as our death, are in themselves indifferent to our life and death, our fortune and misfortune, our good and evil. Nature possesses an indifference which ignores the differences of good and evil, of fortune and misfortune, which are matters for "human" concern. Such insentience is felt cold and unfeeling by man, and sometimes the utmost cruelty.

If such laws of nature were attributed to God as the order created by Him, then God would come to include along with and in contrast to his personality just such a cold indifference. Or is it that the laws of nature do not belong to God? If they do not, then God would cease to be absolute and thus cease to be God. How, then, is this problem to be dealt with? Basically, it demands a re-examination of the concept of "personality" as hitherto applied both to God and to man.

The question of religion and science, however, besides the problem of the modern scientific view of nature *versus* the traditional religious (especially Christian) views, includes still another problem. This is the problem of modern man's awareness of his own subjectivity. These two problems are, in fact, interrelated. Therefore, we must make at least some reference to this problem of the awareness of subjectivity.

## II

Since the advent of modern times, the world view of natural science has been linked with the problem of atheism. The rejection of the existence of a personal God has sprung up as a conclusion to the rejection of the teleological view of

the world. That atheism was generally the standpoint of scientific rationalism, and in its contents it boiled down to materialism. Its spirit was "progress."

The aspect of materialism in this atheism was related to the question of the essence of the things of the world. It took that essence to be matter. Its other aspect, the aspect of scientific rationalism, gave expression to the power of human reason to control such a materialistic world. This rationalism was no longer the earlier standpoint of metaphysical reason which assumed its own root to lie in the divine order of the Creator and which obeyed that order. The new rationalism expressed the standpoint of human reason which emerged to break up the frame of a divine order. The fact that the world was seen as materialistic and mechanistic meant that the world order had lost the meaning it had in the teleological world view, that is, of having derived from God's "personal" will. The new world-image showed every sign of being unrelated to the personality of God. From the other side, this means that the world simultaneously came to be seen as completely controllable by human reason. For within the materialistic world view there is the implication that the world is absolutely passive material subject to human control. Considered conversely, through the view that all things of the world are essentially reducible to matter, man who controls such a world came to the awareness of his own reason as something absolutely active and absolutely free. Human reason became transferred to a field in which it seemed to be all-mighty. In this field, reason no longer had the chance—nor the necessity—to view itself as something within a divine order or subordinate to God's will.

Thus, from the composite unity of a world which had become absolutely passive and material on one hand and of human reason which had become absolutely active and formative on the other, the idea of progress emerged. Reason can realize itself freely and wholeheartedly in a completely passive world and can give that world a rational formation. Indeed, this is the way reason has to function. The future then opens up as a road of unlimited progress. This was the optimism attained by modern atheism, that is, the atheism in form of the so-called "enlightenment" of human reason.

This atheism was, therefore, a composite of three elements: materialism, scientific rationalism, and the idea of progress. But what is manifest in this is the awakening of man in his entirely free and independent subjectivity. The so-called "progressive" atheism in this way became established as the unity of

man's awakening to subjectivity in his reason and the materialistic world view. In the denial of God's existence, these two aspects were linked together.

At present, however, atheism has advanced one step further. Conscious of the meaninglessness of the world which is now solely materialistic and mechanistic, it became aware of the *nihilum* concealed at the bottom of the world. Further, for present day man, only when he comes to an awareness of *nihilum* within himself as the subjective ground of his existence beyond even reason, and only when he treads on that *nihilum*, is it truly possible for him, so he thinks, to speak of subjectivity. This is because to set foot on *nihilum* is to break through at one stroke the dimension of *esse* of things, the dimension of which all things are thought to exist in the world objectively. It opens up the standpoint of man as subject which can by no means be reduced to an objective existence. Thus, as mentioned above, there can be seen in contemporary nihilism its own subjectivization.

