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The Pure Land of Beauty

YANAGI SŌETSU

ADAPTED BY BERNARD LEACH

Rereading this work I am gripped by the fact that despite his failing health, Yanagi uses up his whole being in expressing his thoughts. Because he lived so much with beauty, exploring it from every direction, he opened for us a number of gateways, to the point where none remained. It would almost seem as if he were impatient to tell us that in fact we were already living in the midst of Heaven. Although I have so often heard him enunciate these thoughts, the fresh impact impresses me once again.

From the Foreword by Hamada Shōji (1962)

Preface

I write this book from a bed of sickness. During a long illness [his last], there has been suffering, but a great depth of understanding has come and for that I am thankful. As I lie in bed I have had pots and pictures brought into my room for me to look at. I have got into the habit during long sleepless nights of allowing my thoughts to ponder over the strange miracle of the quiet beauty of each object. On arousing myself I would make the effort to put down my thoughts before they vanished. When I think backwards, I feel that it was the consequence of this process, during my illness, which helped my concept of beauty to mature. This gave rise to my wish to put

* This English adaptation of Yanagi Sōetsu's (1889-1961) *Bi no Jōdo*, which was first published in Japanese in 1962, was made by the renowned British potter Bernard Leach, friend of Mr. Yanagi for fifty years. Mr. Leach's original title was "Heaven of Beauty." Some editorial revisions have been made.—Eds.

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these conclusions together in writing. The content is one aspect of the thought which I have finally reached, and, humble as it may be, yet at long last it is the outcome of four attempts. Now that my body is disabled I cannot do as I wish. Upon rereading what I have written it seems to me that I would have done better to have set down the essentials yet more simply, but to rewrite is too much for my weariness. Thus I decided to have my thoughts printed for the time being in this little booklet.

In conclusion, I would like to have the opportunity to go more thoroughly into my concept of beauty here presented, and one day to construct a Buddhist aesthetic.

I

To write about "Heaven" (the Pure Land) in this era of the intellect may cause some people to smile. Be that as it may, I cannot help thinking about a "Pure Land of Beauty," and I want to set myself to write down what has occupied my mind of late. If from the outset, anyone doubts the existence of such a place, it would be all right if for the time being he just assumed that such a place did exist. It is upon this hypothesis that I would like to proceed to speculate with the reader.

Even then, however, if you feel doubtful about this expression, "Pure Land of Beauty," you may simply think of it as "the Utopia of Beauty" and that also will do. If furthermore you substitute "the Land of Non-duality" in place of it that will be even better; but the significance of that I shall come to later. Ultimately, then, the "Pure Land of Beauty" is a Land of Non-duality, and I would like to go step by step and explain its meaning. There will be those, I am sure, who will question whether a Utopia of Beauty (i.e., the Land of Non-duality) exists, even question whether we have to assume such a thing. Why do we have to discuss such a problem?

In fact it is deeply interesting to note that in the two thousand years or so of Buddhist history during which the Pure Land has been spoken of, there never has been any question as to its existence. Words almost to excess describing the Pure Land there are, but never did its existence pose a serious question. The reason for that was that "the Pure Land" was here-and-now and in no far place. Of course, we have such expressions as "the Pure

Land billions of miles away" ($10 \times 10,000 \times 100,000,000$). That is only to show the contrast between this defiled world and the Pure Land. In other words, it is distant in proportion to the enormity of our sins. But just when we become deeply aware of our sin, at this instant the Land of Salvation is felt. I think one may say therefore that "the Pure Land" is not far off, that the "Heaven of Beauty" becomes a reality in the midst of one's awareness of ugliness. Again, I am not saying that the Pure Land and the defiled world are identical. It is when you loathe and leave this defiled world in earnest that it transforms itself and becomes directly connected with the Pure Land. So far as this defiled world is our present actuality, "the Pure Land" becomes an actual place.

From ancient times people have said, "Loathe and leave this defiled world; gladly take refuge in the Pure Land." Because these two are one and the same, ultimately, the more acutely you feel this defilement, the more you come to feel the Pure Land. That is why, in a religious experience of such immediacy, it may be more correct to say that there was no time to question the existence or non-existence of the Pure Land.

In Christianity, generally speaking, the problem of the existence of God was central throughout its history and the result of a dualistic way of thinking—of God (the Creator) and man (the created); of God (the Judge) and man (the judged)—which will always result in opposition. But rather than to divide in such a way, Buddhists see truth in that which precedes division. Thus Buddha is not a Judge or a Law-giver, but is all-embracing Absolute Compassion itself. There is no one who falls into eternal Hell, and even the greatest sinner is not excluded from deliverance. Such an all-embracing place is the meaning of "the Pure Land of Non-dualism." Thus when I speak of a Pure Land of Beauty it is to be understood as a place where all things without exception are accepted within Beauty. I would like to explain this matter step by step.

Again that is why, fundamentally, man and the Pure Land are not separated by a great gap. As I explained above, the statement that the Pure Land (Jōdo or Heaven) is a vast distance away is equivalent to saying that man has, *a posteriori*, ceased being man. But when one returns to one's original nature "the far is the near." This may be the reason Buddhists did not call into question whether the Pure Land existed or not. Only when they per-

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ceived it they described its radiant eloquence with every conceivable adjective of praise. Fundamentally, Buddhism does not divide man from Buddha. This is because the Buddha is no other than "an awakened person." In like manner, it is when the light falls upon this defiled world that it is the site of the Pure Land (Heaven). Light turns night into day. Just as night and day are not different worlds, this place defiled by human passions and the Pure Land are not different. It is like the persimmon which when unripe is astringent, yet left as it is becomes sweet. In other words this heavy, sin-laden body as long as it exists is the place where the Compassionate Heart is most moved to action. Thus the Pure Land being inseparable from the world of defilement is an idea peculiar to Buddhism. In the Jōdo school the statements, "Loathe the defiled world" and "Seek joyously the Pure Land," are always used together. This is because the mind which abominates defilement is the very same mind which welcomes the Pure Land. The beauty of the Pure Land of which I speak is to be found in that very mind which hates the ugliness surrounding us.

II

Now I would like to write about the Beauty of the Pure Land. First, I shall describe what takes place therein, its astonishing design. Secondly, I shall relate how this is not merely a figment of the imagination, but a demonstrable fact.

When we speak of "a Pure Land of Beauty" what is conjured up in most people's minds is probably some imaginary place as in a dream. But that is misleading because we can see the evidences of this Land everywhere around us. In Buddhism we have such expressions as *sbari* ("here") and *sokkon* ("this very moment"). Since it is possible for me to speak of "the Pure Land of Beauty present here at this very moment," not as an abstract concept but as the concrete reality right before my eyes, how could I fail to be captivated by such a subject?

