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which I have not yet read. I hope to be able to report on both translations in a future issue of *The Eastern Buddhist*.

The long delay in the publication of this volume has not prevented the presence of a great number of misprints. Particularly annoying are the transcription errors in Sanskrit and Tibetan words, which abound in several of the articles. However, one would gladly accept these imperfections if the contents of this volume were more satisfactory. According to the introduction "these studies and essays are representative of the work of modern Buddhist scholarship." Happily enough, this is not the case. Let us hope that they are not even representative of Buddhist scholarship in the United States!

J. W. DE JONG.

THE UNKNOWN CRAFTSMAN: A Japanese Insight into Beauty. By Yanagi Sōetsu Adapted by Bernard Leach. Kodansha International Ltd., Tokyo, 1977. 230 pp.

This book is not really a book: it is a voice crying out in the wilderness of our technotronic time, and its voice is actually the composite one of a remarkable trio of friends: Yanagi, and two great potters, Bernard Leach and Hamada Shōji. And yet, it is a book, and a beautiful one, with 76 full pages of reproductions of the finest samples of folk art Yanagi Sōetsu (1889-1961) could find, from Gothic English earthenware, via the Kizae-mon Ido tea-bowl of 16th century Korea, via textiles, Sung ceramics and Egyptian Coptic as well as Okinawa textiles, Japanese lacquered masks and raw-lacquered wooden objects from Korea, to iron kettles from Northern Honshu.

The text? I read it with profound emotion because of its truthfulness, simplicity and deep concern with the disappearance of beauty, and even the taste for beauty, from contemporary life, the impoverishment of our environment, the decadence of our handicrafts obliterated by the over-production of shoddy machine products, designed by designers who are either incompetent or overruled by industrialists who see nothing but profit as important.

In his introduction Hamada begins with an indictment-in-a-nutshell, as sad as it is true, of the self-assertive art of our time, "often abstract in character and clearly showing the pressures of present-day life and art: I felt a general lack of maturity both in motivation and technique. The first impression was one of power, of force, but it was followed by a sensation of violence and at the same time of emptiness. On the whole the Japanese exhibits had a greater traditional content and were more skillful in technique, but were less alive . . . Shells without fish. The abstract examples were mannered and did not spring from a genuine internal life."

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What is particularly refreshing is that both Hamada and Yanagi speak of their discovery of profound Buddhist insights, not through intellectual reflection, but through their art, their esthetic contemplation and creation, thus overcoming the dichotomy between Zen's *jiriki* and Jōdo Shinshū's *tariki*, as Suzuki Daisetz attained it in his later life. The word "beauty" returns with such obsessive frequency in Yanagi's text, that it sometimes has the effect you may observe when you repeat a word so often that suddenly it becomes a mere puzzling sound . . . Samuel Johnson said that "If we were more accustomed to deformity than beauty, the idea now attached to deformity would be attached to beauty."

I'd rather follow Yanagi, who has much of invaluable wisdom to say about the Beauty of irregularity or deformity. In the Eastern esthetic which he was the first to formulate, the beautiful truthfulness of rural, domestically hand made crafts are contrasted with the over-refinements, the ego obsessions of "art" as produced in the high culture of the cities. It is an anonymous sense of beauty, infallibly allied with function, in these traditional handicrafts. The self-conscious artist on the other hand, trying for perfection and "originality" rather than authenticity, fails in manifesting this untamable beauty "of the human itself," from which a communal, trans-individualist art must spring. Standing before Chartres Cathedral, Yanagi could say: "This is what you have lost. You need a new Gospel."

Yanagi's life work, says Bernard Leach, his friend for half a century, was to "establish art in relationship to the Tree of Life, to God, which is *Thusness* to the Buddhist." He was teaching the new Gospel in which he defines "Beauty" as that which has been freed (*muge*) from duality."

Every artist is more or less aware of being engaged in an encounter with Infinity. Every work done with heart and hand, is actually in praise of Life Itself. As such the real work of art is not the work of ego, but of a moment, or moments, of an enlightenment that transcends ego. The empirical self is, however briefly, short-circuited and Other Power takes over.