If we characterize this atheism by comparing it with Christianity, the *nihilum* brought to our consciousness as underlying all things and the world itself has its counterpart in the *nihilum* that appeared in the Christian conception of God's creation as "*creatio ex nihilo*". And man's subjectivity in which he becomes aware of his self by deciding to depend on no thing, and thus positing his existence on *nihilum*—that is, the standpoint of the subjectivization of *nihilum*—is analogous to God's Being as an absolute subject that was revealed, for instance, when He called Himself "I am that I am." In the case of the awareness of nothingness in contemporary atheism, the "*nihilum*" in "*creatio ex nihilo*" becomes, by virtue of the fact that the existence of God is negated and nothingness is seen in the place of God, an abyss, and this abyss comes to be revealed at the foundation of the world and of oneself.

Thus, with the abyssal negativity implied in contemporary atheism occurs the consummation of the subjective awakening which modern atheism has invited from the beginning. This is clear in the case of Nietzsche. Sartre as well, as has already been mentioned, belongs to this development. In both of them atheism is linked with existentialism. This means that atheism has been subjectivized and *nihilum* has become the field of the so-called *ekstasis* of man's self-being, the dimension of transcendence opening up in the direction not of God but of *nihilum*. It will be obvious that such an atheism no longer believes in the idea of "progress" of the earlier atheism and can not be simply optimistic.

On the contrary, the features that characterize the atheism of present day existentialism are the consciousness of the most fundamental human crisis, the suffering which is one with existence itself, and the passionate decision by which man, firmly upholding the independence of his self-being where there is nothing to be dependent upon, tries to be thoroughly himself and thereby break through the fundamental crisis of human existence.

Of course, as regards both atheism and existence, Nietzsche's position is by far broader, deeper, and more severe than Sartre's. Sartre's existentialism will confine itself in the frame of humanism by assigning an absolute affirmation to man instead of to God. But atheism is essentially not a problem that concerns human existence alone. It also concerns the existence of all things, that is, the world. Atheism should mean a radical turnabout in the way of looking at the world too. To borrow Nietzsche's image, it implies a catastrophic change similar to that event in natural history when dry land rose out of the sea and various animals that formerly lived in the sea had to transmute into land dwellers, and thus had to change radically their way of living, their way of looking at things, and all their habits, undergoing a fundamental reorientation in their existence and evaluation. The consequence of atheism will be like the entire land sinking into the sea and the land animals all changing into sea animals, a change so fundamental that not only man's mode of existence but also the look of the world must change radically. There, for example, individual things lose their substantiality on the plane of *nihilum* which is their ground and come to be seen like the ocean's waves. In the world as it appeared in Nietzsche's vision, in the world of "eternal return", things take such an outlook. And with that, a fundamental turnabout is also demanded in man's mode of existence; a turnabout which, moreover, appears in Nietzsche as the intention towards a new religiosity—fundamentally different from previous religions, but nevertheless, a new religiosity—symbolized by the name *Dionysius*.

Although we speak of atheism or of a "godless man" (so-called in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*), it is fundamentally different from ancient atheism or from the ordinary atheist. In the same way, although Nietzsche emphasized the "un-human" way of being, he did not advocate an un-humanity on the same plane as the humanity usually spoken of. His is rather the attempt to establish a new way of being human on the place where the frame of "the human" has been broken through. It attempts to posit a new form of man's being from the other

side of anthropocentric existence, from "beyond good and evil." This is the meaning of Nietzsche's saying, "Man is something to be overcome." The new form is symbolized by the term *Übermensch*. However fanciful his thought might appear at first glance, it may be said to have been the result of the attempt to pursue thoroughly the basic changes in the form of man's being as well as in the look of the world, both of which are implied in atheism.

Sartre as well says that his existentialism is the attempt to pursue the consequences of atheism. But Sartre understands man throughout on the dimension of consciousness. Further, in this connection, while considering that human existence takes its rise in nothingness, as regards the world and all things in it, he still has not dropped the way of viewing them on the dimension of consciousness. The fact that his pursuit of the consequences of atheism has not been undertaken thoroughly makes itself clear in his view that existentialism is humanism. It is primarily in Nietzsche that atheism came to its truly thorough subjectivization, that nothingness came to possess a transcendental character by becoming the place of the "ekstasis" of self-existence, and that man's freedom and independence came to a thoroughgoing confrontation with his being essentially dependent on God.