Jōdo (Heaven), then, can be seen in objects themselves. Moreover, not necessarily in lofty or special things, but in the quite ordinary and humble. For this reason I am going to write about the Pure Land of Beauty that is expressed in normal crafts.

First let me deal with what takes place in this Heaven. On examination one begins to see many strange happenings; but chiefly this is so for the dualistic-minded. In actuality the apparent strangeness is no other than lucid fact. This enigma will gradually resolve itself as I proceed.

III

The first thing that one discovers is the curiosity that in this land there is no choosing between upper and lower. This upper and lower can be understood from various points of view—rich and poor, noble and ignoble, intelligent and stupid, gifted and ungifted. In this world of ours it is impossible to escape from the higher and the lower, however in the Pure Land of Beauty we begin to learn that such discrimination has no meaning.

Now when we consider art, that which comes to mind immediately is the issue of talent or lack of talent, or, genius and the average man, the chosen or the unchosen. According to the generally accepted idea it is almost unthinkable for one to participate in the arts without special talent. However, it becomes apparent that in the Land of Beauty there is hardly any meaning in such distinctions. This is because in the Pure Land the possibility is present of the ordinary man performing the miracle of creating things of great, even greater beauty. Indeed, it is this which I would like to call "the Pure Land." Are we not surrounded by overwhelming numbers of unsigned, anonymous objects in testimony to this miracle?

Example

Everyone knows the marvelously decorated Tz'u-chou pots of the Chinese Sung dynasty, but the astonishing fact is that it was the custom of the potters of that time and locality to employ children of around ten years of age to paint those pots. We cannot suppose that children who could not read or write could have received high instruction in art, or that they possessed special sensibility. To crown this, as far as their work is concerned, there was no great difference between one child and another, they all painted beautifully. When thinking of these examples, rather than conclude that the beauty of the work was determined by talent or lack of talent, it would be truer to understand it as the outcome of constant repetition and hard work.

Therefore, in this field the question of above and below, of talent and

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non-talent does not apply. When we see this lovely brushwork we might imagine that some genius of an artist must have done it, but such a conclusion would be due to the cramped and conventional habit of thinking that only famous or highly gifted painters can produce such outstanding work. When we grasp the real state of things, we begin to understand that those wonderful Sung pots were produced in a world where oppositions such as talent or lack of talent, wisdom or stupidity, almost entirely vanish. The reason why I draw attention to Sung ware is because in it one sees almost the ultimate beauty of pots. In this world, so to speak, we can catch a glimpse of Heaven, the Pure Land. Is it not true that among Sung pots examples of ugliness are rare? This demonstrates the feature of all things being saved in the Pure Land.

IV

Another pair of opposites in the consideration of beauty is the difference between skill and clumsiness. But this kind of discrimination vanishes in the Pure Land, leaving almost no trace of meaning. Usually, technical skill enhances the beauty, yet there are instances in art in which clumsiness contributes to beauty, adding strength. In the Pure Land we may see again and again examples where the very clumsiness is allied to beauty.

The apparent advantages and disadvantages of skill or unskill are beside the point, for these qualities are not determinants in this land. Rather, we can even state that there are all too many instances of excessive skill leading to ugliness, and it is frequently the case, in reverse, that clumsiness gives rise to friendliness of feeling; the truth of this can be seen everywhere. It is due to the fact that skillfulness easily becomes clever contrivance, whereas clumsiness is more often combined with innocent simplicity.

Example

In the National Japanese Folk Craft Museum there is a very beautiful Korean folk landscape painting. It shows an elementary line and the method of representation is child-like, and yet as such it has great beauty. Looking at such a painting, we have before us the proof that it was done in a world where skill was not essential. This assures us that in the Pure Land skill is not indispensable. We may even say skill by itself would be an obstacle to

achieving such innocent and artless beauty. Furthermore, we may conclude that once we have been entrapped by skillful knowledge it may be too late for us to reach the Pure Land, perhaps impossible.

Originally, there are no doubt examples of clumsiness standing in the way of the expression of beauty, and, therefore, it cannot be said that clumsiness is essential to artistic expression. But at the same time we may conclude that skill is not indispensable either. In fact, when we weigh which of the two is most blameworthy, we find the greater danger lies in skill. With skill comes all kinds of temptations. How many works of art have stumbled and fallen because of this?

V

Next, we come to understand that just as there is no distinction between higher and lower in the Pure Land of Beauty, there is equally no higher or lower in objects. Let us take the distinction between noble and ignoble, rich and poor. It is not the aristocratic or ornate objects which are most highly valued. We find many examples of things which are humble and liable to be disregarded because they are common folk-utensils being accorded a high place in this Heaven. In the Pure Land all oppositions between aristocratic and plebeian, rich or poor are erased for us. Thankfully, the Pure Land seems to be so made that humble objects just as they are are allowed to become bound to great beauty. The vast quantity of such things puts this beyond doubt, and enables us to see how the very sumptuousness of wealth or aristocracy often contains less of truth and beauty.

Example

The most suitable examples which come to mind are the various old and famous Tea utensils, the tea-bowls and so on revered in Japan today as masterpieces and National Treasures. But when we reflect on the fact that most of them were originally cheap, ordinary day-to-day articles (e.g., Korean rice-bowls) do we not perceive that in our Heaven of Beauty distinctions of nobility have little significance? At any rate, from the undeniable fact that these originally modest folkcraft utensils made in great quantity have achieved the highest rank in the world of Tea, we can conclude that in the Pure Land the distinction between noble and humble is almost obliterated. When we carry

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the thought further we see that those articles which are overdecorated with aristocratic intention lean towards unhealthy decadence. We can no longer state that merely being aristocratic can ensure a high place in Heaven. Coloured Nabeshima porcelain is a good example of this, particularly the red-enamelled variety, because it was made for the use of the feudal ruling clan, and was finely finished in the choicest material. These Nabeshima porcelains were certainly refined, but from the point of view of art can we describe them as of the highest standard? Their lack of vitality and freedom and the feeling of constraint they give is due to the restricted state of mind in the makers when they were being made, which tended to suppress creative freedom. Some people consider that coloured Nabeshima ware is the finest of red enamelled porcelain, but this is because they merely confirm the prevailing conventional thinking which regards aristocratic objects as of the first order, and things made for the masses of a low order. We certainly cannot call this Nabeshima ware the best of red enamelled porcelain. If only you can see an object in its naked reality then you can understand how baseless the judgment is that all aristocratic things are best.

