

The Standpoint of Śūnyatā

(concluded)

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V

IN order to explain the in-itself-ness of "things," we stated that the mode of being of a thing, which appears to us as an object on the fields of the senses and of reason, is the "image" of the thing seen from its circumference; and that, on the contrary, the thing-in-itself is the mode of being whereby the thing is, so to speak, in its own center. I called that non-objective mode of being the mode of being whereby the thing is in its own "middle."

I also said that the form of a thing as the object of sense perception and of rational thinking, is the thing itself going out from its own home-ground and moving into a relationship with us or the thing itself projected into ourselves; and that this relationship can be likened to a light ray being radiated from a source of light. Therefore, the "images" of things, seen on the fields of the senses and of reason, are not their in-itself-ness (or selfness); while, on the other hand, looked at from the center, all these "images" are manifestations of the things' selfness, and the non-objective mode of being in the "middle" pervades them.

To simplify things for a moment, we shall represent the fields of the senses and of reason as the circumferences of two concentric circles. The objective images, wherein a certain thing a appears on the fields of the senses and of reason, then become the two points a^1 and a^2 , where a single radius crosses the two circumferences [in fact, a^1 and a^2 are $a^1(a)$ $a^2(a)$]. In that case, the thing-in-itself, (a), is situated in the center of the circle. This in-itself mode of being, as a non-objective way of being-in-the-middle, pervades a^1 and a^2 . Looked at in that perspective they are manifestations of a -in-itself [a is $a(a^1, a^2)$].

We can represent all other things, b , c , etc., in the same way. The infinite number of possible points on the circumferences, $a^1, b^1, c^1 \dots$ or $a^2, b^2, c^2 \dots$,

are conceived, each as a distinct point, while in the center the infinite number of points $a, b, c \dots$ are situated in the same center, are concentrated into one. This symbolizes the fact that, although on the fields of the senses and of reason things are seen each as a sensory thing with its singular subsistence or, again, as the substantial form thereof, they are gathered into one in their non-objective mode of being as things-in-themselves.

Of course, such a concentration is unthinkable from the standpoint of the conscious ego and its everyday experience, which always establishes itself within the boundary of sense perception and reason. Basically, it is inconceivable from the idea of "being," which is built on such experiences. It is not to be truly conceived in the traditional Western ontology, which considers the fundamental question only of "being" and never calls "nothingness" into question radically.

For example, medieval nominalism and modern empiricism take sensibility as their basis and conceive "being" with sensible things as the core. Medieval realism and modern rationalistic ontology, on the contrary, take reason as their basis and put substantial form in the center of their conception of "being." If we refer again to our little diagram, we can say that this amounts to taking a^1 (respectively a^2) as the center and making a^2 (respectively a^1) a point on the circumference; in sum, to thinking "being" within the confines of a small circle. They are conceiving the "being" of a only as a^1 (a^2) or as a^2 (a^1); and likewise with b, c , etc.

From such a standpoint, all kinds of complicated systems have been devised, but on the whole and fundamentally, they all start from the standpoint of the ordinary conscious self, which conceives all things as distinct and separate beings.

However, in things-in-themselves, which cannot be grasped on the fields of the senses and of reason and which cannot be seen from the circumference, the state of affairs is completely different. Here, the "thing" cannot be conceived if we center our thinking in the mode of being which appears on the fields of the senses and of reason. We cannot conceive the in-itself mode of being of "things" by drawing different small circles, each with a point on the circumference (whereon an infinite number of possible points can exist individually and separately) as its center.

As I said before, such a view of "being" is destroyed by the fact that, at the

basis of the fields of the senses and of reason, the field of *nibilum* appears. Where the turning about through the field of *nibilum* to the field of emptiness appears, all "things" in their in-itself-ness are gathered into one, as the different points on a circumference are drawn into the one and only center. It was quite natural, therefore, that the idea of this mode of being of the "thing"-in-itself could not really arise in traditional Western ontology, which always considered "being" without ever calling "nothingness" into question in any fundamental way.

Of course, in the West also, the idea of a concentration into the One appears from time to time. To begin with, one may cite the ancient Greek philosopher Xenophanes' idea of "One and all" ("what is called all beings or the All, is the One") and Parmenides' idea of "Being" ("thinking and being are the same"), and quote various philosophers such as Plotinus, Spinoza, Schelling. The absolute Unity these men pursued, however, was either conceived as absolute reason or, even when it transcended the standpoint of reason, at least was conceived as a prolongation of that standpoint and in continuity with it. At the same time, that absolute Unity was conceived in a negation of the manifoldness and distinctions of existing things as deceptive and illusory. In all of these several points, the One has a completely different meaning from my previous reference, that is that all "things" in their in-itself-ness gather into one. This is linked with the fact that the said absolute unity appeared without passing through the field of *nibilum*.

Nibilum is something which can appear out of the background of every experience on the fields of the senses and of reason, and out of the roots of whatever "being" experienced there, as that which nihilates it. We can express this, in connection with our diagram, by saying that a tangent line can be drawn to every arbitrary point on the two circles. Hereby we may signify that every point on the circle contains a direction of dispersing infinitely far away, and is suspended out over a bottomless abyss.

The field of *nibilum* is the field of just such an infinite dispersion. The fields of the senses and of reason, on the contrary, are systems of "being," established as the negation of such infinite directions of dispersion. They are a "world" wherein all beings are gathered and united. And this is made possible, we might say, by the fact that all things are gathered in one center: this center makes the world what it is.

However, the absolute One of traditional philosophy assumes such a system of "being" or such a "world"—whether the "sensible world" or the "intelligible (rational) world" or, again, a composite of the two—without paying any attention to the *nihilum* opening up at its roots. As a result, the center to which all things are reducible is only conceived inside a system of "being"; and this center also is thought of only as some "being."

Traditional philosophers consider the circle only from the standpoint of the circle, and the center only as the center of the circle. This is also the reason why, as I said before, absolute unity is converted into the idea of absolute reason or is, at the least, thought of in continuity with an absolute reason. Thereby, the center is always seen from the circumference. In other words, unity is seen as the point where all beings can be reduced to one. This, in turn, is the reason why absolute unity is necessarily considered as something abstracted from manifoldness and differentiation in all beings.

In a system of "being" which disregards "nothingness," the "all is one" idea leads to the establishment of the One as a mere non-differentiation. It is from such a standpoint that absolute unity is symbolized as a circle or a sphere.

Thus, the only way for manifoldness and differentiation to become really meaningful in a system of "being" is this: instead of its being looked at as a system of "being" only, it is considered as something at whose basis *nihilum* opens up; i.e., instead of the circle being viewed solely from the standpoint of the circle, we also include in our vision the tangent lines of all the possible points on the circumference. Then, all these points will appear as containing the absolute negation in the direction of their being reduced to the center, that is, the direction which makes them belong to the circle; as containing an infinite-dispersion direction. They then lose their character of constituting only a locus of points situated at the same distance from the center.

