

The OTHER POWER and the Unconscious

SAKAI Migiwa

The purpose of this thesis is to compare two concepts; 'OTHER POWER' (= 'TARIKI' in Japanese) and the 'unconscious'.

The OTHER POWER is one of the basic concepts in the SHINSHU-Sect of Buddhism originated by SHINRAN who lived in the 12th to 13th century. The unconscious is one of the basic concepts in psychoanalysis set up by Freud, S. at the beginning of the 20th century. While the two concepts have no overt relations with each other, there seem to be covert but significant similarities between them as follows:

1. Both of the two concepts seem to be occasionally misleading and carry ill-tones, while the antonyms of each term, i. e. 'SELF POWER' or 'JIRIKI' in Japanese and 'consciousness' respectively, tend to be agreeable to the values of modern citizenship.
 - (1) The OTHER POWER in terms of the SHINSHU-Sect of Buddhism denotes AMIDA's benevolent power, which is supposed to exist apriori and universally with the sole mission to help and rescue all living creatures, so that real salvation comes from the OTHER POWER. For modern citizens, however, obtaining salvation or anything with help others may sound too much of a reliant attitude.

In most of the other sects of Buddhism, enlightenment is considered to be attained by the SELF POWER through trainings.

The SELF POWER, however, may have ill-sounding connotations of selfishness, lack of cooperative attitudes, narcissism, etc.

- (2) The unconscious in terms of psychoanalysis refers to being unaware

of something that one is experiencing but he may get insight into the meaning of that experience someday; or what he has got insight into may be referred to as it had been unconscious until he got the insight. However, the term unconscious can be misunderstood as if it is something that one will never be aware of, and thus it is no use for human beings to wonder about such an entity. This seems to be particularly the case in Japan, because the term unconscious was translated as 'MUISHIKI' that literally means non-consciousness.

2. Both of the two concepts curtail the freewill notion, and presuppose something that exceeds free-will of human beings.
 - (1) In the SHINSHU-Sect, the fate or life of a person is considered to be determined at the mercy of the OTHER POWER.
 - (2) Freud advocated that instinctive drives have unconscious influence on the will of individuals, so that the will of individuals is not so free as it is taken for granted by modern citizens, particularly post-Renaissance Europeans, who tend to trust the consciousness as the ultimate source of freewill.
3. Both of the concepts presuppose people to get aware of the meaning of the concept, in order to be relieved from anxiety.
 - (1) One of the principles of the SHINSHU-Sect is to accept that he is living his life only at the mercy of AMIDA's benevolent power, so that he should yield himself to the faith in the OTHER POWER.
 - (2) One of the curing mechanisms of psychoanalysis is to get insight, with the help of a psychoanalyst, into one's past traumatic experience that has been repressed into the unconscious.
4. It is curiously interesting that both of the originators of the concepts were involved in the precepts about sexuality which they challenged, and they eventually contributed to the emancipation from sexual precepts of their times.