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The “Inside” and “Outside” of a Religious Organization

The Present Situation of Buddhism

When it comes to my thoughts about Buddhism, I may say that they are occasioned by two things. The first is, the present situation of Japanese Buddhism; the second (not unrelated to the first) is the fact that I have been engaged all my life in philosophy—which, broadly speaking, means specializing in thinking. The contents of my thinking today are the outcome of the meeting of these two, and it is from the perspective of these two that I wish to speak.

Although I doubt that I have anything new to say regarding Buddhism’s present situation, I would like to articulate my views on what I feel is relevant to this topic. Rather than focusing specifically on the separate sects of Buddhism and their various problems, I would like to concentrate attention on Buddhism in a more general sense. The issue that catches my eye is the fact that a great gap of opinion opens up between the general public and those who belong to special religious organizations. This shows in a multitude of ways. This gap is not unique to Buddhism, but at present is rather common to all religions, and is evident in Western nations, too. Thus, Buddhism is no exception here. Shintoism and Christianity must also be taken into account; and while Christianity is a religion of Western origin, I believe that the West also suffers from the same issues as are evident in Japan. I now want to discuss these issues in more detail.

To begin with the present situation, I think that among the Japanese there are many who are willing to read the Bible, or Shinran’s *Tannishō* (in sharp contrast, the *Kyōgyōshinshō* is very difficult to understand), or Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō* (this is also a difficult book, whereas the *Zuimonki* is comparatively easy to read), especially when they

become interested in religion or are actively in pursuit of acquiring a religion. But even the fact that they are deeply moved by reading the Bible, or that they are attracted by coming into contact with the *Tannishō*, does not necessarily lead them to become Christians or Buddhists, or adherents of the Shin sect of Buddhism. Instead, most of them do not become believers at all.

This means that the general public finds itself in a situation in which it does not dare to accept the established individual religious organizations or sects, even though there are many things to learn there, and even though they are inspired by Buddhist doctrines or the Christian faith, by Shinran, Dōgen, or Jesus, or by the way of life to which Buddhists or Christians manage to adhere in accordance with their respective religions. As is often said in the case of Japan, a religious organization is established with the family as its basis. This has been so in Japan especially since the Tokugawa era. People involve themselves with religion through activities such as Buddhist services or funerals, which are regarded more as social customs, and these religious activities are not tied to an individual's religious self-consciousness. Here it is evident that religion does not have a firm grip on the individual person. This is connected with the fact that religion does not seem prepared to meet the religious demands of individuals at a level beyond mere social custom. I completely agree with this frequently repeated verdict. I have the impression that it is in this that various problems of great importance appear in a highly concentrated form.

The Wide Gulf between the Buddhist Organization and the General Public

It is very difficult to find the clue that will solve the problems I have just mentioned. The most basic problem is that there seems to be a great discrepancy between the attitude of those who are concerned with a religious organization and who are supposed to be responsible for carrying on the religion, and that of the general public. The term "attitude" is somewhat ambiguous here. What I have in mind is a way of living—that is to say, a direction or a form (or a way) by means of which we live our life. So I should say "direction," rather than attitude. *Kata*, a Japanese word equivalent to "form," also has the meaning of direction. When we say *izukatae*, the literal meaning of which is "whereto," we denote a direction. At the same time, it has the connotation of form. So I am sure that form and direction combine to give

birth to this Japanese word *kata*. The idea here is that *ikikata* suggests a way of living one's life, that is, a direction to take in one's life.

Since "form" leads us to think of something fixed, it is better to replace it with "pattern" or "structure." A life is structured, which is to say that it has a basic form, or rather *kata*, which moves incessantly in some appropriate direction. Because of this characteristic feature of life, we can say that it possesses a definite structure, even though not simply a fixed one. With an eye on this feature of living, I referred to it above as an "attitude." And with respect to attitude, there is a great difference between those who belong to a religious organization and the general public. Briefly, people in the former category cannot expel the awareness that they belong to a religious organization even when they are engaged in thinking, seeing, or doing something else. In a sense this is inevitable. But the problem lies in the fact that they see everything from within the perspective of their religious organization, that is, from the "inside."

To speak from the standpoint of those who belong to a religious organization, it must be noted that various religious ceremonies are held. And besides this, there is a basic position taken that is characteristic of each religion—for instance, positions that are peculiar to Zen Buddhism or to the Shin sect, respectively. Generally speaking, each position can be described in terms of the articles of faith or the dogmas that express the basic doctrines distinguishing one religious sect from another. I think that any religious sect must have such dogmas. Hence, there are also *sūtras* (or scriptures) connected with them; Christianity has the Bible, and in the case of Buddhism, there are the specific scriptures on which each sect absolutely relies. As a result, there is within each religion or sect a study of dogma based upon its scriptures. It is in this way that a religious organization is established, which has various rituals and articles of faith. We can say that this aspect constitutes the most important nucleus of a religious organization. Here ceremony must be emphasized. I think that ceremony reveals the most ultimate and basic issues of human works and deeds. It expresses the most fundamental stance that a human being takes toward God or Buddha. For Christianity, the characteristic features lie in prayer, or in various kinds of worship. In Buddhism there are many differences, varying from sect to sect. With respect to *nembutsu* (prayers to Buddha), there are various services affiliated with them. And there are many services peculiar to the Shingon sect of Buddhism. From a religious standpoint, we can say that religious ceremonies are most important, when taken in the broad sense as the most basic form or *kata* of the various actions that a human being can undertake in the face of the Buddha.