These points in themselves are not merely homogeneous and undifferentiated. They do not disappear into the One that eliminates the abstracted from all manifoldness and differentiation. Instead, each of them shows a direction of divergency, which absolutely refuses such a reduction to the unity; a direction of infinite dispersion, as the direction of its tangent line. These directions, peculiar to each particular point, each belonging to only one point, constitute an infinite differentiation.

Manifoldness and differentiation, that is, the fact that each and every being

is singularly irreplaceable by the others, that each is absolutely unique, really manifests itself only when the field of *nibilum* opens up at the basis of the system of "being." One could say that only when each has nowhere to be reduced to and nothing to go back to any more, only when each is deprived of all it depends upon is it really forced back to itself. What in the above was called "Great Doubt" is such a mode of being.

Furthermore, when the singularly unique being of all things, the manifoldness and differentiation of the world, manifests itself on the field of *nibilum*, all things appear as being isolated from one another by an abyss. Here, each exists as a thing absolutely shut up in itself, lonesome, incommensurable. A state of such absolute self-isolation is what is called nihilistic.

In the human consciousness, this is a solitude as if one were hanging out all alone over a limitless void. Raskolnikov of *Crime and Punishment* and Stavrogin of *The Possessed* are said to have made even their own mothers feel an unspeakable terror. What causes it is their abysmal solitude. A being abysmally isolated from all other beings, a being that has lost his ties to even his own mother, a being estranged from all order (order as "world"), is aware of an abysmal *nibilum* in its own depths. Out of the depths of all things, as I said before, *nibilum* looms up and insinuates itself into the very roots of the being. This we call "nihilation," signifying that there *nibilum* appears as "negative negativity."

Above, we spoke of small circles with the sensible or the rational modes of being as their center. We expressed them as $a^1(a^2)$ and $a^2(a^1)$. In these modes of being also, beings are individual, many, and are shut up in themselves. But, insofar as things are here conceived inside a system of "being" only, they are thought of as always having some connection with one another, as existing inside an order and a unity. In the last analysis, they are conceived as returning to the absolute One, which is itself "being." Our ordinary consciousness of things, and likewise every thought-system that takes this consciousness as its starting-point, fundamentally conceives things this way.

But, on the field of *nibilum*, all connection and unity is destroyed, and the self-isolation of beings is absolute. All existing things disperse and are apt to draw infinitely remote from one another. And the "being" itself of each one also, situated on a tangent line, of which nobody knows whence it comes or where it goes, disperses infinitely. This is an existence which gradually

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evaporates, as it were, into *nihilum*, and whose possibility of being seems to be gradually drawn into the morass of impossibility of being.

On the field of emptiness, however, "things" are brought back again to their possibility of existence. Or rather, things are brought to light in the possibility of existence which they originally possessed. They appear from the origin (well-spring) of their being, from the in-itself-ness lying at their home-ground. This means that the sensible and the rational forms recuperate their original meaning as manifestations of the non-objective mode of being of the thing-in-itself, as the *position* of the thing. This is what I have called above "be-ification."

Thus, to take up our comparison again, the field of emptiness is an infinite space or void wherein the circles and all the tangent lines on them come to being. This, therefore, has itself no limits or directions whatsoever. Herein, the in-itself mode of being of things, no matter how deeply it is rooted in the center where "all is one," is not reduced to the One that eliminates all manifoldness and differentiation.

Since, on the field of emptiness, there is no circumference, "all is one" cannot be symbolized by a circle (or sphere). If we still say that the in-itself mode of being of things appears, when we return from the circumference (namely, the fields of the senses and of reason) to the "center," the center in that case is no longer the center of a circle, a center with a circumference.

There is, so to speak, a circumference-less center, a center which is a center only, a center on the field of emptiness. We could express this also by saying that on the field of emptiness the center is everywhere. Each "thing," in its selfness, manifests the mode of being the center of all things. Each and every thing, becoming the center of all things, becomes one absolute center. This is the absolute uniqueness of things, their Reality.

But, even if, in that manner, each is an absolute center, this does not mean an absolute dispersion. It is rather the opposite; each of them being an absolute center in which the All is one, *their* totality is one. This state of affairs, i.e. that the center is everywhere in all of them, and, nevertheless, they are *one*, cannot be expressed by the traditional circle symbol. In other words, this cannot be conceived of as a system of "being." The One and All can be really conceived only as a "gathering" of things, each of which is all and an absolute center. And the only field where this is possible is the field of emptiness, which can

have its circumference nowhere and its center everywhere. Only on the field of emptiness can a totality of things, each of which is absolutely unique and an absolute center of all things, be gathered into one.

"All are one" signifies the "world" as the unifying order or system of all things. The real feature of that world must be such as I just explained. In the above, the non-objective in-itself mode of being of things whereby each is on its own home-ground, has been called the "middle." In its mode of being as "middle," the tiniest thing, insofar as it "is," is one absolute center, and is posited in the center of all things. This is its "being," its reality. And the "world" is nothing other than the gathering of such "beings." It is the "all are one" of all that is in that mode of being. The world wherein we actually live and which we actually see is precisely that "All."

The possibility of all things gathering together and constituting one "world," and the possibility of existence of each thing "being" itself while gathering itself into itself, can only be established in the field of emptiness. (As I said before, the possibility of existence of things cannot be conceived apart from the possibility of a "world.")

To summarize, a system of "being" becomes really possible, not on a field where the system of "being" is seen only as a system of "being," but on the field of emptiness where being is seen as being-nothingness as well as nothingness-being; namely, in a place where the reality of beings, at the same time, takes on a temporary and so far basically "illusory" character; in a place where the mode of being becomes possible whereby things precisely in their true reality are temporary appearance, and precisely as things-in-themselves are phenomena.

VI

That a thing actually "is" means that it is absolutely unique. There cannot be two things absolutely the same. The absolute uniqueness of a thing means that it is situated in the absolute center of all other things. It stands, as it were, in the position of a principal and all other things are in the position of subordinates.

But, that all "beings" are such things, that the "world" comes into being through the fact that all such beings gather into one, these are nothing but

contradictions in our everyday thinking. How is it possible that a being which stands in the position of a principal toward all other things would, at the same time, stand as a subordinate toward all other things? If each thing in its in-itself-being enjoys absolute self-autonomy, occupies the principal position, and stands in the center, is not then the only possible outcome a complete anarchy, total "chaos"? Is not this the diametrical opposite of "world" as an order of being?

