

Emptiness and History

PART III

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VIII

IF, ON the field of emptiness, actual existence as such appears in the burdensome guise mentioned before, what is important is the character of infinity this burdensomeness essentially contains. Our actual existence is, for itself, an essentially limitless task. That it is itself, that it *makes* itself be itself, and thus *becomes* itself, implies a limitless debt with respect to itself, and this means it is at once an infinite debt with respect to all possible others. This debt has its origin in the fact that our actual existence is established within a world-nexus which is spatially and temporally infinite; that it is always doing something while relating to other things, and comes into being in that way within "time."

Unlike what takes place on the field of karma, however, on the field of emptiness our actual existence breaks through the utter self-enclosingness of basic ignorance and returns to its original form where self and other are not two. Instead of standing on *nihilum*, it stands on non-ego. Ridding itself of the infinite impulse, it achieves "non-doing," doing which is freed of the self's agency.

The field of emptiness is in such a sense the field of absolute transcendence, transcendence of time and place, of causal necessity, of the "world-connexus" itself. But this absolute transcendence is at the same time absolute immanence. I have said "birth-and-death *sive* nirvana" is the

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NISHITANI

true birth-and-death and the true nirvana, but actually nirvana, the absolute "yonder-shore," can only appear as birth-and-death, which is the absolute "this-shore." The field of true emptiness presents itself only at one with that dynamic relationship of "being"- "doing"- "becoming" in time or rather as time. That is also the meaning of what I said before about our true actual existence being the self as an emergence of suchness from non-self.

Our actual existence is in its very being-in-the-world, not-being-in-the-world: because it is not-being-in-the-world, it is being-in-the-world. And as such an existence, it is, I have said, essentially debtless while still essentially shouldering a debtless debt.

On the field of emptiness, as a dynamic relationship that comes into being at one with the infinite world-connexus, our actual existence can be considered under three aspects.

First, it is a "*samskṛta*" ("being-doing") existence that appears and turns in transmigration within the "world" while arising and vanishing instant by instant within beginningless and endless "time." This involves continually *doing* something. *Next*, on the field of emptiness as absolute transcendence, a "before" is found, in the ground of the present, which is before any past however far back it is traced, and an "after" beyond any future capable of being projected. On this ground of the present, our actual existence standing in the "beginning," and thus also in the "end," of time, transcends "time," transcends the world and its causality (the "three worlds"), and is eternal. This absolute transcendence, however, presents itself only at one with the absolute immanence mentioned as the first aspect.

Therefore *thirdly*, we can say, together with the statements that "birth is as such not-birth," and "dying is as such not-dying," that every instant of "time" is a monad of eternity. Here, each point of time throughout the past that traces infinitely back into antiquity, and every point of time as far as we can see into the infinite future ahead, are equally simultaneous with the present instant. The present instant presents itself only as something reflecting in itself as it were all possible pasts and all possible futures.

Or we may say the present instant only appears as something in which all the past from the beginning of time and all the future from the end of time are reflected. The "instant" comes into being sustaining all pasts and all futures in the ground of the present. (This is why I have used the

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

term "monad" of eternity, and not Kierkegaard's "atom" of eternity.)

From a different viewpoint, we can say that in the present instant, the present is at the homeground of all points of time past and future without ever leaving the ground of the present. This is because an instant is always present *now*, and each point of time past and future when coming into being as "time" can only come into being as an instant. In this way, the present, while being invariably the present of "time," is nonetheless simultaneous with each and every point of time past and future.

The past never ceases to be "before" the present, the future never ceases to be "after" the present, and the order of "before" and "after" in the sequence of time is never abolished. That is, each and every point of time is itself, the past strictly the past, the future strictly the future, while each is at the same time simultaneous with the present.

In this simultaneity, the present encompasses and sustains all pasts and futures. Or rather, what is being encompassed and sustained in the present is not only what actually did arise in the past and what actually will arise in the future, since what did not occur in the past but could have occurred, all the various possibilities that are eliminated in the movement toward actualization and come to be buried away without ever going beyond mere possibility, also enters into the "keeping" of the present.

The field of reality as a circuminsessional interpenetration is at the same time, as a place of emptiness, a field of infinite indetermination or endless possibility, where, in the Zen phrase, an "inexhaustible store" emerges whence "there is not a single thing." And the actual existence that emerges in suchness on the field of emptiness does so as something containing such an "inexhaustible store" within it in the homeground of the present.

The idea of the present being simultaneous with every point of time past and present may sound at first rather far-fetched. But, if we bear closely in mind that the "beginning" of time lies always in the present, and investigate this circumstance thoroughly, we should find that such simultaneity follows as a matter of natural course.

In our everyday life, "time" is regarded as being irreversible as well as without beginning or end. This is an essential aspect of time too, the first aspect of actual existence mentioned above. When, within the dynamic connexus (the "being"-*"doing"*-*"becoming"*) of actual existence, being as becoming emerges in the "being-doing" of the present instant where generating and perishing always overlap, "time" comes to be seen as

something spreading out infinitely before and after with the present as its point of origin.