As for the articles of faith and the study of dogma, we can say that they are established on the basis of the most fundamental *kata* by virtue of which a human being can come to see and to know. That is to say, they are extremely important items without which a religious standpoint could not be established. Hence, I think it quite natural for each religious sect to take good care of them from within its own organizational standpoint. However, the case becomes quite different if we view this matter from the standpoint of the general public. It has little interest in religious organizations as such. This means that it is not interested in the various religious activities that take place within a religious organization before Buddha or God. In other words, there appears to be a great contradiction evident in the fact that the general public is most indifferent to ceremony as a form of religious service, as well as to sectarian dogma. It is true that the general public is very pleased to read the Bible or the *Kyōgyōshinshō*, and is inspired by them. But on the other hand, when it comes to religious ceremonies or religious dogmas, it seems to me that the public has no interest in them, or rather in most cases is actually repulsed by them. This creates a basic problem. Originally, religious rituals and doctrines were thought of as having been concerned with a human being's fundamental way of life. They originated in answers to various doubts that arose gradually through confrontation with the basic problems of living. The religious demand of pursuing and answering these doubts led religions to try to find various solutions to them. At present, however, the problem is that these religious ceremonies or services are rather matters unrelated to their lives, or in some cases, are actually viewed as repulsive by the general public, and particularly by those who are in quest of religious truth in the midst of doubt. The question is, then: From what source or sources does this attitude originate?

Religion is Normally Concerned with a Human's Way of Being

Needless to say, religious services and the study of dogma have come into existence against the background of their historical traditions, and have continued to support their respective religious organizations to the present day. What is required now is to bring them back to their origins once more. Here the term "origin" refers to a place where the religious demands of a human being take root and have their beginning. These religious practices were given as a way of life itself. It is very important to bring this way of life back again to the place in which it originated. To "bring back" means to render this way of life capable

of being a "living form" once again. In this way, it again becomes a way by means of which, or through which, we live our lives. I think that this is a matter so obvious that we need not elaborate further.

The important thing is to reevaluate and then reappropriate the various religious services and doctrines. "To reevaluate" seems to be a simple matter, but in truth it is difficult to do. What we must do is to submit them to reconsideration, because the manner in which we have been dealing with them thus far is no longer of use. But we cannot do this so easily, since what is at stake, basically speaking, is a concern with our way of living, and hence, we cannot reevaluate them authentically without carrying this reconsideration into the very midst of our living. This amounts to saying that we must once more get a grip on their authentic meaning—that is, we must reinterpret them in a sense. We must try to interpret, for instance, what religious services really entail, or what the doctrines with which the study of dogma deals in various fashion really mean to us right now. It is to be noted here that such reinterpretation has nothing to do with so-called scientific interpretation in which we ponder in our heads this and that. What I intend to convey by the term "interpretation" is the attempt to grasp genuine meaning in the midst of really living our own lives in one way or another. The "meaning" that is inherent in religious services or in the study of dogma is that they give expression to a human way of life. To interpret means nothing less than to "get a grip" on this meaning.

This sense of interpretation has nothing to do with the scholarly one in which one tries to ponder with one's intellect what it is that this word means or that word means, even though it eventually comes to include within itself the scholarly interpretation. But it is more important to come to grips with the meaning of religious thought in and through an intimate connection with our particular way of living. What is at stake is our way of living, and we have no choice but to grasp this meaning through actually living. This requires that those who now belong to a religious organization must come back to its origins, that is to say, to those roots or origins as disclosed and encountered wherever we dig down at our very feet, so to speak.

If this is so, then we must destroy traditions one after another, in a sense. I am afraid that the term "destroy" is perhaps inappropriate here. But when it comes to our own way of life, it seems to me that we must proceed to alter the fixed form into which it has objectified itself, and that we must alter the definite structure, form, or pattern into which religious services or doctrines have become congealed. So far as the term "destruction" is concerned, I think it comparatively

easy to submit something to simple destruction. Recently, some students have behaved violently with steel clubs.¹ This kind of destruction is comparatively easy to carry out. But it does not, I am convinced, bring about a real reevaluation of the traditions. What is demanded of us is rather to untie something rigidly structured in such a way as to uncongeal it, and then to probe into exactly the form or *kata* of living that is hidden behind it. We can say that what is argued for here is some sort of decomposition. If we use a word that corresponds to the word "structure," then "destruction" is appropriate to express what I have in mind.

Even though the term "destruction" denotes breaking something to pieces, what I mean is rather a procedure somewhat different from "breaking something down" in the ordinary sense. While taking part, and living in a fixed form or *kata*, we constantly move out of it, and subject it to constant reflection—that is, we examine it by reflecting upon it. What is demanded of us is to remain inside of it and at the same time to get out of it, and vice versa. These two perspectives or viewpoints of the inside and the outside are both required. In this way, we unravel something fixed little by little and hence are able to explore the meaning that it may have originally possessed as a way of life. We cannot do this without going through our own living of it. In this way, we gradually come to understand the authentic meaning of a fixed *kata*. This is exactly what is meant by "interpretation." I admit that it is helpful for modern persons that scholars engage in obtaining various scientific interpretations, so to speak. But these interpretations are nothing but attempts made at the level of "learning" in the general sense, and have nothing to do with the position characteristic of the study of dogma, that is, with a learning about activities from the vantage point of religion. As was said before, the authentic position envisaged here lies in proceeding to destroy some fixed forms and meanings one by one, and I am sure that this destruction will result in an almost continuous construction or reconstruction of something out of itself.