This objection, however, arises only because one is thinking on the field of ordinary consciousness, which lies between the senses and reason, and without any regard for the field of emptiness. Indeed, that all things gather into One, at the same time each one "being" absolutely unique, means that they are master and subordinate to one another. We shall call this relationship "circuminsessional,"¹ and understand it as possible only on the field of emptiness.

That a certain thing stands in the position of a subject to all other things, means that it lies at the ground of all other things, that it is one moment of what makes each one of the others "be," that it comprises one element of what puts each of the others in the position of self-autonomy. In the home-ground of all other things it stands, as it were, in the position of the subordinate supporting the master.

Furthermore, that, for example, *a* has such a significance toward *b*, *c*, etc., means the absolute negation of *a*'s own mastery, of its uniqueness and of its "being." In other words, it means that *a* possesses no substantiality in the ordinary sense. It means its "no self-nature" (*mujishō* 無自性). Its "being" is a being at one with emptiness, a being with an "unreal" character.

On the other hand, however, the same thing can be said of *b*, *c*, etc., of each one of all other beings. Considering things from this angle, all other things stand in a subject position toward *a*, support *a* in its master position, are moments making *a* be. Thus, that a thing "is" (its absolute self-autonomy)

¹ *egoteki* 圓互的. I have translated this as "circuminsessional" because the relationship described here seems to imply such a degree of reciprocity that nothing in Western culture can approximate it, except this term used to describe the relationship between the divine Persons in the Trinity. I do not suggest that the Japanese word and the English word are exact equivalents. Trans.

comes into being only at one with the subordination of all other things. It comes into being only on the field of emptiness, where the "being" of all other things, while remaining being to the very end, is "emptied."

This means also, of course, that the self-autonomy of this one thing comes into being only at one with its subordination to all other things. Its self-autonomy is established only on a standpoint where it makes all other things be and, thus, is emptied of its own "being."

To summarize, it is only in a field where the "being" of all things is a being at one with emptiness that it is possible for all things to gather into One, even while each is a reality as an absolutely unique being; that the "being" of all things and, again, the "world" as a system of being, is possible. If, without reference to the field of emptiness, we try to conceive of the *reality* of things (the fact that things *are*) and the fact that they all gather into one, we find that the more radically and more profoundly we think, the surer the result is bound to be that we will arrive at the opposite extreme, at anarchy and chaos.

All things in the world are, in some way or other, interlinked. There is not a single thing that comes into being completely without relation to all other things. Scientific intellect conceives here a law of naturally necessary causality; the creative imagination of mythology and poetry perceives here an organic, living connection; philosophical reason apprehends here the absolute One. But, on a more essential level, one has to grasp here the system of circuminsession, wherein, on the field of emptiness, all things are becoming master and subordinate to one another.

In this system, each thing is itself while not being itself, is not itself while being itself; its "being" is unreal in its truth and true in its unreality. This may sound queer at first but, in fact, through such a view, we are enabled for the first time to conceive a "*force*," by virtue of which all things are gathered and brought into relationship to one another—a "force" which, since ancient times, has been called "nature" (*physis, natura*).

That a thing is not itself means that, without ceasing to be itself, it is in the home-ground of all other things; figuratively, that it has its roots in the ground of all other things. It means that it becomes a moment supporting all other things, making them stand up, making them be, bringing an element to their "being." That a thing is itself means that all other things, without ceasing to be in themselves, are in the home-ground of that thing; that pre

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cisely in the point where it is in its own home-ground, all other things are present too; that all other things plunge their roots into its base.

That in this way every thing, without ceasing to be in its own home-ground, is at the same time on the home-ground of all other things, means that the "being" of each thing is supported, established, made to be by virtue of the "being" of all other things—or, the other way round—that each supports, establishes, makes be the "being" of all other things. This means, in short, that all things "are" in the "world."

To imply that when a thing is in its own home-ground it must at the same time be on the home-ground of all other things, sounds highly absurd but, in fact, this is precisely what constitutes the "nature" of the thing's existence. The "being" of things in-themselves is essentially circuminsessional. And this is meant when I say that being is being at one with emptiness, is being on the field of emptiness. This circuminsessional system is only possible on the field of emptiness.

As I said before, outside the field of emptiness, for a thing to be on its own home-ground, to be "in-itself," would mean for it not to be in the home-ground of all other things; for it to be on the home-ground of other things would mean for it not to be in-itself. In that case, the fact of all things existing together in a "world" cannot really be explained. Only on the field of emptiness, where being is being-nothingness as well as nothingness-being, is it possible that each being is itself in the face of all the others, and thus, at the same time, is not itself to all the others.

The interpenetration of all things, which takes place there, is an absolutely essential relationship, a relationship more fundamental than any relationship that science, myth, or philosophy ever conceived on the fields of the senses and of reason. The Leibnizian system of monads also, as living mirrors of the universe, reflecting one another, can, in the final analysis, be brought back to this relationship.

The circuminsessional system itself, whereby all things in their "being" thus enter into another's home-ground, are not themselves and, nevertheless, precisely as such (i.e. on the field of emptiness) are themselves to the very end, is nothing else than the "force" that gathers and links all things into one; the force that makes the world into a world. The field of emptiness is a force field.

In every thing in the world, the world "force" appears and comes to itself as the "force" of the thing itself.

On a previous page, I used the word "*virtus*"; the world force or "nature" realizes itself in a pine as pine *virtus*, in a bamboo as bamboo *virtus*. Even the tiniest thing, insofar as it is a being, manifests in its act of being the web of circuminsessional interpenetration that links all things together. Or again, we could say that in its "being" the world "worlds." This mode of being is the thing's in-itself mode of being, its non-objective mode of being as "middle," its selfness.

VII

Let us first summarize: in the circuminsessional relationship, each thing is in the home-ground of all other things while being in its own home-ground. This means that in its "being" the world "worlds," and that the thing is in the world. All this is only possible on the field of emptiness. The field of emptiness, as the field of the circuminsessional relationship, is the field of the "force" whereby all things-in-themselves gather themselves into *one*, the field of the possibility of the world. At the same time, the field of emptiness is the field of the "force" whereby a thing gathers itself, the field of the possibility of existence of the "thing."

In us, this field of emptiness is realized as an absolute this-side: it opens up more intimately this-side than we, in our ordinary consciousness, consider our self. It opens up, as it were, still nearer to ourselves than the ourselves we are ordinarily thinking of. In other words, by converting from what is ordinarily called "self" to the field of emptiness, we become truly ourselves.

The meaning of "converting" to the place of emptiness has been explained above; namely, when at the ground of the self itself *nihilum* opens up, it is not only seen as some such thing as *nihilum*, as if it lay outside the self; rather, it is taken over by the self into the self's own subjectivity, and thus, in the basic consciousness that "the self is empty," *nihilum* becomes the place of the ecstatic transcendence of the subject. Then, from there it is converted further to the standpoint of emptiness absolutely this-side, with the awareness that "emptiness is the self."

