

The International Mission of Mahayana Buddhism¹

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ALMOST EIGHTY YEARS have passed since the Meiji Restoration [1868] to the present day [1943]. In the cultural spheres in Japan outside the Buddhist sector, quite intense developments have taken place. Our contact with the cultures of various Western countries has thus proved a profound stimulus for us. At the same time we were able to take appropriate measures in response. Comparing our culture at the beginning of the Meiji period [1868–1912] with that of the present day, this is a fact to which anyone would well attest.

Through scientific advances, the manufacture of machines, technological developments, the accumulation of capital, the increasing complexity of society, and epoch-making changes in the guiding principles of political thought, rapid advances have taken place in recent times in every aspect of our lives to a degree that has never before been seen in any other age in history. To those in the Western world it may well be that the fact of such remarkable progress may no longer disconcert them, but for those in the East, especially Japan, it was indeed earth-shattering. Or rather, the earth-shattering event of that time continues to be so even to the present day. The reason why this is so is attributable to the qualitative difference between Western culture and our Eastern one.

This ideological conflict between our distinctively different cultures is one that is amply evident even today in every facet of our lives. I would

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contend that such confrontation or compensation or antagonism or struggle and so on, as this phenomenon is to be called, will continue to take place for quite some time. However, accompanying such struggle and conflict there will surely occur a natural easing of the tension between Eastern and Western culture. Before that can happen, though, we must pass through a great many trials, especially with regard to philosophy and culture.

In terms of real life, it is always the case that the convenient replaces the inconvenient. Our Japanese garments, for instance, have been completely replaced by Western ones. However much we may doubt the suitability of the silk hat and frock coat for the Japanese man, they have since become *de rigueur* in the wardrobe of the prominent. Whether the electric trolley, wireless telegraph, aeroplane, or armored tank, if useful, regardless of their origins, all of them will be taken up in short order and used as easily as something in our own medicine cabinets. Utility, profitability, efficacy make up the new mantra that is now being heard everywhere. During the time of the Meiji Reformation, men would cover their topknots with a fan when passing under electric wires. Today, though, there is not a single Japanese who would try with all their might to exorcise these "barbaric, defiled inventions." It makes me think there is perhaps no force in the world as irresistible as utilitarianism.

When it comes to our thoughts, feelings, and preferences though, utilitarianism may not always be so eloquent a spokesman. Although there may be times when the philosophy underlying utilitarianism seeps unconsciously into our thinking in these areas, when consciously considered, we resist utilitarian philosophy. The will and way of thinking of our primitive ethos stand firm deep in our spiritual life and will not budge. This will and way of thinking try to gain control on the conscious level both in positive and negative ways. Thus even were we to fully adopt foreign utilitarian schemes, or were obliged to adopt them, when it comes to the philosophy or way of thinking that undergirds utilitarianism, we would find ourselves consciously rejecting it. Utilitarian schemes are not necessarily all generated from utilitarian philosophy alone; they can also contain elements of religion, morality, and cooperative social life, as seen in such slogans as universal brotherhood for all, impartiality in dealing with others, equal benefit for all, working for the public good, and be dependent on the people for your decision. Although utilitarianism is utility- or effectiveness-oriented, it cannot be said to be motivated by mere self-benefit alone. For this reason, we cannot dismiss it out of hand using a philosophy based in our primitive

ethnic sentiment. This philosophy itself latently contains a good deal of selfish individualism.

Utilitarian schemes have an element of internationality and, therefore, are not limited to things like ethnicity. Utilitarianism possesses a character that goes beyond national boundaries and is not limited regionally. It is in this dimension that we find its distinctive difference from Japanese culture. However, we must forego the discussion for the present time. In the following, we will look briefly at the way in which Buddhist philosophy has responded to Western culture.