To summarise, we can now realise that those folkcrafts which have hitherto been disdained in fact quite often are accorded a high rank in the Pure Land of Beauty. The proof of this may be seen most directly in the evidence of the genuine Tea Wares of Japan. As one can see from the coloured enamels of Nabeshima, aristocratic wares, contrary to general opinion, are not necessarily examples of a free and creative spirit. It is thus clear to us that differences in worldly rank do not apply here, for it is not rare for articles of humble origin to express beauty of a high order.

VI

To this point I have discussed the marvels which take place both in man and in the things he makes. Now I wish to consider the appearance of the same marvel in the ways in which the things are made. I have encountered countless instances of the miraculous manner in which objects, howsoever made, are embraced by beauty. It is just such a world I want to describe as the Heaven of Beauty, a land in which all is included and embraced in beauty. It is also the place in which ugliness cannot occur. Here we come to comprehend the

way in which the who, the how, and the what all become beautiful. This is the exquisite work of the Pure Land. Ultimately, the footprints of ugliness disappear; all traces vanish; the duality comes to an end. In the *Sutra of Eternal Life*, there is reference to the "non-existence of duality of beauty-ugliness." This is indeed a laudable description of what takes place. Again we have the phrase "neither purity nor defilement," and indeed in this Heaven the roots of all such dualities are severed.

Since ultimately the Pure Land of Beauty does not belong to relativity, it is the place of non-duality, the land of non-dualistic beauty. Here the slate is wiped clean of all relativity.

This beauty, therefore, is not what remains after the negation of ugliness. It is an absolute with no antonym. It is thus not the antithesis of ugliness, it clearly belongs to a world where the dichotomy of "beauty-ugliness" has died out. This beauty of the Pure Land, then, expresses an aspect of beauty which has no antonyms. "Beauty" or "good" are but provisional names. Compelled to express it, I can only say it is "that which is not-two." Even then, that does not mean "something of the nature of not-two-ness"; it would be better to say that "not-two" is itself beauty.

Ultimate beauty thus becomes impossible apart from non-duality. Since being nondual it cannot but be beautiful, ugliness, on the other hand, disappears as a matter of course. In short, the absence of duality is, *per se*, beauty, but not by overcoming or rejecting ugliness. If I must add anything further, perhaps I can call this the beauty of Beauty itself, or autonomous beauty. Therefore, conversely, it is beauty without ugliness, beauty which has no antonym. Finally, I would like to call this ultimate beauty "the beauty of the Pure Land." Once entered, ugliness has no place, "all things become beautiful." This is why Buddhists could not help arriving at the idea that "everything without exception is Buddha." Therefore in the Pure Land of Beauty there is nothing that does not gain salvation. All things are accepted in this aspect of beauty. Do such things really occur, or is this a dream? To prove it is no fantasy I would like to cite the following examples.

Examples

It is probable that on both sides, East and West, let us say before the 12th century or earlier, it was almost impossible to find anything which was ugly. This implies that in those earlier times this miraculous phenomenon of ubi-

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quitos beauty prevailed. If we examine the matter closely, even in less ancient times, we are able to see the concept "everything without exception is Buddha" at work in art.

Again, as examples, just as one can rarely find any specimens of ugly Coptic or Inca weaving, so also in more recent time, there is not a single piece of Okinawa textile which could really be described as ugly. This miraculous world where ugliness becomes impossible is what I call "the Pure Land of Beauty."

In this age of overwhelming ugliness, we cannot help feeling a strong yearning for this Heaven where ugliness is not possible. Since it is an actuality that time, space, and man really can be embraced without exception by the blessings of beauty, would it not be well to give this consideration as an aesthetical problem of the utmost urgency? In view of the fact there is not a single example of ugliness among Coptic, Inca, or Okinawan textiles, and also recollecting they were done by very simple and humble people, it is a certainty that this marvel, "everything without exception is Buddha," is actually taking place in the Pure Land of Beauty. Wonderful as it may seem, this is the place where distinctions between good and bad, high or low, or beauty and ugliness, both in men and or in objects, vanish.

VII

Now we come to the third marvel that takes place in this Pure Land. As an inevitable result of this wondrous working, in those places and periods where ugliness did not prevail, all men from the rulers down to the humblest used only genuinely good things from morning to night. This means these ordinary articles made in perhaps large quantity by ordinary people, are by the very property of number closely allied to beauty. In this way even the poorest people lived amongst superb artifacts. Today, if we think of this it seems a dream, but in those times and places people were unable to live in ugliness, in fact the articles used by the poor were the most beautiful—a truly wonderful spectacle to be seen in the Heaven of Beauty, is it not?

Even from an economical standpoint this was ideal, not only because the goods were inexpensive but because they remained excellect. The cheaper they were the greater was the guarantee of beauty. What a fortunate pheno-

menon! Here we find the happy unity of beauty and frugality. Beauty and low cost were not opposed, whereas our constant experience in our own age is the reverse. In "the Land of Beauty" there is not the slightest discrepancy between them. In some cases, beauty is even enhanced because of low cost. Could we imagine a happier state of affairs? This is because today in our present environment troubles originating in the conflict between beauty and low cost occur all too frequently.