This means that the domain of the so-called "self," the field of self-consciousness and consciousness, is broken through. More fundamentally, it

means that we pass beyond the boundary of the essential self-attachment, which lies hidden in the nature of self-consciousness and which means that in grasping ourselves we are captured by ourselves. This emancipation is at the same time the emancipation from the essential attachment to "things," which means that we are captured by things in grasping them objectively-representationally.

But what does "emptiness is the self" mean? We said that emptiness is the field of the world's possibility, the field of possibility for the existence of things. "Emptiness is the self" means that the self, originally in its own home-ground, exists as such a field. The self is not merely what the self is conscious of as self. Insofar as the self is truly in its own home-ground, insofar as it is the self-in-itself, the field of emptiness, wherein the world and things become possible, opens up in the home-ground of the self.

One could say that, as the field where they become possible, the home-ground of the self in the self is antecedent to and anterior to the world and things. Of course, this anteriority is not temporal. Time becomes possible on the field where world becomes possible. Therefore I have no objection if someone says that something anterior in time to the world is unthinkable. It is all right for one to regard the world as continuing infinitely in time. Even in that case, the home-ground of the self and the self itself which is truly in its home-ground, is essentially anterior to the world and things.

The self has its home-ground at a place disengaged from world and things, and is originally standing on such a place. One could perhaps call this the "transcendence," in the sense used by contemporary existentialism, although my interpretation of it would of course be different.

In a word, when we are in our own home-ground and are truly ourselves, we are in a field—we *are* as that field—where the "world," an above-mentioned circuminsessional system of "being," becomes possible, and where, at the same time, "things" find the possibility of their existence. We can say that each of us as well, as individual human existences, is a "thing" in the world, and that the existence of this thing, just as a true and real being, is temporary and unreal. We can say also, however, that where this being of ours is originally at one with emptiness, the world and all things originate and come into their own from our own home-ground.

Our being in that home-ground of ourselves is our true self-awareness. Of course, that self-awareness is not self-consciousness or self-knowledge, nor is it akin to intellectual intuition. Ordinarily, our self is conceived as something knowing itself, being conscious of itself or intellectually intuiting itself. But what I term self-awareness here does not mean a field where, in any sense, the self knows itself. On the contrary, this is just where such a "self" and such "knowledge" are emptied. In what sense would such a field be our true self-awareness?

In the above, I said that in sayings such as "fire does not burn fire," and "the eye does not see itself," the non-objective in-itself mode of being of "things" is expressed. An eye is an eye because it sees things, but there is, in the point where the eye is "in" itself, an essential not-seeing. If the eye saw the eye itself, it would not be able to see any other thing; that is, the eye would cease to be an eye. The eye is an eye on account of that essential not-seeing; because of it, "seeing" is possible. Not being an eye (not-seeing) is the possibility of being an eye (seeing). For that reason, the "being" of the eye, as I said before, can only be expressed as: eye is eye because it is not an eye.

In emptiness lies the possibility of the existence of "being." Of course, what I call "being" is the non-objective in-itself being of things. In the case of the eye, the "not-seeing" can only get true meaning at one with the eye's activity of seeing something. Likewise, the activity comes into being only at one with not-seeing. That the contradictories, seeing and not-seeing, originate only as a unity, is the self-identity of the eye in its non-objective in-itself mode of being.

Therefore, we can say that in the suchness of seeing is contained simultaneously an essential "blindness." This blindness lies just where the seeing is seeing-itself, just at hand within the emergence of the act of seeing. It is of course not lack of eyesight, blindness as an objective phenomenon. It is not-seeing right in the midst of the activity wherein seeing realizes itself as seeing-itself; not-seeing for the sake of the possibility of seeing as seeing.

This means, not that the eyesight is in an objective, phenomenal sense not there, but that the eyesight is, in a non-objective in-itself manner, empty. Emptiness means here that the eye does not see the eye, that seeing is seeing because it is not-seeing. It means that the sensation or perception called seeing itself (and, in general, all consciousness as such) is originally empty. All

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consciousness is originally emptied from the roots up. It can only realize itself on the field of emptiness. Consciousness is essentially emptiness.

However, this essential emptiness is not distinct from the fact, for example, that seeing is seeing itself. That seeing is a bottomless activity, that is, an activity void from the "ground" up, is nothing else than the suchness of seeing. Seeing as it is, is bottomlessly seeing. Even the ordinary visual act, the fact that we see things, is an "act of non-act."

In more general terms, at the base of all consciousness, there is a non-consciousness. This is not what is called the "unconscious." The region of the unconscious is, after all—no matter how emphatically we call it a deeper strata of the mind—found in a continuum with the region of the conscious. It belongs to a level on which, together with the conscious, it can become the subject matter of psychology. What we call here non-consciousness indicates that the conscious is also, originally and from its roots up, voided or emptied.

In that sense, as something that transcends the conscious and the unconscious, we could call it super-consciousness. But that would not mean, of course, that there exists something super-conscious. No matter how much we speak of emptiness, no "thing-as-emptiness" exists. As not-seeing, the absolute negativity of seeing, was said to be originally one with seeing, so supra-consciousness, as the original emptiness of consciousness, is at one with consciousness itself. In that sense it has to be called "non-consciousness." Do you not read in the following haiku, a death poem by an anonymous person,

Having now become deaf,
I distinctly hear
The sound of dew.

We now go back to the question of self-awareness we were treating before. The self is indeed the self as knowing the self itself, but in the self-in-itself, the home-ground of the self, there is an essential "not-knowing" at one with the "knowing" of the self.

If the self-in-itself were something knowing the self-in-itself, the self would be completely unable to have any knowledge, unable to know anything. It would be the same with the case when the field of emptiness were a sort of being. Then there would be only One Spinozian "Substance," and the world and all things would melt away. In the former case also, there would never

come into being any knowing of oneself, whether through "intellectual intuition" or through conscious or cognitive knowledge; and the self, which knows itself through such ways, the so-called "subject," would not obtain either. As a result, the knowing whereby that self knows other things and whereby the subject knows objects, would not come about.

In brief, at the ground of all knowing from the standpoint of "subject" lies an essential not-knowing. This is a place where the standpoint of consciousness, discursive (discriminating) intellect and intuitive intellect, is broken through: a place beyond the domain of the standpoint of the subject that knows things objectively and knows itself as an object or thing called the self.

