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Popular Buddhist Orthodoxy in Contemporary Japan

The writings of popular lay Buddhist writers Kino Kazuyoshi and Hiro Sachiya affirm traditional Japanese Buddhist ideas of original enlightenment, suchness, nonduality, immediacy, Buddha nature, emptiness, ineffability, and the valorization of everyday life. Kino presents his ideas of self-affirmation through a loose association of stories and lessons drawn from life, literature, and Buddhist texts. Rejecting early Buddhist teachings such as the Four Noble Truths and dependent origination, Hiro Sachiya argues for a Zen that champions individual freedom and disengagement from social expectations as an alternative to the stresses of Japanese life. Despite their free and contemporized interpretations, both writers present a pansectarian Buddhism consistent with traditional Mahāyāna orthodox ideals.

KEYWORDS: Kino Kazuyoshi – Hiro Sachiya – original enlightenment – emptiness – orthodoxy – Zen

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CONTEMPORARY Buddhist thought in Japan is remarkable for its lack of innovative formulations. Theological debates arising out of academic circles have generated some sounds and furies but have not produced new doctrines of any significance. The so-called critical Buddhism (*hihan Bukkyō* 批判仏教) debate raised old issues in provocative ways, but failed to produce creative doctrinal reformulations of the kind, for instance, that emerged in the early Kamakura period. In rejecting substantialist beliefs such as original enlightenment and *tathāgata-garbha*, which Matsumoto Shirō 松本史郎 characterizes with his Sanskrit neologism *dhātu-vāda*, the critical Buddhists reaffirm and call for a return to early Buddhist ideas of causation, moral selflessness, and cognitive thinking (see SWANSON 1997). They lodge their complaint against a large majority that holds to a popular orthodoxy of substantialism, which the critical Buddhists regard as heresy, but few minds have been changed by their criticism.

The so-called postmodern Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 discussion also seems to have petered out, and it too defended an older orthodoxy at odds with popular practices. Shinshū leaders have long been concerned by the findings of surveys showing widespread acceptance of practices for gaining health, wealth, academic success, and a host of other practical benefits. Many Shinshū believers ignore their denomination's orthodox rejection of magic and superstition. In holding to a rationalism that stems from their founder Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262) and is consonant with modern science, Shinshū orthodoxy has been dubbed “Shinshū-P” by those who liken it to a strict puritanism. Realizing that chastising members in the name of institutional orthodoxy and modernism has been largely ineffective, Sasaki Shōten 佐々木正典 and other Shinshū priests and scholars have called for a “postmodern” approach in the form of “Shinshū-c,” which is likened to Catholic ritualism. By this strategy, Sasaki advocated a provisional sympathy with the people and their superstitions so that Shinshū-c agents, having gained the confidence of people, could then persuade people to return to Shinshū-P. The postmodern proposal has generated discussion and controversy, but little in the way of effective change.¹

In both of these cases, scholar-priests have criticized popular teachings and practices that have veered away from what they consider to be true Buddhism. Following the conservative instincts of reformers, they see heresy and call for a return to earlier versions of truth. As such, they do not propose progressive

1. For an analysis of postmodern Shinshū thought, see READER and TANABE 1998, pp. 94–100. See also VAN BRAGT 1999, pp. 468–86.

innovations, and their impact can only be detected in a handful of scholars while the majority of Japanese Buddhists, including the rest of the Buddhist academic world, remain unaffected by these localized disturbances. These challenges have not affected common understandings in any significant way.

In order to gain a glimpse of the teachings of popular Buddhism, it will be fruitful to sample the works of writers such as Kino Kazuyoshi 紀野一義 and Hiro Sachiya ひろさちや,² whose publications are widely read. In describing these understandings as a popular orthodoxy, I take as the standard of orthodoxy the principle of *vox populi, vox dei*, by which true Buddhism is defined by whatever is embraced by voices of the people. While I shall not engage in a survey of popular opinion, which is the best way to gauge common understandings, I shall assume that writers such as Kino Kazuyoshi and Hiro Sachiya command enough public acceptance that their voices can be taken in some degree as representative of the people. *Vox Kino/Sachiya, vox populi, vox dei.*

Kino Kazuyoshi

Having written over a hundred books, Kino Kazuyoshi is one of the most popular writers on Buddhism in Japan. Unlike famous priests who are known for their ritual, scholarly, or ecclesiastical achievements, Kino is a lay person whose public presence is asserted entirely through the written and spoken word. He belongs to a small but influential group of lay professional teachers, another example of which is Hiro Sachiya, who exert significant influence on the public understanding of Buddhist teachings.

Besides being a writer who commands a wide readership, Kino Kazuyoshi is a good choice for a study on modern Buddhist teachings since he devotes much of writing to explanations of the metaphysical side of Buddhist teaching, rather than the social dimensions represented, for example, by engaged Buddhists. Kino has a wide audience, and he makes his living by making fantastic absolutes ordinary.

Kino was born in Hiroshima in 1922. During the Pacific War, he was drafted and was serving abroad in a student brigade when he lost his family and home in the bombing of Hiroshima. Captured by Chinese troops, he was not released until 1946. After returning to Japan, he entered the University of Tokyo, and graduated from the Department of Indian and Buddhist Studies in 1948. Kino held teaching positions and even served as president of Hōsen Junior College. Now retired, he continues to add to his long list of over one hundred books and innumerable other publications, and derives much of his income from royalties and speaking fees. His books and lectures cut across sectarian lines, and he sees

2. Sachiya is a transliteration of the Sanskrit term *satya* or truth, and is not really a surname. Hiro Sachiya is a pen name meaning something like the Broad Truth, and I use both words in that word order in referring to him.

himself as a promoter of a broad array of Buddhist ideas and values appropriate for modern people.

MYSTIFYING THE TEACHINGS

Like any good writer and speaker, Kino is a great storyteller. His speeches and books are filled with anecdotes drawn from his wide reading and personal experiences. His stories feature past and present priests, nuns, scholars, other religious figures such as Jesus, and ordinary people. He has written books about famous monks such as Ryōkan 良寛, Myōe 明恵, and Shinran, and has published a four-volume series of biographical sketches of Japanese priests (KINO 1984, 1996, 1999a, 1999b). He tells stories of his travels to Buddhist places and other parts of the world, and retells entire sutras in ordinary terms. His other skill is clear exposition delivered in a homiletic style that draws upon diverse examples and metaphors for greater clarity. He is a preacher who draws on others for theological messages at the same time that he develops his own interpretive strategies. Though he is more creative than rigorous, Kino seldom breaks new doctrinal ground, but his explanations nevertheless give readers a sense of learning something new.