Utilitarianism, which makes up one facet of Western culture, is not aimed merely at profitability; it is also possessed of internationality and imbued with religiosity—these are facts that we should not lose sight of. The way of thinking informed by our primitive ethnic ethos which is known by the name “Japanese-ness” is challenging this utilitarianism, scientific thought and technology which are internationally oriented. While on the surface of our “Japanese” minds we lay out all kinds of apparently logical arguments, beneath them all there operates the logic of affirmation-negation of *prajñā* wisdom. That is, the task for us to solve today is first how to negate our “Japanese-ness,” and then return to affirm our true selves as Japanese. Our philosophical dilemma today lies in an inability to reconcile consciously and philosophically the fact that, geographically speaking, we are trying to make a leap out of the limited island nation called Japan and lead international, continental lives. During the Kamakura period [1185–1333] we experienced that sudden intellectual leap—what I call the logic of negation, or the logic of affirmation-negation; today we find ourselves faced with the same situation. In the Kamakura period, however, the reality of this intellectual leap came about almost entirely unconsciously; today, by contrast, we are conscious of the challenge confronting us, and we must defuse this crisis consciously, that is, philosophically. We Japanese have come this far. Some people have urged us to retreat into the backwaters of our ethnic unconsciousness, and as much as it may sound like a winning solution to some, in fact such a scheme is entirely short-sighted.

What actions did Buddhist philosophy and lifestyle take as a result of this intrusion of foreign culture into its environment? Well, the fact is, in the eighty years that have since passed they have done not a thing. As long as any life remains to Buddhism, even if its physical form were to die out, it would certainly sprout anew. However, since its teaching is spread by

individuals, and those people are one part of that physical form, if they were to disappear, it would be a long and difficult process to revive it. Then, during that period, undesirable elements would be allowed to flourish unchecked. Thus the defense, growth, and prosperity of the truth must be seen to in a conscious, well thought-out, and systematic manner. Japanese Buddhism today is indeed facing a serious crisis. If at this juncture we fail to take the time to work out a solution, we may well have to suffer the bitter experience of looking on as the very life force of Buddhism is extinguished. Subtle signs of this are to be seen everywhere we look.

The Buddhist religious organizations, living in the traditions of the feudal era, experienced a major shock from the political reformation of the Meiji Restoration. The ideology that had supported the religious organizations was badly shaken, let alone the damage to their material basis. Fortunately, there were a number of great priests and religious leaders who were able to restore the status of these institutions, but since then the thought and practice of Buddhists, the monks especially, have been like “the worm in the lion” [sapping the strength of its host], and this condition at present is widespread. Herein lies the root of all evil, its source exposed, and these poisonous vines grow more rampant with each passing day. Despite the fact that Japanese Buddhist religious organizations have become little more than extensions of the funeral industry, the monks are resigned to doing nothing about it. Eastern and Western culture and thought are bearing down on each other in a collision course, and though there are a great many ordained monks among these religious organizations, it makes me wonder whether there is a single one who is concerned with solving this very real problem confronting us or not.

The majority of these priests are incapable of doing anything other than promoting, defending, and serving what has come to be called “Japanese” Buddhism. The “Japanese-ness” which they speak of is nothing but the empty shell of the past. In view of today’s world situation, that empty shell is not something that they should be preoccupying themselves with. I have heard it said that the best defense is a good offense, and today what the term “Japanese-ness” should instead imply is the negation of the past behind and the conscious opening up of a new phase. We can no longer live simply by clinging to the past. Today, we must first negate it. If out of this negation we do not nurture into being a new life force, then even clinging to the past will become impossible. In recent times, I have heard people talking about “progress through changing” and “developmental dissolution,” but

at whichever one we look we can detect the logic of negation. It should not be necessary for me to point out that this is of course not negation in the ordinary sense of the term.

Kamakura Buddhism negated the Nara and Heian Buddhism that preceded it to develop a new, popular form of Japanese Buddhism. This opportunity was given to us Japanese by the decline of the court nobility, the rise of the warrior class, the renewed contact with Chinese literature, and the spirit of defiance against the threat of Mongol invasion, among other things. Kamakura Buddhism, as a result of these stimuli, was able to shed itself of the abstract, aristocratic, amusement-oriented and island-country mentality that had characterized Buddhism up to then. In other words, Buddhism itself was able to waken to its original mission. During the long course of the intervening six or seven centuries, however, Buddhism has managed to put fetters on itself again. Today, the opportunity presents itself to throw them off and advance yet another step forward. In response to the incursion of the distinctively different Western culture and thought, Buddhists as Buddhists must negate their way of thinking up to now, that is, purge themselves of the aspects of the past that deserve to be purged, and proceed to develop Buddhism in novel directions. What we call the Greater East Asia War is, ideologically speaking, actually a struggle between Eastern and Western culture.² Buddhists must join in this struggle on their own initiative if they are to fulfill their original mission.