This infinity is, I have explained, the projection within "time" of the infinite openness which unfolds directly beneath the "doing" of the present and from which the "doing" arises. And "doing," as something arising from this infinite openness, constantly nihilizes ("makes impermanent") being. This at the same time makes being into new being, so that being originates as something ceaselessly "becoming."

Insofar as this becoming is ever "new," however, and "doing" is each time a once and only occurrence, "time" cannot be considered other than irreversible. Seeing time as stretching boundlessly out before and after the present without beginning or end, is linked essentially with the fact of time's being regarded as irreversible. It is possible to speak of being able to probe infinitely back for a beginning and to search infinitely forward for an end, only in regard to an irreversible time. Conversely, one cannot speak of an irreversible "time" apart from the premise that time lies endlessly open in both directions from the present.

All this is, indeed, an essential aspect of time; such things as "newness" or the "once-only" nature in the present are essential moments of the historicity of "time." But when this one aspect is considered in abstract from the totality, it results in the standpoint of "progress" in the eminent sense of "secularization" mentioned before, the standpoint of modern secularism. In abstractness, however, this standpoint does not become aware that the idea of "time" as beginningless and endless only comes into being at one with an infinite openness in the present. This openness, the openness of *nihilum*, lies hidden beneath every single step of "progress." When it does rise to awareness, the standpoint of "progress" can only dissolve into nihilism. Nihilism is already touching the second aspect of actual existence. For here, in the ground of the present, time itself's "beginning" and hence also its "end" have already risen to awareness, opening up the horizon of eternity.

Here, however, this eternity comes to awareness as an eternal "*nihilum*," with the world on that field of *nihilum* being perceived intuitively as a whole (in the sense mentioned before of "*Es gibt nichts ausser dem Ganzen*," "there is nothing outside the whole"). That is, "time" as a circuitous recurrence, of which the beginning and the end are one, and the world-process as a circuitous event, are both seen intuitively as a totality in the home-ground of the present.

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

In this *nihilum*, as time, instead of being without beginning and end, has a beginning and an end which are self-identical, time is not irreversible. Circuitous recurrence and irreversibility are mutually exclusive. The recurrence of the same events and phenomena implies an essential reversibility.

While it is true the presence of a beginning and an end in "time" in the ground of the present and the opening up there of the horizon of eternity also constitute an essential aspect of time (and of actual existence as well), yet the idea of a circuitous "world-time" implies a standpoint which abstracts this single aspect alone. Here the present ceases to be a field where anything original and "new" arises. Both time and the world-process become merely the same things repeated over and over.

This repetitive world-process was apprehended in ancient mythological world-views as the action of "life" on the field of a so-called "pantheistic" nature, and in the world-view of modern philosophy as the working of the "will" on the field of atheistic *nihilum*. But in neither case does the opening of the horizon of eternity in the ground of the present truly signify an essential moment of the historicity of time. They go no further than merely de-historicizing time. We do not find in them the meaning of "moment" which Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Dread* has called "the synthesis of time and eternity."

The aspect of eternity in the present can be time's (and, consequently, actual existence's) essential character only at one with the first aspect. As we know, Kierkegaard goes on to say, in *Philosophical Fragments*, that in Christianity the "moment" has a decisive significance; and in all his works, he discusses "simultaneity with Jesus." But even apart from Kierkegaard, when our actual existence is considered at the ground of the present, at the point where time and eternity intersect, or when it is considered as said before under the aspect of infinity, time always shows the character of simultaneity.

In Christianity, for example, all creatures are considered sustained at the ground of their existence by the Power of God, the Creator; and this sustaining is conceived, in a sense, as God's continuous creation. In modern philosophy since Descartes, this relation has received all manner of interpretation. But however it may be interpreted, as long as it includes the meaning of a "synthesis" of time and eternity in the ground of the present, there unfolds a horizon of simultaneity. That means on the horizon of eternity, things which come before and after within time are

reflected as such into the ground of the present, and the present is reflected into the past and the future.

For example, in the case of "original sin" which constitutes the "beginning" of history, it is said that all men have sinned simultaneously within the sin committed by Adam and, conversely, that Adam's sin is still at work as hereditary sin in the ground of existence of all men. We find the same way of thinking in the "judgment" which is the "end" of history. The eschatological events are considered to be there already at work in the ground of the present; conversely, we must say, then, that the present is already there in the field of the eschatological "judgment."

Such a view of "time" is no product of idle fancy; rather, it expresses an awareness of actual existence that goes very deep. The Will at work in God's Creation and Providence may be said from the side of the creatures coming into being to be ceaselessly new, emerging as a sequence of one-time occurrences. But from the side of the Will itself, totality must come about all at once. In a sense, the totality of "time" can only exist as a single instant.

At the point in the ground of the present where the Will of God and creatures touch one another and time and eternity intersect, the things that occur as consecutive but independent one-time events have to be simultaneous. There, one could say, is the field where irreversible time, without ceasing to be irreversible, becomes reversible. Repentance, forgiveness of sins, resurrection from the dead, and the like, are inconceivable except on such a field.

I cannot enter into such matters here. For now, it is enough to remember what was said before about the problem that is raised for Christianity by "time's" appearing in radically historical guise even while history itself is thought to have a beginning and an end, and to also recall how the standpoint of secularism, and, in a further turnabout, the standpoint of nihilism, emerged as a result.