In his book, *Watakushi no Tannishō* 私の歎異抄 [My *Tannishō*], for example, KINO (1973) characterizes Shinran and the world of the *Tannishō* by first setting out what they are not. He criticizes Kurata Hyakuzō's 倉田百三 (b. 1891) novel, *Shukke to sono deshi* 出家とその弟子 [The Monk and His Disciple], in which Shinran is depicted as a sentimental figure. Rejecting sentimentalism, Kino prefers the ideas of Maida Shūichi 毎田周一 (1906–1967), a student of Akegarasu Haya 暁鳥敏 (1891–1979), and his religion of simplicity (*kanso no shūkyō* 簡素の宗教). While *kanso* means simplicity, Maida provides a complex exegesis of the two characters in the term. *So* refers to the raw materials or basic elements of life that are not shaped by deliberation, which is represented by *kan*. *Kan* is deliberate choice and functions as a power of intensification or concentration. When plants do not have enough water, they concentrate on certain essential leaves and drop off all others. Likewise, when people have too many desires to fulfill, they concentrate on the important ones and set aside others. *Kan* is the power to deliberate, choose, select, and give up certain desires or *so*. *Kanso*, simplicity, is thus the ability to select and is a fundamental principle of life (KINO 1973, pp. 4–5).

Maida's interpretation of simplicity is unique and presents a novel rendering of *kanso*. The linkage of ideas—simplicity, choice, elements, leaves, desires, selection, and basic principle of life—is plausible if not exactly cogent. These linkages make up a loose matrix, and Kino uses it by saying that the “principle of *kanso*” carries out an important function in the *Tannishō*. “What I see in *so*,” he says, “is something feminine, and what I see in *kan* is masculine” (KINO 1973, p. 5). The

problem with Kurata's sentimental portrait of Shinran is that it is feminine, but "when I see a portrait of Shinran or read the *Tannishō*, I always feel his masculinity." Using Maida's matrix of meanings about *kanso*, Kino suggests that Kurata's sentimental portrait of Shinran is *so* and therefore feminine, but Shinran and the *Tannishō* clearly are *kan* and masculine.

On the one hand, this rather tortured line of reasoning by association does not make clear sense and is an exercise in mystification if not confusion. On the other hand, Kino's conclusion is crystal clear: Shinran and the *Tannishō* are masculine, harsh, and rigorous. Those who see soft sentimentality in the *Tannishō*, he says, are reading their own feelings into it. Since the age of seventeen, when he first read the *Tannishō*, he has always carried a copy of it, even when he was a soldier at the front. As great as the book is, Kino warns against understanding Shinran just on the basis of the *Tannishō*, and he insists that one must also read Shinran's *Kyōgyōshinshō* 教行信証 and other writings. Shinran is complex, he concludes, and is difficult to understand. In characteristic style, Kino combines clarity with ambiguity, referring loosely to novels, essays, individuals by name, ideas, images, and his own experiences. Despite the twistings and turnings, an overall assertion survives: the *Tannishō* is a book of profound meanings.

The impenetrability of Buddhist profundity is an ancient claim that is more of a boast than a complaint. Ian Reader and I have already noted that from the time of the official introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the sixth century to our own time, Buddhism has been praised for being unfathomable. The king of Paekche recommended Buddhism to the Japanese court because its profundity was attested in the report that Confucius himself could not understand it (READER and TANABE 1998, pp. 74–75). The challenge for a popular writer like Kino is to be clear and understandable about profound meanings that resist clear explanation. Intellectually jarring, his presentation must be rhetorically smooth to allow ideas to flow, even implausibly, one into another: Shinran, Kurata Hyakuzō, Maida Shūichi, sentimentalism as feminine, simplicity (*kanso*) defined as concentrating (*kan*) on certain basic elements (*so*), desire (*so*) likened to plants, choice (*kan*) as masculine, Shinran and the *Tannishō* as definitely masculine, the *Tannishō* as the one book he took to war, *omote* 表 and *ura* 裏, and finally the common boast, which everyone understands, that Shinran and the *Tannishō* are complex and hard to understand. If Kino mystifies Shinshū, it is because it is a mystery, but that claim of Buddhist ineffability is so widely accepted as true that mystification is a perfunctory truism clearly understood by all.

THE INCONCEIVABLE VOW

Kino holds that Shinran's mystical teachings can be penetrated only by a select few, and is subject to widespread misunderstanding. The *Tannishō* itself is a lament about the divergent understandings among Shinran's own followers.

Attributed to Yuien 唯円 (d. 1290), the *Tannishō* opens with his grave concern that too many followers understand faith (*shinjin* 信心) in ways not taught by Shinran in his direct oral transmissions (*kuden* 口伝). Oral transmissions or *kuden* from master to disciple were widely practiced, often in secrecy. Once written as texts, oral transmissions, as Jacqueline Stone shows in her magnificent book on original enlightenment, were emblems of legitimacy as well as doctrinal privilege and mastery (STONE 1999, pp. 97–152). This culture of secrecy bred innovative interpretations—hence, divergences of the kind Yuien laments—and claims were pitted against counter claims over correct and errant understandings. The *Tannishō* is a good example of this culture of secret transmissions, and Yuien establishes his authority in the preface by saying that his understanding of *shinjin* (faith) is based on the *kuden* received from Shinran himself. Because Yuien was able to receive direct face-to-face instruction, Kino affirms the legitimacy of his understanding as expressed in the *Tannishō*.

While Yuien was in a position to sort right from wrong understandings, those who did not receive a direct transmission suffer a disadvantage. Kino, however, assures his uninitiated audience that they have their own method for discerning true from false writings. The method consists of reading a text constantly day and night. If the constant reading makes one feel bad (*kimochi ga waruku naru*), then the text is false, and good feelings (*kimochi ga yoku natte kuru*) indicate a true text (KINO 1973, p. 15). Kino could be accused of affirming the very sentimentality he earlier rejected, but the persuasion of his claim lies less in logical consistency and more in the unmistakable clarity and simplicity of his test for authenticity. Some might say that his test, unmistakably clear, is simply mistaken, but each person is in the end his or her own standard of orthodoxy.