In terms of culture and thought, though we may speak of struggle, conflict or competition, this does not mean we should throw our opponent to the ground and render him immobile. This is especially the case when our

² Translator's note: This translation relies on Kemmyō Taira Satō's interpretation of this passage, who writes: "It is of interest to note that, although it does not change the overall meaning of what Suzuki is saying, it is likely that there was a misprint here in which *tōa* 東亜 (East Asia) was substituted for *tōzai* 東西 (East-West). In the original text, Suzuki places quotation marks around the 'Greater East Asian' in the term 'Greater East Asian War,' suggesting that he wished to express a contrast between 'East Asia' and something else. The fact that the entire article is a discussion of the differences and tensions between Eastern and Western cultures, combined with the fact that the two characters *a* 亜 and *zai* 西 can easily be confused when written by hand, suggests that the original manuscript, before being set to type, read, 'We speak of the "Greater East Asia" War, but its essence, ideologically, should be seen as a struggle between Eastern and Western cultures' (*'Daitōa' sensō to iu ga, sono jitsu wa shisōteki ni tōzai bunka no kōsō de aru to mite yoi* 「大東亜」戦争と云ふが、その実は思想的に東西文化の抗争であると見てよい)." (Kemmyō Taira Satō, "D. T. Suzuki and the Question of War," *The Eastern Buddhist* vol. 39, no. 1, 2008, pp. 108–109, n. 81.)

opponent is not necessarily our inferior in intellectual, material, or historical terms, and so on; then not only is it actually impossible to eradicate our opponent, indeed doing so would not work to our benefit. Western culture is distinctly different from that of the East, and for that reason alone, we may assimilate it. In the same vein they need to assimilate our culture as well. On our side, we need to do as much as we can to put our counterparts in that frame of mind. That role is truly one that Buddhism is charged with. The reason I say this is, for it is Buddhist thought that we find at work at the axis of the Eastern way of thinking.

The systems that comprise Buddhist thought, however, must not be dependent on things of the past. We must have sufficient understanding of the core of our opponents' philosophical systems, as well as an appreciation of the most qualitatively distinctive features of our own systems. This appreciation will deepen to the same degree as our understanding of our opponents. That is, it is through knowing our opponents that we come to know ourselves. We do not arrive at an understanding of ourselves solely through ourselves. It is because there are those who are unlike ourselves that we come to recognize ourselves. One does not come to understand the Orient simply by holing up in the East. If we are attached to our geographically and culturally limited past, is it even possible for us to understand ourselves? This attitude does nothing more than foster conservative, backward and reactionary philosophies which are entirely self-centered and exclusive. If we simply retreat into our shell like a turtle, the completion of any sort of philosophical development that is a move forward either externally or biologically would be unthinkable even in a dream.

Buddhists should first see the organizational institutionalism of their sects as heirlooms of the past and simply acknowledge their existence. Eventually and not too far from now, they will probably decay away naturally. The doors should not be closed to the historical, traditional, or academic research into Buddhism as fields of specialized study, but the methodology of that research is in need of revision. Research into Buddhist philosophy, logic, and intellectual history is also to be greatly encouraged, but these studies look at Buddhism in tedious detail as if it were a dead object. If Buddhism is to have a future, and if it is to have something to contribute to the advancement of the philosophy and culture of the world, it must be treated as a living thing. That is, Buddhism must bring its philosophical content to light as a fact of our religious experience through modern theoretical methods and modes of expression. Furthermore, we

must proclaim within our country and beyond that which is eternal, true, and international within it, that which can be understood, practiced, and attained equally by ourselves and others. Once Buddhism is taken up in this fashion then for the first time it will take on a life of its own. If it does not have a life of its own, not only is there no reason for it to exist, but also it will not develop to a point where it is capable of affecting Western culture and thought. Through the constant negation of what has preceded it, life itself can maintain its continuity and therefore immutability. What has died has died and must pass away. Living things always move forward in time, thereby expanding themselves. Life has to press forward, or else it will fall back, and here retreat means death.