In Kierkegaard, as is well known, the resolution of this same confrontation is sought in the direction of faith. In his case, existentialism, the emphasis on subjectivity, is the placing of man in a field of decision in which he must choose between these two possibilities: either he has his existence established and maintained on the foundation of God's salvation, or, without that salvation, in the despair of the so-called "sickness unto death," he falls into an unauthentic existence. In the latter case, he is led to assume delusively that the existence of the self which wants to be itself without being based on God is the real existence. He thus calls forth nothingness at the base of his self-being which is now involved in eternal damnation.

Thus, in Nietzsche and Kierkegaard the existentialistic attitude has a fundamentally religious significance, so far as it has to do with a confrontation between man's subjectivity and God, and with them, in that confrontation, existentialism has become split into atheistic and theistic directions. But whereas Nietzsche, in the development of his thought, has passed through the purgative fires of the mechanistic world view in order to enter into a confrontation with the new way of human being which lies hidden in the establish-

ment of the natural sciences, there is no such radical confrontation to be found in Kierkegaard. Consequently, nothingness in Kierkegaard does not yet mean the abyss where man's self-being comes to its "ecstatic" transcendence, although the germ of this idea can be found in *The Concept of Dread*. In its relation to the problem of religion and science his standpoint remains insufficient.

### III

It has been stated in the first section that the laws of nature in the modern scientific concept of nature become so completely indifferent to man and his concerns, that the world controlled by them appears as something transversing the personal relation between God and man which obtained in the religious experience of former ages. The world now has the characteristic of being essentially unrelated to God and man in so far as they are personal entities, or rather, the characteristic of being essentially incompatible with the idea of "personality". Therefore, I suggested that the idea of "personality" entertained in the past as regards both God and man now requires reexamination.

I then spoke in the second section of the awareness of subjectivity in modern man which is intertwined with the problem of the modern scientific view of nature. I said that in our time this awareness comes to its consummation as the subjectivization of atheism. That is, *nihilum*, which signifies the death of God, emerges from beneath the ground of the material, mechanical world and is realized by modern man as an abyss in which he reaches the "ecstatic" transcendence of his own self-being. Only when a man has such an abyss opened at the base of his existence does his subjectivity become subjectivity in the word's true sense. He becomes aware of himself as truly free and independent.

Historically, it is in Christianity that these problems have generated. It has been at once the matrix and the antagonist of modern science since its origin in the Renaissance or even before. It is the same with modern atheism, the various forms of which are unthinkable apart from Christianity. Behind the ideas comprising the ingredients of modern atheism—for example, the idea of the natural law with unyielding necessity, the idea of progress, the idea of social justice which has become the motivating factor in so many social revolutions—lies a genealogy which leads back to Christianity. It is well known that Nietzsche derived his radical attack on Christianity from an attitude of mind that was

nurtured within Christianity, that is, to constantly and uncompromisingly pursue truthfulness. Let us, therefore, first consider our problem in connection with Christianity.

To preface this investigation, I should like to begin with a famous passage from *Matthew*.

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, and do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you. That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?

And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”

In this passage there are two points to be noted. The first is the command to love one's enemies as one's friends. This is said to be the way in which one comes to acquire the same perfection as God. In Buddhism this is called “non-differentiating love beyond enemy and friend.” Second, God causing the sun to rise on the evil as well as the good and causing the rain to fall on the unjust as well as the just is cited as an example of this perfection. What is being spoken of here is a phenomenon similar to what I before called the indifference of nature. However, this is not a cold and insensate indifference, but the indifference of love, an indifference which, as love-equality, transcends the human distinctions of good and evil, just and unjust.

The indifference of nature is one which reduces all to the most abstract entity common to them all—whether considered as “matter” or as some particular physical element. In contrast to this, the indifference of love is an indifference which embraces all things in their most concrete form—for example, good men and evil men, embracing the differences just as they are.

