VIEWS AND REVIEWS

The Past as a Problem of the Present: Zen, the Kyoto School, and Nationalism

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THE COLLECTION OF articles in *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism,* edited by John Maraldo and James Heisig (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1995), is a welcome addition to the growing, critical literature on Zen and the Kyoto school of philosophy. They expand our horizons for exploring a number of important issues, although only a few can be touched on here. They include wartime complicity of intellectuals, relationship between religio-philosophical thought and socio-historical realities, link between social criticism and self-critique, and false human constructs that need to be dissolved.

Since different assumptions about history are implicit in the articles by the contributors to *Rude Awakenings*, it may help us to see them according to Nietzsche's view of history. His basic approach may be summed up in the following words:

> Nietzsche couches his own philosophy in terms of a vast historical analysis; he deals with human history in order to place it in the service of life. His early essay sets an agenda for his own philosophical

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> labors. And it is difficult to read his depiction of mankind as horizon-creating without seeing here the first stirrings of the doctrine of the Will to Power.[1]

Two points are significant for our discussion: 1) historical studies should be pursued in the "service of life"; and 2) they should provide fertile ground for a new philosophy to cope with changing historical realities.

Relevant to Nietzsche's observation, the objective, self-critical nature of some articles in *Rude Awakenings* give a balanced picture, contributing to serving life; and the complex variety and different conclusions of the 15 papers in this volume provide a fertile ground for future studies.[2] Rather than simply classifying them into the self-evident categories of critics and apologists, accusers and defenders, or dismissing them simply as "a clash of temperaments," they all merit serious considerations in accord with Nietzsche's classification of history into monumental, antiquarian, and critical.

I

The first point regarding self-critique is exemplified by the observation made by John Maraldo, at the end of his well-crafted article on Nishitani, Abe and Suzuki, "Questioning Nationalism Now and Then." His reflection is a befitting conclusion to the entire volume:

> We also know from experience that one day our verdicts will likely meet with criticism. And yet this knowledge can free us to be open to continued questioning. If there is no end to the process of critique, it is not because a final judgment is perpetually deferred, but because the goal is so close at hand: always to remember that the past is a

[1] From the introduction by Werner Dannhauser to Chapter II on the use and abuse of history in *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen,* translated as *Unmodern Observations,* ed. William Arrowsmith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 84.

[2] For examples of defensive strategies dealing with Martin Luther's anti-Semitism, see *Tainted Greatness: Antisemitism and Culture Heroes,* ed. Nancy Harrowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 15–35. The volume includes chapters on Gerhard Kittel, Mircea Eliade, Carl Jung, Masud Khan, Cesare Lombroso, Wagner, Heidegger, Ezra Pound, De Man, Jean Genet, and passing comments on Joseph Conrad, T. S. Eliot, Joseph Campbell and Louis-Ferdinand Celine. The final chapter by Joshua Cohen, "The Remembrance of Amalek: Tainted Greatness and the Bible," sums up the relationship between taintedness and greatness: "To fight bigotry we must understand it, which we cannot do without first remembering that our 'taintedness' is indivisible from our 'greatness.' Let us, therefore, follow the example of the Talmudic sages, who wrestled with their tainted greatness for the blessings of moral illumination," 300.

problem of the present. Critique of nationalism is ultimately a self-critique.[3]

Whenever we criticize past thinkers, we must remember that they are of another age in a different political climate, facing their own unique problems which may be beyond our comprehension. In the words of Nietzsche, "Measuring past opinions and deeds according to the widespread opinions of the present moment is what those naive historians call 'objectivity.' It is in these that they discover the canon of all truth; their aim is to force the past to fit the mold of their fashionable triviality. By contrast, they call 'subjective' every form of historiography that refuses to accept these popular notions as canonical."[4]

In addition, our views in our own times may also shift with changing historical circumstances and personal interests. Hiromatsu Wataru, a critic of the Kyoto school, for example, notes in the most recent introduction to his *"Kindai no chōkoku" ron* (Theories on "Overcoming Modernity") that his views have changed over a 20-year period: when the chapters in the book were first serialized in a journal in 1974; when they were published in book form in 1980; and when the revised, enlarged edition appeared in 1989. The latest version appears, he writes, because "In comparison to 1980 the subjects debated and the agenda pursued have become 'an actuality' in recent times."[5]

[3] *Rude Awakenings*, 362.

[4] *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen,* translated as *Unfashionable Observations* by Richard C. Gray (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995), 96. Among the various English translations of this work, including *Untimely Meditations,* tr. J. R. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), the Gray version is closest to the German edition in *Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe,* eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyer & Co., 1995), I:157–510. All subsequent references are to the Gray translation.

[5] The full title is *"Kindai no chōkoku" ron—Shōwa seishinshi no ichidansō* [Theories on "Overcoming Modernity": One perspective on Shōwa intellectual history] (Tokyo: Kodansha, 1989), 7–8. An example of changes in historical appraisal is the case of Subhas Chandra Bose, leader of the Indian independence movement, who opposed the tactics of Gandhi and Nehru. During World War II, he formed the Indian National Army, sided with the Japanese against the British, and was defeated in the Imphal campaign, the abortive attempt of the Japanese army to invade India via Burma. Bose died in 1945 and was harshly criticized as an Axis sympathizer, traitor, and fascist. But on the 100th anniversary of his birth this year (1997), January 23 was declared a national holiday, honoring him as a patriot and hero. During the 50-year anniversary of Indian independence, symposia were held which proposed to reevaluate the role of Bose in modern Indian history. See the article by Nobuko Nagasaki of Tokyo University in *Sobun* (a publication of Sobunsha) No. 309 (July 1977), 1–5.

