BULLETIN
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Nanzan Institute
for Religion & Culture

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Lectori benevolo!

The research activities of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture returned in haste in 2023, following a two-year slowdown due to restrictions caused by the covid19 pandemic. We hosted numerous online and hybrid events, including workshops and seminars on Japanese philosophy. We also held a symposium in celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*. The first large-scale gathering in years, the event brought together an international cohort of scholars to discuss the past, present, and future of the study of Japanese religion. This issue of the *Bulletin* includes summaries of these events.

The institute also had the privilege of hosting several visiting researchers from Italy, Belgium, Germany, Norway, Ukraine, and the United States as well as from within Japan. Since it was established in 1974–75, the Nanzan Institute has endeavored to facilitate dialogue between scholars of religion and philosophy from various backgrounds, traditions, and cultures. We are excited to publish the results of some of these exchanges that occurred in 2023 in the pages of this year's *Bulletin*.

Staff of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture
Nagoya, Japan
19 July 2024

Calendar of events

April 2023–March 2024

2023

11 May Enrico Fongaro hosted the first session of the Nishitani Keiji Workshop on the Philosophy of Religion. Many scholars from around the world gathered in-person and online for two days to discuss Nishitani and Mysticism.

9 June Matthew D. McMullen organized a two-day international symposium on "The Study of Japanese Religions Past, Present, and Future: Fifty Years of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*."

6 July 2023 Roche Chair Fellow Hayashi Makoto gave a lecture "Diplomacy and Tourism in Visits to Kakuozan Nittaiji," with comments given by Moriya Tomoe.

10 July Moriya Tomoe held a seminar on best practices for publishing in academic journals in Japan with editors Ōtani Eiichi (*Modern Buddhism*) and Hoshino Seiji (*Religious Studies in Japan*).

12 July The sixteenth Nanzan Shūkyō Kenkyūkai was held with presentations by Kaitlyn Ugoretz on the "Globalization of Contemporary Shinto" and by Josko Kozik on the "Transformation and Laicization of Modern Shugendō."

29 Sept. In collaboration with Mushin'en—Intercultural Philosophy Research Group, Arisaka Yōko (University of Hildesheim) presented on Histories of Philosophy in a Global Perspective.

23 Nov. Suemura Masayo organized a seminar on relationships between religion, and art with presentations by artist Wakana Kimura on her works, including her recent LA MANDALA project, and Miyawaki Chie on cultures of dress in Yunnan, China.

1 Dec. Enrico Fongaro hosted the second session of the Nishitani Keiji Workshop on the Philosophy of Religion. Many scholars from around the world gathered in-person and online for two days to discuss Nishitani on Emptiness and Soku.

4 Dec. Paolo Livieri (University of Messina) moderated a workshop on Nihilism and Realism with presentations by Paul Ziche (Utrecht University) and Tobias Bartneck (Kyoto University).

12 Dec. Visiting researchers Serhii Trylis and Mariia Trylis presented on Buddhism in Ukraine and their experience as refugees in Japan.

2024

21 Jan. Suemura Masayo held a meeting of the Translation of Japanese Religion and Japanese Philosophy Research Group with presentations given by scholars from the United States, Canada, and Japan.

26 Jan. The seventh Permanent Seminar on Nishida's Philosophy was held with a presentation by Yoneyama Masaru (Nagoya University) on his book *Polyphonic Monadology* and Leibniz.

16 Feb. The eighth Permanent Seminar on Nishida's Philosophy was held on the topic of Nishida and Physics with presentations by Rossella Lupacchini (Università Napoli Federico II) and Nakatsugawa Keiji (National Institute for Materials Science).

17 Feb. The *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* co-hosted the two-day PJRW international symposium "Vibrations of Word, Text, and Ritual in Medieval Japan: Interdisciplinary Approaches in the Study of Japanese Religious Culture."

26 Feb. A workshop was held with Kim Seung Chul to discuss his book *The Center is Everywhere*.

1 Mar. Moriya Tomoe moderated a book talk on Heian Buddhism with presentations by Shigeki Moro (Hanazono University), Kameyama Takahiko (Kyoto University), and Asuka Sango (Carleton College).

2 Mar. The Institute co-hosted a meeting of the Memorial Research Group for Inoue Katsuhiro on his work *Between Poetry and Philosophy*, which included a presentation by Suemura Masayo.

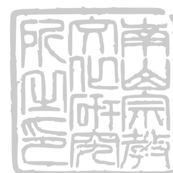
7 Mar. Alessandro Calefati organized a two-day conference "Expression in the (Un)making," which included presentations by Calefati, Piergiacomo Severini, and Yamada Tomoaki.

26 Mar. Michiel Herman presented his research on Knud Løgstrup's Ontological Ethics.

28 Mar. Enrico Fongaro moderated a workshop "Non-Duality, Education and Democracy" with presentations by Chiara Robbiano (Utrecht University) and Evandro Vieira Ouriques (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro).

31 Mar. Moriya Tomoe moderated an event co-hosted by the Institute reporting on several research groups' findings concerning International Networks and Gender as Seen through the Seizasha Archives.

Annual Update
Japanese Journal of Religious Studies



Matthew D. McMullen
Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture

The following is a summary of activities and circulation of the Japanese Journal of Religious Studies during the 2023 academic year. This update includes table of contents for published issues, an overview of online engagement with articles, and notes on present and future plans for the journal.

This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (*JJRS*). Since the journal was rebranded in 1974, the *JJRS* has published over one thousand academic articles on topics ranging from the architecture of ancient religious sites to contemporary religious movements in Japan. The breadth of scholarship and diversity of methodology included in its publications has made the *JJRS* the leading academic journal for the study of Japanese religion.

The issue published in 2023 is no exception. Although it only includes three research articles, they cover a wide range of topics, including female corporeality in koan praxis, Buddhist institutional support for Japan's war effort during World War II, and the role of modern technologies such as railroads in promoting travel to Buddhist temples. The issue also includes two reviews of recent publications. See the Table of Contents below for details.

There was a slight reduction in online engagement in 2023, no doubt due to the fact that only one issue was published that year. A total of 92,970 successful DOI searches between April 2023 and March 2024 is approximately 10,000 fewer than the previous year (see the *JJRS* update in *Bulletin* 44 for an explanation of DOIs). The most popular DOI resolution for the 2023 academic year was for Kawakami Mitsuyo's "The View of Spirits as Seen in the *Bon* Observances of the Shima Region" (vol. 15, no. 2–3). Perhaps this popularity suggests new research on *bon* rites, or it may have been assigned in a course. (Editor's note: Please help us increase our online traffic by assigning *JJRS* articles in your courses.) Readers are invited to speculate on possible reasons for achieving the highest DOI activity in

2023. On JSTOR, there was an increase in the number of downloads. *JJRS* articles were accessed 101,882 times between April 2023 and March 2024, which is 1,100 times more than the previous year. The University of Edinburgh hosted the highest number of downloads of *JJRS* articles through JSTOR.

The above numbers do not include articles downloaded directly from the Nanzan Institute website (https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/journal/6). Although it is difficult to confirm how many articles have been downloaded, the *JJRS* page was viewed an average of about 9,000 times per month last year, making it by far the most visited page on the website.

Most readers engage with the *JJRS* in PDF format. The *JJRS* was ahead of its time in making all of its contents open access and freely accessible online. However, the *JJRS* is, in fact, a print journal. The digital version that most readers are familiar is a facsimile of a paperback version. Print copies of the *JJRS* can be ordered print-on-demand from any Amazon marketplace. Last year, we sold six copies worldwide. Although Nanzan does not receive profits from online sales of the *JJRS*, the editors spend a great deal of time and effort to create the cover and print volume. Please order it.

The 2024 academic year will be a banner year for the *JJRS*. We are currently preparing a full slate of articles for the spring issue, which covers topics such as mummies, reclusion, Kannon fandom, *wagaku* vs. *kokugaku*, and the music of the Pure Land. We also plan to complete a yet-unpublished special issue on not-so-new "new religions" that was originally scheduled for last fall. Finally, we will end the year with a very special special issue celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of the *JJRS*. This Golden Issue promises to be one of the greatest the journal has ever published. Check the NIRC website for announcements regarding new publications and related events.

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Workshop Series

Japanese Philosophy

Enrico Fongaro

Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture

The following essay announces a series of workshops on Japanese philosophy hosted at the Nanzan Institute. In 2023, the main workshops were held on 11-12 May and 1-2 December. During this period, we also launched a series of monthly seminars on the philosophy of Nishida. We are currently preparing publications stemming from the presentations and discussions among participants in the workshops.

In keeping with the long tradition of intercultural research on Japanese philosophy at the Nanzan Institute, we began a series of workshops in 2022 focusing on the thought of Nishida Kitarō and Miki Kiyoshi. This year, in addition to continuing these international workshops, we commence a series of monthly seminars on Nishida Kitarō, which host speakers from around the world. These seminars, along with the annual workshops, further expand the international network of the Nanzan Institute as an interest in Nishida's thought continues to grow beyond the boundaries of Japan.

As we continue to host workshops on Japanese philosophy, the need arose to document the results of these gatherings. Therefore, we will launch a series of multilingual publications as collections of essays and translations based on the results of the Japanese philosophy workshops. We plan to inaugurate this series next year with an initial publication devoted to Nishida, hopefully followed by many others. Related to this publication endeavor and the Japanese Philosophy workshops is an ongoing digital project to create a database of essential works in Japanese Philosophy and their respective translations in multiple languages. Check the Nanzan Insitute website (https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp) for updates.

In an effort to bring together scholars from around the globe to discuss a single text by a specific author, we held the first Nishitani Keiji Workshop on Philosophy of Religion on 11–12 May followed by a second on 1–2 December 2023. The first Nishitani Keiji Workshop was entitled "Nishitani Keiji and Mysticism." The main

reference for the workshop was the 1956 text *Mysticism* 神秘主義, published in volume three of Nishitani's *Collected Works*. Based on either the original Japanese text or an English translation produced for the workshop, various scholars from around the world discussed the meaning of mysticism between East and West, while drawing on Nishitani's views. The second Nishitani Keiji workshop was devoted to a late and famous text of Nishitani, the 1982 text *Emptiness and Soku* 空と即, published in volume thirteen of Nishitani's *Collected Works*. The second workshop also allowed for a passionate and fruitful discussion of Nishitani's thought, reinforcing our intention to continue with this initiative.

This year we were also able to host several meetings on translation, the history of philosophy from a cross-cultural perspective, the problem of nihilism between East and West, contemporary theology, and an international workshop on the concept of "expression." Such meetings devoted to topics in contemporary philosophy that have cross-cultural relevance aim to involve as many people as possible, not just specialists in Japanese thought, and without necessarily privileging the use of English or Japanese. In addition, many of these meetings are now available on the institute's new YouTube channel, so even those who were unable to attend due to scheduling conflicts or difference in time zone can watch the presentations from various speakers.

