

A Nineteenth-Century Dialogue in the Hall of Flying Clouds

ÉMILE GUIMET, SHIMAJI MOKURAI, AKAMATSU RENJŌ,
AND ATSUMI KAIEN

Translator's Note

On October 26, 1876 (Meiji 9), a fascinating dialogue took place in the Hiunkaku 飛雲閣 (Hall of Flying Clouds) of Nishi Honganji 西本願寺 in Kyoto. It consisted of questions posed by the French scholar Émile Guimet (1836–1913) and answers given by three representatives of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism. These were Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911), Akamatsu Renjō 赤松連城 (1841–1919), and Atsumi Kaien 渥美契縁 (1840–1906). Shimaji and Akamatsu belonged to the Honganji-ha while Atsumi represented the Ōtani-ha. However, no differences between these two schools became apparent during the meeting with Guimet. Notes were taken by Higashi Kan'ichi 千河岸貫一 (1847–1930). A text was then initially assembled in French, translated into Japanese under the title *Montai ryakki* 問對略記, and then retranslated into French by Imaizumi Yūsaku 今泉雄作 (1850–1931), Yamada Tadazumi 山田忠澄 (1855–1917), and a Mr. Tomii who cannot be further identified.¹ The text is said to give a rather exact idea of the subjects considered during the dialogue. The event was a question and answer session, the purpose of which was to elucidate, for Guimet's benefit, the leading ideas of Jōdo Shinshū. The responses provide an interesting window into the way these ideas were pitched at the time. Equally, Guimet's questions provide an insight into some of the assumptions then current among Western investigators.

¹ This process was explained in note 2 of the French text.

The present translation is made from the final French version, originally published in the first volume of the *Annales du Musée Guimet*.² Reference has also been made to the Japanese version with a view to certifying some of the Japanese concepts which underlay the answers given at the time.³ The two versions correspond quite well, but not always exactly. Nevertheless, on this basis, characters used for basic terms have been inserted at a few points in square brackets to assist the reader's orientation. In the present translation, from the French, the striking gender-neutral use of masculine forms typical of the time has been reduced to some extent, notably by translating "l'homme," referring to humankind in general, as "human beings."

In its printed form the dialogue was followed by a retrospectively compiled summary of the leading concepts set out by the Japanese delegation, described as *réponses sommaires*. Since this was compiled after the meeting itself, but also for reasons of space, it is not included here. The original title of the dialogue was *Notes abrégées sur les réponses faites dans le Hioun-Kakou (salle élevée du temple de Honganji) par Mm. Simatchi, Atsoumi et Akamatsou aux questions de M. Emile Guimet, savant français*.



ABRIDGED NOTES ON THE RESPONSES GIVEN IN THE
HIUNKAKU BY MESSRS. SHIMAJI, ATSUMI, AND AKAMATSU TO
QUESTIONS PUT BY THE FRENCH SCHOLAR MR. EMILE GUIMET

THE MEETING began at 10 o'clock in the morning and finished at 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Notes were taken by Mr. Higashi Kan'ichi. After exchanging their cards and various courtesies, the participants took up their places on chairs.⁴

² 1880, pp. 337–73.

³ This was reprinted under the auspices of an editorial committee in *Meiji bukkō shisō shiryō shūsei* 明治仏教思想資料集成, vol. 5. (Kyoto: Dōbōsha, 1981), pp. 253–73.

⁴ The chair is a rarity in Japan where everybody kneels down on indoor matting. [This and further notes are from the original except where otherwise indicated. –Trans.]

Opening by Mr. Guimet. I have come to your temple today to ask for information about the principles of the Buddhist religion in general and in particular about those of your sect.⁵ I am very happy to be here, and I thank you for the kind sympathy with which you responded to my request by coming together here. I would like you please to reply to the questions that I will put to you.

Reply [hereafter, R]. Based on the little knowledge which we possess we will try, all three of us, to reply to your questions.

Question [hereafter, Q]. Will it disturb you if I make some notes on your answers, here on the spot?

R. It will not disturb us.

Q. My first question is about the origin of heaven, earth, and everything which surrounds us. How do you explain their formation according to the principle[s] of the Buddhist religion?

R. The Buddhist religion attributes the existence of all things to what it calls *in'en* [因緣] (cause-effect). Each thing is nothing other than the union of infinitely subtle atoms which, reunifying with each other, formed the mountains, the rivers, the plains, the metals, the rocks, the plants, and the trees. The existence of these objects arises from the natural relation of their *in* to their *en*, just as all animate beings are born by virtue of their own *in'en*.

Q. So there is no creator of heaven and earth and all the other things?

R. No.

Q. So what is that which you call *in'en*?

R. Nothing forms itself naturally of its own accord. It is always the relationship between a “this” and a “that” which constitutes something. The distance between the *in* and the *en* varies to a greater or lesser extent in accordance with the circumstances; but since these two generative elements are correlative by their very nature, it is through their relationship that all things are born. Both the *in* apart from the *en*, and the *en* apart from the *in*, are absolutely nothing.

Q. So do you admit that there is a certain order in the formation of heaven and earth?

R. According to an old Indian tradition the Buddhist religious writings sometimes speak of such an order; but we can find nothing clear and precise about it. At the same time, since the narratives tell us that thousands of years have elapsed since the formation of the world, it does not seem to us

⁵ The term “sect” was in general use at the time to indicate a sub-branch of a religion and had not yet taken on the pejorative meaning which it bears in some quarters today. –Trans.

to be conceivable that all the phenomena of nature could have been abandoned to arbitrariness and chance over such a great length of time. In this perspective we can say that even if we nowadays admit the existence of a certain order in the formation of things this does not impact the fundamental principles of our religion.

Q. All things in the universe are subject to a general and uniform law. So did this law preexist the formation of heaven and earth?