This is not necessarily limited to the Japanese spirit; whatever living thing it may be, all of them obtain as many nutrients from their environment as possible. As long as an organism lives, it will not turn into the nutrients that it has taken in. For a living organism, nutrients are its sustenance. When they cease to be nutritive, even if an organism may strive with all its might to live, it has already begun the process of dying. Living things always get their sustenance from their environment by various means. When that power to acquire nutrition runs out and they have to consume themselves, they have been read a death sentence. To live in the past is like the young master of an old house that has been brought to ruins who sells the family heirlooms in order to eke out a meager day-to-day existence. What life is there in that, however—what power does it have to bridge the gap? Buddhists should never allow themselves to get into a similar situation. If Buddhism does not have any substantial life left in it, then we must let it pass away, but if there remains some life in it, then it must absorb all the nutrients available from its environment. Moreover, since that environment is not in a state of rest for even an instant, Buddhism should never suspend taking sustenance from its environment.

Buddhism is a living organism, and there is nothing that moves Buddhism to realize the meaning of its existence to the extent that today's international milieu does. In other words, it is to the present age that Buddhism must boldly proclaim its vital existence. Buddhists have to reflect on the content of their religious experience as fact and must represent that experience effectively using the modern methods of thinking.

I think it was the mid-Meiji period when Dr. Inoue Enryō 井上円了 [1858–1919] authored his *Bukkyō katsuron* 仏教活論 [On the Vitality of Buddhism,

1887] demonstrating the reason that Buddhist philosophy is not inferior to Western philosophy. Professor Murakami Senshō 村上專精 [1851–1929], wrote his *Bukkyō tōitsuron* 仏教統一論 [A Theory for the Integration of Buddhism, 1901] wherein he tried to impart unity upon Buddhist doctrines. Since then Buddhist scholars have appeared who have variously explored different aspects of Buddhism. There are those who are researching the Pāli and Sanskrit Buddhist literature, and others the Tibetan and Southern Buddhist traditions. As these scholars have been appearing one after another in ample numbers, we are witnessing a flourishing of so-called Buddhist studies. At the same time, among these studies we see no attempt to explain the contents of Buddhist thought as a fact of vital religious experience from a modern perspective. Nor do we see anyone who brings this thought up against Western culture and thought and attempts to relay to the world what is truly Eastern. We are surrounded by hordes of people who, just clinging to “Japanese-ness,” protect such a geographically limited thing as if it were their last outpost and thereby die with the past that they love. And that may all be fine and good. Would it not be wonderful, though, if there were but one person who were inspired by the vitality of living Buddhism, who could transcend the limited notion of a Greater Asia, and proclaim the fact of his religious experience to “the heavens above and all below them.”

In order to proclaim, minutely reveal and sing out in praise of the Way, however, it is not enough to take recourse merely to tradition. A living religious experience must be expressed in living words, languages and ideas. Pouring new wine into old wineskins simply will not do. Just as the cicada, butterfly, and snake leave behind their old skins, we must divest ourselves of the old without a twinge of regret. Only people who have wrung dry the wellspring of life are so bound up with the old. Look at Dōgen 道元 [1200–1253] and Shinran 親鸞 [1173–1262]. Did they not develop their own individual modes of expression and interpretation? Here dwells the living force of Zen; here, too, dwells the living force of Shinshū. The flourishing of the “Japanese spirit” during the Kamakura period clearly did not occur by coincidence. As aforementioned, we have to execute discerningly, with sufficient awareness, consciousness, thought and logic, what our ancestors did almost entirely unconsciously during the Kamakura period. The reason is that our ancestors, with regard to their environment, did not have the intellectual resources to deal with the problem consciously and to analyze it discerningly. We who have been born now, six centuries later, and have experienced the culture of the Meiji period

are like the residents of the Garden of Eden after the apple was eaten. We are conscious of the kind of intellectual milieu we are in. We are no longer able to resolve to try to move out into the world with a worldview formed through refurbishing our simplistic, primitive, ethnic ethos by adding a traditionalistic, sectarian, insular, politicized Buddhism to it.