Nishitani Keiji Workshop on the Philosophy of Religion: First Session, Nishitani Keiji and Mysticism

11–12 May 2023
Morning session (9:30–12:30)
Afternoon session (15:00–18:30)

The goal of the workshop was to contextualize and elaborate on Nishitani's notion of "mysticism" and to use his reflections as groundwork for further explorations into the philosophical significance of the encounter between religions, in particular Buddhism and Christianity.

Ryōsuke Ōhashi 大橋良介, *Japanese-German Culture Institute in Kyoto*
Sova Cerda, *Kyoto University*
Joseph O'Leary, *Sophia University*
Gregory Moss, *Chinese University of Hong Kong*
Gerald Nelson, *Penn State University*
Marcello Ghilardi, *Padua University*
Chika Katō 加藤千佳, *Kansai University*
Tobias Bartneck, *Kyoto University*
Ian Moore, *Loyola Marymount University*

Stephen Lofts, *King's University College*
Seung Chul Kim 金承哲, *Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture*
Lorenzo Marinucci, *Tohoku University*
Morten Jelby, *Ecole Normale Supérieure*
Emma Lavinia Bon, *Turin University*
Francesca Greco, *Hildesheim University*
Alberto Giacomelli, *Padua University*
Fernando Wirtz, *Kyoto University*

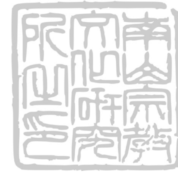
Nishitani Keiji Workshop on the Philosophy of Religion: Second Session, Nishitani's "Emptiness and Soku"

1–2 December 2023
Morning session (9:30–13:00)
Afternoon session (15:00–18:00)

The workshop's goal was to contextualize and elaborate on Nishitani's notions of "emptiness" and "soku" and to use his reflections as groundwork for further explorations into the philosophical significance of the encounter between religions.

Ryōsuke Ōhashi 大橋良介, *Japanese-German Culture Institute in Kyoto*
Akitomi Katsuya 秋富克哉, *Kyoto Institute of Technology*
Keta Masako 氣多雅子, *Kyoto University*
Odagiri Takushi 小田桐拓志, *Kanazawa University*
Marcello Ghilardi, *Padua University*
Emma Lavinia Bon, *Turin University*
Abe Hiroshi 安部浩, *Kyoto University*
Stephen Lofts, *King's University College*
Tobias Bartneck, *Kyoto University*
Nobuo Kazashi, *Hiroshima City University*
Francesca Greco, *Hildesheim University*
Robert Lehmann, *Hochschule für Philosophie München*

JJRS Fiftieth Anniversary Symposium



The Study of Japanese Religions Past, Present, and Future

Kaitlyn Ugoretz
Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture

The following essay summarizes the symposium held at the Nanzan Institute to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of The Japanese Journal of Religious Studies. *On 9 and 10 June 2023, scholars and friends of the journal from around the world reflected on the past, present, and future of the study of Japanese religions. The editors are currently preparing a special Golden Issue of the* JJRS *to crystallize the insights gained from this momentous event.*

The Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (NIRC) was proud to celebrate fifty years of publishing *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* (*JJRS*) in 2023 by hosting a grand symposium entitled "The Study of Japanese Religions Past, Present, and Future: Fifty Years of the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*." On 9 and 10 June, scholars and friends of NIRC and *JJRS* from around the world gathered to reflect on the history of the publication, recent developments in Japanese religious studies, and the future of the field.

The first issue of the *JJRS* was published in March 1974 as a revival of the journal *Contemporary Religions in Japan*. David Reid of the International Institute for the Study of Religions saw the potential of the journal to play a leading role in advancing of postwar study of religion in Japan and changed the name to reflect the diversity of research published by the journal. The management of the journal was transferred to NIRC in 1981, where it remains today.

Countless hands have worked together into the long hours of the night to chart the course of the journal, and many of these contributors participated in the fiftieth anniversary celebration, including former editor Paul Swanson, longtime advisers Hayashi Makoto and Jim Heisig, former associate editor Clark Chilson, and current editor Matthew D. McMullen. Former editor and current President of Nanzan

University Robert J. Kisala sent his regards and joined everyone in spirit despite a scheduling conflict. In addition, the room was full of previous guest editors, editorial consultants, and *JJRS* article authors.

Today, the *JJRS* is proud to continue its legacy of leading cutting-edge scholarly production. In terms of content and scope, the journal has advocated for a multidisciplinary approach to the study of religion in Japan. And in terms of production, the *JJRS* was a leader in open access publishing and is currently available for digital download on NIRC's recently redesigned website and as a print journal printed on-demand and distributed all over the world.

The first day of the symposium kicked off with presentations from past editors Paul Swanson and Hayashi Makoto, highlighting many milestones in the journal's history. This retrospective gave a fascinating and, for many, nostalgic glimpse into the scholarly debates and developments that helped to move the field of Japanese religious studies forward. At the end of his talk, Hayashi revealed a golden baton which he and Swanson ceremonially passed on to McMullen to great applause. That afternoon, Clark Chilson (University of Pittsburgh), Hoshino Seiji 星野靖二 (Kokugakuin University), Keller Kimbrough (University of Colorado), and Jacqueline Stone (Princeton University, Emerita) gathered for a panel discussion "On the Study of Japanese Religions." The discussion covered a wide range of topics, including what impact the *JJRS* has had in their careers and the field of Japanese religions, what opportunities and challenges there are to research in the field's current state, and what sort of future we might envision for the study of Japanese religions. The panelists' comments led to a lively discussion with all in attendance.

The second day of the symposium focused on several presentations designed to challenge research on the study of Japanese religions. In the morning, Emi Foulk Bushelle (Western Washington University) presented on the topic of "National Learning and the Buddhist Roots of Japanese Philology." Bushelle traced the philology represented by Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 back to the Shingon monks Jōgon 浄厳 and Keichū 契沖 and their attempts to rediscover "lost" Buddhist truth in language in the seventeenth century. Orion Klautau (Tohoku University) shared his researched on "Towards a History of the Public Study of Buddhism in Modern Japan." Klautau examined how early Japanese academic study of Buddhism at the University of Tokyo and transnational discourses on Mahāyāna sought to answer the question of how Buddhism could contribute to building a "civilized" Japanese nation.

The afternoon session included presentations by Jolyon Baraka Thomas (University of Pennsylvania) and Aike Rots (University of Oslo). In "Scholars of Religion as Educational Policy Actors and Religious Aspects of Education Policy in Postwar Japan," Thomas critiqued the role religion scholars play in creating educational policy in postwar Japan and how our arguments for religious education

often reflect field, state, and economic interests rather than public needs. Speaking on "Crossing Boundaries: Rethinking the Study of 'Japanese Religion' in the Asian Anthropocene," Rots argued for a present and future of religious studies that critiques "methodological nationalism" and projects of Japan-making in favor of transnational comparisons of place-based ritual in the Asian Anthropocene, with case studies shedding light on environmental humanities and more-than-human relations.

While the fiftieth anniversary of the *JJRS* is now in the past, the contents of the event continue to be available to scholars who were unable to attend the event. The full symposium was recorded with the technical assistance of Van Bragt Fellow Ishihara Yamato and logistical aid of Van Bragt Fellow Suemura Masayo. New associate editor Kaitlyn Ugoretz made the event accessible online by posting about the program as it unfolded on social media and later editing and uploading the presentation recordings to NIRC's new YouTube channel (@NIRC-nanzan)—please like and subscribe! Finally, the editors and participants are currently preparing a special Golden Fiftieth Issue of the *JJRS*, which promises to crystallize the insights gained from this momentous event. Here's to fifty years of the *JJRS* and many more to come!

The Study of Japanese Religions Past, Present, and Future Symposium

Friday, 9 June (13:30~17:30)

"Fifty Years of the *JJRS*"
Paul Swanson, *Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture*, Emeritus

"The *JJRS* and the Study of Japanese Religions"
Hayashi Makoto 林淳, *Aichi Gakuin University*

Panel Discussion On the Study of Japanese Religions

Clark Chilson, *University of Pittsburgh*
Hoshino Seiji 星野靖二, *Kokugakuin University*
Keller Kimbrough, *University of Colorado*
Jacqueline Stone, *Princeton University*, Emerita

Research on the Study of Japanese Religions

Saturday, June 10 (9:00~17:00)

"National Learning and the Buddhist Roots of Japanese Philology"
Emi Foulk Bushelle, *Western Washington University*

"Towards a History of the Public Study of Buddhism in Modern Japan"
Orion Klautau, *Tohoku University*

"Scholars of Religion as Educational Policy Actors and Religious Aspects of Education Policy in Postwar Japan"
Jolyon Baraka Thomas, *University of Pennsylvania*

"Crossing Boundaries: Rethinking the Study of 'Japanese Religion' in the Asian Anthropocene"
Aike Rots, *University of Oslo*

The Ethos of Repentance
Løgstrup, Tanabe, and the Problem of Naturalness

Michiel Herman
University of Antwerp

The following essay was first presented at the NIRC *on 26 March 2024. The essay addresses ethical thought of the Danish philosopher Knud E. Løgstrup in which spontaneity plays an important role. Through a comparison with Tanabe Hajime's metanoetics, the author brings Løgstrup's account of spontaneity in conversation with Tanabe's idea of naturalness in an attempt to rethink the Christian tradition within the context of intercultural dialogue.*

> Because absolute nothingness is the ground of human freedom, to submit oneself to the absolute and serve as its mediator means to be free in the true sense of the term…. Action no longer belongs to the self in the usual sense of carrying on one's own work according to one's own plan. Instead, a higher spontaneity is made manifest—we may call it "transcendent facticity" or "absolute reality"—wherein the plans and doings of the self are mediated, subsumed, and negated. This is "naturalness" (*jinen-hōni*) in Shinran's sense of the term, an "action of no-action" or activity without an acting self in which the action ceases to be merely the doing of the self.[1]

> The demand is unfulfillable; the sovereign expression of life is not produced by the will's exerting itself to obey the demand. By contrast, the sovereign expression of life is fulfilled, but spontaneously, without being demanded. The demand announces itself when the sovereign expression of life does not come about—but does not engender it; therefore, the demand demands that it is superfluous. The demand corresponds with sin, the sovereign expression of life with freedom.[2]

1. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 171.
2. Løgstrup, *Controverting Kierkegaard*, 87.

What is naturalness? What does it mean to act spontaneously? Does it make sense to say that spontaneity contains moral knowledge? Most of Western philosophy tends to see moral value only in actions that follow deliberate reflection. In reflection, a universal is posited which mediates the encounter with the other(s). Mediation takes place in reflection, and through the mediation of the universal, the individual is turned into a moral agent. When an act is done spontaneously, however, there is no prior reflection—no deliberate intention, no willing subject.

The closest alternative to an "ethics of naturalness" in the West is virtue ethics. The decisive difference between them is that naturalness is an act without an actor, while virtue is a disposition of a subject. One Western thinker who tried to rehabilitate spontaneity was Knud Løgstrup. By bringing his thought into dialogue with that of Tanabe Hajime, I hope to elaborate on some topics that remained underdeveloped in Løgstrup's works.