I have been considering the standpoint of karma as one which, like secularism, views time as beginningless, endless, and irreversible, but which, unlike secularism, implies in its ground an awareness of *nihilum*. I have, moreover, dwelt upon the standpoint of "emptiness" as a turnabout from that standpoint of karma. I have suggested that on this standpoint of emptiness the synthesis of time and eternity in the present instant means all pasts and all futures are simultaneous with the present and are accommodated within our actual existence.

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

This means that the actual existence emerging on the field of emptiness does so within the limitless world-connexus in a circuminsessional interpenetration with all other existences. Here all past and all future things stored within the homeground of the present—all things that appear in the “world”—become the liability and the task of actual existence as an infinite (but debtless) debt. This task is one in which there is no duality of self and other; it is others-centered and at the same time self-centered, self-centered and at the same time others-centered.

The original countenance of that actual existence is perhaps best revealed in the “Four Great Bodhisattva Vows”:

However numberless sentient beings,
I vow to save them.
However inexhaustible the deluding passions,
I vow to extinguish them.
However limitless the Dharma Gates,
I vow to practice them.
However supreme the Buddha Way,
I vow to achieve it.

All the vows are limitless in the face of the limitless realities. The original aspect of actual existence that emerges on the field of emptiness cannot be otherwise. It must express the essential burdensomeness of actual existence.

The vow to save all sentient beings may be regarded tentatively as the others-directed side of that burden, with the vows to extinguish the inexhaustible passions, to learn and practice the limitless Dharma, and to realize the Buddha Path’s infinite bounds, as the self-directed side. But both—the traditional formula of “descending to save sentient beings” and “ascending to pursue enlightenment”—are invariably interdependent. Thereby, with all pasts and futures reflected into actual existence and actual existence reflected into all pasts and futures, our actual existence comes into being within that circuminsessional interpenetration on the field where an “inexhaustible store” can emerge whence “not a single thing exists”—the field of simultaneity. (On the field of karma, on the other hand, we find within the concept of “karma from previous existence” (*shukugō* 宿業), a simultaneity which is similar to that found in the concept of original sin.) And just as, for example, “body and mind fallen away” was seen to be the practice of Zen, and the practice

NISHITANI

of Zen to be a playful, "sportive" samadhi of self-enjoyment, here also, aboriginal seriousness is aboriginal play and this play is deadly serious (in the same way, everything becomes "religious practice" and is as such totally unhindered). I have dealt with this at some length in the previous section.

Each instant of beginningless and endless time is a "monad of eternity" that reflects into the present the total reality of infinite time, and the true actual existence emerging as such a time is itself, makes itself be itself, and becomes itself in an unhindered "practice" that shoulders infinitely all other things that appear within the infinite world-connexus.

This is a "time" of historical, causally conditioned "being-doing," consisting of constantly new, once-only events, and is nevertheless a historical time firmly rooted in the ground of unconditioned "non-doing." While our actual existence emerges as primally new occurrences of "being-doing" within infinite time and the "world," it is at the same time an absolute transcendence of time and the world, and thus, in mutual interpenetration with all pasts and futures, it contains and preserves all things of the world in the present instant.

From that point our actual existence as historical "being-doing" (*samskrta*) in the present emerges in suchness with a historicity rooted deep and fast in the ground of the supra-historical. While actual existence in the field of emptiness may thus be said to be finite to the core at each and every instant, it is also thoroughly rooted in the eternal and hence is truly infinite.

The infinite vows taken in response to infinite realities manifest the infinitude in the ground of the present, which is the infinite life of actual existence. In Buddhism, the so-called "Bodhisattva Path" may be said to be an expression of the self-awareness of such a life.

On the "Bodhisattva Path" which penetrates the field of emptiness at each point of historical "time," each time must have an infinite gravity and seriousness. Christianity's most serious or solemn moments are perhaps the time when God created the world, the instant of Adam's sin, Christ's birth and resurrection, and the moment at the end of the world when the trumpets sound Christ's second coming. Or it may be that the moment the self is brought to conversion is the serious time when the seriousness of those moments is truly realized.

From the viewpoint of the Bodhisattva Path, the seriousness those special moments in Christianity possess is the very same seriousness possessed by

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

each individual moment of infinite time. We may say also that while gathering all those "times" within the ground of the present, actual existence realizes the serious gravity of the present as a monad of eternity, and thereby realizes all "times" in their true seriousness.

May we not say there appears in all this an original view of history? The three aspects of actual existence and of "time" given above—let us call them its aspects of "illusion," "emptiness," and the "middle"—constitute here as well one actual existence. This actual existence, though frequenting the three aspects, can show its own totality within each one of them. The freedom and self-sufficiency of actual existence may be said to obtain in this relation. And each of the three aspects becomes thereby something which reflects the three aspects within one. This "one-in-three, three-in-one" structure of actual existence and of time is too multifaceted to investigate here.

The Bodhisattva Path is linked essentially with the question of the so-called "Great Compassion," or what is generally termed religious love. It is the same with the vows mentioned above. I have discussed already the fundamental ground on which these originate. Now, in the following, I should like to address myself to this question somewhat more concretely.