Example

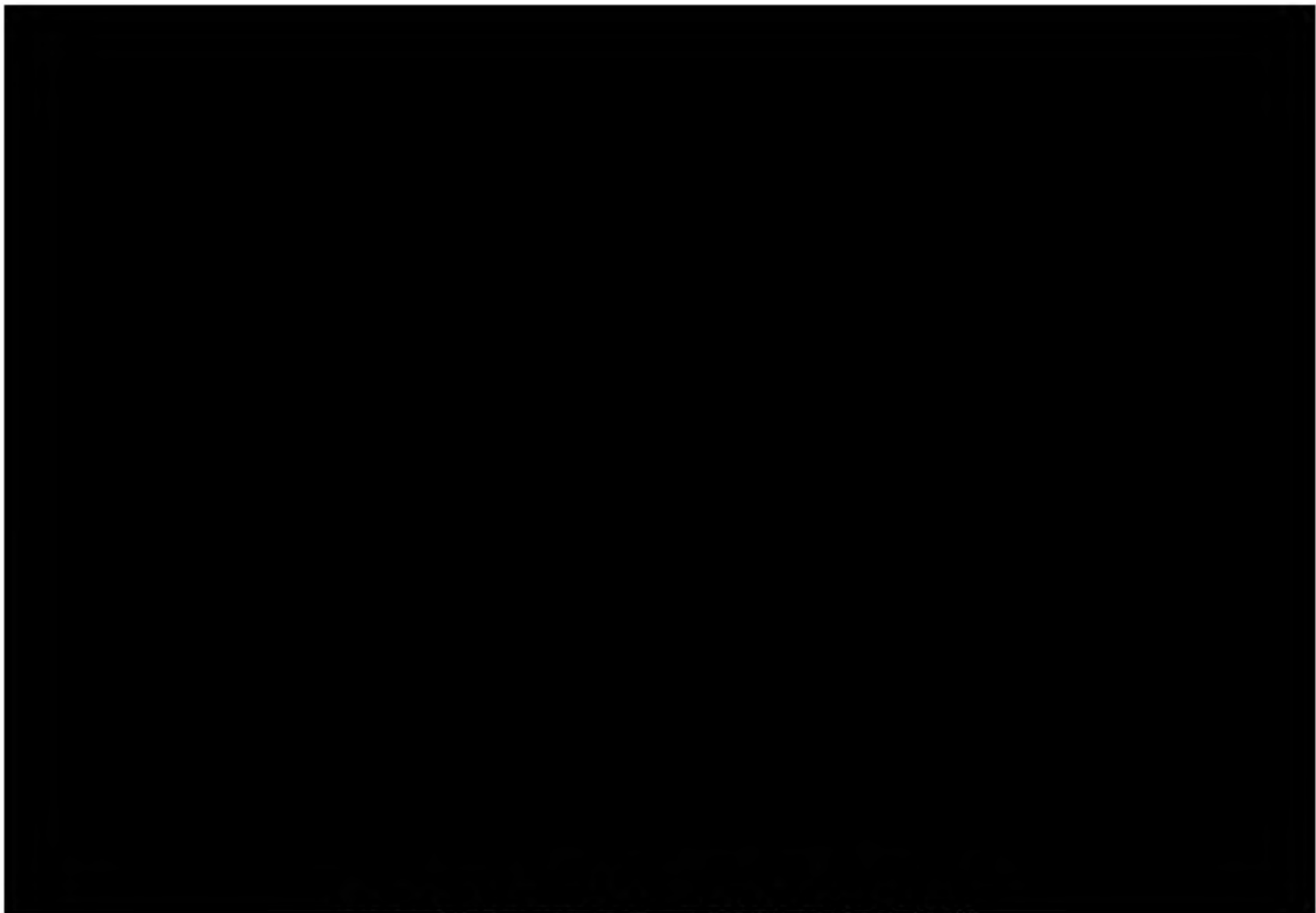
I shall take a very simple example and try to describe the way in which the miracle of beauty actually took place. Amongst Japanese ways of weaving there was one type of indigo-dyed *kasuri*¹ that prospered in several centres from the close of the Feudal Period into the early Meiji Restoration (from the mid-19th century to the turn of the century). It was traded from port to port and was used by the fairly upper-class on down to the lower class population. Hardly any chest-of-drawers would have failed to contain one or two garments made of this *kasuri*. In those days it was a very ordinary cotton cloth for clothing. It was not expensive, except for one kind in which the pattern was minute, but the cost of the ordinary kind could not have troubled anyone's purse and everyone employed it for normal daily use. Yet considered from our viewpoint today this indigo *kasuri*, cheap and for daily use, is of a remarkable beauty, particularly when used and frequently washed. This commonly used cloth is in its very unpretentiousness refreshingly beautiful, and in it we can see before our eyes the identity of beauty and thrift.

Kasuri represents the most highly developed technique in Japan. It may be called the characteristic Japanese cloth. To Japanese themselves it is a common cloth seen everywhere, but when foreigners see it they are surprised by its fresh loveliness. Not only foreigners, anyone who can see its authentic beauty will come to realise what a fine textile has been evolved on these shores. Can we not see by this the astonishing fact that the Japanese have been in the habit of commonly using something of great beauty without taking any

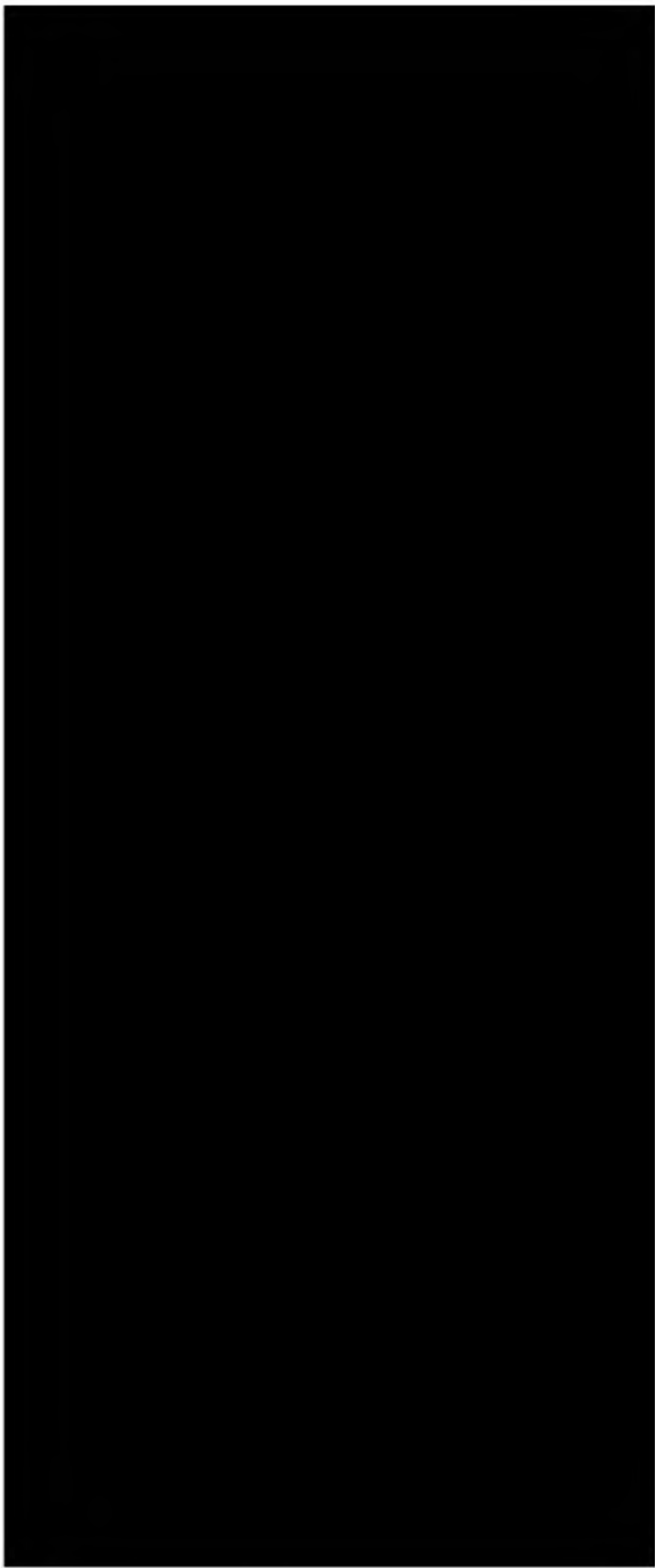
¹ *Kasuri* is a unique kind of textile, originating in India, in which either the thread of warp, or of the weft, or both, are dyed in calculated lengths before weaving to form pattern. B.L.