Valid criticism in academia is most welcome, if it is constructive and placed in the proper context. James Heisig's meticulous study of Tanabe summarizes five contemporary criticisms, ranging from the Marxist Tosaka Jun, a student of Nishida and a close friend of Nishitani, who died in prison in 1945, to a liberal historian, Ienaga Saburō, whose study of Tanabe is a model of in-depth scholarship. His approach includes self-critique from which he himself should not be excluded. In his words:

> A conscientious appraisal of Tanabe, his critics, and the intellectual atmosphere in which each of them worked requires fuller detail on nearly every point. Further, such an appraisal must at least aim for the same critical self-awareness that it is predisposed to accuse Tanabe and others of the Kyoto school for having failed to achieve.[6]

A similar caution is sounded in another recent study, "The Kyoto School and Reverse Orientalism," by Bernard Faure. He concludes his article with the following words:

> The recent interest in the philosophy of the Kyoto school in the West makes this ideological critique more urgent. However, rather than accusing or excusing individual authors, we should shift the focus to ourselves, and realize that our accusing and excusing, excluding or including is never neutral, that our reading these texts, our receipt is always verging on deception.[7]

If Faure had taken his own advice more seriously and made it prefatory to his analysis, the possibility of self-delusion would have been even more attenuated than indicated by his article.

Self-critique is at the core of Nietzsche's view of history which he saw as a form of delusion. The target of his criticism was the founder of objective history, the "celebrated historical virtuoso" Leopold von Ranke, as well as the philosopher Hegel, who believed that "the apex and culmination of the world process coincided with his own existence in Berlin."[8] For Nietzsche the historical process can never be completed; the end of history is a myth. Thus, any judgment reached by selecting from infinite possibilities can only be an interpretation.

[6] Ibid., 285.

[7] *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspective,* eds. Charles Fu and Steven Heine (Albany: SUNY, 1995), 281. For a revealing, critical review of Faure's essay, see Graham Parkes, "The Putative Fascism of the Kyoto School and the Political Correctness of the Modern Academy," *Philosophy East and West* 47:3, 311–321.

[8] *Unfashionable Observations,* p. 143.

That all history is *subjective* is Nietzsche's observation which echoes the critical views of "the underground man."[9] His sweeping questioning of all existing values, whether ethical, philosophical, or religious is radical, resulting in his philosophy of perspectivism. He also applies this approach to history:

> In so far as the word "knowledge" has any meaning, the world is knowable; but it is *interpretable*, otherwise it has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. . . . It is our needs that interpret the world; our drives and their For and Against. Every drive is a kind of lust to rule; each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm.[10]

Nietzsche's overarching agenda of overcoming nihilism in Europe in the 19th century culminates in the questioning of the very possibility of any and all objective truths. But it is also within this project that he leaves room for the study of the past, provided that it contributes to enhancing the present and to serving life.

To that end Nietzsche examines three types of history in Chapter II of his *Unfashionable Observations,* entitled "On the Utility and Liability of History for Life." He writes:

> History pertains to the living person in three respects: It pertains to him as one who acts and strives, as one who preserves and venerates, and one who suffers and is in need of liberation. The three relations correspond to three kinds of history: in so far as it is permissible to distinguish between a *monumental,* an *antiquarian,* and a *critical* kind of history.[11]

Monumental or exemplary history studies models of great achievements of humankind in the past. Antiquarian history discerns historical forces that contribute to the present and to love of tradition. Critical history points out not only outdated aspects of the past but injustices that must be abolished. Each, however, when misused, contains a hidden danger. Monumental history may

[9] For the relationship between Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, see *The Disappearance of God: A Divine Mystery* by Richard Elliot Friedman (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1988), Chapter 7, "Nietzsche at Turin." I wish to thank Dennis Hudson for this reference.

[10] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power,* tr. Walter Kaufman and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 267 (No. 481).

[11] *Unfashionable Observations,* 96. Gray notes that while Nietzsche considered his essay on history to be the weakest of the four essays in this volume, today it is considered to be the most significant. Ibid., 407.

obstruct emergence of present greatness and produce nothing but epigoni, antiquarian history may praise aspects of the past which deserve to be censured, and critical history may uproot more of the past than should be uprooted.

In spite of the ambiguity of history, these three create the horizons of life. The horizons become enriched with the increase in perspectives, even if absolute knowledge is impossible. In the past horizons may have been created unconsciously, but today we are in the position to consciously create them for unparalleled human accomplishments. For this the proper use of history is crucial. In the words of Nietzsche:

> To be sure, we need history; but our need for it is different from that of the pampered idler in the garden of knowledge. . . . We need it for life and for action, not for the easy withdrawal from life and from action, let alone whitewashing a selfish life and cowardly, base actions.

And he continues, sending a warning to current academic enterprises:

> We only wish to serve history to the extent it serves life, but there is a way of practicing history and a valorization of history in which life atrophies and degenerates: a phenomenon that it will likely be as painful as it is necessary to diagnose in the striking symptoms of our present age.[12]

All the articles in *Rude Awakenings* contribute to the creation of new horizons in diverse ways: the focus on the question of nationalism (critical), detailed background information on events clouded by the passage of time (antiquarian) and the possible contributions to enhancing the present and serving life (monumental). Some papers contain more than one of these attributes, but none contains all three. One glaring lacuna is the feminist perspective on history.

Apropos the title, *Rude Awakenings*, many articles focus on the complicity of Zen and the Kyoto school with Japanese imperialism. But, to quote Nietzsche, critical history should be undertaken, in the "service for life," not simply out of *ressentiment*. The errors committed in the past must be brought to light, but "the knowledge of the past is at all times desirable only insofar as it serves the future and the present—not insofar as it weakens the present or uproots a future that is full of life."[13] While we must not hesitate "to shatter and dissolve the past . . . by bringing the past before a tribunal, painstakingly interrogating it, and finally condemning it,"[14] we must go beyond mere name-

[12] Ibid., 85.
[13] Ibid., 108.
[14] Ibid., 106.

calling. "People call names when they run out of ideas or are too lazy to do the hard work. Being seriously critical is hard work."[15]

II

The diversity of views on Nishida and the Kyoto school range from the judgment of Tetsuo Najita and Harry Harootunian that they fashioned the "philosophical contours of Japanese fascism"[16] to Michiko Yusa's statement in her article: "Nishida's systematic philosophy was far too universal in scope to submit to the petty racial egoism, cultural chauvinism, and pseudo-religious belief in the superiority of the Japanese people that was the hallmark of nationalism—or rather ultranationalism—prevalent at that time."[17]