The *Tannishō* itself, however, cannot be mistaken since it is based on *kuden*. In the first section Yuien expresses his joy at being saved by Amida's inconceivable vow (*seigan fukashigi* 誓願不思議), which makes no distinction between young and old, good and evil, and embraces without ever letting go. This is the boundless light and life without limit, says Kino, and it is a “great thing” (*ōinaru mono*). Great is Amida's name, great is the absolute freedom (*zettai jiyū* 絶対自由) of the pure land into which all are born. As long as one has faith, the vow works in inconceivable ways overcoming all evil, sweeping away every obstacle in the way of its embrace of everyone and everything (KINO 1973, p. 16).

Though we think we control our lives, Kino continues, we are grasped by an eternal power. People can deny this, reject this, think that they have been abandoned by it, but such denials do not change the primary condition in which everyone lives in the life of the Buddha. This is just as it is with ordinary physical life produced by an endless line of parents who had parents who had parents. No one chooses to be born; everyone is given life through a power moving through generations. There are those people who do not recognize this power,

but for those who feel it even for a moment, they “step out and see something eternal” (KINO 1973, p. 18).

Amida has his own genealogy, having been the bodhisattva Hōzō 法藏, who became Amida Buddha by fulfilling a vow he made in the eternal past. Shinran believed in this unconditionally and did not question it. Even if he had raised questions and received answers they would be of no consequence except for the self-satisfaction of having understanding. But he did not seek understanding, and therefore he simply had faith in the inconceivable path by which Hōzō fulfilled his vow and became Amida. “The vow itself is inconceivable,” Kino writes. It cannot be understood through human cognition. There is no fool stupid enough to try to understand what cannot be understood. But those who have faith know eternity (KINO 1973, p. 19).

Kino is fond of repeating the refrain that truth is ineffable. Words fail, not because the absolutes are transcendent and beyond their reach, but because absolutes are confounding for inhering in phenomena. Section seven of the *Tannishō* begins with the language of oneness: “The *nenbutsu* 念仏 is the single path free of hindrances” Kino points out that in *kanbun* 漢文 the passage can be punctuated so that the subject, *nenbutsu wa* 念仏は, can be read as *nenbutsu-sha wa* 念仏者は: “The practitioner of the *nenbutsu* is on a single path free of hindrances (*muge* 無礙)” (HONGWANJI INTERNATIONAL CENTER 1995, p. 21). The term *muge* (without hindrances) belongs to the Mahāyāna language on the mutual interfusion of things, and in accord with this spirit of inherent relatedness, Kino argues that the passage must not leave out the person, who is, after all, at one with the *nenbutsu*. Against the standard reading (*nenbutsu wa*) preferred by scholars such as Kaneko Daiei 金子大栄 and Soga Ryōjun 曾我量深, Kino follows Ono Seiichirō’s 小野清一郎 reading of the term as a reference to the practitioner (*nenbutsu-sha*). Clearly approving the language of nondual identity, Kino cites the medieval Chinese Pure Land thinker T’an-luan 曇鸞 and his explanation of *muge* as a reference to the idea that samsara is nirvana (*shōji soku nehan* 生死即涅槃) (KINO 1973, pp. 170–71)

Having affirmed the nondual identity of samsara with nirvana, Kino switches easily to explaining their difference. As the cycle of birth and death, samsara is the condition from which one seeks liberation into nirvana. The process is linear as one moves from samsara to nirvana, from life to death. People fear death, Kino says, because they do not know what comes after it. This fear of the unknown is hard to control, and people therefore concentrate on life and do not think of death. This is particularly true for Westerners, and since the Japanese educational system is Western, modern Japanese “in terms of their mentality, are the same as Westerners.” Pure Land Buddhism, however, explains what happens after death and provides assurance that the dead will be reborn in the pure land. This is to say that people move from samsara to nirvana (KINO 1973, p. 173).

Shifting back to the language of immanence, Kino asserts that from the standpoint of faith in the *nenbutsu* “samsara in and of itself is nirvana” (KINO 1973, p. 173). The structure of this faith is the same as that of Zen Buddhism. Kino cites a passage from Dōgen’s 道元 *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏 about how knowing the Buddhist path is knowing oneself, and how knowing oneself is forgetting the self. He cites another *Shōbōgenzō* passage about saving others even though one has not yet been able to save oneself, and notes that the source of this idea is the *Muryōgikyō* 無量義經 (*The Sutra of Innumerable Meanings*), the so-called opening sutra of the *Lotus Sutra*. By helping others “the great matter of eternal light and eternal life appears before our very eyes.” This is what Dōgen said, and “through this we know a world in which samsara is nirvana” (KINO 1973, p. 175). Service to others is thus the means for realizing that samsara is nirvana.

Taking another line of explanation, Kino delineates a human being into three parts: body, mind, and spirit. Mind performs psychic functions and together with the body is inherited from parents. Unlike mind and body, spirit is not genetically transmitted and comes from a totally different sphere. Children can therefore be quite unlike their parents if their spirit component outweighs the inherited combination of mind and body. Believing parents can have unbelieving children, and scoundrels can have incredibly pious children (KINO 1973, p. 176).

Spirit, according to Kino, ties the world of the living with that of the dead, and those who understand this will know that samsara is nirvana. Nirvana is not just the state of being enlightened but is achieved when one completely rejects attachment, that is, when one is liberated from the fetters of the mind. Even upon attaining enlightenment (*satori*), one is still afflicted with delusion: “It is not the case that just because one is enlightened one will be free of delusion. Delusion still occurs” (KINO 1973, pp. 176–77). Only when each delusion is eliminated one by one will there be a sense of peace and quietude, which develops as one approaches death. The point at which quiescence meets death is nirvana. “This,” says Kino, “is what I think.”

Given this understanding of nirvana, what then, asks Kino, are we to make of the statement that samsara is nirvana (*shōji soku nehan*)? If “*soku*” means “just as it is (*sono mama*)” then delusion is enlightenment, but clearly this cannot be the case. This problem, however, arises from thinking, and the terms delusion, enlightenment, nirvana and so forth are categories of the mind. As such, these terms indicate differences between themselves.