R. Alongside each thing there is always a rule to which it conforms. Heaven and earth are formed by virtue of a natural law which resides in this very formation. However, among men there are those who understand it and those who do not; this is because the former have a sufficiently developed intelligence to understand it, and the latter are in a state of ignorance.

Q. Do animate beings owe their existence to *in* and *en*? Do you admit that all physical properties and all the forces spoken of by the physicists of our times existed from the beginning?

R. It is beyond doubt that animate beings owe their existence to *in* and *en*. Everything exists in this world because, prior to its formation, the *raison d'être* of this formation already existed. Without this preexistent law nothing could be formed.

Q. Chemists claim that when two bodies combine a third is formed which is quite different. Do you admit that this could have held true before the existence of anything?

R. Yes.

Q. After all that you have told me so far, I see that your ideas are fundamentally in accordance with those of our scholars in Europe, who are investigating the mysteries of science from day to day. I now wish to ask you if the acts of human beings are dependent on God.

R. The acts of human beings are their own: they do not depend in any sense upon God.

Q. So, do you not admit that God exercises his influence on humanity and directs us in the accomplishment of various acts of invention or perfection?

R. Since the Buddhist religion does not admit of any creator and attributes everything to *in'en*, this in itself implies that all deeds by human beings are carried out on their own initiative without any intervention from God.

Q. The expression "God" may be inappropriate. Nevertheless, your religion recognizes a superior being, Amida, who is adored with veneration and faith. So then, does the power of Amida have no influence at all on the actions of human beings?

R. The differences between human beings with regard to their personal value and the value of their actions depend mainly on their education, and do not depend on the will of Amida.

Q. The political and legislative reforms in a country do not depend at all on Amida?

R. Every action, whether emanating from the will of an individual or from the consent of all, is nonetheless an action emanating from human beings. It conforms with reason to a greater or lesser extent depending on whether it derives from well-informed or ignorant persons, but it has no direct relation to Amida.

Q. I will readily admit that knowledge is augmented through work and that one can make progress in the physical sciences, but when we come to the realm of morality, of the distinction between good and evil, and of the just and the unjust, does it not seem likely that there is a superior being who rewards or punishes our actions, just as the social authority punishes transgressions of the rules of public order?

R. All good and all evil have as their consequence happiness or suffering. This results from the very natural idea of *inga* [因果] (a synonym of *in'en*). The social authority, in punishing actions contrary to morals, is simply repressing the abuse which results from the external relations between human beings. This explains why it is that laws are set up in terms of a convention between human beings and that they vary from country to country. That is simply a human fact which reflects the good and evil of the exterior world. It is a consequence of *in'en*, that is to say, an application of the law of *in'en* in the world through reward or punishment pronounced by the social power. As to actions which have a bearing on the conscience, human convention can neither reward nor punish them. According to *the intensity of their "in,"*⁶ their consequence will manifest itself either sooner or later. It is the human being who inflicts on himself either happiness or suffering. So when an individual commits a blameworthy action, if nobody knows of his guilt he will suffer no external punishment. But he will nevertheless be more or less severely reproached by his conscience, and that is because the vice which caused the action will somehow rebound upon him.

Q. Does the consequence of a bad intention or a blameworthy action necessarily show itself in the life of its author?

R. Sometimes it shows up during his life and sometimes after his death; this cannot be known in advance. Supposing that a blameworthy action occurs

⁶ Italics in original. –Trans.

today, the effects might occur immediately, or some days later, or indeed at a time after the death of the person concerned. So, while the cause exists at the moment when the blameworthy action occurs, its consequence does not show up until a more or less later time, depending on the gravity of the action.

Q. According to what you have told me so far, every particular thing is formed by virtue of two elements, *in* and *en*. But in matters of industry it seems to me that everything is produced by the confluence of three elements: *capital*, *intelligence*, and *labor*.⁷ Thus when a factory is set up the requirements are the capital necessary for its foundation and continued existence, the intelligence of the investor, and the labor of the workers. If one of these three elements is lacking the factory could not exist. Similarly, if it is a question of manufacturing pottery, one needs the capital necessary for buying the clay and the dyes, intelligence for determining the dimensions, the height and the width of the pieces, and then the labor for mixing and kneading the clay before baking it in the oven. It is therefore through the confluence of these three elements that pottery, or anything else, can be manufactured. I have never seen anything which was formed by the action of two elements only.

R. What we call *in'en* simply means that everything results from the relation between this and that, and not by virtue of a single element. Therefore, the examples that you have just given to show that three elements are necessary for all human productions are in reality nothing but an application, or even a confirmation, of our principle of *in'en*.

The *in'en* spoken of in the Buddhist religion does not at all require a limitation of just two. Thus, if we are cultivating a plant, the seeds are the *in* and rain, dew, water, and soil are the *en*. If one of the latter is lacking the plant cannot grow. Thus the seasons are also part of the *en*. In reality there are six kinds of *in* and four orders of *en*, but we cannot speak of this to you comprehensively in just one meeting. A very detailed explanation would be needed to appreciate the reasoning and its implications.

Q. If, as you say, there is no difference between the three elements I mentioned and *in'en*, does what I referred to as "capital" pertain to *in* or to *en*?

R. Since Buddhist doctrine is not based on a triplicity to explain the formation of things, we cannot tell you precisely if capital is included in *in* or in *en*. However, if we work on the rule that the principle is *in* and the accessory is *en*, we could say, if pressed, that capital counts as *in*.

⁷ Italics in original. —Trans.

Q. So then, what about labor and intelligence? Would they be assigned to *en*?

R. If we stay with the example of pottery, the clay is always the first material for it. Now, since it is by intelligence and by labor that one arrives at the production of pottery these two constitute a kind of intrinsic element independent of *in'en*. However, we could say, if pressed, that they pertain to *en*.