Geographically speaking, even Greater Asia is not suitable as a stage on which our spiritual awareness should appear. Culturally, it will not do to run and hide ourselves in the cave of traditional Oriental thought and attempt to become a cave-dwelling people who gaze out on the great sky from its mouth. Just as an electrical pulse can circle the world in a few seconds, the wave of our philosophy is able to go from one corner of the world to another, and once it starts to move there is nowhere it cannot go, as its influence is felt in other spheres; nor is it impossible for it to return from there. The world since the Meiji period has been such that if a bell is struck in one corner, its reverberations are felt throughout. Today it is not ours to retreat and defend, but to go forth and take. That is the only path open to us. Thus we must negate what ought to be negated, and thereby we can face historical reality for the first time. Thus I say, living Buddhism must be based on the living fact of religious experience and expressed in living words and languages. Once we can do that, we find a way for Buddhism to contribute to the history of international culture and thought.

Buddhism's institutionalized religious organizations may have some historical or political meaning, but they do not go beyond having anything more than that. In the face of the contact, exchange, and struggle between Eastern and Western culture and thought, which are the most realistic of our problems, the religious organizations count for nothing. Further, with regard to those working within those organizations, that is, the monks, they are a kind of tool, and in a sense they enjoy the social status they have by providing a kind of business service. Among them we can spy many who are rushing about trying to avoid losing that status. These people do not have any thought to guide the laity and lead them to enter the Buddhist path. In this regard, even if one suggested to these priests to develop the kind of dignity that the Zen master Bankei 盤珪 [1622–1693] expresses when he says, "I am the leader of the triple world. I do not have to ask the laity to act as my witness," they would be incapable of doing so. Instead, they chase after the laity, only afraid that they will be unable to keep up. These monks have no qualification to mount the stage where Eastern and Western culture

are engaged in exchange and struggle. Well, who then will bear on their shoulders a living Buddhism, you ask. I think that responsibility will fall on the shoulders of young students whose names are as yet unknown.

In what way will they bear that living Buddhism? How should they prepare themselves spiritually for this task?

If there are living young Buddhists (not dead ones) who wish to proclaim to the world a living Buddhism and contribute to the development of the history of international philosophy, I imagine they would first think of the problem as follows.

First, Japanese Buddhism has never been Mahayana Buddhism in the true sense of the term. It has always been too bound up in the politics of its island country; this feature that once made it suited to its existence within that environment, today makes it impossible for Buddhists to rise above that limit. The Japanese Buddhist has never burned with missionary zeal to go to other lands and die in the wilderness. In this regard, I feel Buddhists compare very unfavorably to Christians, particularly Catholics, with their spirit to struggle to spread their teachings. Even if one may be willing to sacrifice oneself within Japan, there is not even one Buddhist who is willing to make a martyr of himself outside the country for the path he believes in, who would be willing to go abroad to strange lands to dwell amongst foreigners, where no one in Japan would know whether he was dead or alive. This is only to be expected, given the character of Japanese Buddhism.

Since from here on out, Buddhism must articulate its *raison d'être* not just in Japan but internationally, the way for Japanese Buddhism to survive is through returning to the true nature of Mahayana Buddhism. The Buddhists of Japan misconceive Mahayana Buddhism as having neither precepts nor insight nor regulations nor knowledge. However, viewed in terms of its history or evolution, Mahayana Buddhism was never like that. I am sure that this is well known to those who are practicing Mahayana Buddhism in a "Japanese" way.