But what is this non-differentiating love (or *agape*) which loves the enemy as

well? In a word, it is "making oneself empty." This meant, in the case of Christ, taking the form of man and becoming, moreover, a servant—and this in accordance with the will of God. The origin of His "making himself empty" (*ekkenōsis*) is in God. It is God's love which is willing to forgive even the sinner who has gone against Him. This forgiving-love is the expression of the "perfection" of God who embraces equally the good and the evil. Therefore it may be said that also within God Himself is included the meaning of "having made himself empty." However, in the case of the Son *ekkenōsis* is actualized in the fact that He who was in the beginning with God and was God takes the form of a servant. In the case of the Father *ekkenōsis* is included already in God's original perfection. That is to say, in the very fact itself of God's being God there is essentially included the characteristic of "having made Himself empty." In the case of the Son Christ, this characteristic is a work which has been fulfilled; in the case of the Father, it is His original nature. If the case of the Son is called *ekkenōsis*, the case of the Father is *kenōsis*. In Buddhist terminology it is *anātman* or *muga*, that is, non-ego or selflessness.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> The similar concept of "emptiness" implied in Buddhism is what is called *śūnyatā*. *Śūnyatā* is the original nature of Eternal Buddha, of Buddha as Buddha eternally is *in actu*. It is an unchanging state of perfection of Eternal Buddha, which at all times is found already fulfilled, always in the modus of "present perfect", so to speak. In traditional Buddhistic terminology, *śūnyatā* is the Dharma of Buddha, the most original and authentic way of Buddha-being. And as such, it is simultaneously the ground of the *sambhoga-kāya* (the "reward-body"), that is, of the way of Buddha-being in its self-manifestation as the compassionate *Tatbāgata* (Thus-Come). This compassion is a compassion grounded in "Emptiness." It is the so-called Great Compassion. "Emptiness" takes on here the character and meaning of *anātman* or *muga*, of non-ego or selflessness. Moreover, this Emptiness identical with the Great Compassion is the ground of the *nirmāṇa-kāya* (the "transformation-body") of the Buddha, that is, of the way of Buddha-being in its manifestation in the form of man as the *Tatbāgata* Shakamuni. Buddha, being originally "empty" and "formless", takes the form of the Thus-Come, whether the simple form of Buddha as in the *Sambhoga*-body, or the double form of man-Buddha, and thus is revealed. This means essentially an *ekkenōsis* (making oneself empty) though it seems at first glance to be the contrary. The transition from being "formless" to being in form means selflessness and compassion, as in the case of a school-master playing with his children. In any case, all through the basic thought of Buddhology, especially in the Mahayana, the concepts of emptiness, compassion and selflessness are seen to be inseparably connected. The Buddhistic way of living as well as the way of thinking are permeated with *kenōsis* and *ekkenōsis*. *Tatbāgata* is thought to mean "Thus-\*

To hate the enemy and love one's friend is a characteristically human position. It is the position of the ego. In this sense, the indifference of love can also be said to be "non-ego". Essentially implied in the perfection of God is the characteristic of selflessness.

To become equal to this perfection of God, to be perfect as the Father in Heaven is perfect, to "become the son of the Father who is in Heaven" must, for man, be actualized by loving one's enemy. Man must negate differentiating human love and turn to non-differentiating divine love. He must negate *eros* and live in *agape*, negate the self and exist in selflessness. "Making oneself empty" is for Him who is in the form of God to become a servant in the form of man. This Christ-love is the embodiment of God's perfection. For a Christian, "making oneself empty" means changing from human, differentiating love to divine, non-differentiating love. This christian love may be said to imitate or be patterned after the perfection of God.

Although God's perfection may be understood in its characteristic of selfless love of making Himself empty, that perfection denotes the "mode of *being* 'perfect'," rather than the work of "making oneself empty," which is spoken of in the case of Christ and is demanded of man—the work of "loving." In other words, within God's perfection, as I said above,<sup>4</sup> there is essentially included the characteristic of having made Himself empty. The work of love thus comes into being as the imitation or the embodiment of that perfection. Considered in its relation to love as work or deed, God's perfection can also be called love. But if the work of love has a personal characteristic (as I think it does), then it must be thought that God's perfection (and love as perfection) is an even more fundamental thing than being a "personal" entity, and that it is as the imitation or embodiment of this perfection that the "personal" for the first time comes into being.