IX

Having discussed above Kant's "theoretical philosophy" in connection with the problem of knowledge, I would now like to say something about his practical philosophy. Kant, as we know, emphasizes that the "person" is an end in itself and may never be treated as a mere means. This "person" is the point where the universal law of morality that transcends the arbitrary will of the individual and the true freedom of the individual realize themselves as a unity; this point is both individual man himself as the original subject of behavior and individual man as the original purpose the behavior is directed toward.

In this way, man's apprehension of the goal he has to reach or attain as a self-realization conforming to the dictates of his own will (that is, as his own moral mode of being), invariably takes place within himself as the deepest expression of modern man's subjective self-awareness, the revelation of the true meaning of human independence.

The idea of the "person" as an end in itself and the concept of a

“kingdom of ends” formed of a community of such persons are not only clarifications of the most fundamental ground of ethics but can also be said to have brought man’s humanity to a culmination of self-awareness. Indeed, the highest point reached by man within the boundaries of ethics can only be realized subjectively.

But is the subject of behavior really fully encompassed by the self-realization of such an ethical subject? Of course, the subject can truly be subject only as something which has its own basis universally and radically in itself, something which is, in its autonomy, self-sufficient. Without this character of independence—of “being its own master”—the mode of being as “subject” does not obtain. And the standpoint of the person as its own end is the highest manifestation of such a subject’s essence.

What I want to question here, however, is whether this standpoint of self-sufficient subject with its foundation rooted in itself does not stand on a still more fundamental ground. There is no doubt about the standpoint of “subject” appearing solely where the self finds self-sufficiency only in autonomy. But does the possibility of the subject appearing in that way to begin with, or the basis for the subject’s possibility of existing, reside in fact in the subject itself? While self-dependence is without doubt the essence of the subject, does this essence really belong only to the standpoint of the subject? Is it totally immanent there?

Humanness is indeed something that man is aware of in himself as his own essence. But can this essence—the fact that he is man—be comprehended exhaustively when we consider man solely from the standpoint of man himself? Does not the “human” existence that is aware of its own essence of humanness appear and come into its own at a more fundamental place? In a word, the question is whether the “person” as an end in itself does in fact divulge man’s self-awareness at the most fundamental ground.

From an ethical standpoint, this probably is the final word, but when we come to what in religion is called Love (*agape*) or Compassion (*karuna*), there then appears something that has broken through the standpoint of “person” on which the ground of the self’s subjective “being” is seen as its own end solely in the self. There the self is not in any conceivable sense an end for itself. Rather, it is the negation of any such mode of being, in even the highest sense.

Of course, the standpoint of the person also presupposes a strenuous

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

self-negation. It requires the will to refuse to be deflected by the inclinations of the passions and to follow the categorical imperative of practical reason, so that man's behavior comes in accord with a moral law.

This self-negation, however, involves choosing one of two directions which are contending against one another within the self, and determining the self in that direction. That self-determination is the establishment of the "person." Yet religious Love is absolute self-negation, a complete renunciation of the self as such. In that sense, it is fundamentally different from personal morality, which is a standpoint where the self is in grasp of the original "self."

Even on the standpoint of the "person," it is in a certain sense perhaps possible to speak of love. The "person" as an end in itself cannot exist without at the same time recognizing others as ends in themselves; for only through the opening up within the self of a field where others are also recognized as persons, can the self also exist as a person in that same place. The standpoint of the "person" invariably contains a reciprocity which can only come into being by building a community of persons—"a commonwealth of ends."

While this betokens a respect for the dignity of the "person" in oneself and in others, it can also be construed as a kind of fraternity in an eminent sense. The relations between persons may even be considered to be a religious type of Love for those about one ("Love your neighbor as yourself") projected into the realm of ethics on the standpoint of modern secularized man. This would make it the kind of interpretation which maintains that religious freedom and equality have found their highest form of "secularization" as moral subjects in Kant's personalism. But even though we can recognize a kind of fraternity in the respect and affection between persons, this is still fundamentally different from the fraternity in the religious sense of love for one's neighbor.

Kant's statement that the "person" is radically its own end and may never be treated as a mere means, means we may never regard other people as things. When his will is swayed by passion and greed, man always acts on the principle of self-love. Others are treated as means (to gain happiness, for example), as if they were things. Morality comes about only by negating and transcending that standpoint.

But, even as the "knowing of unknowing" which opens up the field that realizes the "thing"-itself requires that the "Copernican revolution" of Kant's epistemology make another fundamental about-face, so with

the question of behavior, it is necessary that this standpoint of the person be radically turned about again, a complete conversion from the standpoint where the self as a person is its own end to the standpoint where the self is a means for all other things.

The self that has returned to the "original self," that (while relying on the universality of moral law) finds its own end in the self itself, has to break its way through that standpoint as well and become a self that finds its end in all other beings. This standpoint where the self returns into the ground of all other beings and finds in them its own "end," has to be opened up as a complete negation of any standpoint of "subject" or autonomy in any sense, even its authentic (ethical) sense.