However, considered from the standpoint of spirit there is no change between being Śākyamuni or ourselves. Accordingly, without delusion there is no enlightenment. From the standpoint of the world of spirit, delusion is in and of itself nirvana. Nirvana is to think that we are deluded. But it is useless to

think of this from the standpoint of the mind or the body. If we do not consider this in terms of spirit, then we will not be able to settle the matter. Spirit has no relationship to delusion, enlightenment, sin, pollution, salvation, and other such categories. We have spirit from the very beginning. We were born into the world upon receiving the same life as that of the Buddha. It is that which we share with the Buddha that we call spirit. The original Buddhist term for this is Buddha nature. This is the “nature of being a buddha.” Everyone has the Buddha nature. If we call this Buddha nature “life,” then we see that this great thing that vitalizes us is the same as eternal life. Everyone’s Buddha nature is the same, and seen in this manner, we can immediately understand that samsara is nirvana. (KINO 1973, p. 177–78)

Characteristically eclectic, Kino concludes his explanation of the identity of samsara with nirvana with a discussion of passages from Ippen’s 一遍 writings. Weaving diverse sources into his own rhetorical fabric, all of his citations are presented as consistent support for his argument. Everyone agrees with him and each other. Again he constructs a matrix, and again the rhetorical flow is smooth even when his logical progression is not. There are glitches: how, one might ask, is it possible that the enlightened are still deluded? The beauty of the language of identity, however, is that such problems arising from the mind can be disregarded without solution in favor of considerations of the spirit, to use Kino’s terms. The language of nonduality is so familiar that it need not be questioned and it functions well in glossing over what does not make sense, or, even more effectively, in rendering sense unnecessary.

The appeal to nondual expressions passed off as explanations has a long history and is not new to Kino. What is interesting is its continuing effectiveness. The modern proponents of critical Buddhism complain that such language is not Buddhist, but they do not sell as many books as Kino does. This is not a rhetorical strategy useful only to popular writers like Kino—and D. T. Suzuki also comes to mind³—but is also standard with many academic theologians as well. In a special issue of *Pacific World* dedicated to contemporary Shin Buddhist thought, Shigaraki Takamaro 信楽峻磨, the former president of Ryūkoku University, attacks his colleagues for perpetuating a dualistic understanding of Amida as a divine “entity” possessing power to solve people’s problems. Shigaraki senses a crisis in which the viability of Shin Buddhism as a religion for the modern world is at stake.

I believe that Shin Buddhism of today and the future must cast off its traditional framework, which not only deviates from fundamental Buddhist principles, but also consists of convenient interpretations of them from institutional or sectarian levels. Shin Buddhism must be restored as a truly

3. See, for example, SUZUKI 1963, especially chapter 5.

Buddhist school. As long as it fails to do so, it will be unable to respond to today's societal problems or to issues that are global or international in scope.

(SHIGARAKI 2001, p. 28)

Shinjin, or faith, Shigaraki charges, is no longer understood as a nondualistic experience of awakening in the presence of Amida. The primal vow ties us to the Buddha, he says, and the one does not exist without the other: "there is no Buddha apart from me, and no me apart from the Buddha.... This self and Amida Buddha, as well as our attainment of birth and Amida's attainment of supreme enlightenment are identical-of one essence. This theory of simultaneous arising is a fundamental principle of Mahayana Buddhism" (SHIGARAKI 2001, p. 39). Shigaraki calls for a return to the true Shin Buddhist faith of Shinran, which is nothing other than the orthodoxy of nonduality. What worries Shigaraki is the widespread practice of praying to Amida for worldly benefits, and if Shin Buddhism cannot extricate itself from this vulgar practice, then "without question it will soon forfeit its societal and international position, and be reduced to just another Japanese folk religion" (SHIGARAKI 2001, p. 29). The special issue also contains an article by Murakami Sokusui 村上速水, who argues that emphasis should be placed on the present assurance of rebirth rather than on future rebirth. Here too is the language of immediacy (see MURAKAMI 2001).

Shigaraki and Kino see their audiences differently, but use the same language of nonduality. Shigaraki addresses his academic and ecclesiastical colleagues for failing to use the language of nonduality, while Kino assumes that his readers easily resonate with it. Here, however, I limit my observation to the fact that the language of nonduality is essential to both of them: to Shigaraki in his call for a return to true Buddhism and to Kino for popular persuasion. For the one it is an ideal standard, for the other an operating principle.

Hiro Sachiya

Like Shigaraki, Hiro Sachiya is critical of the widespread practices of praying for worldly benefits. Such prayers are not only at odds with what he considers to be true Buddhist teachings, but are not even genuinely religious. The fact that prayers of supplication cannot be avoided totally does not make them acceptable. True prayers are "receipt prayers" (*ryōshūsho-teki inori* 領収書の祈り) by which one expresses gratitude for everything received or even for nothing in particular. Prayers of supplication are "invoice prayers" (*seikyūsho-teki inori* 請求書の祈り) by which one demands payment from the gods.

Invoice prayers are bogus! One should not offer invoice prayers to the gods and the buddhas! Prayers to the deities should be prayers of gratitude that say "Thank you." This is correct religion. A religion that practices invoice prayers is a bogus religion.

(HIRO SACHIYA 1992a, p. 51)

Prayers for worldly benefits, he claims, originally were tolerated as expedient means (*hōben* 方便), but now they are mistakenly regarded as genuine and thus represent a grossly negligent Buddhism in Japan (HIRO SACHIYA 1992a, p. 51).⁴

Hiro Sachiya's criticisms of worldly benefits are similar to those of other Japanese Buddhist scholars, and are based on a construction of a Buddhism that is incompatible with ritual magic for the fulfillment of materialistic desires. Trained (like Kino) in the Department of Indian and Buddhist Studies at the University of Tokyo, Hiro Sachiya was a philosophy professor for twenty years (1965–1985) before devoting himself entirely to giving public lectures and writing for a popular audience. Like Kino, he is known for his skill in being able to explain difficult concepts in clear and simple terms. He too deals with Buddhist topics across the sectarian spectrum; he too is a great storyteller whose tales often conclude with blunt lessons expressed in striking language.

ILLNESS AS EMPTINESS

Instead of praying for a cure or performing a healing ritual, he argues, a true Buddhist would see illness as “empty” (*kū* 空). “In the matter of illness,” he writes, “I think of it primarily in Buddhist terms. It is important to do this. What does it mean to think of illness in Buddhist terms? In short, I think of illness as emptiness (*kū*)” (HIRO SACHIYA 1992b, p. 75). Invoking one of the doctrinal mainstays of Mahāyāna Buddhism, Hiro Sachiya cites the *Heart Sutra* and its lesson that everything is empty, and tells the *Huai-nan Tzu* 淮南子 story of the old man whose horse ran away. His neighbors expressed their sorrow about his misfortune, but the old man said that something good would come of it. Not only did his horse return, but it brought back an even finer horse. His son was delighted, but fell off the horse and broke his leg. Again the old man rejected expressions of sympathy, and was rewarded when his son was spared the military draft because of his injury. From this tale of hidden silver linings and blessings in disguise, Hiro Sachiya concludes that nothing has intrinsic value: bad can be good and vice versa. “Suffering is the seed of joy, and joy is the seed of suffering,” he says. Good and bad inhere in each other, and it is therefore not possible to declare something good or bad. This, he says, is the meaning of emptiness: things must be accepted as they are without placing value judgments on them.