In this sense, within God's perfection is included a characteristic to be

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\*Gone" as well as "Thus-Come". The reason is easy to understand, as being manifest is here inseparable from being hidden, being formless from being in form, emptiness from compassion. Rather, taking form means a self-determination and self-determination means negation (or self-negation). Compassion means a self-negation, that is, "making oneself empty", which is a manifestation of the original "Emptiness". Thus-Come means always Thus-Gone.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter One.

spoken of as a kind of trans-personality or impersonality—not an impersonality which is in simple contradistinction to personality, but as mentioned above,<sup>5</sup> a personal impersonality. This characteristic of personal impersonality can also be suggested in the non-differentiating love which causes the sun to rise on the evil and good alike, and which causes the rain to fall on both the unrighteous and righteous.

Again, in Holy Scripture it is said that Heaven is the residence of God and earth the stool at His feet. Before,<sup>5</sup> in relation to God's omnipresence and omnipotence, I spoke of personal impersonality. Here, as well, I think it possible to consider His impersonality to be that which precedes (or is above) the simply personal, that from which personality itself derives.

I said before that the non-differentiating love which causes the sun to rise equally on the evil and good, on the enemy as well as the friend, has a characteristic of selflessness. Selflessness (*anātman*), needless to say, is the basic position of Buddhism, in which it is called the Great Wisdom and the Great Compassion (*mabā-prajñā* and *mabā-karuna*). I have already had occasion to touch upon *mabā-prajñā*, somewhat.<sup>5</sup> *Mabā-karuna*, or the Great Compassion Heart, is precisely like the fact of there being no private sunrise. The sun does not choose the place upon which to send its rays, nor does it have any preference guided by likes or dislikes. There is no "ego" in its illumination. To be without ego or selfless is thus to be "empty" (*śūnyatā*). In this, God's "perfectness" has something in common with the Great Compassionate Heart of Buddhism. And such a way of being perfect like God is something which is demanded of men.

From what has been said above, it can be seen that this "perfectness" of God is quite different, for example, from the "personal" absoluteness of the God who chose the people of Israel—the God who commands with absolute will and power, who loves the righteous and punishes the sinful. If selflessness, which does not choose, is perfection, then a personality which chooses is never "perfection". Here, two different ways of viewing the God of the Bible are seen. In the past, Christianity has generally given attention only to the personality aspect of God. Instances in which attention was directed to the "impersonal" aspect have been few.

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<sup>5</sup> Chapter One.

We take up this problem here in accordance with the aforementioned problem of religion and science; whether nature as understood by modern natural science can, in spite of its insentience and indifference to human good and evil, fortune and misfortune, still be thought of as belonging to God. Further, the modern view of nature as insentient is, as was mentioned before, connected with the problem of man's freedom and independence, and the awakening of his subjectivity. It is because today this composite problem cannot be denied that we make a question of the "personal" conception of God and ask about the trans-personal aspect included in the concept of God.

I do not think an idea of God able to cope with this problem is to be found ready-made within the history of Christian dogmatics.

It is only recently that modern science's view of nature has become a trenchant problem for religion. I do not see that during this period, Christianity has produced any thought which is capable of coming in deep enough contact with this problem and confronting it genuinely. It is only regarding the problems of man's freedom and independence and the awakening of his subjectivity, that attempts to open up the aspect of the trans-personal in God with the intention of penetrating this problem thoroughly have not been completely lacking. These are the attempts which belong to the tradition of negative theology.

If we start from the problem of religion and science, the problem of man's freedom and independence seems to be only indirectly related. But as previously indicated, these are really two aspects of the same problem. Therefore, I should like to begin by taking up these attempts of negative theology first as regards the problem of man's freedom and independence.

(To be continued)

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