I believe that both views are one-sided and fail to acknowledge the volatile nature of historical vicissitudes. This fact would lead us to see Nishida in a more complex light, similar to Andrew Feenberg's observation: "Nishida's earlier political writings had followed conventional opinion in over-estimating the philosophical significance of the state, a natural enough tendency given the centrality of the state in reshaping Japan from the Meiji period on. However, this state naturally had proven a false path, and Nishida's attempt to infuse it with his own culturalism was a disastrous failure, as he would no doubt have conceded had he survived the war."[18] In a sense Nishida is a tragic figure, caught up in the vortex of his times. Oketani Hideaki describes his case aptly as "ideas overcome by events, prophecies stumbling into endorsements."[19]

Yet Nishida is not completely free of the taint of nationalism, for he does sound like a spokesperson for the Imperial Way. A case in point is his famous pronouncement on national polity (*kokutai*), cited by various authors. In Yusa's rendition it reads:

> The Japanese *kokutai* captures the essence of the idea of *kokutai* as that which makes up the historical world; what the Japanese people think of when they hear the word has no counterpart in any foreign language.[20]

[15] "Whither Civility?" by Courtney Leatherman, *The Chronicle of Higher Education,* March 8, 1996, A21–22.

[16] *The Cambridge History of Japan,* ed. Peter Duus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 6:741. See also Parkes' review cited in fn. 7.

[17] *Rude Awakenings*, 107.

[18] Ibid., 171.

[19] Oketani quoted by Horio, ibid., 302.

[20] *Rude Awakenings*, p. 130. *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū* (NKZ) [Collected Works of Nishida] (Iwanami, 1978), 12: 415.

Later he defines the unique role of the national polity of Japan:

> It is only in virtue of the fact that the Japanese national polity, as the creative modality of the formation of the historical world, contains a principle of the world from which a principle of the formation of an East Asian world can emerge. This is how we need to think of *hakko iu* (translation slightly revised).[21]

The last phrase, rendered "All the world under one roof," epitomizes Nishida's position concerning the central role of the Emperor of Japan in world history. How are we to understand such a statement?

Nishida's pronouncements come from the era of nation-building when Japan began its modernization in 1868. Kevin Doak identifies a crucial factor in this process as follows: "No clear distinction between a sense of nation rooted in the emerging nation-state and a sense of nation rooted in the people as an autonomous source of racial identity, separate and distinct from the state, emerged at this time."[22] This is borne out in the confusion found in the Japanese translations of "nation" as *kokka* (country), *kokumin* (citizen), *minzoku* (race) and *minshu* (people). Sometimes they are used interchangeably, and even scholars of Japanese history have been careless in their indiscriminate usage.[23] More importantly, the confusion reveals something about the nature of Japanese nationalism that is prone to totalitarianism and fascism.

As Liah Greenfeld points out in *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity*,[24] nationalism is a modern construct born in response to structural contradictions in the modernization process. Her study of nationalism growing out of this dysfunction in England, France, Germany, Russia, and the U.S. is helpful in assessing the rapid modernization of Japan as a nation-state, including the price it paid. In sum:

> Once adopted, nationalism accelerated the process of change, channeled it into a certain direction, limited the possibilities of future development, and became a major factor in it. It thus both ac-

[21] Ibid., 127. NKZ 12: 419.

[22] Ibid., 178.

[23] See Atsuko Hirai's critical review of Carol Gluck's *Japan's Modern Myth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) in *The Journal of Asian Studies* 46:1 (February 1987), 89–103.

[24] *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 9. The work undertakes a comparative treatment of nationalism in English, France, Germany, Russia and the United States of America.

knowledged and accomplished the grand social transformation from the old order to modernity.[25]

The sense of unity essential to modernization forged the myth of the nation-state. As "an imagined political community,"[26] a historical construct, any pronouncements coming from it would be necessarily ideological.

Historically, "nation" originally referred to groups of foreigners who came to study at medieval universities in Europe, then it changed into a community of opinion and by extension an intellectual elite. In 17th-century England nation referred to the people and later the sovereignty of people. Parallel with this existed the aristocracy in Europe who were interrelated through marriage and the intellectual class which was cosmopolitan. Both of these phenomena were non-existent in Japan.[27]

Inherent in nationalism is the belief in a chosen people which is but one step away from military aggression.[28] The notion of a chosen people is directly connected to the emperor-centered myth in the case of Japan—"the sovereign embodying in himself absolute value." Although Maruyama Masao's thesis may

[25] Ibid., 487.

[26] For helpful references to nationalism, see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983). Also, Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1976). I am indebted to Richard Minear for these sources. See also, *Daedalus* 122:3 (Summer 1993), Special Issue on Reconstructing Nations and States.

[27] This point is important for considering political asylum in a foreign country which was not an option for the Japanese, adding to its isolation and provincialism. Paul Tillich makes an interesting point about the provincialism of German academia which he realized only after he came to the U.S. See his *Theology of Culture* (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), Chapter XII.

[28] This belief in a chosen people appeared in different guises. Greenfeld notes, for example, England: "God is English" and "God and his angels fought on her side against her foreign foes," 60. France: nation is the incarnation of the sacred, for "The Nation exists before everything, it is the source of everything," 172. Russia: nation born from *ressentiment* relative to the West: "First, that everything is awful with us, while in foreign lands everything is good; the second, that in foreign lands everything is awful, and with us everything is good," 233. Germany: "The German alone can be a patriot; he alone can for the sake of his nation encompass the whole of mankind; contrasted with him from now on the patriotism of every other nation must be egoistic, narrow and hostile to the rest of mankind," 276, quoting Fichte. U.S.A.: "The different peoples are to be considered as component parts, prepared, like so many springs and wheels, one day to be put together. . . . In this great work our country holds the noblest rank. . . . Our country stands, therefore, more than any other, as the realization of the unity of the race," 398, quoting Bancroft.

be taken as another form of Japanese particularism, his main point is well taken: while European nationalism was born from the people and the mechanism of rule was a value-neutral institution, in Japan the nation was imposed from above and the locus of morality was the state and the emperor.[29] This nation-building from above was made possible by the bureaucracy, impacted by the *han*-feudal order, with the Emperor as the sole source of all conceivable virtues. The people did not count, other than being subjects of imperial rule.