From the point of view of religion, *in'en* refers to the cause and consequence of our happiness and our sufferings, of our entry into paradise or our fall into hell. By contrast, the necessity for the coming together of three things, which you posit, is about purely material things. It therefore seems to us that these two opinions should not be appreciated in the same way.

Q. The reason why I spoke to you about the confluence of three elements in the formation of things is simply because it is currently the subject of much discussion in France. I am simply asking if there is something analogous in the Buddhist law. I will be satisfied with either an affirmative or a negative reply.

R. The Buddhist religion nowhere speaks of a confluence of three elements in the formation of things. It simply explains for us the cause and the consequence of good and evil, of happiness and suffering; and in particular, it teaches us that *in'en* is not unitary but complex, that is to say, that it is composed of diverse elements.

Q. The Christian religion declares that all human beings are afflicted by what it calls original sin. Is there anything analogous to that in the Buddhist religion?

R. There is no question of original sin. However, all human beings possess in themselves what is called *mumyō* [無明], that is to say, an original error inherent at the very base of the heart [*kokoro* 心].⁸ It is said that this primitive error is the cause of all the vices and the faults which we have committed and still commit in the *meikai* [迷界] worlds.⁹

Q. What you call *mumyō* cannot be the same as sin. If it were sin it could be absolved. But if it is an error no absolution is possible.

R. Error can be the cause of a sin, but it is not itself a sin. It is therefore quite different from original sin in Christianity. Accordingly, when an individual commits an unsuitable action, out of ignorance, he is no doubt blameworthy in the sense of having committed the unsuitable action; but from the point of view of his ignorance he could not be considered blameworthy.

⁸ *Mumyō* has usually been translated as “ignorance” in later Buddhist studies. The term translated here as “heart” (corresponding to the French “coeur”) also bears the meaning of “mind,” especially in Buddhist contexts. –Trans.

⁹ *Meikai*: worlds (*kai*) of aimless wandering. An original note explains them simply as worlds below the heavenly worlds (*tenbu* 天部, that is, the realm of divinities). –Trans.

Q. The other day I saw a child going to a temple, probably to observe a traditional formality. As he was on his way he had the character for “dog” (犬) on his forehead, but when he returned it had been changed into the sign for “great” (大).¹⁰ Was that for erasing a kind of original sin?

R. We have not seen such a ceremony anywhere. Anyway, there is nothing like that in our sect.

At this point there was a discussion about how simple people place the character for “horse” (馬) over their doorway, repeated three times, to protect their family from smallpox. There was considerable amusement over this superstition.

Q. Is it possible, by means of prayers, to change some misfortune into happiness, for example by transforming a mediocre crop into an abundant harvest?

R. In the Buddhist religion in general one often mentions the success of requests addressed to the divinity, but our sect absolutely forbids this. In any case, even in the Buddhist religion in general, one does not ever speak of the transformation of something that cannot be transformed; one does not demand the impossible. So the question of prayer can only be posed in relation to something which is susceptible to happening.

In such a case, the *raison d'être* of prayers is as follows. All misfortune is the consequence of an *in* tainted by vice. But, in repenting of previous actions, a person is committed to performing in the future only actions which conform to morals. So what more can he do? Request the intervention of the *Hotoke* (the Buddha)? But the *Hotoke* does not grant any petitions addressed directly to him, whether for happiness or for deliverance from a misfortune.

It is out of ignorance that ordinary people with little perception contravene this principle and demand good fortune or personal well-being from the *Hotoke*. So it is to prevent such superstitions that our sect, Shinshū, severely prohibits all kinds of prayers.

Q. But in that case why are there people in this temple saying prayers?

R. They are not prayers. We have said that actions in this life depend exclusively on ourselves, and not on the *Hotoke*; however, since our destiny belongs to the *Hotoke* we beseech him to watch over us, not in this life, but

¹⁰ These two characters were noted by Guimet himself and hence occur in round brackets.
–Trans.

in future lives, to deliver us forever from life in inferior worlds, and to grant us pure and supreme happiness. This is not a petition in the ordinary sense, at least not with respect to the present life.

Q. Is it possible to erase one's sins by washing the body, the hands, and the mouth before prayer?

R. In a number of sects one finds practices of that sort, but in ours there is only belief in the compassion (*charité*) of the *Hotoke*.¹¹ No external act can make our faults disappear.

Q. So why are there some people here who wash their hands and their mouths before beginning their prayer?

R. It is only to conform to the general practice in the country. If one washes one's mouth and hands before prayer it is simply to demonstrate one's feelings of respect and veneration, independently of any idea formally required by the Buddhist religion.

Q. Do you have a confession of sins?

R. Yes, in the Buddhist religion but not in our sect in particular.

Q. Do people make offerings to the *Hotoke*?

R. Yes, they simply offer rice which has been washed clean and cooked.¹²

Q. Is it in order to obtain some kind of favor?

R. No. It is simply a display of sentiments of respect and veneration, and not an invocation addressed to the divinity. Also, the offerings are prepared differently than food for human beings.

Q. I will have the honor of asking you for information about the future life. But first, as I am accompanied by a French artist, I wonder if you would mind if he sketches the various halls in this temple?

R. No, not at all. You may let him sketch as he thinks fit.

The artist, Mr. Regamey, had been visiting Higashi Honganji earlier this morning together with the French scholar. Just at that time there had been an ordination ceremony for young aspirants to the priesthood, and he wished to stay a little longer to draw it. That is why he came here later, and why Mr. Guimet now asked for permission for him to make drawings.

¹¹ The Japanese version refers to "the power of the Buddha" (*butsuriki* 佛力). –Trans.

¹² The Japanese take much care over the washing of rice, getting rid of the agglutinative matter surrounding the grains, so that after cooking the grains remain quite separate from each other. Washed rice is a symbol of purity.