This not-knowing is the self as an absolutely non-objective self-in-itself. And the self-awareness which originates in that not-knowing is a kind of "knowledge of no-knowledge." This self-awareness, contrary to what is usually considered as the self knowing itself, is not a "knowing" that consists in the self turning to and refracting into itself. It is not a "reflective" knowledge; and, moreover, it is not even intuitive knowledge or intellectual intuition. Even these, although they are ordinarily opposed to reflective knowledge, contain the duality of the seer and the seen, and to that extent still show traces of "reflection."

I called this self-awareness a knowledge of no-knowledge because it only comes into being in an absolutely "forward-looking" position, as it were, and not in a refraction of the self into the self. This is because it is knowing that originates in the "middle." It is an absolutely non-objective knowing of the absolutely non-objective self-in-itself; namely, a completely non-reflective knowing.

This self-awareness comes into being only on the field of emptiness, on the standpoint where emptiness is self. What we just called "the absolutely forward-looking position" is the point where the self is truly the self-in-itself, the place where the self essentially posits its own being. The "knowledge of no-knowledge" originates only as the realization—both in the sense of actual effectuation and the sense of immediate awareness at the same time—of such an in-itself-"being" on the field of emptiness. On all other fields the self is always "reflective" and, as I said before, is a mode of being that, grasping itself, is captured by itself, and at the same time, grasping things is captured

by things. In sum, it can never be absolutely forward-looking; it can never be the *jikishin* 直心 (lit. "straight heart") of the ancients.

Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty asked the Bodhidharma, "What is the primal meaning of the Holy Truth?" The Patriarch answered, "Vastly void, with no holiness at all." The Emperor, aroused by this answer, inquired further, "Who is it that is facing me?" "I don't know," replied Bodhidharma. This is a famous story, but we could say that what I previously spoke of as not-knowing as the self-itself being in its own home-ground, is precisely this "I don't know," which emerges out of the beyond-bottom of the universe like a bolt of lightning.

It is only with this non-objective self-in-itself and the equally non-objective self-awareness as its home-ground that the self as "subject" becomes possible. The standpoint of the subject always subsists as the unity of two directions: on the one hand the direction of its pure subjectivity, of its being definitely not an object, but an unobjective existence; on the other hand the direction of its relating, in that capacity, to objects, of its knowing objects. At the point of intersection the subject comes into being with the structure of self-consciousness, that is, containing a consciousness of itself as something persistently un-objective and, nevertheless, always opposed to an object. In other words, its "being" originates in its self-reflection, in the reflective knowledge of itself as the unity of the two above directions.

Now the first of these two directions, the persistent unobjectivity of the subject in its own subjectivity, is only possible through the fact that the self-in-itself is absolutely non-objective. Subjectivity is nothing else than the self-in-itself projected on the field of consciousness. A "subject" is made possible by the self-itself. (Therefore we can conversely call the "in-itself" of the self "original" subject.)

The second direction, the reflective knowledge whereby the self knows itself and objects, is also made possible by the fact that the self-in-itself is "not-knowing." If the knowing of the self-in-itself (which is, in fact, knowing of not-knowing) were reflective, the standpoint of the subject, which while keeping up relations with the object (knowing the object) is related to itself (knows itself), would be impossible, as would all reflective knowledge on that standpoint. Just as the essential function of the eye, the seeing of things, is only possible through the fact that the eye does not see the eye itself, that is,

through that same fact which reveals the in-itself-ness (selfness) of the eye, just as the fact that fire burns things is possible through the selfness of fire, whereby the fire does not burn itself, so the "knowing" of a subject is rendered possible by the "not-knowing" of the self-in-itself. Thus we can say in general that the self-in-itself makes possible the self's existence as a subject, and that the fundamental not-knowing constitutes the essential possibility of knowing.

Furthermore, just as the seeing and not-seeing of the eye—the "being eye" and "not being eye" so to speak—exist only as a unity, and the self-identity of the eye-in-itself resides precisely therein; just as the burning and not-burning of fire—"being fire" and "not-being fire"—exist only at one with each other, and the self-identity of the fire-in-itself consists in that fact, so the knowing and not-knowing of the self, its "being self" and "not being self," are established as a unity and the *concrete* self-identity of one's self resides in that fact.

If we view the whole matter in the direction of returning from the self as a "subject," projected on the fields of the senses and of reason (or, generally, on the field of consciousness), to the home-ground of the self, then the pure in-itself-ness of the self, its pure self-identity, appears at the point where the being of the self-in-itself is a being on the field of emptiness, a being at one with emptiness; at the point where the self is an absolutely forward-looking position (in the sense that the self's "being" means the self positing itself.)

When, on the other hand, we look back from that point, not only the so-called subject but even the body is a manifestation of the self-in-itself (selfness); it is—at one with the pure selfness—the position of the being of the selfness. In other words, the selfness consists, *concretely* speaking, in the self-identity of the selfness and the subject, the body, etc. In that same sense I have been speaking above about the various sensory and rational forms being all pervaded by the mode of being of the "middle" and constituting all manifestations thereof.

Our selfness transcends, on the field of emptiness, the so-called subject. It is the point where we cast off all modes of being of the "self," personal, conscious, corporeal, etc. "Being" in this context is a mode of being which can no longer be called self; the self is here "not being self." This mode of being,

however, pervades the various modes of being of the "self," personal, conscious, corporeal, etc., and constitutes together with them one "being," one "position."

From that point of view our self is, thoroughly, the self we are conscious of and know, the everyday self with its bodily behavior, its joys and angers, griefs and pleasures, the self that is busy in all kinds of discrimination and is active in social life. It is the self as it is in its "being self."

Finally, concretely speaking, the point of self-identity where "not being self" and "being self" are one, is nothing else than the self-in-itself. We can only express our self-in-itself (our selfness) as "that which is not self at the same time it is self," and "that which is self at the same time it is not self."

VIII

"Being self while not being self" means that the being of one's self as personal, conscious, corporeal "human being," and also one's subject-existence, are essentially unreal appearances. It means, moreover, that the various phenomena of body and soul which originate in and through us as human beings and also all reflective knowledge whereby the self knows itself and objects, are essentially illusory; that they are what the ancients called "vain discrimination" (*vikalpa*); that, no matter how objectively true they are in themselves (no matter, for example, how true they are as scientific knowledge), they are in their being as such essentially illusory appearance.

Or, speaking from the opposite pole, it means precisely that on the field of emptiness, at the point where they are at one with emptiness, they are essentially actual reality. To make use of some expressions used before, they are "true suchness," "as-it-is-ness." And again, this is the "like" of "the bird flies, it is like a bird."