Japanese nationalism accelerated the adoption of Western technology, industry and military power but not the ideas of individualism and liberal democracy. In political terms, "Where the state order is not conscious of its own formal nature, it is impossible by the very nature of things for any private realm to exist that is not captive to this state order."[30] The *kokutai* was a powerful moral and material force that could crush any and all forms of opposition.

It is in such a world that the philosophers connected with the prestigious Kyoto Imperial University were called upon to become spokespersons on behalf of the state (Nishida had retired from the faculty in 1928). To take just one prime example, Nishida was asked by the Tōjō government in May, 1943, to write an essay, "The Principles of a New World Order." It would be used to unify and mobilize the Asians under Japanese occupation. Ueda Shizuteru summarizes its main points in his comprehensive treatment of Nishida's thought,[31] and Yusa also gives details on its drafting.[32] But, as Nakamura Yūjirō has shown, the event was not so straightforward.[33] Nishida initially refused to cooperate, but later acceded and several people had a hand in drafting the statement. Nishida was suspicious of the Army's intentions and was cautious about supporting the war. In fact, he avoided using nationalistic jargon, such as Greater East Asia, sacred war, and Anglo-American imperialism. In the announced text, however, these terms appear as if they were Nishida's own words.

When Nishida realized soon thereafter that the events occurring were beyond his control and seeing his inability to change the course of history, he began to rethink the implications of *kokutai*. It would be central to a global

[29] Maruyama, *Thought and Behavior in Modern Japanese Politics,* ed. Ivan Morris (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), Chapter I, "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-nationalism," 1–24.

[30] Quotation is from a new translation of Maruyama's "Theory and Psychology of Ultra-nationalism" by Richard Minear. Unpublished typescript, p. 4.

[31] *Rude Awakenings*, 87–90.

[32] Ibid, 123–125.

[33] See, for example, *Nakamura Yūjirō Chosaku-shū* [Collected Works of Nakamura Yūjirō] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1993) 7: 350–357.

world that would be realized by the people of a specific nation, whereby the creative contributions of the people would be recognized. Furthermore, a variety of regional traditions with their own *kokutai* would be promoted which would constitute the new world order. Thus, toward the end of his life Nishida articulated an entirely different understanding of *kokutai*. As noted by Augustin Jacinto Z.:

> In this process the Imperial Throne would stand at the center, but with the proviso that the *kokutai* be defined in terms of self-negation, and that this self-negation be extended to include the plurality of other *kokutai* or states no less conscious of their historical mission.[34]

But this was too abstract and too idealistic,[35] as pointed out by many critics, some of the sharpest being his own former students: Miki Kiyoshi, Mutai Risaku, Tosaka Jun, Yanagida Kenjūrō, and others. Yet the philosophical grounding of this view, the logic of *basho* or place, would be inherited by his successors in the Kyoto school.

III

Minamoto Ryōen, in his article, "The Symposium on 'Overcoming Modernity'," clearly states that "Nishitani was a nationalist and that he supported the war."[36] This would confirm Jan Van Bragt's conclusion that the Kyoto school is inherently nationalistic. But Minamoto also shows that Nishitani was an advocate of "world ethic," going beyond national egos to overcome the problems of modernity. How these two contrasting positions are reconciled is not addressed, but the recourse to Nietzsche's three kinds of history leaves open the possibility of affirming both positions.[37]

[34] *Rude Awakenings*, 148.

[35] In contrast, Heidegger's involvement with the Nazi regime was more explicit and concrete. For comparison of Heidegger and Nishida, see comments by Feenberg in *Rude Awakenings*, 168–170, and Maraldo in *The Eastern Buddhist*, N.S., 28:2, 189–90, See also comparisons by Joseph Grange and Allan Plaskow in *Philosophy East and West* 41:4, 515–527.

[36] *Rude Awakenings*, 229.

[37] For a parallel affirmation of conflicting views, see Rabbi Joseph Polak's concluding remark in his Afterword in *Tainted Greatness:* "This volume of essays has attempted to raise some important questions regarding some of our cultural heroes and the legacy they have left us. Foremost among these, in my mind, and perhaps the beginning of the synthesis is the question raised to me by Elie Wiesel, namely, not what to do with the taint of these heroes but what to do with their greatness," 305.

The Symposium on 'Overcoming Modernity' and the concurrent event, described by Horio Tsutomu in "The *Chūōkōron* Discussions: Their Background and Meaning," both dealt with historical problems that the Japanese experienced in its rapid modernization. In 1942 the agenda was twofold: first, going beyond modernity with its historical roots in the West, manifested in imperialism, capitalism, scientific technology, and Marxist ideology; and second, articulating the future vision of Japan that embraced Western technology and material culture but was to be rooted in native resources. Robert Bellah, as quoted by Van Bragt, puts it precisely: "The Pacific War posed for Japan the profoundest problems of cultural identity—the relation of Eastern to Western culture and the relation of the Japanese past to the modern era."[38] The goal would be "a productive transformation of modernity with global consequences."[39]

Karatani Kōjin in the Afterword to the 1989 reprint of Hiromatsu's *"Kindai no chōkoku" ron* notes that the problems discussed were molded in the decades since the Meiji Restoration and serious reflections began as early as the mid-1930s.[40] Thus, he states that the symposium expressed a long concern and should not be regarded as simply a wartime propaganda. In fact, the very opposite was true in 1942: the participants were regarded as dangerous threats to national polity. Karatani believes that the discussions are still significant today, requiring our attention and reflection, for two reasons: we are in the midst of the modernity to be overcome, and we have yet to find a viable philosophy which would make the overcoming possible.