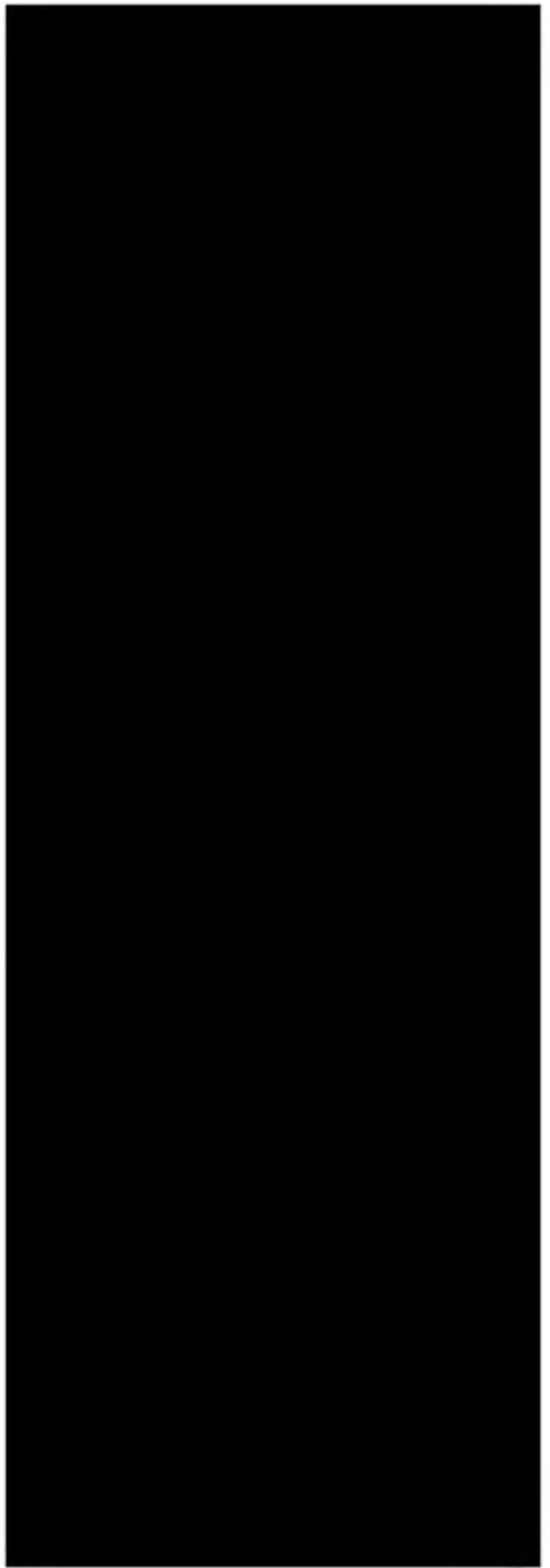
SWANKOLOK WARE THAILAND
(page 29)



T'ZU CHOU WARE SUNG DYNASTY
(page 22)



MOKUJIKI
(page 38)



KOREAN FOLK PAINTING
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particular notice of it—one more actual example of the harmony between beauty and economy.

So far, I have said nothing about the beauty of the colour. In the unsurpassed loveliness of the indigo dye we can see the identity of thrift and beauty. Today, the situation is degenerating. True indigo and the colours produced from it have risen greatly in cost. But we cannot escape blame. It is we ourselves who have allowed this state of affairs to develop.

We human beings, without even a sense of regret or any reflection have permitted the loss of this beautiful colour. We have allowed ourselves to be driven into this inescapable situation. It is because of this stupidity that now ugly colours have become so widespread.

VIII

Next, in the Pure Land it is so arranged that everyone is saved by the hand of beauty. This means that in our fundamental state we are all, without exception, saved. Put more simply, man is originally made so as to make and use beautiful things. Hence originally things are arranged rather that the making of ugly things is impossible. If at any time man finds himself dispossessed of this happy state, the cause may no doubt be laid on acts which disturb and defile this natural order. This would be like a child who is given by his parents a ticket for a trip, and throws it away, making the gift useless, and finally being unable to go on the expedition.

When we look at nature which surrounds us, for example, grass and stones, not to speak of flowers or butterflies, we discover there is not a thing which is ugly. There all things are beautiful in their true state. Although some of us might consider certain things less beautiful than others, such judgment is based on self-centred human ideas. In nature itself "ugliness" is inconceivable. It is from human convenience that man discriminates, but in nature the difference between the high and the low, beauty and ugliness has no meaning.

Example

The clays of Swankolok in Thailand and of Tamba in Japan which people might call poor raw material, are from a man-centred viewpoint said to be bad, or, not being white, too ordinary. Judged from nature itself, however,

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there is no such thing as bad or ugly material. We can see this as a fact before our eyes when we look at Swankolok or old Tamba wares, which cannot be imagined apart from these so-called bad materials. Such clays in their very poorness of quality are given life by the way in which they are employed in fine pots. Used in a suitable way, one sees that the so-called bad clays come to life. We may learn from this that the birth of beauty of this sort is paradoxically dependent on what has been called poor clay. In the same way, man, if he is able to live in his original nature, will make nothing which ever goes wrong. Should anything be amiss it would be more reasonable to think that the cause was on the human side. Where does such error arise? All said and done, all mistakes arise due to our attachment to the discriminating mind, dividing I and thou, beauty and ugliness, skillfulness and unskillfulness, upper and lower.

IX

When we come to think in this way, all that man makes, if left to itself, should tread the "path of non-error." The reason why we do fall into error is simply because something happens which impairs our original nature. We are all inclined to conclude that in order to create something beautiful, some kind of special gift is necessary, but that is not so, for left in our pure state, all of us are in possession of the ability to create something beautiful. This is a truer way to grasp the situation.

Example

The best example and proof is found in those objects made by primitive peoples so wonderfully that often they are emulated even by modern artists. This is not because every primitive craftsman is an outstanding genius but because such people live a life truer to their original nature than civilised people. In a similar way we find beautiful paintings done by children. This too is because more often than adults, children dwell in their original nature. When children become educated, or sophisticated, they lose their capacity to draw freely and beautifully. Even by this evidence we may judge what is happening to us. If only a man is capable of living in his original state, ugliness in his work will cease. Primitive people, looked down upon as "under-developed," create free and lovely things because their life has not been

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affected by artificiality as has the life of so-called cultured man. For this reason they are able to give effortless freedom to their work. We know such primitives do not receive a high level of education, also that any attempt to educate them immediately results in their handwork becoming lifeless. Thanks to the very fact that they are not equipped with knowledge and discrimination, they have no attachments and are therefore free. Thus they can express freedom both in their hearts and in their work, with resulting beauty.