I

Knud Løgstrup was born on 2 September 1905 in Copenhagen. His first academic publication, in 1932, was a prize essay on Max Scheler's ethics. In the following years he turned his attention towards epistemological problems and wrote a doctoral dissertation called "The Epistemological Conflict between Transcendental Idealism and Theology." From early on, he joined the ranks of existential phenomenology, represented by (the early) Heidegger and Hans Lipps. While critical of Neo-Kantianism, the dialogue with Kant would remain a constant throughout his philosophical career. As the title of his dissertation makes clear, Løgstrup's philosophizing was theologically motivated. Despite this, he was always convinced that philosophy and theology should be kept apart. After he finished his dissertation, he returned to ethics again. In 1956 he published his first and most famous book on ethics: *The Ethical Demand*. *Controverting Kierkegaard* was published in 1968. In this work, Løgstrup introduced the important idea of the sovereign expressions of life. Building on his work on ethics, he later developed a philosophy of language, of art, of nature and history, and of religion. These "metaphysical considerations," as he called them, were intended to constitute a philosophy of creation. His metaphysics project remained unfinished at the time of his death in 1981.

Being a phenomenologist, Løgstrup aimed to explicate and structure the understanding contained in our pre-philosophical knowledge. Philosophy should have its feet firmly planted in the shared life-ground. In this regard, natural language is a treasury of pre-philosophical insights. We find the world already as an ordered world, because it is, in a sense, contained in the language we use to orient ourselves. Language is alive and constantly evolving; it shapes speech and is shaped by speech. The historicity of language and of human existence are inextricably linked.

For Løgstrup, it is through engaged interpretation (*tydning*), not detached observation, that we gain insight into human nature. Moods modulate our anticipatory attitude towards the world and each other. For example, when we feel sad, happiness confronts us as something incomprehensible. This incomprehensibility leads to further alienation and forlornness. The world becomes a prison. How different everything is when we are joyful! The world is no longer an oppressive environment, but a source of life. The happiness of others no longer isolates us; we can participate in their joy. We truly understand it. But this understanding is something fleeting. It is an understanding that is only present in and through participation, for which our mood is the necessary condition of possibility. When active participation stops, the understanding disappears.

Experience is a meaningful response to reality. Interpretation is constitutive of experience, not something we add post factum. Some experiences elude our grasp; we are, in a manner of speaking, interpreted by them. They reveal something fundamental about human nature. When we see something beautiful, we are drawn to it. The fact that beauty exists at all, and can hold us in its grip, is quite astonishing. Or consider the phenomenon of "sincerity." We are unable to experience it as negative. Its unconditionality confronts us. In some cases, however, it can be questioned whether it is reasonable to be sincere. If it turns out that it is not—e.g. when we have to lie in order to safe someone's life—the problem lies with the situation, not sincerity. The decision to suspend sincerity has to be justified, sincerity itself does not.[3] Insincerity is the suspension of sincerity without a valid justification.

As interpretation, philosophy is closely related to poetry. According to Løgstrup, poetry is indispensable for philosophy, because it makes the contradiction in our existence present: "we live by what we contradict.… The contradiction in our existence, which the light cast by poetry falls upon, is that we are blind and deaf to the world in which we live."[4] Poetry is at once personal and universal. Genuine poets manage to express the meaning of an experience as such. Universality is not achieved by eliminating the personal relation of the poet to his experience. Science aims at the *elimination*[5] of the human perspective through the use of experiments. Its results belong to the sphere of generality, not universality. Only through the personal relation is the universal meaning of an experience disclosed. What matters is that the poet leaves his contingent personality behind for the sake of the experience itself. Philosophy has to be practiced in like manner. Authentic philosophizing,

3. Løgstrup, *Beyond the Ethical Demand*, 133.

4. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 175.

5. "Emotion and interpretation are eliminated, and with them all the questions they introduce—and these questions are not small in number, but quite rightly comprise all the questions raised by human existence, except the scientific ones. But—and this is the crucial thing—we just cannot call a halt to being emotionally engaged and interpreting" (Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 162).

while rooted in the particular pre-philosophical life of the philosopher—the life-blood of philosophy—is an overcoming of this particularity through *purification*. The autonomy of philosophy is as much a question concerning the ethics of thinking as it is a methodological issue.

II

In *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup wants to determine "in purely human terms"[6] what the proclamation of Jesus discloses about our relation to the other.[7] He pleads for the philosophical relevance of Christianity. According to Løgstrup, some fundamental insights concerning the human condition only present themselves in religion. These insights are universal and can be understood by both Christian and non-Christian. But as part of religion, these insights point beyond themselves. What makes Jesus' proclamation religious is the fact that it is not exhausted by what it discloses—it is soteriological.

Faith contains an ontology. This ontology, which Løgstrup calls the universal in Christianity, is part of the unforeseen, historical Christ-event; it is implicitly contained in it as its horizon of understanding. This is reminiscent of how Nishitani characterizes the relation between religion and ontology:

> Every religion, when it takes concrete shape—as an actual historical reality—invariably bases itself on some world view or ontology. For a religion this basic "philosophy" is not something that can be changed at will, like a suit of clothes. It is to religion what water is to a fish: an essential condition for life. Water is neither the life of the fish as such nor its body, and yet it is essentially linked to both of them. A change of worldview or ontology is a matter no less fatal to a religion than a change from salt water to fresh is to a fish.[8]

Every religion has its own unique way of interacting with the ontology it contains. Løgstrup is convinced that the universal in Christianity can be philosophically elaborated and communicated without invoking the authority of (divine) revelation. That which points beyond itself must be comprehensible before that which it points towards can be genuinely accepted and incorporated in our life.

The silent, radical, one-sided, and unfulfillable demand is a philosophical reformulation of the love commandment. The demand gives us "a fundamental and constitutive determination of being, namely that human existence and the world that goes with it have been given to human beings."[9] It indicates both what a

6. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 3.
7. His aim is *not* to secularize Jesus's proclamation.
8. Nishitani, *Religion and Nothingness*, 77.
9. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 147.

human being ought to do, and what a human being is. Ethics, as the study of man, is ontological.

Even though it is called the love commandment, it is not a command but a demand. A demand only demands of a human being what is due; a command is based on the authority of the commander. Both a demand and a command have to be obeyed. The difference is that to obey a command consists simply in following it, whereas to obey a demand means following it with the knowledge of one's indebtedness.[10]

Human life is impossible without trust. Trust is a fundamental attitude that precedes any particular relation. It is anticipatory. One of the basic *facts* of our ethical life is that we "dare to come forward to be met by the other."[11] By trusting, someone "places something of their life in the hands of the other person."[12] It is out of this fact that the demand arises. We can only live in mutual dependence, which give us tremendous power over each other which obliges us to take on responsibility. Because trust, as a condition of possibility, precedes every concrete encounter, so does the demand. This is why Løgstrup considers the demand to be silent. It is also silent in another sense: the purpose of the demand is not to make us slavishly follow the wishes of the other. The demand precedes the explicit wishes of the one we should care for.

The concrete situation in which we find ourselves is always historically and socially conditioned. Løgstrup compares the relation between the demand and its concrete historical embodiments with a prism.[13] The various ways in which human beings gave shape to their humanity throughout the ages do not stand in the way of the universality of the radical demand. It is therefore important to keep in mind that the demand is *refracted* and can never be fully identified with any particular embodiment. There is only one thing demanded: "the power that the interdependence gives you over another human being, you must use in their best interests."[14] It is our responsibility to determine what their best interests are, according to the unique situation we are in.

Even though human existence is characterized by interdependence, we nevertheless "have a strange idea that the world which for each individual is the content of their life, is occupied by that individual self alone, so that we are outside the other's world and only touch it from time to time."[15] What leads us to this thought? It is a fact that human beings want to be free and independent. In order to exercise our

10. Løgstrup, "Ethik und Ontologie," 389.
11. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 17.
12. Løgstrup, 16.
13. Løgstrup, 91.
14. Løgstrup, *Ethical Concepts and Problems*, 11.
15. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 15.

independence, it has to be acknowledged by others. If this is not the case, independence will be met with disapproval and oppression. Genuine independence is therefore rooted in a more fundamental dependence. As Løgstrup notes: "In the other person's reception of us, they take part in our self-realization."[16] Because humans are social beings, self-realization is impossible in isolation, for the simple reason that, without others, there would be no self to speak of. Because we find ourselves already being a self, we lose sight of this deeper dependence and erroneously equate independence with self-indulgence.

The act of listening illustrates what it means to take part in someone's self-realization. When we attentively listen to someone, we do not merely let them speak, we also encourage them to speak. There is no difference between our listening and our encouraging. The passivity of listening is activity-generating. We create a space in which the other can develop and clarify their own thoughts—attaining a degree of self-understanding that is only possible through dialogue. By listening, the listener takes part in the self-realization of the speaker.

Because the ethical demand is rooted in the basic fact of interdependence, it is the most natural of all: "God demands nothing other than what he himself gives."[17] Yet it is precisely this demand to which we cannot align our nature: "Our nature posits the commandment, but our nature cannot adhere to it."[18] But what is it about our nature that opposes the demand? "Our self-assertion, our will to power, our ceaseless concern about what we ourselves will get out of what we do, all stand against it."[19]

What is the root of this ego-centric self-assertion? *Anxiety*. Even though we cannot live without trust, we never know in advance whether our trust will be received or abused. Trust is by definition unprovable. As we grow up it is inevitable that we experience this vulnerability, which gives rise to a condition as fundamental as trust: anxiety. The fact that anxiety is derived from trust does not make it less fundamental. It is not something external to trust. When trust breaks down it discloses its inherent vulnerability; we become aware to what degree we are dependent on others and how little power we have over our own lives.

Anxiety engenders an obsessive need for control. An ethics of reciprocity is well attuned to this need. If interpersonal interaction is based on reciprocity, humans have a certain degree of control over the other. I can determine beforehand what the other owes me and possess the *right* to demand what is my due. The one-sided demand contains a completely different understanding of life. The conditions of life are given to us, and we are in no position to make a counterdemand: "The

16. Løgstrup, *Ethical Concepts and Problems*, 21.
17. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 93.
18. Løgstrup, *Ethical Concepts and Problems*, 11.
19. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 141.

individual is a debtor, not by first committing some wrong, but simply because they exist and have received their life."[20] Once confronted by the demand, it is impossible to fulfil it.[21] This is not to say that it is impossible to do what we should have done: we can make compromises with the demand. We can do what we ought to do, for example, out of a sense of duty. This kind of obedience is, however, always rooted in a more fundamental disobedience. It should have been done spontaneously. Our conscience is the manifestation of the demand's accusation. When we experience pangs of conscience, we are thrown back on ourselves. The opportunity arises to take stock of our lives so far and take a stand towards it. The recollection of past misdeeds in and through conscience is anything but a detached activity—it is accompanied by a feeling of shame. We have two options. Either we can try to talk ourselves out of it and invent all sorts of reasons in order to justify ourselves; or we can accept our failure unconditionally as our guilt. In light of the demand's unfulfillability, only the latter option brings us closer to the truth.