Mahayana Buddhism should not be sequestered away in Japan. It has an international mission. Philosophically, it is imperative that it leaves Japan, as it contains within itself much that will contribute to the improvement of international culture when it goes out into the world. While the various Japanese cultural assets that have been produced and preserved in a Japanese way are meaningful in the places where they have grown, developed, and are preserved, anyone with the slightest discernment would readily understand that these assets would require a great deal of adjustment if one were to give

them internationality and make them meaningful across the globe. Among these, not only can Mahayana Buddhist philosophy alone be taken anywhere as-is, it can also serve as a great alarm to the various other thought systems throughout the world.

Second, Mahayana Buddhism as it has been handed down to us, however, may be of little use. Mahayana thought has to be baptized in the waters of contemporary science and philosophy. In other words, living young Buddhists have to keep abreast of the leading ideas that are animating today's world. Without such understanding, they would be unable to arrive at a correct grasp of Mahayana thought. Then, it would be impossible to make that thought valid internationally, to make it work at an international level. It is without doubt that performing research into the historical background of the origins of Mahayana thought in India, its development in China, and its preservation in Japan is important. However, that alone is not enough as a means of bringing Mahayana thought to move the world. Buddhists—young Buddhists conditioned by the world—have to keep themselves constantly informed as much as possible as to movements in world thought. Further, they must consider how to process that information in a Buddhist vein. Those who understand Buddhism with only traditional or historical methods have the unfortunate defect that they are unable to make that understanding meaningful internationally.

That alone is not sufficient. Knowing how to make Mahayana thought meaningful at an international level is not simply summed up by being able to understand Buddhism internationally. It means charging into the middle of the battle of international thought. It must not be just protecting one corner of the world with an insular mentality in a traditional way. That is nothing more than presenting the narrowness and insularity of that thought. If there are people who have attained the attitude that “I solemnly vow to deliver sentient beings from suffering, however boundless the sea of beings may be,” and “I solemnly vow to learn the approaches to the Dharma, however infinite in number they may be,” they must proclaim what they have understood in a way that can be understood by anyone over the largest possible area for the longest possible period of time. It will not do for us to hole up and keep it for ourselves, lest we be admonished for hiding our awakening to ourselves. Military conflict without an ideological background is merely a beastly struggle to the death, which for man is the most shameful thing.

That is, Mahayana Buddhists must not stop at realizing the international nature of what they believe in, but must go on to proclaim and argue internationally that internationality in an international logic. This requires that tradition and history be negated for the time being. We are being called upon internationally to make a one hundred and eighty degree turn. One could say that this opportunity arose by chance. Or one could say it arose from the actions of a certain group that broke out of control. Regardless of what the direct cause might be, today, in the year 1943, what is demanded of us is that we make a complete turnabout in our culture and thought. This call seems as though it would resonate in the depths of the heart of a Mahayana Buddhist. No, more than that, I believe that it is heard by everyone. However, we may not be ready to respond to it. During the Kamakura period, Shinran was moved by the spirit of the times beckoning to him from the very folds of the earth and look how he went on to negate tradition.

Up until the time of Shinran the traditional view had been that sentient beings transferred the merit derived from good karma toward *bodhi*, the awakened state. Shinran, however, understood merit transference as coming from the Tathāgata. This was a direct negation of the traditional view. That something that goes up really comes down from above was unthinkable prior to Shinran. Once someone comes up with a notion, it may seem rather unremarkable, but to first conceive it requires a leap, the crosswise leap. From the very first, Mahayana Buddhism has had a doctrine of mutuality, but being conscious of it and articulating it was Shinran's genius. Since then Shinshū believers have developed a traditional doctrinal system and lived the lay lifestyle following Shinran's example (Shinshū has no monks in the usual sense of the term) that allows eating meat and getting married. Though they have researched his teachings and lived a lay life as he did, this is insufficient today. They have to leap into Shinran's religious experience itself. It starts from there. This might be the complete turnabout that is beckoning to Shinshū believers today.