Q. Is the soul immortal?

R. Yes.

Q. The conditions for human existence can be regarded from two points of view, in physical terms such as the circulation of the blood, the digestion of nourishment, and in terms which are essentially moral such as intelligence, thought, and imagination. Are these two souls distinct, or do we not rather find there two functions of one and the same soul?

R. Buddhists designate the soul [*reikon* 靈魂] with the term *shin-shiki* [心識]. It is from this soul that all intellectual facts emanate (such as thought or imagination), produced by the means of sight, hearing, taste, touch, and so on. The circulation of the blood and the digestion of food constitute the functioning (through the soul) of the organs of our body considered as the habitation of the soul; these functions enter the material domain and not the moral domain. The soul is unique, but its functioning is multiple.

Q. If the soul is unique, why is it that there are persons who are in good health despite the degeneration of their mental facilities, and reciprocally there are persons who enjoy their full intelligence even while suffering bad digestion and difficulties with the circulation of the blood?

R. The soul sets in motion the organs of the body in which it resides, through making the blood circulate, directing digestive processes, and so on. If the body is in good health while mental faculties weaken, this is proof that the soul is immortal. For in most cases it is possible to recover one's strength of spirit by passing a short time in rest or distraction. Even if, while being in good spirits, one suffers from indigestion or cramps, this disorder is in the body, and only in the body. But if the bodily organs cease to function, the soul can no longer remain there. This is the inevitable consequence of the rule already formulated that the soul only sets the organs in motion in so far as it resides in the body. That is why, in the case of total inactivity of the bodily organs, the soul itself becomes powerless to reactivate them.

Q. So it is uniquely to the soul that we owe digestion and the circulation of the blood, as well as the acquisition of perceptions, and so on?

R. Yes, just as steam gives movement to a whole machine.

Q. (*turning to interpreter*). Are you comparing the soul to steam?

R. Yes.

Q. All my questions and the replies which I seek from you should be kept as simple as possible. I will not be able to completely understand detailed explanations, especially in a single conversation. So I would be satisfied if you would answer quite simply to the questions which I ask. I ask once again if circulation of the blood depends on the soul.

R. It depends on it, but not directly.

Q. Imagine an individual who is mentally deranged but whose stomach can digest everything which he eats. Does he still have a soul?

R. Yes. An alteration of the five powers [*gokan* 五官] (meaning sight, smell, touch, hearing, and taste) does not prevent the soul from existing. The soul itself suffers no change; it is simply deprived of one of its functions through the loss of power inherent in the five external organs.

Q. So, is the soul necessary for circulation of the blood?

R. Yes. Without the soul circulation is impossible.

Q. Is it the same for animals?

R. One can say the same for all animate beings. Just as steam machines function differently in accordance with whether they are large or small, perfect or imperfect, so too the organs of beings work differently in accordance with the shape of their bodies and the efficiency of the five powers.

Q. So does an animal have the same kind of soul as a human? Is there no difference other than in the perfection of the organs?

R. Yes [meaning “no”]. The soul is the same. There is no difference [in principle] regarding intelligence. The difference in intelligence is nothing other than the difference in the functioning of the five organs.

Q. You say that humans differ from animals regarding the formation of the organs, and you add that this difference implies another in the functioning of the organs. What do you mean by that?

R. The most evident difference between these two kinds of being is that one walks on its feet and the other on four paws. Humans can freely develop their intelligence by acquiring knowledge, whereas animals possess none of the organs necessary for acquiring such knowledge. Thus the difference in the functioning of the organs derives from the difference in the organs themselves.

Q. Does the Buddhist religion include the teaching of metempsychosis, that is to say, of the endless return of the soul in future lives in which there is reward or punishment for the actions taken in the present life?

R. Yes. Even if a person, through talent, arrives at a major position, they could still fall from it on account of a fault or having been guilty of a crime. That is what is called the *rin'e* [輪廻] of the present life. If the *in* and the *en* are so linked with each other, if they are bound in such a permanent manner, one could conclude that the *rin'e* has no conclusive term and [that it is possible] “to foresee clearly from one corner of a given space everything which happens in the other three corners” (a Japanese saying).

Q. So could the soul of an animal transform itself into a human soul, or reciprocally, the soul of a human be transformed into that of an animal, or even of a tiny fish or a shellfish?

R. Yes. But this transformation is more or less successive. The smallest does not immediately become transformed into the greatest. For example, a black African could not *immediately* become the president of the French Republic or of the United States; but who knows whether he might become that sometime in the future.

Q. What would you say about something which is neither animal nor vegetable, like coral?

R. If something is properly speaking neither animal nor vegetable, it might seem difficult at first to assign it. However if it is examined closely it becomes possible to distinguish which elements are which. On that basis, nothing prevents the animal part from becoming subject to *rin'e*.

Q. Do trees and plants participate in *rin'e*?

R. In the Buddhist religion what is "animal" is referred to as *ujō* [有情] (a being which possesses instinct) and what is "vegetable" is referred to as *mujō* [無情]¹³ (a being which does not possess instinct). The first is susceptible to *rin'e* and the second is incapable of it.

Q. You say that the soul is reborn indefinitely. So is it possible to limit the number of souls?

R. No. The number of souls is infinite.

Q. In that case, the souls which exist presently must disappear sooner or later, and reciprocally there must be others which are born for the first time?

R. We cannot say that there are souls which are born or disappear, or that their number increases or diminishes.

Q. If there is neither birth nor disappearance, neither increase or diminishment, why do you say that their number is infinite?

R. Since the number of worlds is infinite, the number of souls to be found in them is inevitably also infinite in the nature of the case.

Q. Are all the souls of the same kind, or of different kinds?

R. They are all of the same kind in that each one derives from its *in'en*. But they are clearly distinct from each other from the point of view of their functioning. Thus, just as steam machines are small or large, and function more or less actively following the force of the fire, in the same way we have different constitutions of *in'en* and are endowed with more or less intelligence in accordance with the level of our activity.