The notion of guilt brings us back to where we began: the religious proclamation of Jesus of Nazareth. In the last chapter of *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup raises the question: With what right did Jesus preach the unfulfillable demand? In the gospels, "we are told of a human being who gave voice to the demand of existence as God's demand and as his own."[22] But, and this is the crucial point, Jesus did not only give voice to the unfulfillable demand; he also granted *God's forgiveness*. He simultaneously demands that we love our neighbor unconditionally and forgives our inability to do so. It is therefore important to know why we are unable to do what is demanded and in what way we are guilty; if we did not, forgiveness would have no meaning for us.

Repentance allows us to take a proper stance towards the preaching of Jesus. Repentance grants us the ears to "hear God's own promise to us.… In having faith that it is God himself that the individual meets in the life of Jesus, then the demand, guilt, and forgiveness, which are central to his proclamation, become realities."[23] Only through divine forgiveness is the ethical antinomy[24] that constitutes our existence resolved without being dissolved.

20. Løgstrup, 100.

21. "In other words, what is demanded is that the demand should not have been necessary. Its radicality consists in this" (Løgstrup, 127).

22. Løgstrup, 177.

23. Løgstrup, 180.

24. "Theoretically, these two assertions cannot be reconciled: the assertion of existence that its demand, implied in the fact that one human being is delivered to another, is fulfillable; and our assertion, made on the basis of our nature, that the demand cannot be fulfilled. Theoretically, we must either maintain that we are right to say that the demand is unfulfillable, and therefore drop it as meaningless and a sham. Or, we must maintain that existence is right to assert that the demand is fulfillable, and therefore drop our own assertion to the contrary, including the illusions about our nature that follow as a consequence. Either way, the contradiction is theoretically resolved; that is, it is shown to have been a sham problem.

In the debate following the publication of *The Ethical Demand*, Løgstrup was often reproached for simply asserting the givenness of the conditions of existence without giving any concrete arguments for it. He fully acknowledged this critique. There is, moreover, some ambiguity whether we ever fulfil the demand. At times, Løgstrup seems to imply that the demand is realized. If it were not, human existence would simply not be possible. If we live by what we contradict, that which we contradict must be a reality. In *Controverting Kierkegaard*, Løgstrup developed his answer: the sovereign expressions of life. It is through the sovereign expressions of life—such as sincerity, trust, and compassion—and not our own effort that the demand can be obeyed. They allow us to act spontaneously and fulfil the demand before it is demanded. We "know the radicality not only as commandment and rule, i.e. a command to love your neighbour and the Golden Rule, but we also know it as spontaneity."[25]

Løgstrup's interpretation of Kierkegaard is heavily influenced by his Kierkegaardian contemporaries. Løgstrup's criticism comes down to this: in modernity, the contact with the divine is excessively interiorized and finds its consummate expression in Kierkegaard's concept of "the moment." This turn inwards is, of course, nothing new. It has been present in Christianity from the very beginning. The problem is that, in modernity, the sense of the fundamental interdependence between self and other, human and world has been lost.

Løgstrup criticized his Kierkegaardian contemporaries for uncritically adopting the irreligious ontology of the age. For them, finitude is reduced to relativity and conditionality, and freedom is only gained in direct relation (i.e. the decision) to the absolute. For Løgstrup, on the other hand, the unconditioned is fully present in the conditioned. Transcendence and immanence cannot be separated. Finitude is both relatively independent and absolutely dependent. Because finitude is fundamentally constituted by a contradiction, i.e. life and death, it cannot be self-sustaining. On its own, life stands powerless against death. It cannot exist without being granted existence at every single moment. The reason that the finite exists, therefore, is because the infinite is fully present in it, without confusion, without change, without division and without separation.

The sovereign expressions of life are the source of freedom. Løgstrup takes over the distinction, introduced by Kierkegaard, between freedom of the will and freedom of existence. According to both Kierkegaard and Løgstrup, the will is not free. It is rather the cause of self-attachment—the will wills to will. It is restless, the will

However, if our existence is ethically constituted by a contradiction, it is not just about getting rid of it theoretically. Rather, it is a matter of letting *both* assertions stand as true just as they are, holding them together and remaining standing in the contradiction by taking on the full responsibility for the unfulfillability of the demand as our own" (Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 143f).

25. Løgstrup, *Ethical Concepts and Problems*, 12.

is bound to itself; it is bound to the unfreedom of our existence, and the more we exert ourselves to be free, the more unfree we become. This is not an endorsement of determinism, which denies the existence of the will. A bound will is still a will. It is bound because it is intrinsically self-contradictory. We live our lives in self-contradiction and are unable, through self-power, to get out of our predicament. In order to be *truly* free, our existence has to be set free. Even though Løgstrup considers the will to be bound, this is not the whole story:

> Human existence is not sheer unfreedom, because the sovereign expressions of life are fulfilled; they assert themselves. If they did not, our lives together would not go as well as they do. This can only be due to the fact that we live off that which we do not owe to ourselves. This is because the sovereign expressions of life are not accomplished by the will. On the contrary, when the expression of life breaks through our self-enclosedness, it is because the expression of life, and not the will, is sovereign.[26]

The expressions of life are other-centred, rather than self-centred. A spontaneous deed is characterized by self-forgetfulness, and only by being self-forgetful am I (temporarily) freed from my ego-bound self. Genuine freedom is mediated by the other. It is only by liberating the other that I am liberated from myself; it is one and the same event. We either spontaneously participate in the freely given freedom or distort it by trying to make it our own. The sovereign expressions of life are liberating because they are possibility-maintaining possibilities, unlike their distortions, which are possibility-dissolving possibilities.[27] Listening, for example, is a possibility-maintaining possibility. It is a kind of creative not-doing which allows the speaker to speak freely and lets the conversation run its course.

A spontaneous *action* has to be distinguished from a mechanical *reaction*. A mechanical reaction (e.g. the factory worker who performs the same movement day in and day out) is thoughtless, while a spontaneous action is thoughtful in the highest degree. Spontaneity is not identical to immediacy. There is no freedom in immediacy.

Even though the expressions of life are omnipresent and all-pervasive, it is perhaps only in human existence that they fully manifest themselves.[28] The reason is not because humans are the crown of creation—on the contrary. If human beings are a crown, it is a crown of thorns. The reason is, rather, that by breaking through

26. Løgstrup, *Controverting Kierkegaard*, 86.
27. Løgstrup, *Ethical Concepts and Problems*, 12.
28. The sovereign expressions of life can be considered to be self-expression and self-communication of the universe.

humanity's brokenness they reveal their sovereignty. Spontaneity makes its appearance in the world as lost—without sin, there is no freedom.

The human being is a rebel. We do not want to be what we are. Yet it is precisely in not wanting to be what we are that we are what we are. Self-alienation belongs to the essence of human existence and propels us forward towards self-destruction. What we rebel against are the given *sovereign* expressions of life. We try to conform the expressions of life to our wishes. But as rebels, we can do no more than rebel: we do not have the power to destroy the expressions of life, as we are not their source. The sovereign expressions of life are given as realized possibilities.[29] As realized *possibility*, they can be distorted; as *realized* possibility, they cannot be destroyed. Furthermore, a realized possibility has to be distinguished from an actuality. Givenness manifests itself as a realized possibility, which is both definitive and unconditioned. If the expressions of life were given as actualized, their content would be unaffected by the concrete situation in which they are realized. They would be divine laws which have to be applied.

The irony of rebellion is that it can only exist by virtue of that which it rebels against. Even though we occasionally realize—without realizing it—the sovereign expressions of life, we are still in need of substitute motives (i.e. norms) and substitute dispositions (i.e. virtues). Without them, life would be impossible. The construction and formulation of norms and duties, through reflection, belongs to the sphere of morality. The task of morality is to develop principles that can be used to evaluate actions. The expressions of life, by contrast, are to be realized in the concrete ethical situation. They are pre-moral, precede reflection, and are therefore not rational in the strict sense. Yet, it is not the case that the expressions of life are irrational feelings: "they have a primordiality which precedes any distinction between rationality and irrationality."[30] The meaningfulness of moral discourse is dependent on the definitive sovereign expressions of life. Furthermore, if we consider the concepts "good" and "evil" to belong to morality, we might even say that—as their source—the sovereign expressions of life are beyond good and evil.

III

Do not let me hear
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,
Their fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.

29. Løgstrup, *Ethical Concepts and Problems*, 21.
30. Løgstrup, *Beyond the Ethical Demand*, 151.

> The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
> Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless.[31]

What are the implications of Løgstrup's ethics for our understanding of the human being? First of all, we have to introduce the distinction between "individual" and "person." The difference between individual and person can be described as follows: otherness belongs to the essence of "person," while the concept of "individual" posits otherness as an external relation.

The human being, as *zōon logon echon*, exists in and through speech. Through our words we are fundamentally part of the other's existence. Personhood and language are therefore inextricably connected. But it is precisely the possibility given by language to say "I", that creates an opposition. As Rosenzweig noted, "I is always a No become audible."[32] When we say "I" we set up an opposition—between I and Thou, between I and the world. We stress the absoluteness of our particular individuality at the cost of its fundamental relationality. We forget that our No needs others in order to have content. We forget that the original No is not directed at the other, but at ourselves. The essence of personhood is the unity of I and Thou—which has its source in the sovereign expressions of life. When the demand exhorts me to love the other as myself, I have to discover—not project—myself in the other and discover the other in myself.

The ethical demand reveals that we are not self-enclosed individuals, but interdependent persons. It also discloses the fact that we live in opposition to our own origin. The sovereign expressions of life take place in the space between human beings and are constitutive of their personhood. They are the anonymous ground hidden in every interpersonal encounter. It is only by letting the anonymous ground realize itself, and becoming anonymous, that we can encounter the other truly as a neighbor.[33] But how is it possible to let them realize themselves? Are we not powerless in face of their spontaneity? A spontaneity that is consciously brought about is obviously not spontaneous. It is not possible for us to become what we are through our own power. The relation of the human being to itself and

31. T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 16.

32. Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, 187.

33. Anonymity is not loss of identity, but a different relation to it. To be anonymous is to become self-negation (*kenosis*) through the sovereign expressions of life that are incarnated in the encounter with the other. If my identity did not *exist* as negated, self-negation would be contentless. We have to realize our individuality, our name so to speak, in order to pierce through it and realize true personhood. The realization consist in affirming and embracing the self-contradictoriness of our existence. Only thus do we achieve authentic anonymity.