We must refrain from placing plus or minus values on things. This is the philosophy of emptiness taught in Mahāyāna Buddhism. When I get sick, I see it simply for what it is: “I am sick.”

If I view illness as something negative and offer an invoice prayer asking the

4. For an analysis of priestly and scholarly criticisms of practices for worldly benefits, see READER and TANABE 1998.

gods and buddhas to please cure me, then this is nothing but a belief in worldly benefits. And this is terrible. (HIRO SACHIYA 1992b, pp. 80–81)

Through the philosophy of emptiness illness is denied a negative value, and Hiro Sachiya thus rejects prayers for healing. Since he mentions visits to the hospital, he would not, it can be presumed, refuse medical treatment even though illness is not negative.

THE SUPERIORITY OF MAHĀYĀNA BUDDHISM

Having distinguished the Mahāyāna philosophy of emptiness from prayers for worldly benefits, Hiro Sachiya goes on to isolate it further from Hīnayāna Buddhism (*shōjō Bukkyō* 小乗仏教). Mahāyāna Buddhists “appeared in great numbers about five hundred years after Śākyamuni’s death, and insisted that Hīnayāna Buddhism was not true Buddhism, and that Śākyamuni never preached Hīnayāna Buddhism” (HIRO SACHIYA 1992c, p. 64). Hiro Sachiya, however, assumes that Hīnayāna Buddhism was the teaching of Śākyamuni, and therefore the question at hand is whether or not Mahāyāna Buddhists reject Śākyamuni’s teaching. Since no form of Buddhism can afford to reject the teaching of the historical Buddha, Hiro Sachiya argues that both forms of Buddhism can be traced back to Śākyamuni, and that Mahāyāna actually preceded Hīnayāna. At the moment of his enlightenment, Śākyamuni realized that the truth he had discovered could not be expressed in words and therefore said nothing about it. When he subsequently decided to turn the wheel of the dharma by preaching, what he expressed in words was but the “dregs” (*kasu* 糟) of his enlightenment.

If “dregs” is too exaggerated, then we can speak of it as a framework. At any rate, the teaching Śākyamuni preached with words was something by which he spoke *about* the truth, but it was not the truth *itself*. Therefore, the disciples listening to him were not able to grasp what he was really talking about, and they understood a Buddhism (Śākyamuni’s teaching) that was but his blather. That Buddhism became Hīnayāna Buddhism. (HIRO SACHIYA 1992c, p. 64)

By contrast, Mahāyāna Buddhism goes back to the original source of Śākyamuni’s enlightenment experience that he maintained in a condition of silence. In short, Hīnayāna is the spoken teachings, while Mahāyāna is the ineffable truth.

Inherently resistant to articulation, emptiness is the epitome of the ineffable truth. The *Heart Sutra* and its pithy message of emptiness disregards and even contravenes Hīnayāna teachings such as the Four Noble Truths. “The Four Noble Truths,” he writes, “is the basic doctrine of Hīnayāna Buddhism, but Mahāyāna Buddhism does not regard it as being that important. Or rather, to put it clearly, Mahāyāna Buddhism claims that the Four Noble Truths are no good at all” (HIRO SACHIYA 1993a, p. 76). The *Heart Sutra* “denies the entire doctrinal system of Hīnayāna Buddhism,” and insists that “Hīnayāna Bud-

dhism is for shit (*kuso kurae* 糞食らえ!)” (HIRO SACHIYA 1993a, p. 77). This includes the teaching of dependent origination (*engi* 縁起), which was not part of the Buddha’s enlightenment. The teaching of causality “was made up by later generations” (HIRO SACHIYA 1993a, p. 78). Hīnayāna doctrines are based on what Śākyamuni explained (*toita mono*), but the Mahāyāna ineffable truth is what he “wanted to teach” (*oshietakkata mono*) (HIRO SACHIYA 1993a, p. 77–78). Despite his sharp criticism of the Hīnayāna teachings, Hiro Sachiya is careful to remind his readers that they are not totally devoid of value, but they do not represent Śākyamuni’s original enlightenment.

Why, then, did Śākyamuni teach the inferior doctrine on suffering (*ku* 苦) but not the superior truth of emptiness (*kū* 空)? Raising the classic problem of whether or not Mahāyāna Buddhism was preached by Śākyamuni, Hiro Sachiya asserts that modern scholars of Buddhist texts have concluded that the historical Buddha taught only Hīnayāna but not Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Well, from one point of view their claim is correct. In historical terms, such is the case. But if that be their claim, then Śākyamuni knew only the low level teachings of the Four Noble Truths, and this means that the superior teaching of emptiness was created by Buddhist thinkers of later ages. In other words, these scholars view Śākyamuni as having a low ability. Such a stupid situation could not have been.

(HIRO SACHIYA 1993b, p. 79)

As one trained at the University of Tokyo, Hiro Sachiya is himself a modern textual scholar, and is exaggerating surely for rhetorical effect. But his condemnation is sweeping nonetheless. Buddhist scholars, he says, study only texts without thinking about the excellence of their content. But whenever past Buddhist thinkers in India, China, and Japan thought about the content of the teachings, they all concluded that Mahāyāna was superior to Hīnayāna Buddhism. In Japan, these eminent monks included Saichō 最澄, Kūkai 空海, Hōnen 法然, Shinran, Yōsai 榮西, Dōgen, and Nichiren 日蓮 (HIRO SACHIYA 1993b, p. 79). For them, the teaching of emptiness was at the graduate school level, while the Four Noble Truths were suitable for elementary school. Modern Buddhist scholars thus place Śākyamuni in elementary school. “They are more than rude to Śākyamuni, they are blasphemous. Buddhist scholars castigate him nonchalantly, and are not aware that they commit blasphemy” (HIRO SACHIYA 1993b, p. 80). In trying to keep some semblance of balance, Hiro Sachiya follows his accusations with a bit of defense by noting that we should still be grateful to scholars for making the study of Buddhism possible (HIRO SACHIYA 1993b, p. 80).