¹³ The Japanese version has the synonym *hijō* 非情. —Trans.

Q. Following your example, let us imagine a steam machine with six hundred horsepower. Would it be sufficient to activate the fire strongly or would we not need to add some water at the same time?

R. I do not want to give too much importance to my example. I simply wanted to tell you that various distinctions have to be made in accordance with the nature of *in'en*.

Q. I believe that you have not yet understood my question. Let us imagine a reservoir which contains fish of different sizes. I want to ask if their souls are also of different sizes.

R. The soul can be now large, now small, but its nature is always identical and invariable. However, if it seems to us to be different when functioning in some manner or another, this is because its repose or its functioning is affected by some external factor. Therefore, when anger ceases to arise, there is nothing which makes us suppose that it really exists; but if an oppositional *in'en* comes into view then anger is quickly produced. Anger in itself is nowhere, but it is always available within us and just shows itself when there is an external provocation.

Q. Your reply still does not correspond to my question. I asked if the soul of humans is analogous to that of quadrupeds or birds, or if the souls of these animate beings differ in accordance with their species.

R. We answered as we did since we did not understand your question. Since the answer was inappropriate, it is possible that there was some inexactness in translation. So please be so kind as to repeat the question.

Q. Your response will be sufficiently clear if you answer the following hypothetical question with yes or no. Let us suppose that all the children in a town or a village receive the same education in the same school. These children always read, write, and eat together. Even though they are educated in this way their capacities will differ in various degrees. Is that what you want to say?

R. Yes.

At this point it is announced that lunch is ready. M. Guimet says "I am very grateful for your kind and benevolent reception, and I am particularly happy to learn about the deep principles of your teachings." The reply: "We fear that many of our replies failed to match up with your questions. The time was short and we could not give more details, but we trust that you will be able to fill in the gaps in our explanations. We will resume our talk after lunch." Afterwards, the parties returned to their previous seats.

Q. The question I would like to put now is about the end of the world. Does the Buddhist religion admit that the soul is revived at the end of the world?

R. The Christian religion is the only one that teaches that the soul will be revived at the end of the world. As for the Buddhist religion, it teaches that the soul is immortal, and that soon after death it submits in a future life to the consequences of the *in* (cause) of the present. So we believe that there never has to be a judgment of the souls or a resurrection at the end of the world.

Q. Do you not teach that the soul returns, on the last day, into its previous body?

R. No. The *en* of an *in*, that is, the effect of a cause, is produced in an instantaneous and regular manner. Therefore, how could it be that the soul awaits the end of the world and then enters into its old body, which is already corrupted, destroyed, and dispersed?

Q. So does the Buddhist religion not admit the destruction of the world at its end?

R. The Buddhist religion teaches *jōjūekū* [成住壞空], which is to say that the world¹⁴ takes shape and thereafter exists; after its existence it destructs; after destruction it becomes chaos; then the world takes shape again, and so on; it is impossible to know how many times formation and destruction have succeeded each other. Moreover, the Buddhist religion teaches that the formation of the world, and its destruction and its new formation, take place during an infinite number of kalpas¹⁵ so that it would be impossible to calculate it.

D. I will take this opportunity to ask whether, in your sect, you incinerate corpses.

R. They are burned or buried, depending on local custom; but the first of these is the more frequent.

Q. I have heard that this city is about to build a cremation furnace. Would it be difficult to see the plan and the model of this furnace?

R. That is very easy.

¹⁴ “World” here means heaven and earth and all that they include.

¹⁵ The Japanese *gō* [劫; Skt. *kalpa*] is a technical Buddhist term meaning a long period of time. One *gō* consists of 16,800,000 years; a great *gō* or *dai-gō* equals eighty times one *gō*, or 1,344,000,000 years. According to the explanation of Mr. Yamaizumi, the formation of the world, its destruction and reconstitution, take up twenty great *gō*, that is, 26,880,000,000 years. The world, and its chaos, also last for this number of years.

The engineer in charge of the construction of the pyre is called and he is asked to bring the plan and the model.

Q. Do you recognize hell and paradise?

R. Yes.

Q. Are there different degrees of hell and paradise?

R. Yes. Insofar as the causes of evil are diverse, the same diversity exists in the effects which follow the diverse causes of the good. But those who have devotion to Amida are all equal because that is one cause and consequently has one single effect. There are therefore no different degrees of paradise for the faithful.

Q. If a dead person falls into hell, can he be relieved of the pains which he suffers there if he beseeches Amida? Or would he rather, once fallen into hell, be quite unable to get out again?

R. The pains or sufferings are proportionate to the sins, and therefore, after undergoing the pains proportionate to his sins, the dead person will go elsewhere. The fact is that, even if one requests nothing of Amida, the good or bad deeds carried out in this life are not effaced, and one is drawn over to the side which carries the day. If one falls into hell, as soon as the consequences of one's faults are expiated, one is reborn in a better condition in order to receive the reward for good actions.

Q. So the dead person who suffers the pains of hell can never hope for the help of Amida? In that case, one calls for help from Amida in this world and not after death.

R. We do not intend to say that, once one has fallen into hell, one could never hope for the help of Amida; for the Buddhist texts teach us in several places that one is drawn out from hell by the power of Amida. Those who do not have this *in'en* cannot receive his aid, even if Amida wishes to save them. It is because of their own merit that they are saved.

Q. Do you teach that we should implore Amida to get us out of hell, if we fall in there after death?

R. We do not speak of invoking the help of Amida after falling into hell. But we do teach people to obey his commands in the here and now, in order not to fall in there after death.

Q. So do you teach that we should pray to Amida in this life in order to be spared the sufferings of hell after death?

R. No. We teach to believe firmly that we will have the assistance of Amida if we follow his commands. If we just leave it at saying a prayer, that will not satisfy Amida and the prayer is worthless.