Elsewhere, calling the same thing the "primal fact," I said of it:

Goethe said that all transient things are similes of the Eternal . . . however, so long as there is no eternal thing that would be its archetype, the simile is, as such, the original reality, the primal fact. It is simile while being primal fact, primal fact while being simile. When a Zen master extends his staff and says: "If you call this a staff you cling to it, if you do not call it a staff you depart from the facts. What

should you call it then?" "Staff" is not the sensible wooden object, but neither is it not the sensible object. The staff is always the staff but at the same time is not the staff. When we describe this in terms of the well-known "form is emptiness, emptiness is form," it is not a pronouncement from a merely contemplative attitude.

That this staff is this staff is a fact which factualizes itself in such a way as to involve there, at the same time, the deliverance of the self. There, the fact manifests itself in its original factuality. The point where this fact can be originally grasped is just the same point of deliverance, of our becoming a "son of God," a "son of Buddha."

This does not mean that it is not the world of sense perception, matter, life; but only that it is the world of these things in their primacy. It is the world of these things brought back to their true suchness, having been stripped of the discriminating way of thinking which insinuates itself without our knowing it into our ordinary language and thinking about sense perception, matter, life.²

In the place where they are in their own home-ground, facts are bottomlessly factual. There they break through and overcome whatever would ground them or back them up by giving them a foundation. On whatever level, the "cause," "reason," or "purpose" of facts—to say nothing of "matter," "sensibility," "life," and so forth, but also with the faculty of understanding with its categories, with the faculty of reason with its Ideas, and even with the "Will to Power" as a metaphysical principle—they cannot reach the facts standing on their own home-ground.

A fact, as original fact, i.e. as a fact in its own true reality, is, on the field of emptiness, groundlessly itself. It is the simultaneous yonder and this-side, so to speak, of all grounds and reasons on all dimensions. It is simply itself without any traces of "wherebys," "whys," and "wheretos." And this mode of being (namely, to be groundlessly on the field of emptiness) is none other than what I called "illusory." As something like that, our subjective existence and all its facts can be called "as-such-ness." So much for the thesis, "To be self while not to be self."

² *Gendai shakai no shomondai to shūkyō* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1951), pp. 89–90.

"Not to be self while being self" means that our self-in-itself, on the field of emptiness, stays at the home of all other things. On the field of emptiness, the center is everywhere: all things—each in its non-objective and "middle" in-itself-ness—are an absolute center. On that field, therefore, it is impossible for our self to be self-centered like the "self" as ego or subject. Rather, it is precisely in the absolute negation of that self-centeredness that the field of emptiness can ever open up.

There, the being of the self is located in the home-ground of all other things. To that extent, the self is not self. The self is not a self-centered small circle; together with emptiness it is limitless and, as it were, without any circumference whatever—the original self-awareness.

However, our self, as the being at one with emptiness, is one absolute center and, to that extent, all things are in the home-ground of the self. As far as our self is at the home-ground of all things, that is, on the field of emptiness, all things are also in the home-ground of our self. The circuminsessional interpenetration can, as I said before, only exist in the non-objective, "middle" mode of being of all things including ourselves. I explained already that through this circuminsessional interpenetration all things are gathered together, and so render possible a "world," an order of "being," and again, the existence of "things." The "force" whereby each thing can exist, the "force" whereby all things make one another exist, the fundamental force whereby all beings appear as beings, finds its origin in this circuminsessional relationship. All things are in the home-ground of one thing and make it exist. With that thing as the absolute center, all things are assembled in the home-ground of one thing. This "being assembled" is the "force" which makes this thing be, and also the force of this very being, whereby it can "be."

In that sense, I stated above that in the fact that a thing "is," the world "worlds," and that, as the field of circuminsessional interpenetration, the field of emptiness is the field of "force." Now we can add that this field opens up in the self, when the self is truly in the self's home-ground. This field lies in the home-ground of the self, or "right at hand" for the self; anyway, within reach of the self. We can say that the ground of the possibility of the world and of the existence of things, namely, the place where the world and the existence of "things" have their foundation, resides in every man's "home-ground" (at his feet, at his fingertips).

In that way, the in-itself-ness (selfness) of the self—insofar as the self is “being self,” is “being”—lies radically in *time*, or rather, is bottomlessly in time. At the same time, on the field of emptiness—insofar as the being of the self is being only at one with emptiness, insofar as the self is “not being self”—the self is, in every instant of time, wholly outside of time. In that sense I have said above that everyone’s self is originally anterior to world and things.

We live and die in time. “To be in time” means to be constantly inside the birth-death cycle. But it is not true that we are merely in time, inside the birth-death cycle. In the home-ground of ourselves, we are not simply drifting around in birth-death; we live and die birth-death. We do not simply live in time; we live time. In every moment of time, we are making time be time, we are bringing time to its fullness. That is the meaning of what I said before: being bottomlessly in time.

Moreover, to be thus bottomlessly in time, groundlessly to be inside the birth-death cycle, means to be thoroughly outside of time, outside the birth-death cycle. It means to be antecedent to world and things, and to be master in dominion over all things.

In our “home-ground,” in our own selfness, we are, originally, as such Reality. And, when we are aware of that fact, i.e. when we are truly in our own home-ground, we are, while being each moment bottomlessly in time, each moment outside of time. While being radically, or rather groundlessly (rootlessly, shelterlessly) inside the world, we are standing, at the same time, outside of the world. In this context, being deprived of all that we built upon means absolute freedom.

To pass out of time into the field of emptiness is not different from radicalizing the mode of being in time, i.e. from living *positively* the vicissitudes of time. Here, our being is essentially transcending all grounds, is existentially breaking through all caves and shelters. This groundlessness is absolute freedom.

Emptiness as this absolute freedom which bottomlessly makes “being” be “being” and “time” is, in the very act of its being absolute freedom, also knowing. It is the standpoint of insight, of knowing all as it truly is, as such, reality (“like-reality”). But we should not forget what was said before: that this true reality is also like a phantom. This knowing is “like-phantom Wisdom” (*nyogen no chi* 如幻の智).

The opening book of the *Avatamsaka Sutra* says: “The phantom-like Wisdom

of the Buddha, without hindrance, completely penetrates with its light all dharmas of the three worlds, and enters into the mental activities of all sentient beings. Here it is the domain of the Good Heavenly Being of the North. Its all-includingness knows no limits at all. . . . Here, it is the deliverance of the Great Light. . . .” A little farther on, the sutra compares to the magic (phantom-technique) of a magician (phantom-master) the fact that this Tathagata dwells in the phantom-like Wisdom. “It is as with the magician who knows magic well and, dwelling on the crossroads, produces all kinds of magical effects. Within the fleetingly short time of a day he conjures a full day or a full night, even seven days or seven nights, a fortnight, a month, a year, a hundred years. And always it is all there: cities and hamlets, wells, rivulets, rivers and seas, sun and moon, clouds and rain, palaces and residences. The original one day or one hour is not done away with simply because a long stretch of years has been shown in that time; and the days, months, and years of the phantasmagory are not demolished simply because the original time was so very short.” (Book 10, no. 27)

The meaning of this extract is as follows: in a short while, in an “instant,” the course in time of a whole day or even a hundred years is shown in a phantasmagory, and this phantasm is the day or the hundred years as they are in actual reality; furthermore, although the days or years are shown therein as they really are, the present instant does not cease to be this actual instant. In a word: “one aware moment is ten thousand years, ten thousand years are one aware moment.”