In dealing with texts and history, Buddhist scholars cannot help but fail to grasp the Mahāyāna truth that transcends words and time. Zen masters know this, and Hiro Sachiya cites the famous *Mumonkan* 無門関 story of how the Buddha gave a sermon by holding up a flower in silence. Only Kāśyapa smiled, having received the wordless message from mind to mind. “Of course,” Hiro

Sachiya notes, “the *Mumonkan* was written by a Zen priest of a later time, and the flower sermon could not have been delivered actually by Śākyamuni. Therefore it is a legend. But I repeat again: I like to think that there is a truth that transcends facts” (HIRO SACHIYA 1993c, p. 40).

Like Kino Kazuyoshi, Hiro Sachiya writes on a great range of topics. The series of articles published in *Daihōrin* 大法輪, a popular magazine on Buddhism, set forth some basic doctrinal definitions: the meaning of the Four Noble Truths, the philosophy of emptiness, the superiority of Mahāyāna truth over Hīnayāna teachings, the ineffability of truth, and the transcendence of truth over fact and history. While this characterization makes him seem doctrinaire, his other writings aim more creatively at defining Buddhist lifestyles. In *Zen no yomikata* 禪の読み方 [How to Read Zen], for instance, Hiro Sachiya lays out five existential principles derived from Zen and illustrated with stories and examples drawn from Christianity, Islam, and other Buddhist traditions. As a whole, the principles add up to a naturalism of acceptance, nonattachment, and ease. He makes constant references to the hard work, strict schedules, unrelenting efficiency, and stress of Japanese society, and proposes an alternative: personal liberation and freedom. The dust jacket reads: “Now, for the sake of rediscovering yourself” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998).

All five principles were hard-won from Hiro Sachiya’s own study of Zen. They do not comprise any ready-made system found in traditional Zen, and no one has to go to a temple to study and practice Zen in order to understand them. The first principle is *makumōzō* 莫妄想, the Japanese transliteration of a three-character Chinese phrase meaning “do not engage in needless thinking.” One of the reasons why Japanese are so filled with anxiety, he says, is that they worry about unnecessary things. They should be more like Indians, whose everyday attitude is “no problem,” even when problems arise. If a train is late, Japanese get irritated and wonder why it is not on time. The reasons for train delays, says Hiro Sachiya, is not a problem that requires our consideration, and in fact we pay fares so that the railway employees will worry about such matters, of which we are thereby freed (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 35).

Hiro Sachiya devotes a whole chapter to the uselessness of past regrets and future worries. He cites Suzuki Daisetz (1870–1966) and other Zen teachers on the famous dictum of eating when hungry and sleeping when tired. This attitude, however, is condemned by many as irresponsible, and would lead to the downfall of society if people really practiced it. The alternative, however, is to worry, and people are so worried about their work and studies that they find no enjoyment in those activities. They do not know the meaning of *que sera sera* or *carpe diem*. Hiro Sachiya portrays Japanese as driven and uptight, and contrasts them with more easy-going foreigners. The only resource for personal liberation that he finds within Japanese society is in Zen circles, idealized to be sure, but resident nonetheless.

The second principle is *ittoku isshitsu* 一得一失, a phrase from a Zen *kōan* meaning “one gain, one loss.” In the *kōan*, two monks visit a master, who directs them to roll up some bamboo screens. After both complete the task, the master said, “One gain, one loss.” Ordinarily, Hiro Sachiya points out, this phrase would be taken to mean that one of the monks did well while the other did not. But what the master did not indicate is which monk is which, and it is therefore not possible to identify who was the better or worse performer. What then can be said of their actions?

Who did well and who did poorly? Both did well. Do you understand? There are two people, A and B. We do not know if the Master said, “A did well and B did poorly,” or “B did well and A did poorly.” That being the case, both did well. In short, “one gain, one loss” means “both did well.”

(HIRO SACHIYA 1998, pp. 68–69)

This does not mean that relative differences do not matter, or that preferences do not count. What it does mean is that a particular preference has an intrinsic value that is equal to the value of the opposite preference. This is the “Buddha’s measure” (*hotoke no monosashi* ほとけの物差し) by which all things have equal intrinsic values, and is to be contrasted with human measures by which all things are given different relative values.

The Buddha’s measure is expressed in the *Lotus Sutra* by the phrase “the true aspect of all things” (*shobō jissō* 諸法実相). Since everything has the true aspect, there is no intrinsic difference between bean paste (*miso* 味噌) and shit (*kuso* 糞). Each has its own context of value, but neither can be said to be better or worse than the other. Just as the taste of good bean paste will cause one to exclaim its virtues, so will a good bowel movement elicit the judgment, “Ahh, excellent!” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, pp. 76–78). Both are blessings.

The same can be said for life and death. In a well-known Buddhist parable, Kisa Gotami grieves the death of her young son and begs the Buddha to revive him. The Buddha agrees on the condition that she bring him mustard seeds obtained from a household that has not experienced death. She cannot find such seeds, of course, and thus gives up her attempt to bring her son back to life. Buddhist scholars, Hiro Sachiya notes, have given absurd and incoherent interpretations to this story, saying that it has something to do with the transience of life. But they are wrong.

You think that a living child has value, while a dead child does not. Do not think of something as stupid as that! A living child has the highest value insofar as it is living, and a dead child has the highest value insofar as it is dead. Why can you not understand this? Śākyamuni scolded Gotami on this point.

(HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 80)

Every aspect of life has equal value: the young, the old, and the dead. This is

the teaching of Buddhism and Zen. It is the great affirmation of all phenomena (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 81).

The problem with Japanese society is that it fails to see the intrinsic value of people and assesses them only in terms of their function. People are not human beings but are workers, students, teachers, managers, baseball players and so forth. For Hiro Sachiya the modern Japanese view of people is that they are functionaries: “we do not think that we buy things from human beings; we think we buy things from vending machines. Store clerks are all like vending machines” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 118). But in France it is different. French store clerks present themselves as individual people and treat customers as human beings. This is so different from stores in Japan and America. People whose worth lie in their functions are no better than slaves (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 119). Hiro Sachiya calls for liberation.