Q. In your sect, do you have a festival to commemorate the dead?

R. Yes.

Q. What is your intention when you celebrate this festival?

R. The ceremonies are the same as those of other sects, but the intention guiding them is very different. Everything the believers do is intended to thank Amida for his benevolence. In a nutshell, they make use of the religious ceremonies in honor of the dead to fulfil their duty of gratitude towards Amida.

Q. Shaka is a buddha. Do you honor him as much as Amida?

R. Although Amida wishes to save us out of pity, we cannot know him. Therefore he manifested himself out of compassion in the person of Shaka. Since the time of that incarnation Amida returned to his previous form, and there is no other Shaka except Amida himself.

Q. If that is the case for Shaka, are there also other buddhas?

R. The Buddhist texts tell us that there are several buddhas. But they are all none other than incarnations of Amida's compassion.

One should have asked here what kind of buddha Amida is. It is very disturbing that this question was not posed, so I [Higashi Kan'ichi] will attempt to fill the gap here.

Q. What kind of buddha is Amida?

R. Amida is a buddha who had no beginning and will have no end. He is endowed with miraculous power, his great intelligence spreads throughout the "ten worlds," and there is no place where it does not manifest itself; his great compassion runs through all time and there is no period in which it does not manifest itself. Such is the essence of Amida whose goodness and life are eternal. He is therefore called the True Buddha of the Three Periods¹⁶ and the Ten Quarters,¹⁷ Jinjippōmugekō Nyorai [尽十方無碍光如来].

Q. You said just now that Amida saves humans. From what does he save them?

R. If we human beings were to perform only good actions all our lives we would experience happy results, by the sheer force of things, and we would not have the misfortune of falling into bad situations. But alas, in this life almost all of our deeds are bad, and we cannot escape from their aggravating consequences. Amida, deploring our misery, and wishing to give

¹⁶ Past, present, and future.

¹⁷ The ten worlds.

us the possibility of enjoying happy situations, deigned to take our place, and becoming incarnate time after time performed all the necessary deeds and penances necessary for this. By the sheer force of things it suffices to observe with faith the words of Amida to make our bad intentions disappear, to make good ones arise, and without even knowing it ourselves to begin to accomplish the charitable intentions of the Buddha. That is how Amida saves human beings.

Q. You told me just now that the soul goes to reside in hell or in paradise, and you told me also that the soul enters a body, whether human, animal, or indeterminate. But does that not involve a contradiction?

R. The soul proceeds in sequence through the five superior worlds, that is, the five *dō* [道], and these are:

1. the world of buddhas
2. the world of bodhisattvas
3. the world of *shōmon* 聲聞 [hearers of Dharma]
4. the world of *engaku* 緣覺 [solitary buddhas]
5. the world of humans

and the six inferior worlds (*shu*) [趣]:

the world of humans

the world of *tenbu* 天部 [class of heavenly beings]

the world of *shura* 修羅 [beings in dispute]

the world of *gaki* 餓鬼 [hungry ghosts]¹⁸

the world of *chikushō* 畜生 [animals]

the world of *jigoku* 地獄 [place of sufferings, hell]¹⁹

The soul passes from one dwelling to another without remaining in two places at the same time.

Q. Do these transmigrations of the soul follow a determined order, for example first entering the animal world and then going down to an inferior world?

R. Certainly not. In accordance with the extent to which human actions are blameworthy, the soul enters the animal world or goes immediately into

¹⁸ The French refers to “hungry demons,” but “hungry ghosts” is more usual in English. –Trans.

¹⁹ Note by Mr. Yamaizumi: This does not add up to eleven worlds because humanity occurs both in the upper five and in the lower six. Paradise is the first of the five and hell is the last of the six. That is what the priests should have explained. Note by translator: Mr. Yamaizumi also gave partial explanations which have been completed above in square brackets for the reader’s convenience.

jigoku. Sometimes, having undergone the consequences of its actions, it enters the body of a hungry ghost or of an animal. It can happen that the soul is reborn in the world of humans or of heavenly beings, by virtue of the good actions which were previously performed. As an example of this case, consider an individual who did good deeds, but is condemned to forced labor because of a crime committed later; not only will this individual recover his liberty at the end of his punishment, he will also be specially rewarded for the good which he had done previously. On the other hand, an individual condemned to forced labor might, instead of being set free at the end of his punishment, be condemned to death for a new crime committed during the time of his punishment.

Q. In such a case, who is the judge?

R. The punishments and rewards arrive by the force of the things themselves; there is no judge.

Q. Does the sojourn of the soul in the body of an animal, for the expiation of a sin committed, have a predetermined length?

R. It necessarily has a proportional length.

Q. If an individual kills an animal, does this fact extinguish the consequence of becoming an animal?²⁰

R. The soul experiences no further sufferings if its time of purification is completely finished. In the opposite case, the soul must continue to submit to the tests. Even if, for example, the prison where a condemned person is kept is set on fire, that person will be transferred to another prison to complete the time of punishment.

Q. I have finished my questions on the future life. I will now ask you about the principles of religious morality in Buddhism.

R. The rules on this are not the same for the Buddhist religion in general and our own sect. Buddhism teaches five prohibitions and several other rules.

Q. What are the five prohibitions?

1. Do not kill animate beings.
2. Do not steal.
3. Do not be unchaste.
4. Do not lie.
5. Do not drink alcoholic drinks.

Q. Concerning the first prohibition against killing animate beings, what do you say about those who make war?

²⁰ In other words, is the soul suddenly released by this accident?

R. Since war is the greatest of all murderous acts it should of course be forbidden. However, it is necessary to distinguish between legitimate wars and illegitimate wars. If one makes war solely to seize the goods of others, and if one kills and wounds fellow citizens or foreigners, we do indeed forbid it. But if one is obliged to take up arms to prevent invasion by foreign peoples, or to put down internal disorders, then we permit it and the act is not blameworthy.