On the field of emptiness, all times enter into each moment. In this circuminsessional interpenetration of “Time,” or in Time itself, which only originates as such an interpenetration, namely, in the absolute relativity of Time on the field of emptiness, all times are phantom-like, and all “being” of things in Time is equally phantom-like.

Nevertheless, on the field of emptiness, each time is this time or that time in its “as-such” reality as it actually is. Or, it may be stated that, because in the field of emptiness each time is bottomlessly “Time,” all times enter into each time. And, only as a bottomless thing wherein all times can enter, each time actually comes into being as this or that time as it really is. Like-reality and like-phantom have to be at one. The essence of “Time” lies precisely therein.

If one is inclined to consider this conception of time to be a mere daydream,

he could be reminded of the fact that, for example, Kierkegaard speaks of a "transcendence" in the "instant" and, together with that, of a "simultaneity" (*Gleichzeitigkeit*) originating in the "instant." In fact, past and present can be simultaneous without demolishing the before-after sequence of time.

If such a field of simultaneity does not exist, religion, as a matter of course, and even culture in general cannot come into being. We can, in the present, encounter Shakyamuni and Jesus, Bashō and Beethoven. That religion and culture can originate and be handed down historically in time, shows us time's very essence.

The *Avatamsaka Sutra* advances the same conception, not only in connection with time but also with *place*: "A magician, staying in one place, produces all kinds of magical effects on phantom places; but he does not thereby demolish his original place"; "He does not destroy this one world through the fact that those worlds are many, nor are those many worlds destroyed by the fact that this world is one." (*ibid.*)

That time and place consist in a circuminsessional interpenetration, whereby all units enter into each unit, in other words, the absolute relativity of time and space, means that all things in time-space, "earth, water, fire, wind, oceans and mountains, towns and hamlets," "heavenly places," in a word, the whole "world," originate in the interpenetration in the being of every "thing," in the fundamental relativity of existence.

Moreover, that the "world" comes into being as one totality, as one world, means that it originates in a circuminsessional interpenetration with many "worlds." This world of ours is one relative world; a world beside which many possible or actual (in Leibnizean language, *possible* or *compossible*) worlds are conceivable; each world, while being able to reflect all worlds, is, as such, that real world itself. The one world itself comes into being on the field of emptiness as a field of absolute relativity.

And also, on the same field of emptiness, we may be able to ask for the ultimate source-points where the possibility is to be seen of activities such as that of reason in its positing its own images (in the form of "Ideas" and "Ideals") from within itself, or that of artistic imagination in its technique of creating its own imageries (in the form of visional "images"); a "phantom technique" which the haiku poet Kikaku (1661-1701), one of the most eminent

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of Bashō's disciples, speaks of in connection with his master's poem:

The first wintry shower—
The monkey also seems to long
For a small straw raincoat.

We can imagine the poet himself in a straw raincoat, wandering alone through a lonely mountain pass to Nara. But, here, we restrict the problem to the field of emptiness-as-knowledge.

In short, all things in the world and also the world itself are bottomlessly as being in the field of emptiness and, thus, are in a circuminsessional interpenetration whereby all are in each, all are in the "like-phantom=like-reality." There, "the bird flies, and looks like a bird" is the true reality of the bird. And the mode of being of ourselves, who stand on that field, namely, our self-in-itself as returned to its own "home-ground," originates in the point where one "does not enter the world except within the void, and also does not enter the void except within the world." Why? Because there is no difference between void and world; because one "dwells in the world at once dwelling in the void." This means precisely to "dwell, with a boundless heart, in the phantom-like Wisdom of the Tathagata"; to "know all like-reality"; and to "know that all dharmas are selfless." (*ibid.*)

To know things as such (as likely real) is the point where things are brought back to their own home-ground. And if the fact the bird flies and looks like a bird points precisely at the fact that the bird flies, and reveals, as I said, the same fact in its original factuality, then the knowing of this fact as such is not different from this fact being this fact, and also from this fact being there as this fact. The identity of "to be" and "to know" is more original than the traditional metaphysics imagined it to be.

I said above that, on the field of emptiness, our self is originally antecedent to world and things, and that therein lies the ground of the possibility of the world and of the existence of "things." This does not mean that, as in Kant's philosophy, the cognition of objects (and, therefore, the phenomena insofar as they are objects of cognition) would be a construction by the *a priori* forms of the senses and of the understanding. We are speaking here about the non-objective "in-itself-ness" of things before any distinction of forms and

materials, or form and matter, and before any conceived discrimination of phenomenon and *Ding an sich*. What I am attempting to say is that the basis of the origination of such things-in-themselves resides in the home-ground of ourselves, that is, in our self when it is, on the field of emptiness, truly in its own home-ground.

Such knowledge of things-in-themselves (which is knowledge of no-knowledge) means nothing other than that we, in truly returning to our own home-ground, return to the home-ground of things which realize themselves in the world. It is realization (comprehension) as return and entrance into the home-ground where things originate and come to appearance in their true (and "likely") reality. Return and entrance into the point where "things" non-objectively realize themselves and posit themselves (into their *position* or their *samadhi*-being) is, for the self, immediately equivalent to the self's return and entrance into its own home-ground. This is knowledge of no-knowledge.

In a word, it is the non-objective knowing of the non-objective thing itself. This knowing, therefore, does not rely on the faculty of reason. As we said before, reason has traditionally been called "the natural light," but the true "natural light" is not reason. If we call "nature" the force which gathers all things into one, orders them and thus brings about a "world," this "force" belongs to the field of emptiness which renders possible the circuminsessional interpenetration among all things. Returning to stand therein means returning to the home-ground of the world and of things; and this, in turn, means that the self returns to its own home-ground.

If, therefore, we accept that the knowledge of no-knowledge consists therein, this knowledge has to be the true "natural light." In that case, contrary to what is the case with reason, this light is not different from the "being" itself of things themselves. On the field of emptiness, the "being" itself of all things (which, while each thing realizes itself as that thing in itself, are gathered into one) is the light of the knowledge in ourself as it returned to its own home-ground in the return and entrance into the field of the realization of things.