Here the self cannot in any ordinary sense be an end in itself. On the contrary, the self as person including even its reason and will, the self just as it is in its totality, has to become a "thing" to all other beings. And this is possible on the field of emptiness, which is absolutely "this-side."

As I said before, the self as "subject" is the self-"itself" projected onto the field of reason. This is so for the epistemological subject, but it is also true of the ethical subject, on whose standpoint self-awareness as a subject appears most profoundly. When the self-itself is practically projected onto the field of reason, that is, when the subject is subject as "practical reason," it constitutes the most intimate and immediate "projection" of the self-itself.

I said also, however, that on the field of emptiness the being of the self-itself, as a being at one with emptiness, stands in a position which subordinates itself and makes all others its masters, establishing their independence and giving them their being. (Of course this relationship involves a totally non-objective mode of being for both self and others.) I also said that the self-itself can only be in its own homeground and become a sovereign master by entering into the homeground of all things.

In such a circuminsessional relationship, absolute subordination and absolute independence come into being together as a total whole. Luther placed the following words at the opening of his *On the Freedom of the Christian*: "The Christian is free master over all creation and is not subordinate to anyone" . . . "The Christian is the servant serving all creation, subordinate to all men." Of course, both statements amount to the same thing. Only he who returns in faith to the ground of God and receives freedom as master over all things can become the servant of all things,

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

from the standpoint where the "self" is "annulled" and one's autonomy as "subject" negated. Conversely, only he who can be the servant of all things with a self emptied to nothingness can be the lord and "masterly constituent" of all things while existing in the ground of God. Here we discern the profound circuminsessional relationship between the self and all things.

For such a relationship to come about, the self must stand on a field where the standpoint of "subject" in the modern sense, and the standpoint of substratum, or *subjectum*, "that which is spread underneath," of ancient philosophy, achieve a mutual sublation (*Aufhebung*). Such a standpoint is opened up by an absolute negation that annuls the self in a return to the ground of God, and an absolute affirmation whereby one receives life in God's Love.

This is how matters are formulated from the Christian standpoint. And it is similar on the standpoint of emptiness. When the T'ang Zen master Chao-chou (Jōshū), for example, was asked "What is Chao-chou's 'stone bridge'?" he answered, "It passes donkeys. It passes horses." This is the attitude of service and subservience to all things of the humble Sadāparibhūta Bodhisattva who appears in the Lotus Sutra, an attitude someone speaking of Chao-chou once described as "his practice of everyday life that follows in the footsteps of Sadāparibhūta, as low and modest as a bridge."

But the standpoint on which one is able to place oneself beneath the donkey's feet, beneath the questioner, and beneath all things, is no different from the standpoint where one is the "master of all things." Chao-chou's answer issues from such a standpoint. Hakuin, in his *Hebiichigo*, says of what he calls the "mind-master,"

You must resolve to withdraw yourself this very day, to reduce yourself to the level of footman or lackey-boy, and yet bring your mind-master to firm and sure resolution

and,

When the mind-master stands firmly established, it is like a great immovable rock . . . like a range of towering mountains, like a vast and shoreless sea.

Hence it appears this "being one's own master" which occurs together with becoming a "thing" oneself and a means for all other things, takes

place on an utterly different dimension from "being one's own master" as an ethical subject. Here the absolute self-negation that sees the end of the self not in the self but in all things, and the absolute self-affirmation that sees the original self in-itself in all things, are one. That is possible on the field of emptiness.

And, looking back from that vantage point, we are forced to say that both the ethical subject's coming about with an essence of autonomy and the "person's" originating inevitably in a mutual relation, are possible only by virtue of the primordial autonomy of the self-itself and the primordial circuminsessional relation of self and other. All our behavior springs originally from such a fundamental ground. (This holds true, as I said before, even in the case of social behavior.)

Here the self, while being the self, is not self, and all our behavior, while it is invariably done by the self, can nonetheless not be fully summed up merely by saying that "the self" does it. As it is not merely "the self," it is not merely "doing" either. Which is to say, it is not simply something that originates spontaneously from within the self as subject by freedom of the will.

Yet, that does not mean it must necessarily originate from outside the self, from a material relation of some kind, for instance. What arises through necessity cannot be described truly as behavior *of* the self, or as something done *by* the self. In their ordinary senses, neither the standpoint of freedom nor the standpoint of necessity grasp behavior in its reality. Inevitably, man's behavior is the self's doing and at the same time not the self's doing. In its very inexpressibility except through such paradoxes is its true reality. That is precisely why people in the past have spoken of it as the "activity of non-activity." It is the free and unconditioned "non-doing" mentioned before.

Generally speaking, it is the standpoint implied in what has come to be called religious Love or Compassion. In Christianity, the precept "Love your neighbor as yourself" was given together with the injunction to "Love God," and I think the circuminsessional relationship that constitutes the structure of all religious Love is implied in these too.

What does this "as yourself" mean, after all? Loving one's neighbor as oneself presupposes that one loves oneself more than anything else. But of course that does not mean we are to love others with the same degree of passion that we love ourselves. Loving others is a negation of self-love.