Neither does this necessarily mean that we should return to primitive life. Once we understand how intellectual culture restricts our freedom, we should then be able to perceive with great wisdom just where the shortcomings inherent in the nature of the intellect lie. Our "knowledge" should be inclusive of this perception. Because we cultured people lack this wisdom, we have become less able to express ourselves freely in work. "Primitive beauty," then, may be called "original beauty." In Buddhism they often say "Show me your original face." The word "original" is profoundly significant as it points to "that which we *are* before the awakening of the intellect, when dualism commences." Buddhists have employed various words to give expression to this: *hongu* ("that with which we are provided from the outset"); *hon-u* ("original being"); *honbun* ("man's fundamental calling in life"); *honrai* ("that which we are, undivided"); *honshō* ("original nature"), and so forth. There is an old Chinese saying, "Back to our native home, forthwith!" This can be interpreted as an expression of man's desire to return to his original being. His desire for the Pure Land, then, may be taken as nostalgia. If, for the moment, we call this innate nature of ours the Buddha-nature, we may say that beings as well as things are all naturally endowed with this Buddha-nature. If, for the moment, we replace the term "Buddha-nature" with "Beauty-nature," we can then see that all things are from the very beginning endowed with beauty. Affirmation of this truth is taking place endlessly in the Pure Land of Beauty.

Above, I have stated that if we return to our original nature we can steer clear of the path of error. This means also that when we become one and flow with the things before us, we enter the path of non-error. Take, for instance, weaving, which is determined by a numerical law (threads in the warp and weft). If we recall that as long as this law is obeyed the road is

safe and beauty is definitely assured, then I think the truth of what I have said about textile beauty becomes self-apparent. Should we not pay more heed to the fact that this path of non-error opens for each and everyone of us as a way to the Pure Land?

Suppose we are about to decorate a pot. Do you realise that it is possible for anyone at all to produce beauty each time the attempt is made without blunder? I am sure that to many people this must seem like wishful thinking. But this is no dream. I shall give an actual example. Recently, I saw a Korean bottle of the Yi Dynasty on which an incredible pattern was painted with effortless freedom. You would think that only a child could have achieved such innocent simplicity and directness. The pattern itself was so unusual and extraordinary that one would have difficulty in imagining how the painting could express such beauty, but the fact remains that, just as it is, its beauty was such that it could not have been improved upon. Here we are shown that a world does exist in which all things, however drawn, are lovely. At this point the fact is demonstrated that there is a situation in which such things as above and below, skill and clumsiness, concept or lack of concept in men are all without any difficulty, just as they are, completely embraced by beauty. From this we can see that in the world of art there is, without question, a pathway of non-error lying in readiness. I myself have set eyes on the beauty which appears in this realm, and so I cannot help bearing witness to manifestations of this Pure Land of Beauty.

The reason for this is that in this World of Beauty unskillfulness, lack of intelligence, whosoever the maker, whatever is drawn, all is given life, and there is nothing at all to prevent this from taking place.

The Yi Dynasty bottle teaches us the truth so clearly. But it is no isolated case. The world contains countless examples which reveal it to us. How can we doubt then the actual existence of the Pure Land of Beauty?

X

The reader may have perceived already that what I mean is that the Pure Land is, ultimately, no other than Free Beauty. Briefly, this means release from humanly contrived bondage and a return to the original nature which is the Beauty-nature. Since this means a liberation from attachment to things,

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it also means the free mind. In Buddhism, becoming free-minded is returning to the "non-abiding Mind." This "non-abiding mind" is the "mind of non-obstruction" inherent in the Buddhist way of life. Shinran pointed to this very mind with his words, "Nembutsu is the single path of non-obstructiveness." Again the Zen master Daie was asserting the same idea when he said, "Non-abiding is the Buddha-mind." To conclude, if a man lives a life of free-mindedness, then whatever he makes will avoid ugliness. Therefore, as long as a man can remain in a state where his free mind is not obstructed, no matter who he is, or what he makes, he cannot help creating something of beauty. In this sense in all things of beauty may be found effortlessness and naturalness. In other words, they have the inevitability of something that comes about of itself.

Freedom here means the unobstructed expression of one's own innate character, and objects made with such a natural mind are free of any particular human interference; put another way, it may be described as the ordinary and undisturbed state of affairs. In this the most commonplace things are inevitably related to beauty. In contrast, that which is abnormal has something unnatural which takes us far from the Pure Land of Beauty. It does not hold out the promise of happiness. In our own time there is an increase of the sensational, abnormal, and sometimes perverse in objects of art. I can see in this trend no secure abode for art.

In this way, the "Beauty of the Pure Land" finally comes to mean beauty which is free of anxiety, a quiet beauty which is disturbing to no mind. When free beauty is disturbed, ugliness results. Ugliness finally is a representation of an unfree state, and therefore is an indication of bondage. To lose freedom is to become ugly. Recently many works of art have appeared which profess "freedom." But as long as this remains within the confines of an "ism," what they profess is no longer true freedom. Instead it becomes enslaved to the thought of freedom. Real freedom must be free even from the "ism" of freedom.

Example

What was it that made those men of Tea gather together apparently inferior ordinary articles and praise them as masterpieces? I think it was because they were able to see a quality of quiet settled beauty in these unobtrusive things. In their commonplaceness they discovered a deep and modest quality

of beauty (*sbibusa*) which is found in nature itself, and they were able to appreciate that the things which they selected were produced from a free or "non-abiding" mind which was not attached even to the thought of beauty. It was a mind free from fixed ideas. The character of those masterpieces was something born of such a mind. That which made the Tea masters unique was their perceptive desire to live with such things as their companions. The whole sense of Tea-life is the savouring of peace of body and mind through beauty. For this reason the Cult of Tea has flourished for centuries as a Way of Life, because in it is a spiritual fulfilment of the heart's desire.

XI

We have so far discussed Free Beauty as being equivalent to the "Pure Land of Beauty." In Free Beauty there are two conspicuous characteristics. Negatively stated, there are two forces which may restrain freedom. The first to be mentioned is the self, or "ego." We are all prone to stick tenaciously to our self and to become self-imprisoned. When we become imprisoned by the clinging ego, we immediately part company with freedom and bind ourselves to unfreedom. This is because the ego (the attached mind) obstinately clings to man and will not let him go. So, when we want to be accepted into the "Pure Land of Free Beauty" it becomes necessary for us to cut somehow our ties with the "ego." If any trace is left, attaining this Land is extremely difficult.