An Important Aspect of Religion

To reconstruct is indeed to come back to origins. The more we get a grip on an original way of life, the more it becomes revitalized in and through our own lives. Even though we do not act consciously with "construction" as our intention, our proceeding to live our own lives entices the revitalization of an authentic way of life. This amounts

to saying that a new form is thereby continuously constructed and reconstructed. Thus, the process becomes a "constructive" one.

That a religious organization can come to be provided with authentic meaning indicates that it constantly derives new constructions from its origins, that is, from the origin of its traditions. In order for a religious organization to be relied upon, this renewed attempt to reconstruct out of origins is, above all, a prerequisite. This is exactly what the general public demands of it.

I think that this demand arises not so much from individual religious organizations or sects as from (to speak more generally beyond the distinction of these sects) the religious demand involved in a universal way of living inherent in human beings, no matter whether they are Occidental or Oriental.

As mentioned above, the fact that human beings feel the need to pursue meanings through reading the Bible, the *Tannishō*, or Dōgen's writings should bring to the surface their basic way of living. We are here considering religious figures such as Shinran, Dōgen, Jesus, or anyone else who concretely embodies a basic way of living. What the general public finds in the Bible, in the *Tannishō*, and so forth, is a genuine encounter with these religious persons that takes its departure from the standpoint of a human being as such. And given these religious models, the general public searches out the path of religion, that is, of religion as a way of life. Therefore, we can say in a word that the subject matter of religion consists in a way of living by means of which a human being carries on his/her life. Since this is the basic meaning of religion, various matters concerning religious organization must be evaluated and appropriated again and again against this background.

Keeping an eye on the gap between the public and religious organizations, the question to be dealt with from the standpoint of the latter is that of reappropriation in the aforementioned sense. This reappropriation—that is, "to appropriate again and again" has a double meaning. On the one hand, it means to come back to the place from which the traditions originated, and on the other, to deconstruct traditions. And I am convinced that this sort of procedure is interpretation in the true sense. To this end, what is demanded of us is, first of all, to destroy traditions one after another, and then to attempt to come back to their origins, that is to say, to resuscitate or take up in ourselves the basic living power that is at work, lurking behind it, as a result of our own living now. In other words, the power of tradition renders our present life capable of being established in the modern world; it becomes an enabling power that authentically teaches us how to live here and now.

This double activity is demanded of us simultaneously. Otherwise, we would fall into mere destruction, on the one hand, or into mere preservation of the traditions by sticking to something traditionally fixed, on the other. Thus, we are forced to cling to a conservative position or a liberal position, both in the negative sense. But a genuine way of living arises at the place where these two things are established together, that is, the adopting of a progressive standpoint, and that of a conservative one. Here the dictum holds true: "to regress and to conserve" is to be established as congruent with "to search for novel things constantly." In fact, this is everywhere evident. For the purpose of applying this truth to religion, it is necessary for us to think from the standpoint that religion is concerned with a way of life that is peculiar to human beings.

Those Who Belong to a Religious Organization Are Required to Get Out of Their Organization

What is at issue will now surface at last. But what is actually meant by the gap between the general public and a religious organization? Those who affiliate with a religious organization usually confine themselves within it, and then try to see everything from that perspective, while the general public stands entirely outside of it. What appears here is a complete separation between the inside and the outside. The issue is not that this side would be good and that side bad. It seems to me that each of them represents a position indispensable in its own way. I am sure that those who affiliate with a religious organization stand on the foundation of a religious tradition, shouldering something of deep and great importance that has been built up inside that tradition.

The general public also seeks to return to tradition, looking for something of great importance there. But at the same time, even when we confine our argument to the case of Japan, the general public lives in the midst of the modern world, standing there, and being blown about by the winds of the world. So far as a religious organization is concerned, however, since it carries tradition on its back, I think that it is a little less exposed to the winds of the world. It seems to me that those who are so affiliated are, as it were, in an airtight room, where they are unlikely to be exposed to the winds of the world. This holds true of a religious organization, which offers a way of living to its members, no matter what positions they may otherwise hold. Those who stand outside it, however, live under the

pressure of new movements in history, or at least are required to adjust themselves to them constantly.

Generally speaking, a religious organization cannot, or rather should not, simply go along with the new movements, and this is also true of the Western world. In the case of Japan in particular, this defect appears most conspicuously in Buddhism. Ever since the Meiji era, Japanese society has been undergoing rapid and continuous transformation. In comparison with the Tokugawa era, present society has suffered from sweeping situational changes, and virtually nothing has remained unchanged. It is only Buddhism that has not changed. Keeping an eye on its basic aspects, we can say that it still sticks to its old-fashioned structure. Consequently, those who belong to a religious organization are now required to get out of themselves to a borderline where the gap between society and religious organization appears in Japanese history. To come to a borderline means to stand facing both sides at once. To speak more drastically, members of a religious organization are required to step outside of their religious organization. In other words, by standing on the same terrain as the general public, they must now become of one mind with the general public. However, I do not know whether the term "mind" is appropriate here. What I am thinking about is their attitude or way of life, but this transformation is not so easily achieved as one might imagine. What members are required to do is to eliminate, one by one in and through their life decisions, that which must be termed "old-fashioned." That is, they must rid themselves of the rust or dirt affixed to their traditional way of life. It is oftentimes said that even plants and animals constantly divest themselves of something old; that is, they cast off their skin. So it is urgently necessary that those who belong to a religious organization cast off the skin of tradition in one way or another. They cannot do this except through the manner in which they live their lives.