Moreover, the self-love presupposed in such a commandment is

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

grasped in its absoluteness as something contradicting absolutely man's love of God. Hence to love others must signify here the absolute negation of self-love. It is not a question of a superficial, quantitative comparison of loving others in the same degree as oneself. It bears on the quality of the self's standpoint as such; it is a question of an essential turnabout of the self at a place where comparison with others is irrelevant.

This is why Christianity believes one can love one's neighbor truly only by loving God. In *Works of Love*, Kierkegaard says that the command contained in the small phrase "as yourself" penetrates unto the most secret retreats of man's love for himself, and brings the immediacy of an intense negation characteristic of the eternal. This demands the absolute negation of self-love (and consequently of the self).

It means making the self nothing and others the subject of the self, making the self a servant and others its masters, so that others are loved just as they are where they are presenting themselves as themselves in their own homegrounds. It means loving the other just as he is: loving him as a sinner if he is a sinner, as an enemy if he is an enemy. It is the non-discriminating love that makes the sun rise over the good and the bad alike. Kierkegaard says that in his love for his neighbor man resembles God and comes to unite with Him.

But the standpoint of such a nondiscriminating love must be the aforementioned standpoint of the *subjectum* (or *hupokeimenon*, "that which is laid under all things of the world"). The old metaphysics in analyzing the reality of a "thing" distinguished the form from the matter which receives the form, calling matter the *substratum* (*hupokeimenon*); but here of course I do not use the word simply in that sense, that is, to mean an immanent moment in the constitution of the reality of things.

"*Hupokeimenon*" is used rather in the sense explained above of a field that brings all things, each with a totality that is beyond full analysis, to realization in their mode of suchness. This field is not a moment immanent in existence, but a field of transcendence of "existence." It is the place of the absolute *hupokeimenon*, which appears only through the self's being made nothingness.

To open up this field in the self is to love one's neighbor as oneself with the nondiscriminatory love that makes one "similar to God." Love's nondiscriminating nature, and the equality that obtains within it, consists in all others—each individually without exception—being loved "as oneself."

Furthermore, "as oneself" means emptying oneself to return to stand

on the field where all things realize themselves as they are. This is indeed the point where our love for ourself is expunged even in its most deeply hidden preserves, but it is here and here alone can originate the mode of being of loving all others as oneself.

When that happens, "as oneself" is realized where each individual "other" is in-itself, that is, existing at its own homeground. It is also here that all things are gathered into one interpenetrating "world," in an "all-are-one" relation.

From the opposite point of view, we can say the field of the "world" where all are one is also the field of the "a priori apperception" of non-discriminating love where all others are loved, individually, "as oneself." This state of affairs, in which each thing presents itself just as it is in its real mode of being within a world-connexus where all are one, is, in its original mode, what Buddhism calls "suchness," "true likeness." But the field where suchness comes into its own only opens up together with "as oneself." That is the original mode whereby all things appear as they really are.

Several chapters ago, I spoke of the "like" in a bird's "flying *like* a bird" as its true "likeness" or suchness. I stated that, while it is indeed a matter of the bird flying, it is at the same time also knowing in the mode of suchness. On that same field of emptiness, in the absolute negation of self-love, this "as" (*nyo*, suchness, likeness) now becomes also the "as" of "as oneself."

Such is the field of the transcendence of existence. It is the field on which the basis of the possibility of the "in-itself" existence of "things" and of the world obtains. And, as a field that brings all existences to their immediate manifestation, it is (not temporally but essentially) prior to existence. The opening up of this field in the self means that the self becomes, in absolute negation of self-love, a *subjectum* serving beneath all things, loving them "as itself" in their homegrounds.

But this also means at the same time that the self truly returns to its own homeground, where, having risen above all things, it becomes truly the self-itself. It means that each self becomes its own true self. All beings are here at the homeground of their self, just as they are in themselves; and here as well, at those homegrounds, "all are one."

Therefore, the standpoint where one sees oneself in others and loves one's neighbors as oneself, involves the self being at the homegrounds of others in the "nothingness" of the self, and the others at the homeground of the

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

self in that same "nothingness." Only when these are a simultaneous oneness—in the connexus of the circuminsessional interpenetration—does this standpoint come about.

If loving one's fellow men as oneself is such a reality, it follows that the field where that love obtains is in fact not simply a field of the love between men. It must be a field of love toward all living beings, even toward all "things."

This must be a field where man himself stands; it can be no other. Yet it is not a field given up to humanity or human relations alone. Here the self sheds the standpoint of the person as an end in itself and stands upon a vantage ground where it finds its end in all others and sees itself as a "thing" (*Sache*) which is merely a means for all other things.

When Paul called himself an instrument of God, he was not merely speaking metaphorically; his words express a basic mode of being free of the merely "human." It is the same mode of being I spoke of as the standpoint of the substratum (*subjectum* or *hupokeimenon*) underlying all things. When, in the old metaphysics they called this "matter," theirs was a conception of matter unlike what we find in modern science. Yet the character of being formless, while constituting nonetheless the foundation of things which have form, may be seen as a common attribute.