The basic problematic of modernity, summed up by Nishitani, is the fragmentation and compartmentalization of life, originating with the fission created in Western civilization by the Reformation, Renaissance, and scientific culture.[41] The adverse effects of Western influence on Japan had to be overcome by drawing on the native tradition, for the historical resources of the West were unavailable to them. Unless this direction was taken, argued Kobayashi Hideo, a major representative of the romantic school at the symposium, Japan would be a mere replica of the West without any strong foundation.

[38] *Rude Awakenings*, 238.

[39] Feenberg, ibid., 165.

[40] *"Kindai no chōkoku" ron,* 265. The same point was stressed by Ioki Makoto in an article on the Kyoto school, *Asahi Shinbun,* August 17, 1995. This was in response to an article by Tsutsui Kiyotada in the same newspaper the previous day which discusses the postwar intellectuals who sought a scapegoat for Japanese imperialism and found the perfect target in the Kyoto school philosophers because of their prominence.

[41] Ibid., 272. For details regarding Nishitani's views, see Mori Tetsurō's study, "Nishitani Keiji and the Question of Nationalism," *Rude Awakenings*, especially 318.

Related to this overcoming was the role and direction that Japan might play in world history. In the euphoria of the early victories of the Japanese Imperial Army in the Pacific War, some of the participants expressed ultranationalistic and racist views, consciously or unconsciously, but the implications of the symposium are still worthy of consideration today. Commenting on the long shadow Nishida cast on the symposium, Tosaka Jun once remarked that "the philosophy of Nishida, along with Bergson and Husserl, could contribute to overcoming the impasse of civilization."[42] Hiromatsu also suggests that Nishida's logic of place, as well as Tanabe's logic of species, may be relevant today as it was during the war years in addressing this issue.[43]

John Maraldo moves in this direction in an article published subsequent to *Rude Awakenings*. He believes that Nishida's logic of place may possibly contribute to dealing with the "current problems of multiculturalism, multinational relations, the Eurocentrism of philosophy, and the construction of Asia as the Other."[44] He does this by carefully appropriating those aspects which are free of outdated Japanism and related ideological baggage. While Maraldo's essay, focusing on multiculturalism, is an interesting exercise, we would welcome a similar application to the recent work by Samuel Huntington on the clash of civilizations.[45]

In a similar move James Heisig attempts to apply Tanabe's logic of species to the contemporary scene, taking his own suggestion that the "Kyoto-school philosophy needs to be liberated from the confines of the culture and language that gave it birth in order to execute its full potential."[46] He thus seeks to retrieve something positive from the ambiguities of wartime philosophizing. Concluding his study of Tanabe, Heisig states:

[42] Quoted in *"Kindai no chōkoku" ron,* 30.

[43] Ibid., 271.

[44] "The Problem of World Culture: Towards an Appropriation of Nishida's Philosophy of Nation and Culture," *The Eastern Buddhist,* N.S. 28:2 (Autumn, 1995), 184. It responds to the problems discussed by Arthur Schlesinger, *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991).

[45] Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996). See also his article in *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993) in which he sums up his thesis, 22: "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominant source of conflict will be cultural."

[46] See his "Tanabe's Logic of the Specific and the Critique of the Global Village," *The Eastern Buddhist, op. cit.*, 199. Heisig ranks Tanabe, as well as Nishida and Nishitani, with "Russell, Jaspers, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty, Ortega y Gassett, James, Whitehead, Croce, Aurobindo and the like."

> Tanabe's political conclusions are in no sense a natural outflow of the logic of specific; they are a refusal of its author to take the idea as seriously as it deserves.[47]

In a subsequent work contained in *The Eastern Buddhist* Heisig undertakes the complex task of analyzing and elaborating on the logic of species, clarifying its origins and its application to the events of his times.[48] In the end Tanabe failed, yet his logic of species still merits attention and study.

That the central issues taken up by the Kyoto school philosophers have relevance today is evident in the keynote address delivered by Ying-Shih Yu of Princeton, president of the Association of Historians of Asia, in their 1991 conference. Summarizing his lecture, Tessa Morris-Suzuki reports as follows:

> For too long, he suggested, historians have looked to the past through a narrow window shaped by the values of the west, and particularly by the all-powerful western notion of history as the pursuit of "scientific truth." To break through this constricting frame we need to recognize "that the history of every society or people deserves to be studied not only as a part of world history but also on account of its inherent value."[49]

This is one of the central points that is addressed by Nishida, Tanabe, and Nishitani, however different on the surface their philosophies may appear. Let us examine its possible application to the contemporary scene.

Nishitani does not find any essential difference between Nishida's logic of place and Tanabe's logic of species, both being expressions of absolute nothingness.[50] Likewise, I believe that Nishitani Keiji's *philosophy*, as found in *Religion and Nothingness*, shares the same fundamental thought.[51] This work is based on a threefold analysis of reality as the field of sensation and reason, the field of nihility, and the field of emptiness (*śūnyatā*). The field of emptiness is explained metaphorically by Nishitani:

> Since there is no circumference on the field of śūnyatā, "all is One" cannot be symbolized by a circle (or a sphere) . . . It is, as it were, a circumferenceless center, a center that is only center and nothing

[47] *Rude Awakenings*, 288.

[48] *The Eastern Buddhist*, 28:2 (Autumn 1995), 198–224.

[49] *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 54:3 (August 1995), 759.

[50] Nishitani, *Nishida Kitarō* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 161–191.

[51] Feenberg notes that Nishitani's śūnyatā is a Buddhist commentary on Nishida's absolute nothingness, *Rude Awakenings*, 163 fn.