This is, I believe, how we should understand Paul's exclamation: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me" (Gal. 2:20). Thanks to his anonymity, it was possible for him to "become all things to all people" (cf. 1 Cor. 9:19-23).

its surroundings—which are two sides of the same coin—is fundamentally broken. The only thing we can do of our own accord is to distort the given possibilities of life. We do not actively realize the expressions of life: they are spontaneously realized in the encounter with the other, and we are realized through them. Any goodness we do is not our own achievement. There is therefore only one thing that calms us: humility.

Proper knowledge of the fundamental fact that we exist by virtue of interdependence—both in our relation with the other and with reality as a whole—leads to humility. Reality, as the source of our given life, partakes directly in our self-realization. We bear, therefore, responsibility towards the world. Man's natural condition is one in which the given life is negated through self-affirmation. Humility is the negation of this negation. Through self-negation we return to the given life, which expresses itself as naturalness. For Christians, Jesus of Nazareth is the paradigm of humility. He is the way and the truth and the life. As the incarnation of the sovereign expressions of life, he does not share our innate contradictoriness. Not Jesus, but *we* are the paradox.

> [T]here is nothing paradoxical in the fact that the power to be in everything that is[34] then expresses itself in how it is in one person's life, namely how it is in the life of Jesus of Nazareth; indeed, that is what is to be expected, so that the life of Jesus of Nazareth is the only human life in which there is nothing paradoxical.[35]

Only someone who is more than human can be fully human. This, too, is disclosed by the wisdom of humility. The experience of our own impotence crucifies our ego; it allows us to hear the silent Yes in the audible No. Relative freedom is, in reality, enslavement to our own particular individuality. We have to revoke relative freedom in order to become absolutely free. This is not achieved by bending backwards in reflection, but by spontaneously stretching outwards towards the other. Only thus do we regain our true selves.

Spontaneous knowing forms an organic unity with acting. On the basis of Løgstrup's thought, I think it is possible to give a tentative description of this kind of knowing. Spontaneous knowing-acting belongs to interpretation. As we have seen, interpretation is "the kind of knowledge that belongs to our life of active commitment and emotional engagement."[36] Spontaneous knowing is an interpretation of the claim that proceeds from the other. A correct interpretation manifests itself in action. Only against the horizon of humility is it possible to clearly perceive

34. The sovereign expressions of life are the ethical manifestation of a more encompassing "power to be" (*Seinsmacht, værensmagt*). Løgstrup will develop this idea further in his *Metaphysical Considerations*.

35. Løgstrup, *Controverting Kierkegaard*, 14.

36. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 161.

and understand the claim. Humility unites knowing and acting. This unity is mediated by the other; spontaneity is only possible as a response to the call of the other—an unconditional call that is grounded in the other's mere existence. I think that Kōyama Iwao has something similar in mind when he writes that: "the call anticipates the response and the response is made to the call.… *The antiphony of call and response is the most fundamental relationship of human existence*, a sort of ground without which we would not have human beings."[37] That which unites call and response are the sovereign expressions of life. The anticipation of the call is concrete, since it anticipates a response that is made to it. As anticipation, however, it has not yet been actualized. It can, therefore, be considered to be a realized possibility. It is only because they are given as realized that we can realize ourselves through them.

The expressions of life are the source of human existence but do not originate in the finite world: "Eternity has incarnated its demand on us in the interpersonal situation, and in the sovereign expressions of life which correspond to it."[38] The implication is obvious: "Eternity does not incarnate itself for the first time in Jesus of Nazareth, but already in creation and the universality of the demand."[39] We can therefore say that, when the expressions of life are realized spontaneously, it is Christ who lives and acts through us. If we distort the expressions of life, we crucify Christ. If we crucify ourselves, Christ lives in us. Because God is Love, to participate in the life of Christ is to love Him. This love is expressed in and through love of the neighbor.[40]

I am convinced that it is necessary to take into account Eastern intellectual traditions, since they have treated the problem of spontaneity more thoroughly. No man is an island—and neither are religions and cultures. When an intellectual tradition refuses to learn from others and isolates itself, it will inevitably become a prisoner of its own concepts.

The aim of intercultural dialogue is to create the conditions of possibility for mutual understanding. Genuine self-understanding can only be achieved when we look at ourselves from the point of view of these conditions.

IV

Tanabe Hajime was born in Tokyo on 3 February 1885. Even though he initially wanted to become a mathematician, he decided to become a philosopher instead. His interest in mathematics and natural sciences, however, remained throughout

37. Heisig, Kasulis, and Maraldo, *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook*, 742.

38. Løgstrup, *Controverting Kierkegaard*, 90.

39. Løgstrup, 90.

40. "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matt. 25:40).

his life. His predilection for mathematics influenced his style of writing, which, according to James Heisig, "is ponderous and lacking in rhetorical flourish. His sentences are long and winding yet crafted with mathematical precision."[41] He applied himself monomaniacally to the study of philosophy and quickly made a name for himself. Thanks to Nishida Kitarō, he was appointed assistant professor of philosophy at the Kyoto Imperial University. During his stay in Germany, from 1922 to 1924, he studied with Martin Heidegger. Heidegger's philosophical reflections on the meaning of death would have a great impact on Tanabe's further thought—not least in his magnum opus *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (1946). After his return to Japan, Tanabe's own philosophical position gradually took shape. The study of Hegel was to be of vital importance for the rest of Tanabe's philosophical career. As he came into his own, he grew more and more dissatisfied with the philosophy of Nishida. The relationship between Tanabe and Nishida quickly turned sour and they did not hesitate to criticize—albeit without mentioning names—each other's philosophy in their publications. Their disagreements became the ground on which the Kyoto school was build. In the 1930s, Tanabe developed and perfected one of his most important ideas: the logic of species. In 1945, Tanabe reached the official age of retirement and retreated to a cottage in Kita-Karuizawa. There he lived the rest of his days until his death in 1962.

During the Second World War, Tanabe underwent a deep spiritual crisis. As the aging professor looked back on his life, he could not help but wonder: what has come of it all? A profound sense of personal failure—both as a philosopher and a human being—took hold of him. The havoc the war wreaked on the Japanese nation was reflected in Tanabe's inner life. One day, something unexpected happened: "In the midst of my distress I let go and surrendered myself humbly to my own inability."[42] Tanabe felt that the only way forward was to embrace his failure unconditionally: "The only thing for me to do in the situation was to resign myself honestly to my weakness, to examine my own inner self with humility, and to explore the depths of my powerlessness and lack of freedom."[43] Tanabe had no other choice but to practice *zange*; indeed, he had no choice because it was not *his* choice.

> *Zange* thus represents for me an experience of Other-power acting in and through *zange* to urge me to a new advance in philosophy. I entrust my entire being to Other-power, and by practicing *zange* and maintaining faith in this Power I conform the truth of my own conversion-and-resurrection experience. In this way the practice-

41. Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness*, 110.
42. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 54.
43. Tanabe, 54.

> faith-witness (*gyō-shin-shō*) of my *zange* becomes the philosophy of my regenerated existence. This is what I am calling "metanoetics," the philosophy of Other-power.[44]

Out of this experience, a new philosophy was born. Convinced of the universality of metanoesis, it is Tanabe's aim to reform philosophy on the basis of the metanoetical principle, without jeopardizing philosophy's autonomy. Central to the metanoetical principle is the distinction between self-power and Other-power. According to Tanabe, traditional philosophy is based on reason and the principle of identity. In metanoetics it is not the philosopher who thinks *about* Other-power, but Other-power that thinks through them. *Zange* is not contemplation, but action:

> *Zange* is not to be seen as "thought" but as action, and not as the mere action of self-power but as the action of Other-power, one moment in the trinity of action-faith-witness (*gyō-shin-shō*). It is not a matter of self-power, but points to the activity of absolute mediation which can coordinate both self-power and Other-power mutually by converting the former to the latter and thus make transcendent, absolute nothingness manifest. It is for this very reason that we speak of metanoesis in terms of action-faith-witness to a real transformation brought about by the natural spontaneity of Other-power.[45]

Before delving deeper into the meaning of metanoesis as a philosophy of Other-power, I think it is instructive to consider Tanabe's understanding of absolute nothingness. Without a clear grasp of Tanabe's understanding of absolute nothingness, it is impossible to understand his metanoetics. Using the example of language, I will try to make its underlying dynamic more concrete. I will take the liberty of simply positing *translation* as the essence of language. Translation is an event, an activity of transformation. While translatability is the defining characteristic of language, translation, as such, is not something that belongs to language.

Every utterance is an act of transformation: the history of a language becomes part of the present and is opened towards the future. When I speak, I do not give words their meaning, I use their meaning for my own purposes. At the same time, the context which shapes the meaning of my words is transformed by my utterance. Thoughts are translated into words, words are translated into thoughts. The act of speaking is the translation of the past into the present, generating new meaning and creating the conditions for future translations. The axis around which this process revolves is not the individual speakers but the particular language into

44. Tanabe, 55.
45. Tanabe, 319.

which they were thrown. Language realizes itself through us, allowing us to realize ourselves.

Translation is a dialectical process. When a word is translated, it is negated. Because the translated word, however, contains a reference to the original word, it also contains the negation of itself. The original word, by being translated, returns to itself by a negation of negation, which is an affirmation of the word *as* word, rather than a meaningless compound sound. A word, furthermore, is characterized by connotation and denotation. Connotation belongs to the word's embeddedness in the history of a language. When a word is translated, it is necessary to take both denotation and connotation into account. The translated word is given a new home in the history of the other language, changing the history of both languages at the same time. A word cannot be translated as an isolated unit. Through the word, a whole language is translated into another.

In order for language to fulfil its true nature, it *needs* to be translated. Language exists for the sake of translation, for the sake of plurality. Speech is therefore not an option, but a necessity. Yet, there is no genuine speaking without listening. Silence—the language of listening—is the only true universal language; it does not need translation. Silence unites plurality without dissolving difference; it gives depth to speech. If speech is a necessity, silence is an obligation.

Without understanding language—which mediates the relation to the world, the other and the self—it is impossible to under the human being. But is it possible to take up an impartial position and get a hold of language through language? If translation is the essence of language, then the answer is without a doubt: no. It seems that the means we use to philosophize makes the end of all our efforts—absolute knowledge—impossible. The inexpressible is the center, not the border, of the expressible. We seem to be at an impasse.

It was not language, but Kant's antinomies of reason that drove Tanabe to the depths of philosophical despair. According to Tanabe, Kant misunderstands the true implications of the antinomies and therefore does not go far enough is his critique of reason. For Kant, the antinomies indicate the impotence of reason beyond a certain point. When kept within its proper boundaries, pure reason proves to be an infallible judge. But,

> Contrary to what Kant thought in his critical philosophy, it is impossible for the autonomy of reason to provide its own foundations. Reason endowed with the capacity for self-criticism cannot evade the ultimate predicament of the antinomies of practical reason, since it is caught up in the original sin stemming from basic human finitude.[46]

46. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 94.