Thus "matter" is what things with form return to upon dissolution or death; it may also be called the extreme limit of existence in the direction of the death of things. But the *hupokeimenon* I have been speaking of in connection with religious love has a meaning altogether different from that employed in metaphysics. It is the field where the self is brought to utter "nothingness" in a religious sense, the field of the absolute negation or "Great Death" of the self. Here, where "we become dead men while living," is the field of the absolute *hupokeimenon*.

If we take matter in either a metaphysical or scientific sense merely as the end-point of existence in the direction of the death of things, then the field of the religious *hupokeimenon* is the transcending of existence in the direction of the Great Death of the self. Here the self, with body, consciousness, personality and so on intact, takes its place as a "thing" or "matter," in the role of a "tool" or "instrument." In other words, without ceasing to be human being, the self comes to a mode of being where it is freed of its humanness. And that mode is existence as non-self, which is beyond duality of self and others.

But given that love of one's neighbor does emerge finally on such a field, that field itself is not limited to love of one's "neighbor" alone. The self is here at the ground of all things, the "homeground" where every "thing" comes to present itself as itself and where all things are gathered together into one "world." This must be a standpoint where one sees one's self within all things, within living things and within mountains and rivers, towns and hamlets, stones and even broken tiles, and loves all these things "as oneself." (Then, of course, it is a self brought to absolute "nothingness.")

Some may perhaps retort that to love other than a human being as oneself is impossible, for love in its original sense cannot obtain towards beings lower than man, particularly religious Love, which is possible only between "persons"—an I and a thou. The idea of loving all things "as oneself" might well be construed as a kind of pantheism.

But in Buddhism the religious Compassion reaching to all living things is not merely a feeling of "universal brotherhood." It springs from the essence of Buddhism's standpoint as a religion. In the history of Christianity, we can find something similar. Saint Francis of Assisi, for instance, called not only his fellow men but all things brother and sister.

When, in his famous "Canticle to the Sun," Saint Francis addresses the sun, the moon, water, fire, and wind as his brother or his sister, it is not merely a poetical figure of speech. That is how he really encountered them. To him, I think every single thing actually was a brother or sister, beings created together with him by God. And the reason the ground opened up where all could be encountered in such a way, was because he had thoroughly penetrated the standpoint of what he called "the little ones" (*minores*), so that he stood, "smaller than anything," beneath them all. This standpoint opened up at the extreme point of his dedication to God and denial of self. Surely that was not pantheism. In Christianity, Saint Francis's attitude may in fact be exceptional. In it, however, we can detect at least one example of religious Love outstepping human boundaries and reaching out to all things.

In religious Love or Compassion, the highest standpoint of all appears. As we know, Aristotle maintained the "contemplative life" was the

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

highest form of perfection and happiness allowed to man. The self-sufficiency of that "life" was what brought man nearest to God; it was the life of the highest part of the human "soul," the part most akin to God. In that sense, it is the highest realization of the basic nature proper to man and, at the same time, a life already higher than the merely "human."

And yet is it really the highest possible standpoint? Is such perfection and self-sufficiency after all true perfection or self-sufficiency? Aristotle's ethics are based on his metaphysics. In his metaphysics, God as "thinking of thinking" exists in perfect self-sufficiency, and as such is an "unmoved mover," not moved by anything outside himself. Moreover, in pure contemplation, he gathers essentially in himself all the things of the world. On the other hand, all beings are essentially oriented in their very being towards God and move while being moved by their Eros unto God. God is the "prime mover" in a teleological world. It is in this self-sufficiency of God that man participates in the contemplative life.

Aristotle's understanding of divine reality and its self-sufficiency, however, appears to be one-sided, the aspect of transcendence being considered alone. Self-sufficiency of perfection is not simply a matter of being complete and sufficient in oneself (as direct self-identity). Perfection must include the field where things infinitely unfinished and imperfect and even things which work against perfection like sin and karma are brought into being in all their possibility and actuality.

True perfection comes at the point where the Aristotelian "perfection" and its infinite number of opposites and contradictories are one. It is the same with self-sufficiency. When something is self-sufficient merely in a direct self-identity, then the "self" of that self-sufficiency, be it even the self of an only God who is *one* in Himself and nevertheless contains all things, still remains with a residue of an individual self. True self-sufficiency is not egotistical but is a self-sufficiency of the "individual non-ego." It must come in an "emptying" of self that makes all things be.

It is clear that the development from Hinayana Buddhism to Mahayana Buddhism implies such a turnabout in the ideas of perfection and self-sufficiency. From this, of course, the standpoint of Great Compassion came to be manifested. The same could be said about the transition from the Eros love of the Greeks to the Agape love of Christianity. In both, a turnabout towards a completely new view of God or Buddha, and of man as well, took place. But what relation do these standpoints of Compassion and Love then have to a world-view?

NISHITANI

Ancient Greek philosophy distinguished in existing things form and matter, and constructed a world-view with form as its center. It conceived a teleological world with a hierarchical order of "being" as the framework and a God as "first mover." As a common characteristic of the concept of "matter" in this metaphysic, and the concept of matter in modern science, I have mentioned the extreme limit of existence in the direction of the dissolution of things possessed of form, the direction of death. But contrasted to that, in a teleological world that comes about in the direction of form, the contemplative life and furthermore God as the first mover or as "thinking of thinking" may be said to have been conceived as the extreme limit of existence in the direction of the self-preservation of things, the direction of life.