> else, a center on the field of emptiness. That is to say, on the field of śūnyatā *the center is everywhere.*[52]

This reminds us of a favorite imagery in medieval Christianity: "circle whose circumference is nowhere, and whose center is everywhere." One of its earliest formulation is found in Alan of Lille in the early 13th century. In his words,

> The circumference is the immensity of God himself, and because he is not circumscribed by place, the circumference is "said to be nowhere." And so God is the intelligible sphere whose centre is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.[53]

The circumferenceless circle is a metaphor for the boundless world which affirms multiplicity. In traditional Buddhist language in contrast to the world of duality which has only a single ego-center and always stands in an adversarial relation to the other, the boundless world contains infinite centers, each contributing to the whole. The world of nonduality affirms multiplicity.

Here emptiness empties itself,[54] and God is the "God beyond the God of theism."[55] Nonduality goes beyond the outdated constructs of East and West, nothingness and being, Buddhism and Christianity. What remains is the concrete historical world in which a new vision of life awaits to be realized through the efforts of responsible individuals. How that is to be achieved has no simple answer, but the pragmatic approach advocated by William James may be helpful. While it may not answer our deepest spiritual needs, it helps us dispense with pseudo-problems that hinder it:

> The truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity *is* in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its veri-*fication*. Its validity is the process of valid-*ation*.[56]

This is not ideology translating into fact, but philosophy becoming *embodied* in a person. In this process of self-cultivation one does not rely on an external guide but assumes total responsibility to insure that "truth *happens* to an

[52] *Religion and Nothingness* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 146.

[53] G. R. Evans, *Alan of Lille: The Frontiers of Theology in the Later Twelfth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 73. I am indebted to my colleague, Carol Zaleski, for this source.

[54] C. W. Huntington, Jr., *The Emptiness of Emptiness* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1989).

[55] Paul Tillich, *The Courage to Be* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1952), 190.

[56] William James, *Essays in Pragmatism* (New York: Hafner, 1955), 161.

idea." This is what is meant by walking the path that is Tao or walking the middle way (*madhyamā-pratipad*) as a personal challenge.

IV

Among the papers under the topic of Zen, Christopher Ives' contribution is important because he introduces the works of Ichikawa Hakugen, who was a rare voice in modern Japanese Buddhism. I would urge him to pursue his research on the subject, so that he might answer his own basic question: "the linkage between theory and practice, between philosophical systems and complex political activities."[57] In order to proceed some inevitable questions require answers.

According to Ives, Ichikawa was connected with Hanazono University, affiliated with Rinzai Zen, throughout his lifetime, beginning in 1921 as a student and until 1973 when he retired from the faculty. This covers the entire spectrum of Japan's military aggression on the Asian continent, followed by defeat and devastation and subsequent economic recovery. The question of time frame becomes a primary issue.

When exactly did Ichikawa find himself "increasingly against the war and the rhetoric of *kokutai*"? Was it during the war years? If so, did he act on it, if at all? Or was the protest simply a postwar phenomenon, an *ex post facto* criticism, as Hirata Seikō asserts? Did his criticism evoke any kind of response, either individually or collectively?

We would especially like to know whether Ichikawa's criticisms had any real impact on institutional Zen. How did he confront the Zen establishment about its complicity in the war of aggression? Did the Rinzai Zen institution respond to the criticisms in any way? Did Ichikawa himself develop a social ethic to avoid the errors of other Zen practitioners? Did he remain on the faculty of Hanazono University while engaged in his criticisms? Did his critique of Nishida include his close friend, D. T. Suzuki?

These questions are raised also in relation to Ichikawa's wholesale criticism of Japanese Buddhism, many of them well known but never put so comprehensively in a single paragraph. According to Ives,

> [Ichikawa] also attributed the wartime stumbling of Japanese to such factors as the historical interdependency between Japanese Buddhism and those in political power (the "state"); passive interpretations of the doctrine of *karma;* the lack of notions of justice and human rights in Buddhism, partially owing to the doctrine of no-self; the philosophy of debt; Japanese views of the "home" at the level of

[57] *Rude Awakenings*, 319.

> family and nation and their connection to ancestor worship; and the spirituality of aging and tranquillity, which contributes to uncritical passivity in the social arena.[58]

I myself have the same criticism and agree completely with Ichikawa, but the question remains: what did he do with it both on a personal and collective level, both Hanazono University and institutional Zen?

Robert Sharf also makes a important point by insisting that "emptiness" is inseparable from "form"—codified behavior, daily routine, and ritual procedures. It underscores the emphasis on religious praxis and somatic involvement in the Asian tradition. This should help young Westerners who travel to East Asia searching for enlightenment to realize that it doesn't exist apart from the prescribed cycle of monastic life. Too many people who go are disappointed in not getting "it," as if the fault is with Zen teachers and monasteries.

At the same time, however, I don't think that Sharf intends to equate religious praxis with mindless routine. Otherwise, Buddhism would exclude those people who seek some meaningful answers to the problems of living and dying. In fact, I would suggest that it is the small percentage of monks and nuns and lay practitioners who, having tapped the spirituality in Zen, maintain the vitality of the tradition. So, the question comes down to this: What is the relationship of spiritual awakening and formalized ritual? The answer may depend on how Sharf defines "experience." This is a loaded term with multiple connotations and needs explication. The different meanings of experience in empiricism, romanticism, and Haiku are briefly mentioned in Feenberg's article,[59] but its connotation in the long history of Buddhism may be even more complex and far reaching.

The same care in definition must also be given to "silence." Referring to the *Vimalakīrti-nirdeśa-sūtra,* Sharf makes no distinction between the silence of Śāriptura and that of Vimalakīrti, except to say that it's "a matter of credentials." This is akin to talking about deep faith commitment as simply a matter of "religious preference," no more and no less. But if we apply the twofold truth to the problem of linguistic usage, the silence of Śāriptura is clearly within *prapañca,* showing perplexity in the realm of word-play, while the silence of Vimalakīrti clears away all conceptualizations (*vijñapti*) for *deśanā,*

[58] Ibid., 29. For a fuller discussion, see Ives' *Zen Awakening and Society* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1992), 92–94.

[59] Ibid., 155–156. See also Sharf, "The Zen of Japanese Nationalism," in *Curators of the Buddha*, ed. Donald S. Lopez, Jr. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 124–125.

words that lead to liberation and freedom. Discursive strategy alone cannot cover the full scope and depth of human life.