Q. Is it therefore not considered blameworthy to kill the lesser for the sake of the greater?²¹

R. That is not intended to mean that it is good to kill the lesser. But after realizing the difference between the advantage of saving the greater and the crime of killing the lesser, if the former is weightier than the latter, then one is obliged to kill the lesser to save the greater. It is because of this unavoidable consequence that one is permitted to kill the lesser.

Q. Given that religion prohibits the killing of one's equals, when the government calls up a person for military service the person would have to disobey the government to observe the prohibition. In that case, does your sect permit his enrollment?

R. Yes.

Q. What do you think of a government putting a guilty person to death as a punishment for a crime?

R. It is just. The reason is the same as in the preceding case.

Q. What would you say if someone kills a cow or a sheep for food?

R. The use of meat is forbidden or permitted depending on the circumstances. If it is forbidden, that is because the Buddha deplores cruelty in the service of greed; it is the consequence of the great love which the Buddha feels for all beings. But if the intention is not the result of cruelty, but arises out of a health need, then it is permitted to eat meat. The thought of the Buddha is evidently in favor of this teaching. By the way, we distinguish between pure meats and impure meats. They are impure, and hence forbidden, for a person who himself kills, or orders others to kill, or who assists in the putting to death. In all other cases meats are pure and it may be permitted to eat them. Our sect forbids killing living beings for amusement, but it allows it for those who make their living by it. On this point our sect differs from others.

Q. The second, third, and fourth prohibitions are easy to understand. As to the fifth, is it prescribed in the same way as the preceding ones?

²¹ This is a Japanese expression wrongly put into the mouth of a Frenchman. It is as if one said, "Is it therefore not blameworthy to kill one man to save several?"

R. Drinking alcoholic liqueurs is not in itself a sin. However, an excess of drinking often becomes the source of many other faults, notably those mentioned in the previous four prohibitions. That is why the fifth is added to supplement the others. As for us, we prohibit an excess of drinking but not drinking itself.

Q. What are the ten further prohibitions?

R. They are those which derive from the first five and which explain in detail the origin of the faults which they anticipate.

Q. What are these prohibitions?

R. Those which forbid the following: (1) killing beings, (2) theft, (3) unchastity, (4) deceit, (5) sarcasm, (6) insults, (7) slander, (8) greed, (9) anger, (10) heresy. Observing the precepts by avoiding these ten sins amounts to the “ten goods.”

There followed some discussion about these prohibitions, but since it was simply a clarification of terms, I [Higashi Kan'ichi] omit it here.

Q. There are only prohibitions. Are any particular deeds enjoined by the religion?

R. Yes, several. Violating the ten prohibitions is to commit ten sins, but observing them as precepts amounts to the ten goods.

Q. Commanding people not to do something is a precept of avoidance; but commanding people to do something is a precept which indicates how one should behave. I am asking about the latter.

R. Well, here are six moral practices, called *rokudō no okonai* [六道の行い]:

1. Give alms to the poor in a spirit of charity.
2. Preserve your dignity by observing the prohibitions.
3. Put up with insults by reducing your anger.
4. Be industrious by arousing oneself from laziness.
5. Fix your mind on one single point through intense meditation.
6. Clarify your intelligence by studying religious principles.

We also say: look for the causes of suffering and happiness; set aside love and hate by regarding others as yourself; attain an exact idea of your own value by expelling pride from your heart. There are yet many other commandments.

Q. Can people of today fulfill the requirements of so many precepts?

R. One applies the precepts and doctrines of the Buddha according to a person's character, in just the same way as a skillful doctor applies a remedy in accordance with a sickness. It is difficult to apply the precepts about avoid-

ance and the precepts with behavior recommendations to everybody; similarly, the scholarly precepts are difficult to apply to all people today. That is why all these precepts have been designed for faithful followers who behave well through following them. The common precepts, that is the ones for everybody, are the ones which are easy to follow. But as for faithful followers, they are assigned precepts of whatever difficulty.

Q. What you have said concerns Buddhism in general, but what do you recommend in particular?

R. Our precepts are teachings which are applicable to everybody. They fall into two categories, one which teaches belief in the Buddha and the other the observation of the law of the country. In these two categories we teach in summary form all the things which mature citizens can easily do. These are therefore not the same precepts as are taught in other sects, and they cannot be compared with complicated scholastic regulations.²²

Q. What are the main principles of Buddhist religious morality?

R. Charity. The essential point of religious morality lies in perfecting oneself and perfecting others, or to put it more simply, to avoid doing to others what one would not have done to oneself. This arises from the doctrine which teaches us to regard all the beings of the universe without preference.

Q. If this doctrine teaches us to regard all human beings with such lack of differentiation, is there not then any distinction between superior people and inferior people?

R. There are various degrees of rank and function, but there is no distinction if we consider human beings in themselves. That is one of the points in which Buddhism differs greatly from Brahmanism.

Q. So then the rights of human beings are all equal?

R. The rights are not equal with regard to the functions exercised, but the rights of individuals as such are equal.

Q. That means, putting it simply, that human beings are primarily equal in spite of differences in rank and inequality of intelligence?

R. Yes.

Q. Does a person acquire liberty when his age permits him to manage his behavior appropriately?

²² We see that at several points the priests call attention to the complexity of scholastic teaching, a preoccupation which is interesting to note. Before the last political reform the bonzes had a particular responsibility for education, but being released from this they easily tend to criticize the new lay programs of the government. Nevertheless, this critique has been discreet because the priests of the Shinshū sect are prudent people.