How does the setting up of this "ego" of ours come to bind us? Once we set up an "ego" this implies setting a "self" against an "other," a duality. Moreover, once this dualism is established man becomes involved in discrimination, and to extricate himself from this is not an easy matter. The "Pure Land" is a place of non-duality which does not allow any kind of dualism, so, as I have already explained, all such differences as talent or lack thereof, cleverness or stupidity, skill or lack of it, aristocracy or humility, have been done away with. Ultimately to slide into dualism is to draw further away from Heaven and back into the impure world. And as this is also what causes ugliness to come about, it becomes impossible without getting free of dualism to express beauty. A word of warning here, however; Jōdo (Heaven) must not be taken dualistically, that is, as opposed to the mundane world;

it must be seen as being in duality yet not bound to duality. It is not in the nature of Jōdo to repulse duality. To work in the very midst of dualism is what makes Jōdo what it is. To transcend and to reject duality are two entirely different things.

So far what I have stated is that it is the ego which gets us ensnared in dualism. The most serious aspect of this is that the "ego" invariably sets about judging everything with self at the centre of judgment. Just as the pictorial construction of the written Chinese characters for "discriminate" (*fumbetsu*) shows, we divide and set apart when we judge. To put this more pointedly, the working of our knowing mind is a devil that enslaves us day and night. Although the discriminating mind as such admittedly has its value, nevertheless at root it is discrimination which takes us out into the dual world, and it is a power to be feared because it takes us further and further from the Pure Land.

Example

Modern art, in general, advocates the new, the latest, and makes an "ism" the point of departure. If this position is stubbornly defended in accordance with the law of dualism, something newer is quickly bound to emerge in its place. Such newness is merely transient. In due course it will be pushed aside as old-fashioned and will be unable to stand the test of time. Why must it be so attached to a duality of the new versus the old? One view of history asserts that this very opposition is that which brings about progress. For instance, in the dialectic of Hegel's philosophy, thesis, antithesis, and synthesis go through unending cycles. This may be progress from the historical standpoint, but it also means unending conflict without any promise of final peace.

The world as we see it is full of continuous conflict. This confused state of affairs exists because our minds are unable to transcend the duality of the new and the old, of left and right, East and West, and so on. It is for this reason that Buddhists never cease to expound the way in which men can shake themselves free from the dualistic world. As we have already been warned, there are two things which bind us to duality, the first being the "ego," and the second, "discrimination" prompted by the "ego." The root division between self and other causes all oppositional confusion. Therefore Buddhism continually urges us to release ourselves from the suffering in-

herent in duality. Similarly, we may consider that all the pain of ugliness results from the same cause.

XII

We acknowledge that the great difference between man and other sentient beings lies in the fact that man is the master of intellect. The intellect may have reached a summit in man, yet, unfortunately, it is this "discriminating intellect" which drags everything down into dualism. What is even worse, we become proud of this intellect of ours, become convinced that by exercising it we are thereby some superior order of being. The overworking of this faculty shuts man's mind off from freedom, and it develops into a new and formidable adversary. Discrimination always proceeds by a process of dividing, and all man's sufferings, ignorance, and ugliness arise from his being caught in this trap of dualistic reasoning. Unless we remove the dualistic hoops from the barrel so to speak, we cannot regain that freedom which is our original nature. As long as we refuse to do so, we must go on experiencing the unfree state. Ugliness is no other than a manifestation of this subjection. When free beauty is restrained by the "ego," or by the intellect, it can never show us its true and normal nature, or, at the very least, it would become difficult. When I reflect on all the ugly articles I have seen, it seems to me they all show traces of the "ego" and vestiges of the intellect—signs of the unfree state. We may learn much by keeping in mind the vast quantity of things of true beauty to be found amongst the utensils of folk life.

Example

When we examine the kind of beauty in folk crafts we find that it emanates from the innocent mind [leaping from the heart to the hand]. In contrast, luxurious, pretentious things contain much that is false because of the very effort to express beauty—all too often the intellect is overworked. Do we not find from daily experience that it is intellect which is thus the seed of ignorance?²

Take the many examples of great beauty to be found in Takasago weavings. I think once we come to know this has no relation at all to an "ego" and its

² A state brought about by losing sight of our original nature. B.L.

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discriminations, we thereby learn something concerning the character of its beauty.

XIII

Folk crafts are first of all made by quite ordinary people; secondly, the articles made are nothing out of the common. These basic conditions are such that there is no opportunity to assert the "ego," or to scheme with the intellect in the actual work. The minds of the makers together with the quality of the articles made are thereby free and peaceful. Things born in such peace and freeness of mind are thus naturally embraced or accepted by beauty.

I have used the expression "acceptance," a word implying passivity. In truth if we enter this life of acceptance the chance of our being saved is great, and this we can see as evident in the vast number of actual examples of common folk crafts which are, as such, things of inherent beauty. This beauty then can be described as the "beauty of acceptance," or the beauty which comes from being saved by the "Other Power." Can we not see from this how inevitably the concept of the "Other Power" is related to that of the Pure Land? Therefore in Buddhism too the Other Power school was the Pure Land school. One need only to see a few good examples of folk utensils to be convinced of the truth of this.

Example

In the potter's craft there are two types of glaze effect, *yōben* (a change in local colours due to intermittent clear-burning and smoky atmosphere in the kiln), and *baikazuki* (changes in local colour due to wood ashes falling upon melting glazes). In these effects we often find an indescribable beauty. It is a quality that belongs altogether to the Other Power. For here we see how much the fallen ash, fire, and kiln are to be thanked, and how all is but a blessing of the Other Power. This then is the kind of beauty I describe tentatively as the "Beauty of the Pure Land."

XIV

Here I wish to restate that in the "Heaven of Beauty" three great opposi-

tions disappear. In fact, that place in which antonyms have vanished is itself the Pure Land.

The first opposition, distinction between intelligence and stupidity, disappears; the second, the difference between skill and lack of skill, the aristocratic and the humble, becomes invalid; and finally the third, the difference between beauty and ugliness, dies out too. This does not imply that all must become geniuses or great personalities in order to enter this Pure Land. Nor does it mean that we must all become intelligent or skillful.

Neither does it imply that in the Pure Land all things acquire the same level of beauty. In this Heaven the common remains common, the stupid, the unskilled, the poor, each person remains as he is, and yet each and every one has his place in Heaven.