I also find problems with Sharf's attachment to credentials, institutional sanctions, and traditional authority. While I agree that tradition is central to Zen, or any faith community for that matter, renewal and revitalization of a given tradition can come from *both* inside and outside of institutionally sanctioned groups. This is especially true in the transmission of tradition from one culture to another.

I remember talking to a Japanese Christian some years ago. He lamented the fact that Christianity had not spread more widely in Japan, and said that as long as they relied on foreign money and missionaries, Christianity would never take roots in Japan. In contrast, the tremendous influence of Uchimura Kanzō and his lineage of Mukyōkai (Non-church) movement, including such influential Christian intellectuals as Nambara Shigeru, Yanaihara Tadao, and others, had no official sanctions or institutional connections. They were outspoken critics of the war, when the officially sanctioned United Church of Christ in Japan, as well as almost all the Buddhist sects, were voicing unanimous support of the war effort. Proclamations repenting this shameful past of the Church, both Protestant and Catholic, appeared in Japanese newspapers at the time of the 50th anniversary of the end of the Pacific War.[60]

We also find a similar situation in Germany in World War II, when the official stand of the Church supported the government policy against the Jews.[61] Those few who helped the Jewish people escape persecutions were solitary figures outside of any kind of establishment Church—Raoul Wallenberg, Oskar Schindler, Chiune Sugihara, and other nameless individuals.

Several writers have accused D. T. Suzuki of nationalism, along with his lifelong friend Nishida. But he does not fit the ordinary definition of that term. He was born in the same year as Nishida, 1870, but his writings are devoid of nationalistic vocabulary extolling the emperor, the *kokutai*, or the war. As Kirita Kiyohide has amply documented, even during the war years when Japanese journalism was filled with jingoistic and militaristic jargon, Suzuki continued to be prolific but maintained a neutral stance, choosing to write only about religious matters.[62] This may be the reason that Ichikawa Hakugen's essay on Suzuki mentions only episodes that reveal the latter's

[60] See *Asahi Shinbun*, June 16, 1995.

[61] Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Random House, 1996).

[62] *Rude Awakenings*, 52–65. Silence as a form of rebuke is traditional in East Asia.

unique and open personality, and no reference is made to any wartime complicity.[63]

Soon after returning from the U.S., Suzuki taught for 12 years at Gakushūin, which enrolled only students from the imperial household, the aristocracy and the upper class in order to inculcate loyalty to the emperor. The faculty wore military-style uniforms, and greeted each other with hand salutes. The school was headed by army generals, such as Nogi Maresuke, who on the death of Emperor Meiji in 1912, committed double suicide with his wife to demonstrate his loyalty.

Former students recount Suzuki's critical stance towards the school and expressions of patriotism.[64] Once when General Nogi visited his class, the students were engaged in a five-minute meditation. Suzuki did not make his students stand to greet him, as was the custom. In the school publication, *Hojinkai zasshi,* he wrote articles in praise of individuality, predicted dissolution of the peerage, discussed poverty and other social issues which had nothing to do with the privileged classes.[65] If Suzuki had any inclination to be a nationalist, Gakushūin would have been ideal for his career. But in 1912 he resigned due to a "collision" with Nogi's successor, another army general. It was just at that time that he was invited to Ōtani University, a little known sectarian institution.[66]

Another former student, Hidaka Daishirō, who was Dean of Students at Kyoto University, invited Suzuki for a lecture on Zen at the university in September, 1941, about the time the Imperial Army was invading French Indo-China. In the course of his talk Suzuki deviated from his topic and shocked the audience by warning dire consequences if the Japanese did not learn the

[63] See Ichikawa's reminiscence in *Suzuki Daisetsu: Hito to shisō* [Suzuki: The person and his thought] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1971), 128–132.

[64] Koyama Naohiko, a student at Gakushūin, in *Suzuki Daisetsu: Hito to shisō,* 406–411. See also the account by another student, Matsukata Saburō, who notes a framed calligraphy in the Suzuki home during the Gakushūin period which read, "The world is my country; to do good is my religion," in *Suzuki Daisetsu: Hito to gakumon* [Suzuki: The person and his scholarship] (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1962), 63–74. The actual saying, according to informed sources, was "The world is my home; to do good is my religion."

[65] For examples of Suzuki's social consciousness, see Kirita, "Young D. T. Suzuki's View on Society," *The Eastern Buddhist* 29:1 (Spring 1996), 109–133.

[66] From his autobiography contained in *A Zen Life: D. T. Suzuki Remembered,* ed. Masao Abe (New York: Weatherhill, 1986), 21. In the Japanese version Suzuki also mentions the criticism directed against his wife, because she was American. *Suzuki Daisetsu Zenshū* (SDZ) [Collected Works of Suzuki Daisetsu] (Tokyo: Iwanami, 1970), 30: 612.

true nature of America's industrial might.[67] He also confided in a friend at that time, saying that Japan would lose the war, that the government was barbaric, and that the nationalistic education of the young was completely misguided.

Suzuki began writing on Japanese spirituality during the Pacific War, because he wanted to distinguish *seishin* (Japanese spirit) from *reisei* (spirituality).[68] In brief, he wrote that if spirit meant volitional will, there is no difference, whether Japanese, Chinese, or Jew. And if it connoted some kind of ideal, it is not inherent in a people but is something to be realized in praxis. This was an indirect criticism of ultranationalism in accord with the traditional method of expressing opposition to accepted views.

Suzuki, however, openly made negative comments over the years on contemporary Japanese society. He, for example, takes to task various facets of modern Japanese life: child rearing, family system, Buddhist clergy, unkempt kitchen, bathroom, and sewage system, unprofessional proofreading, destruction of landscape, etc.[69] A cursory look at the articles he wrote over several decades for *Chūgai nippō,* the religious newspaper, also reveals his criticism of Buddhism on a variety of topics: future of organized Buddhism, the ideal priest for reviving the tradition, freedom and the Buddhist ideal, proposals to invigorate Buddhism, and so on.[70] These were written for the Japanese audience and are not found in his English works. A thorough study of the approximately 100 volumes written in his native language is necessary to evaluate Suzuki's work properly.