Therefore, what is most important is the attitude or way of life through which they carry out their task, the task of taking as their own, to the extent possible, the position that is the "outside," and on which the general public stands. Perhaps an objection will be raised that an endeavor of this sort is unnecessary, because they meet this task incessantly, and without conscious effort. I agree with this opinion. But to speak the truth, this kind of endeavor is much more difficult than one thinks. For they are required to make this effort not in their heads, but in their bodies, or rather in the way in which they come to feel things. It seems extremely difficult to transform one's sensitivity in this way. I do not insist that such a transformation be

suddenly achieved overnight. But I do want to say that it is necessary for them to be prepared always to turn themselves and their minds in this direction. Still, in the history of religions, this phenomenon is not as exceptional as one imagines. Even in ancient times, it often happened that those who still belonged to a temple in fact had actually left it, in a sense, while still remaining within it. To confine our argument to the history of Japan, we find that the founders of the sects of Buddhism in the Kamakura period, who had submitted themselves to religious discipline on Mt. Hiei, climbed down from that mountain. In those days, Mt. Hiei was the counterpart to the present religious organizations. The fact that they climbed down occasioned the beginning of a new Kamakura Buddhism.² I am convinced that this act was equivalent to stepping outside of a religious organization. It was the occurrence of a renewed attempt to reappropriate Buddhism.

By contrast, laymen cannot simply go along with Buddhism, even though they are in search of something rather like it. There is something in them that prevents them from seeking contact with a greater power, or with the deep ideas of traditional Buddhism. This is a problem with which I will try to cope in the next chapter. But if this is so, then they cannot allow themselves to enter into a religious organization, for they will feel repulsed by it, despite the fact that they may also have a desire to be involved with it. To speak of this as a general phenomenon: people can become indifferent not only to a religious organization, but also to all the affairs of religion as well. What is in vogue now is a position or a way of life in which people are interested in neither Buddhism nor Christianity, nor have they interest in any religious pursuits whatsoever.

Nonclergy and Nonlaity

The general public, while being blown by the winds of the actual world, live in the real world and bear the burden of real life. But it is not yet the case that they come into contact with religion by carrying this living of their life in the world to its extreme. Far from it, for in some cases they become quite indifferent to religion. Those who belong to religious organizations, even though they still hold onto something religious, do not have the ability to lure the general public into having an interest in it. I think this is the situation in which the world finds itself at present. In order to change this, those who belong to religious organizations are required to step out into the "outside" once more. To use old-fashioned terms such as "clergy"

and "laity," they must adopt the standpoint of the laity, instead of that of the clergy.

Yet, on the other hand, if what is required of them is thought to be exhausted by stepping out, then a situation arises in which they are not different than the general public. If so, then every problem disappears. But the fact is that they are required to step out into the outside, while standing on something provided by the traditions of a religious organization. These two directions—that is, the directions of pushing the position of the clergy to its extreme, and at the same time carrying out the position of the laity to its extreme—must somehow be fused into one. In this respect, I think that the position of the Shin sect of Buddhism, when characterized in terms of "nonclergy" and "nonlaity," achieves precisely this end point. The truth seems to be this: the position of the nonclergy consists in carrying out the lay perspective to its extreme, and the position of the nonlaity consists in carrying out the perspective of the clergy to its extreme, and these two positions combine to give birth to a new stance of nonclergy and nonlaity united.

The situation is the same with the general public. The nonclergy and nonlaity are here inverted into the nonlaity and nonclergy. The positions are actually turned upside down, for, from the negation of the position of the laity, there arises the pursuit of religious enlightenment, or the religious demand. Hence, the position of the nonlaity remains in place to the end. At the same time, however, the general public are not required to actually become clergymen. To sum up, those who belong to a religious organization, on the one hand, and the general public, on the other, are required to have the same frame of mind, while pushing their respective positions to their logical conclusions, even though the direction of their intent is quite opposite. In this way, we are able to set up a sort of common ground on the basis of which we are more than likely to overcome the gap between a religious organization and the general public.

When standing on the side of a religious organization, we speak of the nonclergy and nonlaity, and conversely, we speak of the nonlaity and nonclergy when standing on the side of the general public. At the basis of both, what is involved is the same, but the direction of approach varies according to the position taken. I am convinced that it is only as a result of such positioning that a perspective arises through which both sides may come into authentic contact, or at least come to grips with each other's point of view. Let me speak in an abstract manner first of all. So far as a religious organization is concerned, reinterpretation of the basic meanings of religious services and doctrines, which constitute its most important nucleus, is required by

reducing them to the way of life to which they give expression. Here the term “interpret” means for us to submit the basic meaning to reinterpretation through the living of our lives, and to grasp it in a renewed fashion. To use philosophical terminology, we can speak of “existence,” which is more or less equivalent to the living of one’s “life.” Through this renewed grasp, we are genuinely able to give new life to tradition.

Modernization and Tradition

To speak more concretely, the question must be raised concerning what is involved in that issue which constitutes the gap between the two sides. This is a complicated issue. If we take into account the present situation of Buddhism, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that there is some incompatibility here, and that a discrepancy exists between these two sides with regard to the question of how to grasp the form of life, that is, its pattern or structure. I said above that they differ from each other in their basic form of living. Thus, it is evident that they must do their best to fill the gap on various points. But to speak more fundamentally, since the most important thing is to fill or eliminate altogether the gap that occurs in one’s form of living, it is extremely important to consider this problem by pushing the nonclergy and nonlaity mode to its logical conclusion.