The third principle is “being a lamp unto oneself” (*jītōmyō* 自灯明). The dharma teaching is a lamp, but if it were the only truth then believers will become slaves to the teachings. They will be prisoners following the rules and regulations of the dharma jail. This is why Śākyamuni gave priority to the lamp of oneself over the dharma lamp. Being free means being a lamp unto oneself. While the self must remain free from egotism, it is the key to personal freedom, which people will enjoy when they learn to act according to their own self identity (*shutaisei* 主体性) and not be constrained by social or moral expectations (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, pp. 125–26)

For Hiro Sachiya, being a lamp unto oneself requires a disregard of the expectations of others (*ta'nin no kota wa hottokel!*). Drawing on another Zen story, he tells of the monk who suspends himself in a tree solely by biting on to a branch. Another monk arrives and asks him to explain why Bodhidharma came to the west. If the monk in the tree speaks, he will fall and surely die; if he does not, he will be rude. What should he do? If he answers to avoid being rude, he will be a slave to the other monk. If he does not answer because he is afraid of dying, he will be a slave to death. The solution is for him “to answer because he wants to answer, or not answer because he does not want to answer” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 154). His action should be based on his personal integrity, not in response to the expectations of others, or out of fear. Should one stop a man harassing a woman on a train? “If you want to restrain him, it would be good to restrain him. If you do not want to restrain him, it would be good not to. It does not matter which it is” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 155). The question should be answered purely in terms of one’s own integrity, not in terms of the woman or other passengers or the fear of confrontation. Be a lamp unto oneself.

Since Zen has no use for morality, people who act out of a sense of right and wrong are slaves to morality. The principle of emptiness teaches that there is no right or wrong, and the *Heart Sutra* asserts that there is no origination or demise, no purity or impurity, no increase or decrease. The basic principle of Zen is not

to be fettered, not to be bound by external expectations. One should not even be hampered by the teaching that one should not be hampered! This is the meaning of emptiness. The famous Zen monk Ikkyū 一休 (1394–1481) engaged in questionable behavior with women because his mind was pure. For Ikkyū, Hiro Sachiya writes, “morality is for shit” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, pp. 158–63).

Since Zen is freedom, one should throw everything out. This is Hiro Sachiya’s fourth principle of Zen, and it specifically means that one should reject common sense (*jōshiki o sutero!* 常識を捨てろ). One of the most entrenched pieces of common sense in Japan is that all children need to go to school. Since attendance at modern schools is required by law and truancy is a crime, schools are the equivalent of prisons. In the Meiji period, education was made compulsory in order to produce citizen soldiers, and in contemporary Japan schools are designed to produce corporate warriors. Like inmates, students wear uniforms and are regulated by strict rules. This is an “education for slaves.” Students who do not want to go to school are “really wonderful” because they want to be free. And if parents understand this, they too will be happy. The solution to this problem begins with the rejection of the common sense belief that students should go to school (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, pp. 174–75).

Another piece of common sense is that sick people should go to hospitals. Most people assume that doctors have the power to cure illness, but this, says Hiro Sachiya, is a misunderstanding. All people are endowed with a “natural healing power” (*shizen chiyuriki* 自然治癒力), and the only thing that a doctor can do is to nurture this power to do its work (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 184). The same endowed power is at work with education. Every child is born with a “natural improvement power” (*shizen kōjōriki* 自然向上力), and the role of parents and schools is to nurture this power so that it can blossom within the child. All too often, however, compulsory education damages this natural capacity to learn. Both of these natural powers are gifts from the Buddha, but schools and hospitals are not oriented to treat them for what they are. The more compulsory education one receives, the less likely is one to become a true human being. “Since we are children of the Buddha,” he writes, “only if we are raised as children of the Buddha will we become true human beings” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 188). Hiro Sachiya does not give details on how to deliver true Buddhist education and healing, but clearly the common sense approach found in modern schools and hospitals is misguided and should be rejected.

Again valorizing a foreign culture, Hiro Sachiya gives an example from India in laying out his fifth principle of Zen, which is epitomized by the Zen phrase *kantō shinpo* 竿頭進歩 (“progressing past the tip of the pole”), which he takes to mean *ganbaruna* (“do not strive to do your best”). In India, he writes, it is likely that a man will take off work for a month to be with his sick father, who is visited by a doctor twice. But in Japan, a doctor or nurse will visit a sick father

every day in a hospital, but his son will visit only twice a month. Who is more fortunate? (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 194).

The problem with Japanese is that they are constantly urging each other to do their best (*ganbare*). This kind of striving, however, is for the wrong reason of self-interest. Of the three kinds of hungry ghosts (*gaki* 餓鬼), the first two have little or nothing and therefore appear with tattered clothing or totally naked. They live in the underworld. The third kind of hungry ghost is wealthy, wears fine clothing, and lives in the ordinary world. Never satisfied with what they have, they pursue ever increasing lavishness without satisfaction. Modern Japanese are hungry ghosts of the third kind, and their motto is “*ganbare!*” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 196–97).

Hiro Sachiya tells of his daughter’s friend, a foreign exchange student from Australia, who found it necessary to return to Australia because she could not handle the stress of living in Japan. She said that the word she hated the most was *ganbare*. Japanese, Hiro Sachiya claims, are not capable of saying, “Don’t work too hard.” By contrast, Australians are always saying, “Take it easy” (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 198). Once again, Hiro Sachiya holds up a foreign lifestyle as superior to that of the Japanese.

The lesson of taking it easy, however, can be found in Zen. The phrase “progressing past the tip of the pole” comes from a story about a Zen monk who climbs to the top of a hundred-yard pole, views the wonders of the universe, and wonders what to do next. If he goes any further up the pole, he will fall off. How can he progress past the tip of the pole without falling to his death? The solution, says Hiro Sachiya, is easy: he should turn around and go back down the pole. This is not a retreat since it is the only way to progress past the tip. Going down, however, is not much different from going up in the first place.

Since he is going down after going up, it is the same as not going up to the tip of the pole to begin with. Despite his effort at striving, he is not going to the top of the pole and so it would be fine for him to climb up slowly and with ease. Therefore the phrase “progress past the tip of the pole” means that one should not strive to climb to the top of the pole. Interpreted in this way, it becomes the Fifth Principle of Zen: “Progress past the tip of the pole—do not strive” (*ganbaruna*). (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 202)

Despite the mixed nature of the message—does one climb up with ease or not climb at all?—Hiro Sachiya’s point is clear: Do not strive.

The game of life should be run like a race he devises for elementary school children. Everyone lines up for a race around the school yard with the goal of returning to the starting point. However, every time the teacher fires a starting pistol, the students must turn and run in the opposite direction so that the last person would then be in first place. The number of times the pistol is fired is determined by the chance throw of dice at the beginning of the race. There is no

telling who will win, but it is not likely to be the fastest runner putting out the greatest effort (HIRO SACHIYA 1998, pp. 203–204).

The book ends with a valorization of the ordinary. Every day is a good day, and the everyday mind is the Way. This is accomplished through attitude of mind. People cannot change the conditions of the world, but they can control their attitudes. The problem with striving is that it aims at changing the world:

Please do not forget the fifth principle: progress past the tip of the pole—do not strive! As soon as people begin to strive, they reject the day that is today. Worse yet, they strive for tomorrow precisely because they think today is no good.