Note that Tanabe refers here to the antinomy of *practical* reason. While asserting the primacy of practical reason, it seems that Kant underestimated the consequences the antinomy of practical reason has for the antinomies of pure reason. The antinomies of pure reason are rooted in the antinomy of practical reason, which, in its turn, is rooted in radical evil. Since it is *radical*, it is all-pervasive: everything we think and do bears its stamp. Insight in the antinomies can only provide us with a diagnosis; left to its own devices, reason is unable to cure itself. For Tanabe, the conclusion is clear: we cannot go on philosophizing as before. We are left with no other choice but to take a different path. The way Tanabe proposes is metanoetics (*zangedō*), which is "not a philosophy founded on the intuitive reason of *jiriki* (self-power), but rather a philosophy founded on action-faith-witness (*gyō-shin-shō*) mediated by the transformative power of *tariki* (Other-power)."[47] In other words,

> Philosophy must be carried out in the faith-witness that the self is being-*qua*-nothingness, that is, being (*rūpa*) as a manifestation of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) or absolute nothingness. In this way the self is resurrected to an existence beyond life and death; it receives the gift of a new life. The action mediating this faith-witness is nothing other than metanoesis.[48]

As action, metanoesis is eminently ethical: "the confrontation of ethics with radical evil cannot avoid facing antinomy and arriving ultimately at *zange*."[49] Metanoesis is, however, a peculiar kind of action; it is an "action without an acting subject."[50] Furthermore, when we philosophize by way of *zange*, it is Other-power that philosophizes through us. The philosophical method of Other-power, i.e. the logic of metanoetics, is absolute critique: a "critique without a criticizing subject."[51] Absolute critique is therefore not a method the philosopher uses, but something he witnesses:

> Absolute criticism means that reason, faced with the absolute dilemma, surrenders itself of its own accord. In the course of this critical task, the subject that is undertaking the critique of pure reason cannot remain a mere bystander at a safe remove from the criticism. The subject of the critique cannot avoid getting tangled into its own web and exposing itself to self-criticism. It cannot avoid dismember-

47. Tanabe, 73.
48. Tanabe, 92.
49. Tanabe, 81.
50. Tanabe, 104.
51. Tanabe, 121.

> ment by the absolute dilemma of its own thought. Yet in the very midst of this absolute disruption and contradiction, the power of contradiction is itself negated: the absolute contradiction contradicts itself. At this point an absolute conversion takes place and philosophy is restored, through the power of the transcendent, as a "philosophy that is not a philosophy."[52]

Absolute critique can be summarized as follows. First, it uncovers relative being's inborn propensity to cling to itself (radical evil); then, it is pointed out that its independence is not rooted in self-identity, but in the mediating activity of absolute nothingness. The true nature of relative being is to become a pure mediator of absolute nothingness, i.e. being-as-*upāya*, or "empty being." This leads to a salvific conversion (Great Nay-*qua*-Great Compassion), by which reality can manifest itself just as it is. Through *zange*, finite self-consciousness becomes a pure mediator of absolute nothingness. As empty being, the finite can participate in the absolute's work of salvation.[53] Absolute nothingness, as absolute transformation, needs the relative as much as the relative needs the absolute.[54] This is why Tanabe can say that his "philosophy is 'returned to the world' in an act of gratitude, to serve as a medium for spreading faith in Other-power. In this way, metanoetics becomes a philosophical witness of action-faith in Other-power."[55]

Rather than scrutinizing Tanabe's dialogue with Western thinkers such as Kant, Hegel, and Heidegger, I want to take a (far from exhaustive) look at Tanabe's interpretation of Shinran; in particular the relation between *ōsō* and *gensō*. In abstract terms, Tanabe describes the dynamic between *ōsō* and *gensō* as follows:

> [T]he aspect of ascent (*ōsō*) and the aspect of descent (*gensō*) should be mediated in action (*gyō*); the way of *ōso* becomes possible through the mediation of an absolute *gensō*; the absolute *gensō* passes over into the *für sich* stage through relative *gensō* and from there develops into a merit-transference (*gensō-ekō*).[56]

The word *ekō* refers the transforming effect of merit-transference.[57] Because, according to the Pure Land tradition, it has become impossible for sentient beings

52. Tanabe, 61.

53. Tanabe, 340.

54. "[T]he redeeming truth that the absolute can function only as the power of absolute mediation can reach self-consciousness by way of reciprocal mediatory activity between relative selves. In this sense, the transformation through vertical mediation between the absolute and the self must also be realized in the horizontal social relationships between my self and other selves" (Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 63).

55. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 391.

56. Tanabe, 356.

57. Tanabe, 336.

to perform meritorious deeds, the sole agent of *ekō* is Amida Buddha. The transferral of merit should be understood as a transformation. The Tathāgata transfers the true mind (*shinjin*) to those who wholeheartedly recite the nembutsu. What is transferred through the Primal Vow is therefore a new mode of being, grounded in Other-power. The new mode of being is characterized by *zange* and naturalness, death-and-resurrection.

According to Tanabe, the teaching of the *Larger Sutra*—which goes from absolute truth to *upāya*—represents the aspect of *ōsō*; the teaching of the *Meditation Sutra*—which goes from *upāya* to absolute truth—represents the aspect *gensō*.[58] In this sense, the teaching itself is a historical manifestation of *gensō*. The story of Dharmākara in the *Larger Sutra* contains three elements. First there is Bodhisattva Dharmākara, second his self-discipline and third his transformation in Amida Buddha (Tathāgata). When read philosophically, Dharmākara's resolve, his self-discipline and transformation happen simultaneously. The Primal Vow is the efficient and final cause of Dharmākara's self-discipline, sentient beings are the material cause, and the nembutsu is the formal cause. Sentient beings share the efficient and final cause of the absolute, but have radical evil as material cause and *zange* the formal cause. The nembutsu has the same relation to the absolute as *zange* has to the relative. They can be considered the axis around which the dynamic mutual transformation of the absolute and the relative takes place.

Dharmākara symbolizes relative beings and Dharmākara's self-discipline is "the absolute symbol of *zange* for us sentient beings."[59] Even though the resolve to engage in his self-discipline remains with Dharmākara, his self-discipline is not done through self-power, but through the working of Other-power. Dharmākara's metanoetic self-discipline results in the absolute transformation into Amida Buddha. Amida is dependent on Dharmākara, because it is only through his self-discipline that Amida "came into existence"; and Dharmākara is dependent on Amida, because the latter's self-discipline is initiated and sustained by the Primal Vow. In other words: the relative and the absolute need each other. From the point of view of sentient beings, Dharmākara's self-discipline is *ōsō-qua-gensō*; from the point of view of the Tathāgata, it is absolute *gensō*.

Dharmākara symbolizes the *an sich* of the absolute, his self-discipline the *für sich*. As mediating element within absolute nothingness, the truth of relative being is being-as-*upāya* or "empty being." When the relative performs *zange* it realizes its true nature as mediator of absolute transformation. Empty being is characterized by both *ōsō* and *gensō*. The absolute can only "return to the relative" by transforming the relative into a witness of its transformative (saving) power. Absolute *gensō*

58. Tanabe, 334.
59. Tanabe, 337.

is realized when the relation between the absolute and the relative is realized in the relation between relatives. Mediated by empty being, the absolute become *an-und-für sich*. More concretely put: there is no distinction between reciting the nembutsu as a way of praising Amida (action-faith; the relation to the absolute) and communicating Amida's Boundless Compassion (Witness; the relation to other relatives). Without the spontaneous recitation of the nembutsu through Other-power, the Primal Vow remains powerless; yet without the working of the Primal Vow, the nembutsu is nothing more than words, rather than a transformative realization and manifestation of reality in an through naturalness.

V

> I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
> For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love
> For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith
> But the faith and love and the hope are all in the waiting.[60]

Løgstrup excels in concrete phenomenological descriptions of everyday phenomena. He consciously avoided exploring the interconnectedness of the phenomena he disclosed through dialectics. Without a dialectical moment, however, descriptive philosophy runs the danger of becoming merely a collection of loosely connected analyses, as penetrating and thought-provoking they might be individually.

Tanabe's style of philosophizing differs greatly from Løgstrup's. Dialectics runs through Tanabe's veins. His philosophy is a masterclass in mediation. I believe that this allowed him to delve more deeply into the difficulties that confront a philosophy that is open to religion. A predilection and genius for dialectics also has a downside. The dialectician can easily get carried away and lose themselves in mediation. While Tanabe constantly stresses the importance of concrete historical reality, the actual treatment of everyday phenomena remains quite abstract—if not absent.

Tanabe is very open about the occasion which prompted him to perform *zange*. Where we—fellow ordinary, ignorant persons—have to make a beginning is far from clear. Repenting without a concrete cause would be mere pseudo-religious self-indulgence, a pathological cultivation of guilty conscience. This is where Løgstrup's analysis comes in. The possibility, indeed the necessity, of repentance is rooted in our relation to the other. There is no need for an extraordinary experience, only a change of attitude towards the ordinary. What is lacking in Løgstrup is an exploration of repentance's inner dynamic.

60. T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 17.

The ethical demand never became a philosophical principle for Løgstrup the way metanoesis did for Tanabe. There are two reasons. The first concerns methodology. Staunch phenomenologist as he was, Løgstrup's sole aim was to describe our experience and unearth its hidden presuppositions. The content of the experience itself is not to be meddled with. Dialectics is different. In dialects, what is thought and the act of thinking mutually determine each other. The thought becomes part of the thought-process, transforms it, and generates a new thought and so forth. This makes it possible to transform the act of *zange* into absolute critique. The second reason concerns their religious sources of inspiration. As we have seen, Tanabe considered Shinran to be his metanoetical guide. According to Tanabe, Shinran witnesses Other-power from a religious point of view, and differs from his own philosophical witness of *zangedō*. Their authors, however, are both ordinary, foolish individuals and stand in the same relationship to Other-power. When it comes to the relation to the ethical demand, Jesus and Løgstrup do *not* share a common ground. Jesus teaches the demand with *authority*, through preaching, in which the "radicality of the demand does not arise from an analysis of human beings" existence with each other, nor is it put forth as an idea or advanced as a saying or an aphorism in a learned discussion about the law. On the contrary, its radicality is expressed through the most direct claims and appeals to the bystanders, or to one individual amongst them."[61] This is not an attitude that can be integrated into philosophical discourse. Philosophy is without authority, its task is to bring clarity.

To conclude this essay, I will first consider Tanabe's critique of theism, followed by an exploration of the interrelatedness of the ethical demand and the sovereign expressions of life.