Let us now turn our attention to the more concrete problems that seem to have arisen here. First of all, why does such a gap or discrepancy arise concerning one’s way of living, and its direction and form? Fundamentally, I think that this is an issue that involves not so much the present situation as one’s way of living itself. This issue seems to center around how to make doctrine relevant to a person’s way of living in the present world—doctrine in the sense of its constituting a form of living—that has existed from the long past of traditional Buddhism right up to the present day.

In the case of Japan, this is an issue that has been continually subjected to discussion in various circles, including that of religion, under the guise of the consideration of the relationship between the modernization of Japan and her long-standing traditions. But in dealing with this, it should be observed that there is a great difference between Buddhism and other areas of inquiry. In the case of Buddhism, modernization has not yet made a clear-cut appearance. In contrast with this, in areas such as politics, economics, education, the arts, and so forth, attempts to modernize were made, and in the midst

of these attempts, traditions came to be revitalized in one way or another. It is in these areas that a stepping forward to the previously discussed double direction has been achieved, however imperfectly.

The history of Japan since the Meiji era has been constituted by such a double movement in which modernization and the continuing reflection upon, or the going back upon, Japan's tradition have been constantly interwoven. On the one hand, an extremely radical and entirely new direction makes its appearance. In most cases, this direction comes to the fore in close connection with the various attempts to adopt Western culture. In addition, in the modern world, this direction proceeds by being tied to the standpoint of technology. This is not only a problem for the West, but also one with which the Eastern world as a whole must cope as well. This is the direction that Japan has taken in its straightforward path toward the future. When Japan appeared to have gone too far in the direction of bringing about this extremely hasty and new reformation, there then appeared attempts to return to the traditions of Japan and of the Eastern world. These "forward-and-backward" movements have been repeated again and again.

I think that the fact that these attempts have occurred, though in an imperfect fashion, has contributed to the great power inherent in this country. Promoting either one of these directions alone is to no avail. It is because of the fact that the weight of tradition has very definitely continued to operate somewhere within Japanese society that Japan has succeeded in enjoying a more balanced form of progress. It is useless to fly in the wind without a definite direction, as though a kite's string were cut. In such a case, the kite would be lost. Japan, however, has a string attached to her. By giving the string a pull whenever difficulties arise, she has remained well balanced and has avoided being lost altogether. The kite example reminds me that the kite itself is attached both to a string and to a tail. Without a tail, it could not fly. To return to tradition is something like attaching a tail to a kite. But since a kite is destined to fly farther and farther, it is indispensable that the wind continues to blow. But it is no good if the kite is hindered from moving by being caught in a tree.

In comparison with other countries in Asia, this cultural feature is very clearly delineated in Japan. The potentiality of Japan lay in the fact that she could adopt Western culture at a high level, by virtue of the effectiveness of the power of her own tradition, which was itself at a very high level. I hold the view that the reason why the approach that Japan takes toward Western culture is quite different from other Eastern countries such as China, India, and so forth, lies precisely in this.

That tradition was actively alive in Japan provided her with the capacity to modernize. There was no precedent in the history of the world for the rapid pace and early date of modernization that she achieved. This suggests that she has undertaken something quite risky. But there was present at all times a balance between actions and reactions. Despite the fact that both sides of this tension have a tendency to become radicalized, she was able to walk along the path of progress by striking a balance between them, even though in a sort of zigzag pattern. It is regrettable that this could not be said of Buddhism. Like a kite caught in a tree, we must try to fly it once again from the beginning. It is quite important for us to ponder how to raise it higher and higher, once we have been able to make it fly again. On the one hand, when a strong wind blows, the power of tradition must be put to work. But on the other, we cannot fly a kite if its tail is too heavy. It is of the utmost importance to strike a balance between these two inclinations; toward modernization and change, and toward tradition.

The Modernization of the Buddhist Organization

Now, this imbalance appears in Buddhism under the guise of a delay in the modernization of its religious organization. What is the crucial issue that comes to the fore here? I think it necessary to observe that the present world cannot be dealt with exclusively in terms of modernization. This means that what we are now urgently required to come to terms with, and regardless of whether we live in Japan or in some other country in the world, is the need to go beyond the various problems brought about by modernization and to deal with them in such a way that modernization will eventually be transcended.

In the case of Buddhism, we have to deal with these problems in two stages. First of all, we must come to grips with modernization. And then, in connection with this, we must further take into consideration problems that will be posed in and through the transition from the present to the future, after the issues arising out of modernization itself are resolved.

To begin with, it is necessary to ponder what situations arose in connection with modernization. This is so because the way of life that was produced by means of modernization turns out to be a way of life in and through which we, as well as the general public, manage to live at present. At the same time, we must consider various grave issues that make their appearance in the process of modernization, but in a new fashion. In the case of Japan, modernization has come into exist-

ence under the influence of Western culture, and yet, at the same time, the path that goes beyond modernization oversteps the framework of Western culture.