That is why I said before that the "natural light" within us is, more basically, the light of things themselves, coming to us from all things. The light that illumines us from our own home-ground and originally brings us to self-awareness, is nothing other than the non-objective in-itself "being" of things

which obtains on the field where they realize themselves from their own home-ground.

This is also the sense of statements like Dōgen's: "That the self conveys itself to and practices and confirms all things, is illusion. That all things advance forward and practice and confirm the self, is enlightenment"; or Musō Kokushi's, "Mountains and rivers, the earth, grass and trees, tiles and stones, all of these are the self's original part."

The field of emptiness is a field with the center everywhere. It is the field where all things—each as an absolute center, each as possessing an absolutely unique individuality—realize their own selfness. Thus, that each is an absolute center means that in each point where a thing "is," the world "worlds." And this, in turn, means that each, by being in its own home-ground, is in the home-ground of all beings and, conversely, that each is in its own home-ground by being in the home-ground of all things. (I have stated repeatedly that this relationship is inconceivable except in the non-objective, in-itself mode of being of "things.")

In this way, for a thing to be truly itself as it really is, is not different from the fact that all things are essentially one with one another, are gathered together as a world. This is the "one and all," not as it is contemplated on the field of reason, but as it is comprehended on the field of emptiness. This is not simple "being" but being at one with emptiness; consequently, this is no absolute unity which is abstracted from all manifoldness and differentiation in the world, but an absolute unity on the field where manifoldness and differentiation are thorough and radicalized. It means that an "all" that is nothingness-being and being-nothingness is one; that, on the field of emptiness, the centers, every one of which is absolutely independent, are essentially one.

In the non-objective, focused-in-itself, "middle" mode of being of each thing, all things focus themselves into one. In the "middle" mode of being this is necessarily so. It is necessary to the essence itself of "being" that a thing, in being in the home-ground of the "thing"-itself, is in the home-ground of all things.

Furthermore, if the field of emptiness really opens up where we return to our own home-ground, our self, wherein the possibility of the world and of the existence of things has its basis, has to be a self-in-itself such as we described above—something which, being self, is not self; a self which is not self.

In connection with the in-itself-ness of things, I stated that this is mode of being about which we have to say, for example, "fire does not burn fire, the eye does not see the eye," and which can only be expressed in paradoxical ways of speaking such as "fire is not fire and, therefore, is fire." Borrowing a term which is usually reserved to express a state of concentration of the mind, namely, *samadhi* ("settled-ness"), we called this "*samadhi*-being."

Now, we can make a similar statement in connection with the self that is to be "confirmed" by all things in that mode of being, namely the self that is not self. When it is said that "emptiness is self," or "being self because of not being self," we may express the mode of being of that self as an "emptiness *samadhi*," or "no-mind-ness *samadhi*," as it was called in the past.

Samadhi is not simply psychological; it is an ontological concept. The point where the non-objective in-itself mode of being has its basis lies in the home-ground—"at the fingertips," "at the feet"—of our self. In this, its own home-ground, the being of the self is essentially a sort of *samadhi*. No matter to what degree the conscious self is in chaotic dispersion, its self-in-itself is perpetually in *samadhi*. Moreover, when one looks back from that point, even the aforesaid dispersed mode of being is, as it is, *samadhi*.

I have called the in-itself mode of being of "things" their "middle," and quoted, in that connection, the saying, "The moment one brings forth any thing whatsoever to explain it, he misses the mark completely." Now, this saying will apply most originally to our own self; because it is only in our returning to our own home-ground that the field of emptiness opens up to us, where that in-itself-ness of "things" has the basis of its possibility of being. Our self is in itself most originally "middle" and totally inexplicable, because it is at one with emptiness and moreover at one with emptiness always in the self-awareness that emptiness is self, and because with that self-awareness which is more original than any thing whatsoever, it is antecedent to the world and to all things. Every human being-itself contains the field of the "force" whereby all "things-in-themselves" are gathered into one as a world. It contains the ground of possibility of all things which appear and realize themselves in the world; although at the same time each one of us exists only as a temporary and illusory thing in the world among the other temporary things.

When we say that our self is most originally "middle," we are not think-

ing, for example, of Aristotle's "middle" as the middle way between too much and too little, nor are we thinking of the "middle" Hegel discovered when he recognized the action of reason in the mediative activity between contradictory modes of being.

While these are the "middles" projected on the field of reason, the "middle" as the mode of being in the field of emptiness cannot be projected on any other field whatever. It presents itself directly and non-objectively in the fact that we ourselves actually are, and is precisely what comes to self-awareness in this fact. It lies at our fingertips, at our feet.

None of our actions, seeing and hearing for example, can be performed in our place by somebody else; they contain, as it were, an absolute "close-at-hand-ness." Herein appears what we call "middle."

Someone might object here that saying our original self cannot be hit upon when it is explained by means of its likeness with something else is contradictory with what I said before about mountains and rivers, grass and trees, etc., being the original part of the self. But, that objection stems simply from his viewing things on the field of consciousness and representing mountains and rivers as well as the self merely objectively. On that field of subject-object opposition the subject, which one acknowledges as something never objectifiable, is still represented in one's self-consciousness as such a something. But one layer deeper there lies the relationship whereby all things are in our home-ground and we ourselves are in the home-ground of all things. I do not mean here a unification or identity of subject and object, but the aforesaid circumin-sessional interpenetration. Therefore, if I say that mountains and rivers, etc. are the essential part of the self, we should not forget that here mountains and rivers, while being mountains and rivers, are not mountains and rivers; and that, equally, the self, while being self, is not self; and also that only here mountains and rivers are real mountains and rivers as they are, and the self is the real self in its true reality.

It is on this field that our self is the self-presence of the most original "middle." The same *Muchū Mondo*, which contains the sentence, "Mountains and rivers. . . . are all the self's original part," tells us, for example, that "The ancients said: every man possesses the spiritual light. When the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* speaks of the *samadhi* of the Storehouse of the Great Light, it means this spiritual light which belongs to the nature of all sentient beings.

What is called the body-light, the wisdom-light, and the miracle-light of all the Buddhas, are all born out of this Storehouse of the Great Light. And even to the ordinary man's distinguishing east and west, black and white, there is nothing that is not a marvellous work of that spiritual light. But fools forget this original light and turn to the outside to look for worldly light."

In the above, I said that the "natural light" is not the light of all things. What is called "spiritual light" here, does not mean the light of the "soul" or of the "spirit" in the ordinary sense of the words. It is, on the contrary, a *samadhi* of the "Storehouse of the Great Light," whence the light of all things (namely the "being" itself of all beings) is being "born," and which belongs to the nature of every human being. When I said before that our self-in-itself is most originally "middle," I was pointing to that same place.

(concluded)

Translated by Reverend Jan van Bragt