Similarly, it is not that the ugly must be transmuted into beauty to attain Heaven, but that even the ugly when light falls on it comes to life and is accepted by Heaven. As I have explained earlier, what takes place can be likened to the changing of night to day; the day comes, but not because we have dispensed with night. Therefore to the Eye of Heaven the dichotomy of day and night, beauty and ugliness loses its meaning. In the Pure Land school of Buddhism this aspiration for the Pure Land has been expressed as the "Prayer of non-differentiation between beauty and ugliness." This statement must not be understood to mean that all things become beautiful in an identical form. Each and every distinction, remaining uniquely itself, is embraced in the Beauty of Heaven. To conclude, it is not that ugliness alters itself into beauty in order to enter the Pure Land, but remaining what it is, it takes on its own true life and merges into beauty.

Examples

Perhaps the best examples to show what I have been describing are the carvings of Buddhist figures by the itinerant monks Mokujiki and Enkū. These figures are chiselled with rough and almost careless strokes. As may be seen, this summary treatment does not stand in the way of beauty. By this very means they come to life, in fact the expression of life is all the more enhanced. If we were to smooth out the chisel strokes and sharp-hewn facets these wooden figures would immediately lose most of their vitality. But the point is that these so-called defects, considered ugly by most people, proceed of themselves to be a guarantee of beauty. When we come across work of

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this sort it is clear to us that it was done in a state in which the thought of beauty and ugliness had not entered. The idea something finely carved is good and anything roughly carved is ugly loses its meaning. Every single stroke in its real form is alive and merges into beauty. As a consequence when one looks at such Buddhist figures one may regard them as liberators of true beauty. Does it not astonish us to find that beauty is possible even in such areas?

Thus it is not only genius or intelligence which is necessary for good work, nor does it follow that if the work is clumsy or rough the Pure Land is forever closed. All things, without exception, are taken into that Heaven. In our dualistic world we cannot hope for such a miracle, but, fortunately, we are endowed with the Pure Land of non-dualism in which all persons as well as all things are given refuge.

Why is it that human beings hanker for the Pure Land? Because today there is a vast increase in the ugliness surrounding us and to that extent the Land of Beauty has become far off. This predicament also means that by our own attached minds we are robbed of freedom and have placed ourselves in bondage. The owner of this attached mind may be the artist, or the self-interested patron, or the trend of the times; whatever it may be it is the loss of freedom resulting from self-centredness. Then, whether in the person or in his work, beauty attenuates and vanishes.

Since in our day we have come to believe the man of genius is an exceptional and chosen person, the rest of mankind is neglected and placed in a lower category. We have created a disparity between the ordinary man and genius, and this I believe to be the cause of the great increase of the unbeautiful in the world around us. In the same way we are all made to believe that without skill we cannot give birth to beauty in things, and that the road has been completely closed for the clumsy. This again has been a great factor in the spread of ugliness. This is the reason why I am driven by the desire to deeply relate the common, the stupid, the poor, and the clumsy to beauty and see them welcomed into its Heaven. As Buddhists reiterate, "Loathe and leave the defiled world; seek joyously the Pure Land." To save the mass of humanity from deprivation, we cannot but earnestly desire an ideal land of beauty. As I have explained earlier, this "Pure Land" is not in some distant time and place. It is in the very desire for the "Pure Land"; the Pure Land of Beauty,

especially, must be found here-and-now, in the "present." Fortunately, we have the simple crafts made by humble people to show us the truth of this. One reason why I have for so long been drawn to folk utensils is because I glimpsed in them the beauty of Heaven on earth. I observed how in just such things the Pure Land is most brightly reflected.

XV

So far I have stated that the "Pure Land of Beauty" is the land which embraces all things and that the folk crafts are concrete proof of it. In making this contention I do not mean to exclude other forms of art. It goes without saying that both gifted men and articles of high quality and refinement should be securely related to beauty. But what seems to me most interesting is the phenomenon before my eyes of ungifted people and their poor-quality material showing an even surer contact with beauty. This is closely comparable to the relation between eminent and learned and saintly monks who have nursed and nurtured the world of spiritual life in depth, and the simple, humble, and unlearned believers who live by pure and profound faith. In Buddhism such simple men of faith are called *Myōkōnin* ("wonderously good men"). From the point of view of learning the difference between them is obviously vast, but from the viewpoint of the life of faith no such distinction can be made. On the contrary, often the words and actions of these simple-hearted devotees remind us of great and holy monks. I can well believe that, should there be ranks in Heaven, we would be likely to find the humble, who in this world are without rank, highly placed. Is there not a hidden providence in their very ranklessness among their fellow men?

The beauty found in folk crafts may be closely compared to the "rankless rank" of the *Myōkōnin*. It may thus be permissible to call the work of their hands *myōkō-bin* (wondrous work).³ As is self-evident from actual examples, the status which may be given to *myōkō-bin* in the "Land of Beauty" is never low. The Zen master Rinzai employed the expression, "the True Man of no-rank." *Myōkōnin* and *myōkō-bin*, I am convinced, radiate something of this "True Man of no-rank," and it is in this very radiance that we can have a

³ Or, craft objects which are the counterpart of simple men of faith, *Myōkōnin*. B.L.

glimpse into the "Pure Land of Beauty." This is the truth I have fixed my gaze upon.

I have described how simple country crafts are analogous with the humble, unlettered *Myōkōnin*, and how this may be seen in the handwork of such people. I have also said that as far as the spiritual life of *Myōkōnin* is concerned, it is often no less than that of their erudite brethren, if not superior. Are we not shown the truth of this by the great number of examples of folk crafts which hold their own when compared with the works of famous artists? Is it true that the Tea-bowls made by Chōjirō were always as good as the Korean "Ido" bowls made by unknown peasants? Can we assert that the highly regarded pots of Ninsei were always as good as those made by the Folk artisans? When we examine the matter in this way, there can be no doubt I think that the folk crafts, regarded as *myōkō-bin*, hold a worthy place in the "Pure Land of Beauty."

Example

In the history of Japanese pottery it will be found that among the artist-potters, Kenzan and Ninsei are regarded as holding the highest position. But can one assert that they always achieved the quality of decoration to be found in some of the oil dishes (*abura zara*) made in Seto for the commonest daily use in Japanese households? I could never believe this.

It is not my intention to depreciate Kenzan and others, but to plead for fairness and a revaluation of those folk crafts which were born of a selfless way of life. This is just like the need for the reestimation of the humble *Myōkōnin* in relation to erudite and holy priests. Ought we not see with great surprise how these lowly crafts hold their own in company with outstanding examples of beauty?

Just as it would be a great oversight to omit the simple men of pure faith when considering religion, so also it would be only a partial view to leave out crafts of a corresponding nature in recording the history of art. I feel it is my special mission regarding the "Pure Land of Beauty" to cause folk-crafts, already accepted into Heaven and thereby "*myōkō-bin*," to be more deeply, more properly considered. It is because I feel this so strongly that I have taken up my pen and put together these thoughts though lying on a sickbed.