The young Buddhists who should be in possession of the youthful, living spirit of the modern age must also have a religious experience corresponding to the times. In the feudal period there was a religious experience corresponding to the feudal period, and in the Heian period [794–1185] there was a religious experience corresponding to the Heian period, and in the time of a primitive, ethnic lifestyle there was a religious experience corresponding

to that time. Religious experience was given expression to in every period via that period's thoughts, feelings, and writings. While experience itself has an international universality to it, and while its expression is packaged in the form it must naturally assume, that experience never goes uninfluenced by its particular temporal setting. Thus that experience, or rather, the expression of it, is always swathed in local, ethnic, and political coloration. That coloration, however, is not the essence of the experience itself, and is nothing more than a kind of transfiguration of it. We should not mistake the changing expression for the experience per se. It is possible to say that there is no experience outside of its expression, but that is to separate the expression from the experience. When we take the position that both exist, saying there is the expression on the one hand and the experience on the other, expression is not experience, and experience is not expression, nor should the two ever be confused. We must understand that experience is universal, whereas its expression is particular. Expression can be changed from two to three, or four to five, depending on its environment. Therefore, followers of Mahayana Buddhism should not color what they are experiencing today with the expressions of the feudal age or the time of a primitive, ethnic lifestyle.

Their experience must be expressed following the trends of modern scientific thought. Furthermore, it must be expressed philosophically, and it must evince a thoroughgoing logic. Since the religious experience of contemporary Buddhists should, in its essence, have perfect currency in the East and West, past and present, it would well be said to be traditional. However, since it acquires a modern, international, scientific, and philosophical quality in its expression, it must necessarily have one aspect that negates the "past." Because of this aspect, there is historical development. We must also remember that this negation is not simply a reaction against tradition.

Although just reading what I have said above may leave one feeling that there is something inconclusive in my argument, if my readers will consider the statements of those who are regarded as Buddhists and as thinkers in our country today, I believe they will be able to grasp what I am trying to say.

First of all, I would like you to observe the words and actions of today's Buddhists, especially those of the monk class. Does not the majority seem to be simply living on tradition? Moreover, what tradition refers to is nothing

other than the feudal tradition. Take a look at the life that the “monks” lead in today’s “temples.” In a sense, their lives are feudalism itself. However, in another sense, very “modern” aspects have been appended. As a result, their lifestyle has come to be quite complex. They may seem to be leading lay lives, but “temples” are not homes for the laity. From the perspective of their being monk-like, one must say there is not the slightest difference between their lifestyle and that of the laity. Well, then, what of their views, we ask. We find there is not one among them who would willingly lend an ear to what the laity has to say. From one perspective, these priests might know the Buddhist canon inside and out, but their grasp of it does not go beyond the box of traditional views. In order for those teachings to have currency in the real world, they must be taken out of the hands of the priests and placed in the hands of the laity. Indeed, when ideas are shorn off from practical application, they cease to have a life of their own. If we allow the priceless treasures contained in Buddhist philosophy to rust away unused, we will have done something unforgivable to our ancestors.

Next, let us take a good look at the way in which the world’s modern thought, especially scientific thought, is influencing the various aspects of culture. It will no longer do for us to live in the cheap conceit that “we Japanese are spiritual, those Westerners are materialistic.” There is nothing as immoral and materialistic as claiming that one is spiritual or has a monopoly on morality. Although it is useless to criticize those whose eyes and ears are covered and do just as they are told, any Buddhist with the least powers of self-reflection and observation should be able to tell what is actually going on around them. While I would not say these people are being duped, clearly they are not utilizing their eyes and ears to their full capacity.

Science does not just work in our everyday lives technologically. Science in fact also works within our inner lives via the concepts that comprise it. We must not forget that there is both a good side and a bad side to this. We can only obtain an eye to discern that good and bad through an essential grasp of Mahayana Buddhism. Some say that Buddhism and science are not in opposition. This is something that a person who does not understand Buddhism would say. Buddhism has a perspective from which to criticize science. We cannot put Buddhism and science in the same category and say that the object of both of their positions, both of their spirits, is the same. Buddhists must have a selective eye in these matters. With this eye they

must appreciate matters from a higher dimension, whether it be philosophy or science. (However, I cannot address this point any further in the present essay.)

At any rate, in whatever direction Buddhists may turn nowadays, they are confronted by the need to consummate a complete turnabout. I hope that living young Buddhists will consider this matter deeply.

(Translated by Wayne S. Yokoyama)