The same can be said of his sometimes simplistic view of Christianity found in his English writings. His Japanese works include sympathetic description of Christian faith experience and encourage people to read St. Francis of Assisi, Meister Eckhart, Jacques Maritain, and other Christian writers. Very few Japanese in the early 20th century probed into Christian spirituality to the extent that Suzuki did, a fact which was appreciated by people such as Thomas Merton.[71] In fact, what Christian theologian showed any interest in a leading Buddhist thinker half a century ago, when Suzuki was writing sympathetically about Meister Eckhart?[72] Suzuki's appreciation for Christian religiosity is the

[67] See Akizuki Ryōmin, *Suzuki Zengaku to Nishida tetsugaku* [Suzuki's Zen thought and Nishida philosophy] (Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 1971), 284.

[68] His criticism results in the work, *Japanese Spirituality* (1944), tr. Norman Waddell (Tokyo: Ministry of Education, 1972).

[69] SDZ 17:169–182.

[70] SDZ *Bekkan* 1:289, 289, 445, and 456.

[71] See, for example, Merton, *Zen and the Birds of Appetite* (New York: New Directions, 1968), 59–66.

[72] Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist* (New York: Harper and Brothers,

starting point of his little known work, *Shin Buddhism*.[73] This is one of the sources of a recent, remarkable study, *Understanding Shinran*, by Hee-Sung Keel, a Korean Christian theologian, who teaches comparative religion at Sogang University.[74]

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Self-critique in academic discourse may not be fashionable, but it is an ethical challenge that is rooted in the Buddhist life: to live in the mode of another. As expressed in the *Bodhicaryāvatarā:* "Whoever longs to rescue quickly himself and others should practice the supreme mystery: exchange of self and other." [75] This has been codified in the saying "*rita shinjitsu*." Truth (*shinjitsu*) is realized by benefiting others (*rita*) by becoming the other. As I conclude my comments, three vignettes emerged, raising questions as to whether I myself have come even close to that ethical ideal.

In 1988 a distinguished Japanese Buddhist scholar of international repute came to Smith for a visit to give a lecture. We were just at that time organizing the "Free Tibet" movement into an official body called the Pioneer Valley Friends of Tibet. I had just been elected its first president, so I explained our goals and activities. They included consciousness raising concerning the Tibetan situation; writing letters to congressmen about the Chinese invasion of Tibet, resulting in the destruction of 7,000 temples and the death of more than a million Tibetans; raising funds in preparation of receiving Tibetan refugees in our area of Western Massachusetts. The visitor was surprised to hear all this and simply said, "We could never do that in Japan."

Although he himself was a ordained Buddhist priest, relied extensively on Tibetan Buddhist texts, and knew well the plight of his fellow Buddhists in Tibet, he would not do anything to go against the political and commercial interests of the Japanese Government. When I heard his curt reply, I felt that Japan as an insular society had not really changed over the years, in spite of it being known as a democracy. If Japanese society has changed since the war years, it is only on the surface and not at its depth, the depth alluded to by Endō Shūsaku as "mudswamp," Robert Bellah as "submerged transcendence," and Maruyama Masao as *basso ostinato*.

1957)

[73] A revised edition of this book will be published by Shambhala Press under a new title, *Buddha of Infinite Light*.

[74] Keel, *Understanding Shinran* (Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1996).

[75] *The Bodhicaryāvatāra,* tr. Kate Crosby and Andrew Skilton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 99.

In 1968, soon after receiving a one-year visiting appointment to teach at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana, I was one of a dozen or so faculty to sign a strong letter protesting the U.S involvement in Vietnam. This letter appeared in the college daily, so a few days later a group of students and faculty came to my office and urged me to lead a march, protesting the war. A protest march lead by an Asian American would attract the photojournalists, and we would make front page news. I balked at their request, for I had just personally witnessed the police violence in Chicago during the Democratic convention that summer.

If I were to be arrested and jailed, what would happen to my wife and eight year-old son, who had just joined me in an unfamiliar city? In a democracy like America we are free to criticize social injustice; in a land of immigrants we can easily lead a Free Tibet movement. But when it comes down to our own life and safety, it is another matter. I wondered about the plight of Nishida during the war years when he was under surveillance of the Special Higher Police and friends acted to protect him from being arrested.[76]

In August 1992 my wife and I undertook a two-week tour of Europe with a group of friends, starting from Munich, Germany. On our first day we visited the Dachau Concentration Camp. I had just read that the first liberators of a Dachau subcamp were Japanese American soldiers of the 552nd Field Artillery Battalion, 442nd Regimental Combat Team, but that news had been suppressed by the U.S. Government for almost 50 years because in 1944 the families of many of these soldiers were incarcerated behind barbed wire fences in the most desolate areas of the United States.

But once I saw the death camp, the barracks, gas ovens, and the sanitized museum of Dachau, I forgot about that ironic event, and my thoughts turned to the tragedy of the Jewish people that culminated in the Holocaust. After that I was no longer interested in sightseeing. Instead, wherever we went I traced the persecutions of the Jews, prelude to their genocide, in Salzburg, Vienna, Budapest, Warsaw, Cracow, Gdansk, Auschwitz, Prague, and Amsterdam. And wherever I went, I asked myself: if I had been a college professor in Germany and knowing about the Holocaust, would I have spoken out? What protest action would I have taken? What role would have I played in this horrendous and unspeakable tragedy?

Any simplistic answer would be a lie. Yet one must respond to the haunting words of Elie Wiesel in *The Gates of the Forest:* "He who is not with the victims is with the executioners."[77]

[76] See Nakamura's work cited in fn. 33; also mentioned in articles by Ueda, Yusa, and others in *Rude Awakenings*.

[77] *Gates of the Forest* (New York: Avon Books, 1966), 168.