> In the view of theism, God is an absolute existence transcending absolute nothingness and a unifying will embracing the mediation of dialectics. Thus it is clear that the ground of the world and its being are seen not as a mediation of revelation in the self-negation of love but rather as an unmediated, direct activity of God's will which determines the mediation of love. But, speaking metaphorically, God is the principle of democratic organization among people—not lording it over humanity but appearing only in a mediatory function—and therefore the divine activity may be considered as one of mediating among human beings.… Theism, however, does not allow for a deepening of the principle of democracy in the relation between God and human beings. The selective, spontaneous will of God always remains

61. Løgstrup, *The Ethical Demand*, 177.

> the ultimate principle, like the will of an autocratic monarch, and this does not accord with the principle of democracy just referred to.[62]

In sum, because the relation between the absolute and the relative lacks medition, there is—according to Tanabe—no room for genuine freedom in theism. In order to tackle the problem of freedom, we have to have a clear understanding of the relation between God and human beings. Previously it was said that the finite is absolutely dependent and relatively independent. Now I would like to add that eternity is absolutely independent and relatively dependent. God freely binds himself to his creation, and freely grants and sustains finitude's independence—He blesses his creation. By creating, the Creator posits an absolute beginning, thereby manifesting his absolute freedom. Only that which is beginningless can freely posit an *absolute* beginning: "So far as we are able to understand, for Himself God does not constitute either an origin, or an intermediary state, or a consummation, or anything else at all which can be seen to qualify naturally things that are sequent to Him. For He is undetermined, unchanging and infinite, since He is infinitely beyond all being, potentiality and actualization."[63] For Thomas Aquinas, the relation between the Creator and his creation is, from the point of view of the Creator, a conceptual relation; from the point of view of the creation, a real relation.[64] God and his creation do not stand opposed to each other. This would only be the case of the relation were real on both sides. God is absolutely immanent and absolutely transcendent, infinitely close and infinitely distant.

The distinction between a conceptual relation and real relation can shed light on the aforementioned idea of a *realized possibility*. God sustains his creation by giving himself as realized possibility. If God were to incarnate His will as an objective, universal set of laws, that is, an actuality, this would imply a real relation rather than a relation of reason. In that case, Tanabe would be right: there would be no room for freedom creation. In Christianity, however, God did not incarnate himself as law, but as life. The sovereign expressions of life are ethical manifestations of God's divine activity and contain three inseparable elements: a *telos* (selfless love), a definitive principle of movement (e.g. trust, sincerity or compassion), and an obligation to decide for ourselves what best serves the other. In this way God realizes his freedom through us and enables us to participate in his freedom. If we let the truth live through us, it sets us free.

62. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 188–189.

63. Maximus Confessor, *Two Hundred Texts on Theology and the Incarnate Dispensation of the Son of God*, First Century, 2.

64. "A creature by its name is related to the creator, but a creature depends on the creator, not the converse. And so the relation whereby a creature depends on the creator is necessarily real, but the relation in God is only conceptual" (Thomas Aquinas, *The Power of God*, 41).

Tanabe interprets Dharmākara and Amida Buddha as nothing more than a symbol for absolute nothingness.[65] Within a Christian framework it is impossible to relativize God's personhood in a similar manner. Yet, God cannot be completely identified as person, since, in himself, "God is one, unoriginate, incomprehensible, possessing completely the total potentiality of being, altogether excluding notions of when and how, inaccessible to all, and not to be known through natural image by any creature."[66] But, when God turns towards us, he truly becomes a person. One might object that when I say "turns towards us" this implies a personal act, and that I'm therefore contradicting myself. Whether I am contradicting myself, I do not know. What I do know is that, when we reach the limits of what can be thought, we have no choice but to resort to metaphorical language.

Christianity has to take Tanabe's critique seriously. It cannot be denied that the traditional conceptualization of God's omnipotence easily leads to the view of an autocratic monarch. Hiding behind the so-called inscrutability of the divine will is no option. Tanabe is right: an unmediated divine will cannot be the ultimate principle if we want to understand God as love. Perhaps we have to reflect more deeply on the Cross as the symbol of the unity of divine omnipotence and divine impotence.

Within a Christian framework, it is impossible to simply adopt Tanabe's idea of absolute mediation. The relation between the personal Creator and his creation is not absolute mediation, but absolute givenness. Givenness can be understood in two ways. Either God, as person, gives us something, or God becomes a person through the act of giving himself. Whatever might be the case, one thing is certain: between the created and the uncreated exists a chasm that can only be bridged by the latter. One of those bridges is the sovereign expressions of life.

The sovereign expressions of life are the alpha and omega of human existence. No one has not at least once performed a genuine selfless deed. No one has not at least once failed to act selflessly. If the unconditional claim to which the sovereign expression of life corresponds is left unfulfilled, it leaves a trace—this trace manifests itself as conscience. Our conscience accuses us: we did something we should not have or refrained from doing something we ought to have done. This gives rise to the phenomenon of law and its implicit *absolute* distinction between good and evil: *thou shalt not*.[67]

65. "[E]ven Amida Buddha is not merely himself identical with absolute nothingness. Taking the form of a personal Buddha called Amida Buddha, his manifestation is a particular form of *gensō* with its own historical affinities, one buddha among many. His being is merely that of a symbol, no more than an *upāya* for leading sentient beings to the truth" (Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 338).

66. Maximus Confessor, 1.

67. Conscience is not a repository of universal, objective rules. The function of conscience is to accuse past actions, not prescribe future behavior. The law is, in its most basic form, an attempt to objectify conscience (e.g. the decalogue) and will inevitably bear the stamp of the particular historical situation in

The failure of realizing the sovereign expression of life spontaneously is transformed, by conscience, into the ethical demand, even though, at this stage, it is perceived as a command. The demand reveals its true nature through the proclamation of Jesus, where it is coupled with forgiveness; or through the teaching of Shinran, where it is connected with Amida's Primal Vow. We realize that it is impossible to bring forth intentionally a genuine selfless deed. The insight gained through the demand transforms obedience-as-self-power into obedience-through-Other-power. Without the proclamation, the accusation of conscience intensifies calculative thinking (*hakarai*).

> Shinran's insight was that *jiriki* and *hakarai* share a common characteristic: you can participate in neither without first isolating your self from either its goal of praxis or its object of thought. In other words, in both praxis and theory, the Path to Self-perfection assumes a discrete, detached self.[68]

Through calculative thinking, humans attempt to produce reality themselves, rather than letting reality realize itself. We consider the good we do to be our own achievement, something we can pride ourselves on. Intoxicated by our own illusions, we become ever more prideful, ever more blind to the true source of our life. Self-righteousness becomes the *cantus firmus* of our existence.

Sin has the power to turn good into evil. A selfless deed can become, when reflected on, a source of self-satisfaction—in a split moment, light is turned into darkness. As closely related as they are, it is important to keep sin and evil distinct. Whether we do good or evil, our natural mode of being is characterized by sin. Sin consists in relating absolutely to what is relative. As finite beings, the only thing we can relate to absolutely is the relative. This absolute relating, because it originates in the finite, cannot be anything else but a distorted and distorting absoluteness.

A pervasive religious illusion is that, through mediation of a divine law, we are able to relate appropriately to the relative and the absolute. To be sure, obedience to the law can affect and guide our actions for the better, but it can never change our mode of being. The reason is that there is a distance, so to speak, between the law and the good, which cannot but incite *hakarai*. The relation between repentance and forgiveness is different.

Repentance *is* forgiveness.[69] By repenting—which is done through the painful recollection of conscience—we realize that we are not the source of our own exis-

which it was formulated. Not every formulation is of equal rank; sometimes they even run counter to their true intention. This is why "the ideas grounding our rationalizing and organizing must constantly be tested against the expressions of life" (Løgstrup, *Beyond the Ethical Demand*, 156).

68. Kasulis, *Engaging Japanese Philosophy*, 187.

69. "So I say to you: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be

tence and acknowledge our indebtedness. Whereas we formerly prided ourselves on having acted selflessly, we now understand that our deeds are wrought by the sovereign expressions of life. This insight leads to gratefulness and humility. Through humility, spontaneity is transformed into naturalness. Through repentance, we exist as being forgiven, "becoming as one who has died yet still lives."[70]

We catch a glimpse of eternity by pondering the contradictoriness of the world. Contradiction teaches us the wisdom of humility—the narrow gate of faith. When we repent, Christ dies with us; when He grants forgiveness, we rise with Christ. Faith[71] is directed towards the past and points towards the future; hope[72] is directed towards the future and points towards the present; love[73] realizes the fullness of time in the present. Faith abides in hope and acts through love. Carried by the triunity of faith, hope, and love, we are reborn[74] into the *vita passiva*:

> A condition of complete simplicity (Costing not less than everything)[75]

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opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened" (Luke 11:9–10).

70. Tanabe, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, 278.

71. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

72. "'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'" (Mark 1:15).

73. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonour others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres" (1. Cor. 13:4-7).

74. "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26).

75. T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, 43.

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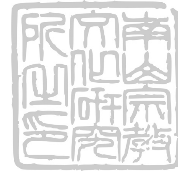
Shinto Overseas and Online



Kaitlyn Ugoretz

Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture

The following essay was first presented at the Nanzan Institute as part of the Sixteenth Nanzan Salon held in July 2023.

As a new addition to the staff at the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture as of April 2023, I would like to share a summary of my academic interests and my ongoing doctoral research on the globalization of contemporary Shinto and the creation of digital Shinto communities. My training at the University of Pennsylvania and the University of California, Santa Barbara is primarily in Chinese and Japanese cultural studies, but I would describe myself as an anthropologist of religion. I am particularly interested in exploring topics related to Shinto as well as other Japanese and East Asian religions, digital media, popular culture, environmentalism, and globalization.

My interests in religious studies began from childhood. I grew up the daughter of a Presbyterian (Calvinist Protestant) minister who has been called to two small churches in the states of New Jersey and New York in the United States. I often liken this experience to growing up in a shrine family (*shake* 社家) or as a shrine maiden (*miko* 巫女), as it gave me the opportunity to understand and participate in the life of religious communities "behind the scenes." I have observed that many religious communities of different faiths face the same kinds of problems. For example, both churches and shrines deal with the aging of their local members and elders, insufficient and decreasing financial support, new lifestyles and changing ideas about religion and spirituality, the adoption of digital technologies and, more recently, social distancing measures following the outbreak of the global COVID-19 pandemic. Due to this background, I am interested in how Shinto communities—especially digital and transnational communities—respond to these problems as compared with other religions.

Toward a Global History of Shinto

Shinto is notoriously difficult to define. According to the National Association of Shinto Shrines (Jinja Honchō 神社本庁), Shinto is "a faith that was born from the Japanese way of life," or in other words, "the indigenous faith of Japan" (Jinja Honchō 2024). From this perspective, Shinto is something that belongs to the geographical region, culture, and people of Japan. Both popular and official discourses claim that Japan is a divine nation inhabited by the myriad kami and that Shinto ritual and thought are the source of traditional Japanese culture. My research interrogates these discourses concerning Shinto's "indigeneity" and the possibilities for the existence of shrines and Shinto practice outside of Japan. In fact, overseas Shinto shrines have a long history that goes back centuries, and there have been new developments in the global spread of Shinto thanks to a number of phenomena, including the emergence of the internet, the growing accessibility of international travel such as migration and tourism, Japan's rise as a pop culture superpower (Iwabuchi 2002), and general shifts in attitudes toward religion being "spiritual but not religious" (Wuthnow 1998; Roof 1999; Fuller 2001).