To speak in brief, we can say that modernization coincides with the period in which the Western world held sway over the civilizations and cultures of the entire world. No one denies the fact that the Western world possessed power enough to exercise such control. This power enabled Westerners to bring the period of modernization into existence. By virtue of the fact that the Western world possessed such power, the civilization or culture established by it was able to hold sway over most of the world. The present problem has to do with the fact that the world that exists outside of the framework of the West has been opened up as one world, through the medium of the power inherent in Western civilization itself. This means that more problems, which are universal in nature, will arise over and above the basic difference between the Western and the Eastern worlds. That is to say, such problems as exist worldwide have come to the fore as a result of modernization. In an attempt to solve them, we must look within the framework of the Western world itself. But their basis is not necessarily to be found solely within the Western world, which has now been put in a very difficult position. The contention here is that the present points of difficulty will remain unresolved, until the way of thinking and living peculiar to the Western world, which has contributed so significantly to the emergence of modernization, is obliged to cast off its own skin.

Occidental people must now face two contradictory demands; the demand to open up to the new world through their capacity for modernization and the demand to deal with problems with which they had no power to deal. That is to say, they were themselves required to cast off their skin. Under these circumstances, a culture based upon religion, as well as a way of living that had prevailed as such since ancient times in the Eastern world, needed to be reconsidered again as an issue. I imagine the possibility of an entirely new way of living arising that has never before made its appearance in the Western world. It may also be said that the time is ripe for providing human beings with a new possibility, one that is not likely to be found in the Western world, but instead may arise out of the positions peculiar to the Eastern world, which are often described as "premodern." From such a vantage point, one can say that the problems of the contemporary world appear in dress that is quite new. Within Buddhism, too, at least to an extent, there has opened up a new vista that deciphers from the above positions the possibility of an entirely new meaning, or at

least it is pregnant with this possibility. However, in order for Buddhism to adequately respond, it is obliged to solve two problems—namely, the problem of modernization and that of postmodernization. But with regard to the latter problem, it is only by means of living through the period called “modern” that we may be able to come to grips with it at all.

Buddhism and Ethics

Buddhism has thus imposed upon itself two problems to resolve. One can say that it lags a little behind other realms or fields of cultural concern in Japan. On the other hand, when seen from another angle, Buddhism, while lagging behind, has a future before it. But it is no good simply waiting for an answer without grasping this point clearly. Buddhism must open itself, or create itself anew out of its own form of living-through, instead of merely waiting for some solution to its problems.

Let me take up one such problem. When I am engaged in philosophical problems, I must pass through Western philosophy. As a result, my observations are elicited or inspired by such a passage. From that perspective, some problems emerge when we attempt to bring Buddhism, with its long history, face to face with the issue of modernization. Let me enumerate some of them. First of all, the objection is oftentimes raised against Buddhism that it has no ethics. This is an impression that Occidental people often have when they come into contact with Buddhism.

The problem of ethics has already been raised by scholars who have themselves been engaged in the study of Buddhism. The term “ethics” refers to what Occidental people have traditionally dealt with as ethics. What they really have in mind is itself a problem. But for the time being, we can say that it is concerned with individual conscience, if we may be allowed to identify it as such. Moral consciousness arises at the deepest level of an individual’s mind. Buddhism is often said not to be clear about this. At the same time, it is also said to be devoid of a “social ethics.” In my opinion, what is here brought to light through these criticisms of Buddhism is not so much concerned with general problems called “conscience” or “social ethics,” as it is with those bases of the Western world that lie at the deepest level of modern civilization and culture, such as politics, economics, morality, and religion. Otherwise, we cannot cope with these criticisms concretely.

A detailed explanation is not needed here. But let me illustrate with a single example. In the field of modern economics, the history of capitalism, which was brought into sufficient relief by Adam Smith, has been tied to Christianity in its origins. In particular, the capitalist position, which has taken the initiative in opening up the modern world, has had an intimate connection with the ethics of Protestantism. Protestantism is usually identified with the Reformation, which was one of the main factors in the opening up of the modern world. With regard to Buddhism, however, it is ordinarily objected that it falls short with respect to social ethics. If we take Buddhism's side, we cannot necessarily say that it falls short of manifesting any ethics. It is certainly true to say that there is no high-level civilization or culture that does not involve some ethical teaching. Otherwise, high-level civilization or culture could not have been established. But in this case, it is no good insisting that there is certainly an ethics involved, and thus enumerating its various teachings in an abstract and theoretical manner. As was just mentioned, the most important thing is to make sure that the social ethics is still at work as a power that contributes to the opening up of the modern world, and thus serves as a driving force in contemporary life. We can say of Christianity that both the economic organization identified as capitalism, as well as liberalism, which emphasizes freedom and basic human rights in politics, were brought into existence along with the Reformation, which served as their foundation.

What I am reflecting upon here is ethics as a basic motive power. When it is argued that ethics has exercised a creative power that has resulted in the production of a new economics and a new politics in the modern world, then it must be recognized that religion—Christianity, in this case—lay at its base. The power of religion was operating as one of the driving forces in opening up the modern world under the guise of the Reformation.

Historical Consciousness and Religion

I have one further thing to say. Occidental people sometimes object to Buddhism because it makes no mention of history, or, rather, because there is no evidence of historical consciousness in its doctrines. Indeed, I think that this objection hits the mark. To elaborate briefly, the phrase "historical consciousness" refers to that position through which we see history as such—that is to say, a way of thinking by means of which the ambiguities of history are brought into clear relief.