Although he is far more the artist than the intellectual, Yanagi drank deeply of Eastern as well as Western mysticism and art, and as he pronounced Rembrandt to be "one of our artists," we may well claim Yanagi to be one of ours.

It was he who coined the word "mingei" for the art of the people and his work on behalf of mingei led to his founding of the Japan Folkcraft Museum in 1936.

In this folkcraft, in the Sung tea-bowl as in the Coptic textile, Yanagi heard the heartbeat of "the human itself," the Buddha Nature, saw the universal, yet almost unconscious, tendency of the craftsman to make that which is at once functional, useful and beautiful without any of the personal arrogance displayed by the art made for art's sake, the art which makes our period that of the "art of signature." Here art becomes a means to self-aggrandizement—of both artist

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and collector, a collector who is ever more becoming a blind speculator in "signatures" . . . "Production is poisoned" by this kind of appreciation. The critic in Yanagi is an intuitive critic: the one who truly "sees," and who sets out to understand both the ends and the means of artistic creation from the Buddhist point of view as human aspiration towards the non-dual, which we somehow vaguely remember and may find to be our way home.

In his indefatigable search for the foundation on which an art of highest validity must be built, he was single-minded to the point of obsession, and therefore it is advisable to read his texts in small dosages, so that one's respect and sympathy for so many wonderful insights are not marred by irritation with the redundancy of some of his statements.

He is, in a non-pejorative sense, a real conservative ("all art movements tend to the pursuit of novelty, but the true essence of beauty can only exist where the dichotomy between old and new has been eliminated"). He certainly is not the reactionary who wants to scrap all machinery, for he indicates how, even in this age of mass-production, designer and craftsmen can cooperate to produce utilitarian goods which are esthetically immensely superior to the kitsch with which we are surrounded. On this point he certainly exaggerates in singling out capitalism as the culprit, instead of contemporary industrial materialism as such, for things made in the so-called socialist countries are, if anything, more shoddy and hideous than the ones produced in America or Japan.

There are precious pages on *shibui* ("the shibui quality is the very skin of *mu*"), on *wabi* and *sabi*, on the wilful distortions common in modern art, and he liquidates Samuel Johnson's dictum by quoting the *Muryōju-kyō* (Sutra of Eternal Life): "If in the land of the Buddha, there remains a distinction between the beautiful and the ugly, I do not desire to be a Buddha of such a land."

It has struck me during my workshops based on *The Zen of Seeing*, in which I insist on the most faithful "seeing/drawing" of simple natural objects, of a leaf, a branch or a flower, that after a number of hours of concentration the drawings of the participants become remarkably similar. By that time all the deliberate "abstractions" by the ego have been abandoned, as have all tricks, shortcuts and acquired routines. I believe Yanagi would agree that, at this point, *tariki* has taken over, or rather that the gap between *jiriki* and *tariki* has been cancelled as soon as the opposition between subject and object has been dissolved, and be it for a moment, has vanished into the non-dual realm of Wholeness. It is the moment in which we no longer "see nature" but "see into nature," our own included.

"They saw, before all else they saw. They were able to see. Ancient mysteries flew from this wellspring of seeing" . . . This is how Yanagi starts his chapter on the Way of Tea. For him the great Tea masters were actually masters of the power of seeing. They did not "look" conventionally but had the kind of vision

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that discerned in the most ordinary objects things of highest beauty. The tea ceremony is this beauty acted out as a ritual of universal validity, a ritual with its rules that demand loyalty and discipline, but which dies where this loyalty and discipline become the noncreative aping of convention, for "Tea is free and flexible in its forms. The Way of Tea is to discover the law of beauty . . . without the proper depth of mind Tea is not Tea, for Tea is the study of Zen through the intermediary of things."

And Yanagi deplures that now "Tea has sunk into the mud of bad taste and cannot save itself."

At this point I become aware that all of Yanagi's words are as quotable as they are invaluable, that they are as universal in their application to all the arts as were those of Zeami, and that the sometimes irksome repetitiousness could not possibly be edited away without falsifying the song which this great artist's life was called to sing: "that nature must be freely at work in the mind for anything to be well-made." As one who, like Yanagi, is a maker of things, I humbly, gratefully, agree with this.

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