Let us live leisurely without striving to do our best. Let us take it easy. Everything is just fine. Whether you are poor or sick or lazy or a drunkard or a misfit or a liar or a lecher, you are you and you are just fine just as you are. You can be happy just as you are. And when you are happy, you will understand Zen. Please do not misunderstand this. It is not the case that you will become happy if you understand Zen. You will understand Zen if you become happy.

(HIRO SACHIYA 1998, p. 216–17)

Hiro Sachiya's book is a quick and spirited read. He is sharp-tongued, polemical, at times bombastic, creative, and critical. He is hard on Japanese lifestyles, which he stereotypes and condemns. As an antidote he champions an innovative Zen that teaches personal freedom from social expectations. What he affirms is the goodness of every individual whose happiness, once experienced through his five principles, is the standard by which Zen will be understood. Every person is a Buddha, and in that basic assertion Hiro Sachiya presents a Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching common in Japan.

Conclusion

The traditional language of identity, immanence, nonduality, eternity, ineffability, absolutes, mystery, transcendence, and emptiness retains its currency in modern Japan. It evokes the medieval culture of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覺) analyzed brilliantly by Jacqueline Stone. In her treatment of the *Shinnyo-kan* 真如觀, a text asserting the identity between Suchness (*shinnyo* 真如) and ordinary activities such as feeding horses, Stone points out that “*hongaku* thought was not necessarily an ‘ideology of ruling elites’: it could also be assimilated to more egalitarian postures” (STONE 1999, p. 195). Kino Kazuyoshi's books are popular and are not for elites of any kind. He is the founder and still the leader of a lay organization, and in the light of Stone's observations it is not surprising that he calls his group *Shinnyo-e* 真如会, the Suchness Association, which supports lectures, outings, and a monthly journal called *Shinnyo*, every issue of which carries the following statement:

We members of *Shinnyo-e* are but ordinary people. There are no limitations

according to age or occupation. We simply value each and every individual as a mutual friend. We are a gathering of people who seek to brighten our homes, our work places, all of society, and the entire world.

A deep and quiet inner peace is what we hold as our greatest characteristic. As we taste the harshness affecting our lives, feel warm-hearted joy, or double up with great laughter, the roots of our Association gradually deepen.

It is essential that human beings live by believing in people and worshipping the gods. In our group, which we call the Suchness Association, we seek a lifestyle of mutual respect, trust and joy; of feeling the deep emotions of meeting each other; of deepening our humanity; and of being connected to each other forever. With our hands we create “strength in gathering together,” which the Buddha always promoted. We pray for peace among all people of the world, and we wish to live with gratitude for our lives blessed by the gods and buddhas.

Buddhism is the backbone of our group. However, we are unfettered by [organized] religion, and we seek to learn how to live as splendid Buddhists and to be persons who are deep and thoughtful as well as modern.

We urge you from the bottom of our hearts to become one of us because we would like for you to savor with us the deep peace of mind that we enjoy. We also wish to increase and brighten, even for just a bit, the lanterns that we have hanging. We look forward to your joining us.

(*Shinnyo* 真如, 256, August 2000, back cover)

The journal’s motto is “Buddhism is alive in the contemporary age.” The group meets twice a month for homilies by Kino. Monthly dues are a modest ¥100 a month.

Without ethnographic evidence indicating readers’ responses to Kino’s works, I offer the following suggestion as unfounded speculation. My guess is that Kino’s readers do not read his works for the tightness of his arguments, but for their rhetorical ring. The substantive content of his works is not as important as the style and diction. He cites a wide variety of sources in support of his portraits of ideas, tells stories, inserts his own exegesis, and links notions together to construct a message that is clear despite its logical gymnastics: we live valorized lives. The message is comforting, is felt as much as understood, and in this sense the expressed teachings of nonduality in all their various forms function somewhat like a ritual or mantra in which form matters more than content. The language of original enlightenment provides a framework, at once familiar, repetitive, and necessary. Without it, his lectures would not sound right; with it, he says nothing new but he affirms everyone and everything as they are. Like a liturgical formula, the litany need only be uttered, not examined closely, or even understood. It is not that the litany is difficult to understand for the message is clear: life is simplicity itself, the eternal is now, samsara is nirvana, and ordinary people have spirit and the Buddha nature. That the truth is a mystery is not a lesson in intellectual frustration but reassurance that whatever it might mean it is

true. In Kino's hands, doctrinal explication is a litany in both senses of the word: it is a drawn-out account and it is a liturgical formulation. Doctrine functions as an analogue to ritual, but this suggestion, I repeat, is unsupported speculation about how readers appropriate his works.

I also do not have evidence regarding readers' understandings of Hiro Sachiya's writings. While he too has an easy style, he differs from Kino in the sharpness of his polemical edge. Hiro Sachiya comes across as an ideologue whose ideas and doctrines do not provide a perfunctory framework but form a system of teachings. *Zen no yomikata* is written around five interlocking principles. His *Daihōrin* articles clearly uphold the teaching of emptiness, and in all of his writings he does not mince his pronouncements: Hīnayāna is for shit, Buddhist scholars do not understand the content of texts, morality is for shit, Japanese schools are prisons, and so on. His condemnation of Japanese society is strident and striking, but he seems not to have offended too many readers, at least not enough to prevent him from being one of the most popular writers on Buddhism. It may be—and here again I speculate—that his harsh words are part of his appeal to those who feel the oppressive burden of social expectations. His message is personal liberation through an approach that is more intellectual and existential than religious. He certainly is not promoting traditional institutional Buddhism with all of its rituals, and is even short of espousing a spirituality. What he does offer is argumentation.

While both writers have their differences—Kino Kazuyoshi links ideas through loose associations, Hiro Sachiya argues and criticizes—both are excellent rhetoricians skilled in the art of persuasion. Both bestow confirmation of people as they are. Both writers proffer personal affirmation and even transformation, but they do not call for social change or major personality make-overs. Their teachings are popular and orthodox, not only because the voice of the people is the voice of the buddhas, but because they also resonate with long standing (and very elite) convictions about absolutes, such as original enlightenment, suchness, nonduality, immediacy, Buddha nature, emptiness, ineffability, and a Zen that valorizes everyday life. In this sense, they have nothing new to say. Using the language of immediacy, Kino asserts that people are already there, while Hiro Sachiya insists that there is no where to go. In doctrinal and social terms, they are both conservatives reiterating that what ought to be is what is.

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