We can also describe it as the standpoint of actually seeing history. But at the same time, by keeping our eye on another aspect, we can say that this way of seeing itself becomes historical. Here two things are to be noted. On the one hand, when we follow the developments through which human beings have lived their lives, generation after generation—that is, when we retrace the footsteps of the growth of human life—we can see them in the form of history. On the other hand, in order for one to see history as history in this way, it is unavoidable that one lives and moves in history oneself. In other words, it is necessary to grasp historically the way of living-through that one lives historically. Therefore, that the historical world comes into sight for us is connected with the fact that the way of life of an individual itself turns out to be historical, and that one comes to realize that one is living a historical life oneself. I think these two things combine to give birth to historical consciousness.

I am sure that Buddhism falls short of such historical consciousness, at least to some extent. Generally speaking, something called “historical” exists no less in China than in India and Japan. But I have the impression that in these countries there has been no trace of seeing the world as history in the true sense of the word. It is repeatedly remarked that there is a historical way of thinking even in Buddhism, and that for instance, its teaching of *shōzōmatsu* (i.e., the tripartite scheme of Buddhist theory of history: the true dharma, the semblance dharma, and the declining dharma) is an attempt to grasp its development under the guise of history. Indeed, this seems persuasive. But this way of thinking is somewhat different from a historical one, at least of the sort prevalent in the modern world

The term “historical” is used in the modern world to refer to history as brought to light from the standpoint of historical consciousness. But it can be said that the history described in terms of *shōzōmatsu* is something different from this. Rather, with respect to the Western world, mention is repeatedly made of the fact that the religions prevalent there, and Christianity in particular, are to a great extent based upon history. The creation of the world by God can be said to refer to the beginning of the history of the world, and the story of Adam’s purge from the Garden of Eden on the charge of having gone against God’s commandment refers to the beginning of the history of mankind. Furthermore, with respect to the end of history, there is the *eschaton* of history as the Second Advent of Christ. This is a conception of the end of history in the sense that history since Adam comes to an end, and a new history begins. Here a view quite different from that of Buddhism has appeared on the scene. The difference lies in this: in

Christianity the development of mankind is cut off by its beginning and its end, and between them, history goes on from its starting point, and eventually comes to an end.

However, when viewed from another angle, Christianity's view of history can be said to be quite similar to Buddhism's idea of *shōzōmatsu*. However, the Reformation first provided the occasion to bring this view of history into sufficient relief in the form of the "historical." Such concepts as Adam's fall through sin, the atonement of this sin through the First Advent of Christ, the Second Advent of Christ—that is, Christ's death and resurrection—and the announcement of the *eschaton* of history through the Last Judgment of history in which everything from the beginning to the end is taken into account are involved in Christianity from the start. But it is through the Reformation that these concepts were delineated in a clear-cut way. Here such issues as sin and the *eschaton* were pressed forward and came sharply to the surface of consciousness. This point was made from the perspective of Protestantism, where the consciousness of history made its appearance. If we consider the Middle Ages in the West, we are certainly not justified in saying that one can find no traces of such a consciousness of history. But, in fact, whenever this sort of consciousness appeared on the scene in Christian churches in the Middle Ages, it was always branded as heretical. In the Middle Ages, Christendom was regarded as capable of eternal continuity; it was thought to be irreplaceable and to have an eternal, unchangeable, and fixed pattern. Thus, whenever a historical way of thinking came to the fore in Christianity, as it did in primeval Christianity, there was no alternative for medieval Christianity but to brand it as heretical.

The standpoint of religion with such historical characteristics as were inherent in primeval Christianity had not been brought fully to life until Protestantism came on the scene. Yet, the standpoint of Protestantism alone was not enough to give rise to the emergence of a historical consciousness. Another factor was needed to bring about this result. To illustrate this with an example, Protestantism was accompanied by secular ethics. This means that a position different from a religious one appeared on the scene as a transformation of that religious standpoint. Similarly, with respect to history, Christianity has operated as one of the basic driving forces in gradually producing the perspective of seeing things historically. As is repeatedly remarked, this is tied up with the fact that the science of history—the attempt to pursue and study history scientifically—was established. As a result, it is clear that in an attempt to take history into account, the standpoint of the science of history was brought into definite relief.

A Historical Way of Thinking and Its Practice

I do have an additional comment to make. Historical consciousness involves the understanding that we ourselves live within history. With this in mind, we can say that it is through reform or revolution that historical consciousness is brought into clear-cut relief. That is to say, it is by living through history that we come to grasp that our human activities are themselves historical. It was said above that the science of history consists in seeing these human activities historically. But if we take the position of practice, we then realize that we are able to reform historically what was constructed historically: once the realization that history is a human product dawns on us, we can accept that to reshape it in the direction that we think to be right is well within our reach. It is in this sense that the history of the modern world has consisted of reforms or revolutions. This way of thinking is also connected with the view that the essential characteristic of the human way of living in this world consists in constantly breaking down fixed forms and in building new ones. This view is one of revolution or reform.

Therefore, it is often said that present history is in the midst of a continuation of a great social revolution. In the background there lies historical consciousness, that is, a historical comprehension of the development of the life of humankind, as well as the view that true knowledge is historical. At the same time, human beings themselves live at present in the world of history. Thus, the present also has its place in history. The past occupies a position in the context of history, but if we see it from the angle of the present as well as of the future, then knowledge of the history of the past can be said to provide a new vista of the future. And in this case, the standpoint of reformation consists in the determination to build societies that can be regarded as righteous.