R. In the Buddhist texts we can find no formal indications of this, but this is what we think. The main point in the Buddhist religion is to encourage comprehension of the equality of human beings as regards their true nature, and to see that all errors disappear. As far as temporal matters are concerned, we leave these entirely to the laws of each country. Nevertheless, if we consider your question on the basis of the fundamental principle of Buddhism, which implies that we regard our fellows without preference, then the individual rights of all human beings should be equal, even though rights relative to functions and ranks are unequal. We therefore have every reason to admit that people can enjoy liberty when they reach the age of independence.

Q. If there are no formal explications in the Buddhist texts, it suffices that the sense is there. Does a conscript always have his liberty, even when he is under the command of the head of the army?

R. Yes. Apart from condemned persons all people naturally enjoy their personal liberty.

Q. Is there any precept which enjoins love of others? For example, a formula which a teacher can use to put this idea to pupils?

R. That is precisely the concept of charity of which we have just spoken. This principle is proclaimed by ecclesiastics and lay persons alike.

Q. The Christian religion teaches that we should love our neighbor as ourselves. Does your [notion of] charity have the same purpose?

R. Yes. We even teach that one should sacrifice one's life for others.

Q. That means saving a person who is drowning even if you thereby drown yourself?

R. Yes.

Q. I would like to know if you have an expression which sums up all these ideas.

R. We have many of them. The meaning is very extensive and therefore difficult to sum up in a single formula.

Q. Our life-saving teams going out to shipwrecks have the expression "Love your neighbor more than yourself." Do you have a similar formula?

R. "Regard your neighbor as an only son," or "regard all your fellows as yourself." Such expressions would doubtless find favor.

Q. I have finished asking questions about morals. Now I would like to get to know the religious rules in your sect.

R. The biggest difference between our sect and the others is that they forbid the clergy to eat meat or to marry, while our sect permits both. Beyond that there are also many differences among the other sects relating to prohibitions and commandments.

In the other sects there are precepts which, like the scholastic rules, are not addressed to all the people, notably those which regulate solitary retreats in the mountains and certain spiritual exercises. In our case the prescriptions are addressed to all the inhabitants. Civil law makes no distinction between the inhabitants of cities and the inhabitants of the countryside, just as our precepts are addressed to all. The special thing about our sect is that it teaches us to trust in Amida Buddha for everything to do with the future life, while not setting up any laws about the affairs of this world. Apart from that it forbids, as a religious rule, any prayers, offerings, and superstitions aimed at obtaining personal happiness, harm to others, knowledge of the future, and so on. It forbids worshipping the *kami* or the bud-dhas. The essential principle is to devote oneself uniquely to Amida.

Our priests are required to carry out certain practices such as rendering homage to Amida Buddha, reading the sacred texts, and so on. Lay people have no duties other than to believe in Amida and to observe the laws of the country. Such is the summary reply which we can give.

Q. I would still have many other questions to put to you. But as I do not know which ones to choose, I request you to give me some detailed replies in writing to the questions which I presented in a list the other day.

R. We saw the items in your questionnaire the other day, but since some of them are difficult to understand we have not yet had time to edit our responses. I hope that our replies today will be more or less sufficient, and that a written reply is not really needed. However, to fill this gap we will offer you some religious books from our sect.

Q. I will accept with pleasure the books which you are offering. But I would also like to have some written responses in spite of the inconvenience. Since all the other sects have given me their explanations in writing it would be regrettable if yours alone would be lacking.

R. We will do it if you insist. However, we have to warn you that, to our great regret, it will not be very detailed. That is because we understand that you will be setting off from here in two or three days.

Q. *A propos* the books: Are there any sacred works written by Shaka himself?

R. No there are not. Shaka only preached in the common Indian language of his time. After his death his surviving disciples made collections of everything they had learned and transmitted them to posterity. Those are the Buddhist books which we see today.

Q. Are those who survived Shaka his direct disciples, or disciples of his disciples?

R. They are his direct disciples.

Q. How many sacred books are there?

R. A very great number. The books transmitted in our sect are, without exception, those which were translated into Chinese. Some were translated from Sanskrit into Chinese, and others passed through the mediation of another language. Without further thought we cannot give you the number of all these books, but it is considerably greater than that of the books of the Bible in the Christian religion. The principal books of our own sect are only three which have been selected from among that great number.

Mr. Guimet rises and expresses his thanks to the priests as follows:

Thanks to your kindness I have received a clear answer to each question. I received interesting information from other sects, but none was as precise and clear as yours and I feel greatly satisfied. I have disturbed your precious studies for several hours, and you also invited me to lunch. I do not know how to thank you enough.

I do not have any more questions, but I would like to say a few words about my French people and French to Japanese people, for I would like to take some Japanese pupils with me to France. The relations between France and Japan are becoming closer and closer, and my purpose is to give our pupils the means to converse with each other. I would therefore encourage you to send some followers of your sect to France who would be able, while receiving instruction themselves, to explain your doctrines to us.

Mr. Shimaji and others offer their thanks to Mr. Guimet as follows:

Your words have made a profound impression on our hearts. If we send disciples to France, we request you to take good care of them.

Mr. Guimet replies:

My advice is that you not only come to France to instruct us about your religion, but also to send pupils to study different branches of science such as chemistry, physics, and so on. In this way you will acquire a new resource for propagating the fundamental dogma which I heard just now, namely that “everything is created through *in* and *en*.” For chemistry teaches us that complex bodies are the product of two factors, the acid and the base. A definition of that kind must be of special interest for your sect.

Mr. Shimaji and the other priests reply as follows:

Your opinion is quite in accord with ours. We will be happy to confirm the truth of the doctrine which we profess with the help of experimental science.

After this exchange, Mr. Guimet inspected the models of the apparatus used to immolate corpses and then gave a detailed explanation of the recently invented procedure for suppressing bad odors. Some questions and replies were exchanged on this subject, but they do not require reporting here.

At that moment the sun was on the point of disappearing on the horizon, so we parted with an exchange of courtesies and a handshake.

(Translated by Michael Pye)