In the new standpoint mentioned above, however, the world is viewed neither from the sole direction of death nor from the sole direction of life. What is seen on this standpoint is the direction of the self being brought to "nothingness," in religious existence, the direction of the "Great Death." It is the standpoint of death and resurrection implied in the phrase, "In the Great Death heaven and earth are born anew."

Here is neither the mechanistic world of modern science nor the teleological world of the old metaphysics; it is a world, beyond all such determinations, of original, primal reality, where all "matters" are each bottomlessly in their own homegrounds, realizing themselves apart from all cause or end and independent of all reasons why; a world in which all things are truly "such-like" and are encountered "as oneself" in that "such-likeness." The field of emptiness in which the world exists as such, is none other than the field of the rebirth of the self—where heaven and earth are born anew in the "Great Death." The self on that field is the "self" which is truly "as itself."

It is said that once when Saint Francis was to undergo cauterization treatment with a hot iron for an eye ailment, he said to the iron:

My Brother Fire, noble and useful among all other creatures, be kindly to me in this hour, because formerly I have loved thee for the love of Him who created thee. But I pray our Creator who created us, that He will so temper thy heat that I may be able to sustain it.

He then signed the hot iron with the sign of the cross. It seems to be customary to make the sign of the cross before something either to ward

EMPTINESS AND HISTORY

off some threat it might pose or else to give it one's blessing. But speaking generally, why to begin with should the sign of the cross have the significance, as in this case, of a blessing? What essential relation does it have to the fact that, in Jesus, death on the cross originally has the significance of a love that expiates sin in man's place?

If I may be allowed my own interpretations: Could it not be that the sign of the cross made over the relation between oneself and others means the opening up of a field where self and others alike are brought together in God's Agape, and are both "annulled" and "emptied"; and that there is where the encounter with others takes place? Does not the sign of the cross take the significance of a blessing because in loving others "as oneself" in Christ, all men become one's brothers and sisters?

Whatever the case, the purpose of making the sign of the cross was, for Saint Francis, to solicit the love of his beloved brother fire. This love occurs in his emptying himself and coming together with the fire, and the fire emptying itself (ceasing to be fire) and coming together with him. When Saint Francis made the sign of the cross before the burning iron, such a field opened up.

And in fact, the fire did not cause him any pain. As the doctor applied the hot iron, drawing it from the earlobe all the way up to the eyebrow, Saint Francis was laughing softly, like a child caressed by its mother's hand. And when the brothers who had fled came back, he said to them, "O cowards, and of little faith, why did you fly? In truth I say unto you, that I have felt neither any pain nor the heat of the fire."

This brings to mind the Japanese saying, "If you annihilate the mind, even a burning fire is cool." Of course, the fire was surely hot, and there is no doubt he felt pain. But the fire was not hot right at the point where it was hot; the pain was not pain in its very painfulness. The fire in the very act of burning did not burn, was not fire. And in the self that felt pain, there was no pain, it was not itself.

Saint Francis and the fire came together at the point where fire was not fire and he was not himself, and the fire was really encountered as a brother. In this encounter, the fire was in the homeground of the fire-itself where "fire does not burn fire" and "fire is fire because it is not fire." And there Saint Francis too was truly in his own homeground as a "self that is not self." When Saint Francis blessed the fire with the sign of the cross, when he addressed fire, water and wind, sun and moon, and all

other things, as brother or sister, was it not in effect an encounter on such a field?

To sum up, in the circuminsessional relationship a field can be opened up where contradictory attitudes—the standpoint where the other is the end and the standpoint where the self is the end, where the self serves others and annuls itself and where the self is invariably the self itself—both come to complete fulfillment in becoming utterly one.

This is the field of the “knowing of non-knowing” that is not distinct from the “being” itself of things themselves—the field of absolute freedom. By freedom, I mean the true freedom that is not simply a matter of freedom of will. When freedom is apprehended as residing in the volitional activity that man is aware of within himself, then it is already a freedom reflected on the field of self-consciousness and is thus transferred out of the home-ground of freedom itself.

In-itself freedom is not simply subjective freedom. Subjective freedom, which is the basis of “liberalism,” is not yet free of the self-centered mode of being of man himself. True freedom is, as I said before, absolute autonomy, “having nothing to rely on,” in the field of emptiness. And this is no different from annulling oneself in the service of all things. It is this characteristic which sets it apart from the freedom of atheistic existentialism enunciated by Sartre and others.

The same applies to equality. True equality is not simply a matter of the equality of human rights and the possession of property, which would relate to man as the subject-possessor of desires and rights, and which is based, after all, on man's own self-centered mode of being. That has not freed itself fundamentally from the self-love principle. And there, invariably, lie hidden the roots of discord and strife.

True equality, on the contrary, inheres in a reciprocal interchange with absolute inequality such that the self and the other stand simultaneously in the positions of absolute lord and servant with regard to each other. It is an equality in love.

Only on the field of emptiness does this become possible. Unless man's thinking and doing take place on that field, the various problems that beset humanity can never really be solved.

TRANSLATED BY REV. JAN VAN BRAGT