These two movements—that is, a historical way of thinking and the putting of it into practice—are combined into one. The “practice” can be said to be a manifestation of historical consciousness. In Marxism, too, these two aspects are made into one. But this is true not only of Marxism. “Revolution” has a broader sense: it is an attitude and a way of life that involves constant renovation, as is inherent not only in the revolution of societies, but also in all other realms. Let us consider art and philosophy. In both, there comes to the fore the fact that people are driven continually to find new forms of expression. We can say that this is the characteristic feature of the modern world.

Such an attitude seeks to break down old-fashioned ideas and ways, and to earnestly and unceasingly search for new ones. The same can be said for all human affairs. Revolution itself is confined to social

revolution. But keeping an eye on the basic human ways of living, we can see operative in almost all realms a drive to bring about one advancement after another continuously, without anything being fixed, and to come up with new ideas—not only in economics and politics but also in art, learning in general and even in science. Fundamentally speaking, this characteristic is closely tied to historical consciousness.

Social Ethics, Historical Consciousness, and the Natural Sciences

I have referred to Christianity in particular in connection with the Reformation. But in fact, it is from the Renaissance that historical consciousness genuinely arose. The standpoint of the Renaissance was that of human self-realization—that is, the realization that a human being is nothing more than a human being. To the contrary, in the Middle Ages, where the existence of God was presupposed, human beings conceived of themselves as being attached to God. Religion operated from within such a standpoint. Human beings were assumed to be constantly connected with God. Since the world of nature was regarded as created by God, and since the human world and its history—that is, the constant advancement made in history—was still thought of as having been due to Divine Providence, both the world of nature and that of mankind were thought to be fundamentally determined by God.

The Renaissance standpoint was different. When they tried to see themselves, Renaissance thinkers adopted a standpoint quite apart from God. They saw human beings with *humanitas* as their axis. As a consequence, the way of thinking about history underwent a radical transformation. It turned out that what human beings had produced was now thought to have been achieved by their own power, instead of by Divine Providence. We can further assert that even the concept of God was thought to be nothing more than a human product. Thus, the way of seeing things was actually reversed. Be that as it may, man's way of thinking, and hence the pattern or structure inherent in the human way of living, underwent a radical change.

The view that history is to be dealt with as that realm in which human life is carried on finally leads us to conclude that history is capable of being produced by human beings, that it was really so produced in the past, and that it is likely to be so produced in the future. This way of thinking is intimately connected with the awareness that human beings are capable of handling things by means of their own abilities (*jiriki*), and without the need to subject themselves to God.

Moreover, the consciousness of human freedom itself was also called into question. Insofar as freedom is a human right, everyone is said to be equal with respect to their being free. Thus arise the concepts of freedom and equality. At any rate, both concepts are tied up with the awareness of human beings as their own subjects. This direction has been pursued ever since the Renaissance.

An additional significant characteristic of the modern world is the establishment of the natural sciences. The view of the world of nature came to be that of modern science. This standpoint is quite different from the way of seeing nature that had been held from ancient times to the Middle Ages. It is experimental in essence. An experiment is something connected directly with the behavior of human beings. One acts upon nature. Instead of looking on this activity from without, one tries to discover the laws of nature by entering into nature, and by moving nature from within. Thus arises a knowledge of nature from the standpoint of experimentation. This is why such knowledge is connected with human action. This standpoint consists in the contention that genuine knowledge is obtained by entering into the inside of nature, and in moving nature from within. Therefore, in this case, the sciences are connected to facts at their very foundation.

I do not have enough time to make a detailed explanation of this, but we can say that these three issues—that is, the theme of social ethics, the development of historical consciousness (and hence, the standpoint of human subjectivity), and the standpoint of the natural sciences—are the three forces that have shaped modernity.

Provided that religion is concerned with a way of living, we must conclude that it is these three perspectives that basically held sway over the way of human living inherent in the modern world. The question is: What happens, if we bring these three perspectives face to face with the Buddhist position? I think that a very basic difficulty is here posed. We must engage in this confrontation by actually entering into it, and going through it. People ordinarily tend to think that such developments as historical consciousness, social ethics, and the natural sciences are all matters that are quite difficult to deal with. The fact is, however, that their power is at work at the very foundation of our lives. The microphone and tape recorder now operating in this room are all originally dependent on the power of the sciences. And furthermore, such issues as individual subjectivity and history, are involved in what we encounter all the time on the streets and in our lives. Besides that, they are also involved in the big issues that put in motion the world as a whole. If we push problems inherent in Buddhism to their logical consequence, then we must try to engage ourselves in

such issues as have just been dealt with in terms of social ethics, historical consciousness, and the natural sciences. Thus, judging from the doctrines of Buddhism, and Buddha's teachings, we can say that all of the issues so far mentioned confront one another. I think it necessary to probe the points at issue further with as much clarity as possible by standing directly on the field of this mutual confrontation.

Notes

1. At the time when Nishitani gave this lecture in 1971, the student movement was still involved in the violent protests that had begun during the 1960s. Many leftist students waged a kind of war primarily against the existence of the security treaty that the Japanese government had concluded with the United States. The students protested, wearing helmets on their heads and having "iron clubs" or "iron sticks" in their hands.

2. In the Kamakura period (from the end of the twelfth century to 1333), great religious figures such as Shinran (1173–1262), the founder of the Nichiren sect of Buddhism, decided to climb down from Mt. Hiei (where they had devoted themselves to studying Buddhist doctrines as well as to performing various religious practices) in order to establish their own distinctive and purified religious organizations.