My research explores Shinto shrines and communities that span several countries, but in this article I will focus on examples from the North American continent, as these cases are relatively unfamiliar in what I consider to be the global history of Shinto. According to Suga Kōji (2010), two types of overseas shrines were established in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: colonial shrines and emigrant (or settler) shrines. The Japanese government and military established colonial shrines dedicated to the imperial cult and deities as sites for (often mandatory) patriotic participation in civil ritual in territories such as Taiwan, Korea, and mainland China, while Japanese emigrants brought their local deities with them to places like Hokkaido, Hawai'i, and Brazil.

In comparison, the history of overseas Shinto shrines established in the continental US and Canada is not well known. It is not that such a history does not exist, but rather that it was deliberately erased by the state in the course of World War II. Immediately following the Japanese attack on an American naval base at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, the US government forcibly incarcerated Shinto and Buddhist clergy who had been included on a surveillance list kept by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. On 19 February 1942, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066, authorizing the forced relocation and incarceration of approximately 122,000 Japanese American men, women, and children in interment camps. Shrine property was either confiscated or destroyed by the military, though some sacred materials survived by being hidden away or sent back to Japan, and the majority of the buildings and land was not returned to their original owners after the conclusion of the war. Abe and Imamura (2019)

suggest that these traumatic experiences and lingering stigma help explain why there are so few remaining Shinto shrines and domestic altars (*kamidana* 神棚) found in the US today. Japanese Canadians suffered similar incarceration and loss at the hands of the state during World War II. While the majority of historical Shinto shrines in North America were established by Japanese emigrants, the Japanese army did in fact build several colonial shrines in the Aleutian Islands, which are part of the state territory of Alaska. Due to the paucity of extant materials and a general lack of awareness, the prewar history of Shinto in North America remains unexplored.

I seek to answer several questions through my ethnography of contemporary Shinto shrines, communities, and practitioners outside of Japan. What is the international appeal of Shinto? How do people around the world define and practice Shinto? What historical precedents do they draw upon, and what innovations might there be? Finally, how does the globalization of Shinto affect Shinto thought and practice? In order to research these dispersed and diffuse religious communities and answer these questions, I employ digital ethnography as my primary methodology. It is a common misconception that the "digital," "online," or "virtual" stands in binary opposition to the "physical," "offline," or "real" and, by extension of this logic, that digital ethnography ignores embodied experiences and materiality. However, recent theories of digital religion and mediatization reject the existence of a clear boundary between the "online" and "offline" (Campbell and Lövheim 2011). Digital technology and activities necessitate the physical, from the material infrastructure for internet connection and the materiality of devices to the human bodies that interact with them. Moreover, the digital is becoming increasingly integrated into our everyday lives. Even when conducting in-person fieldwork on Mt. Inari or on the streets at the Gion Festival in Kyoto, perhaps quintessential ethnographic fieldwork experiences like those of Bronisław Malinowski (1922) or Clifford Geertz (1973), I use my smartphone to navigate and stay in contact with people as my Bluetooth-connected camera immediately uploads the photos I take to a digital file folder in "the cloud." Digital ethnography seeks to capture and analyze all aspects of these experiences, not just those of the researcher but, more importantly, those of their research participants. Thus, my methodology combines traditional ethnographic methods including interviews and participant observation with social media engagement—synchronous and asynchronous—and digital archival research.

Pathways to the Kami

Before examining global Shinto practitioners' activities in further detail, let us first consider the sources of Shinto's global appeal. The term "Shinto" 神道 may be

literally translated as "the way of the kami." However, the phrase may be singular or plural. My research demonstrates that there are in fact various "ways" or "paths" to becoming interested in kami, the deities that constitute the focus of ritual veneration in Shinto. Broadly speaking, I have found three main reasons for why my research participants began to practice Shinto.

The first path to discovering Shinto is ethnic and cultural heritage. Many *nikkei* 日系 (people of Japanese descent) around the world are interested in recovering the spiritual traditions of their ancestors. Moreover, non-Japanese individuals with Japanese partners and children often learn about Shinto in order to participate in and pass on family and cultural traditions. In my surveys and fieldwork, I have observed that people of Japanese descent appear to be underrepresented in online Shinto communities. This may be due to a number of factors, including a preference for engaging with local ethnic communities in-person, language barriers, or the existence of private online communities of which I am not aware or a member. Some *nikkei* members of the largest online Shinto communities have voiced frustrations, arguing that these predominantly non-Japanese groups do not make space for and value heritage practitioners' perspectives and concerns over contentious issues such as cultural appropriation and Orientalism.

The second path to Shinto is an interest in Japanese religion and culture. Some global practitioners identify as Buddhists and appreciate the complex, intertwined historical relationship between Buddhism and Shinto in Japan. Many non-Japanese Shinto practitioners discover Shinto through martial arts, particularly *aikidō* 合気道. This is because *aikidō dōjō* typically include *kamidana* in their space, sometimes even a torii gate, and incorporate elements of Shinto ritual. Japanese popular culture and media such as manga, anime, and video games also contribute significantly to growing awareness of and interest in Shinto. For example, the films of Miyazaki Hayao 宮崎駿 and Studio Ghibli, as well as Shinkai Makoto 新海誠 more recently, often include kami and *yōkai* 妖怪 (supernatural creatures), shrines, rituals, material culture, and themes that are often interpreted as evoking Shinto (Boyd and Nishimura 2004; Thomas 2012; Rots 2017). In addition, this area of my research accounts for the influence of the Japanese government's soft power industry, centered on the Cool Japan initiative, and tourism. An appreciation for Japanese traditional and popular culture often inspires my research participants to travel to Japan, where they have had profound experiences while visiting shrines that have since had a lasting impact on their spiritual life.

Finally, the third path to discovering Shinto is an interest in alternative spiritualities. A significant portion of my research participants grew up in evangelical Christian households and seek to find a tradition that they feel aligns better with their values, including inclusivity, tolerance, an optimistic view of life, and closeness to nature. In interviews, global Shinto practitioners often characterize Shinto

as a more open and welcoming religion because it is focused on ritual, without strict doctrines and scriptures. In particular, they perceive Shinto as an ancient, animistic, "green," and LGBT-friendly tradition. While the extent to which this global Shinto imaginary is a reality in Japan—past or present—remains a matter for debate, this is the Shinto that attracted their interest and inspires their practice.

Shinto in Global Practice

Once a person living outside of Japan decides to practice Shinto, how can they do so? Shrines remain fundamental to the community as physical ritual sites, distributors of sacred items (particularly talismans called *ofuda* お札 needed to enshrine the kami in one's domestic altar) and other resources, and authorities and organizers in communities on social media. Although the number of overseas shrines in operation today are admittedly very few in number, there are more than most people think—approximately twenty, from Los Angeles and Amsterdam to Thailand and the Republic of San Marino on the Italian peninsula. Of the shrines among these that support Anglophone online communities, the ones located in North America are the largest and most active. There are four shrines of note: Kannagara Earth Shrine 神流地球神社 in Florida, Shinto Shrine of Shusse Inari アメリカ出世稲荷神社 in Los Angeles, California, Kamunabi Ban'yū Ko-Shinto Shrine 神奈備万有乃杜 in Maryland, and Tsubaki Grand Shrine of North America 北米椿大神社 in British Columbia, Canada.

Nonetheless, the opportunity to visit a shrine in-person in the US remains rare unless one already lives nearby. Moreover, Shinto Shrine of Shusse Inari has no permanent physical shrine building, and Kamunabi Ban'yū Ko-Shinto Shrine is located on private land. If the majority of people living in North America have difficulty traveling to distant shrines, much less those who live in other countries, how can they practice Shinto and form shrine communities? The answer lies in the availability and affordances of social media platforms which connect users via the internet. My digital archival research reveals that digital Shinto communities emerged almost simultaneous with the birth of the public internet and the earliest forms of social media such as bulletin board systems (BBS), forums, and mailing lists (Bruns 2008; Ugoretz 2021; Ugoretz 2023). At least as early as 2000, an official Shinto Mailing List was created in connection with the Shinto Online Network Association on Yahoo! Groups. Over time, new social media platforms emerged and offered new features and affordances for creating community, leading to the migration and proliferation of Shinto interest groups on sites like Facebook, Reddit, and Discord. In addition, digital groups are not limited to a single social media platform; rather, they are multi-sited communities that make use of different platforms simultaneously. Calculating the total number of people active within these

communities is very difficult, if not impossible, but I estimate that there may be as many as ten thousand individuals within this network.

Shinto shrines outside of Japan use the internet in innovative ways to network with practitioners and supporters around the world. Online, they share information about Shinto and festivals, distribute *kamidana* and sacred items, organize shrine membership groups (*sūkeikai* 崇敬会) and confraternities (*kō* 講), receive electronic donations, and perform rituals over livestream and broadcast. One of the most innovative overseas shrines in my research is Shinto Shrine of Shusse Inari in Los Angeles, which does not have a permanent physical shrine building. Even prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, the chief priest Rev. Izumi Hasegawa livestreamed her shrine's monthly *tsukinamisai* 月並祭 and annual ritual events via Instagram and YouTube. Moreover, Rev. Hasegawa uses a platform called Patreon, which allows fan communities to support content creators, to manage shrine membership, offerings, newsletters, and access to other resources based on different donation tiers. This approach to creating a digital shrine community is particularly significant in light of Jinja Honchō's official opposition to internet-mediated worship (*intānetto sanpai* インターネット参拝 or *bachuaru sanpai* バチュアル参拝) since 2006 (Kurosaki 2019).

It must also be remembered that these digital Shinto communities are "hybrid," in that they allow for both online participation and in-person participation. The use of digital technology does not replace in-person experiences, but rather creates new opportunities for participation for those who are unable to engage in-person. Overseas Shinto shrines continue to carry on their material and embodied traditions. Shrines in North America may hold events and perform rituals within their sacred precincts if they have a permanent location, and they also often hold festivals outside of shrine grounds. For example, Rev. Hasegawa performs rituals to bless the fields at Koda Farms, a rice farm owned by Japanese Americans for three generations. This practice and relationship emphasizes the connections between Shinto, Japanese people, and the cultivation of rice. Rev. Kuniko Kanawa of Kamunabi Ban'yū Ko-Shinto Shrine conducts opening ceremonies and offers prayer services (*kitō* 祈祷 or *kigansai* 祈願祭) to visitors of Japanese cultural celebrations such as the Subaru Cherry Blossom Festival in Philadelphia, reifying the relationship between Shinto and nature, in particular forms of nature associated with Japan such as cherry blossoms. Furthermore, while festivals (*matsuri* 祭り) held at Japanese cultural and ethnic centers such as Little Tokyo in Los Angeles strengthen the association of Shinto with "Japaneseness," priests also offer ritual services, give lectures on Shinto, and even hold *miko* training courses at anime and Japanese popular culture conventions, suggesting that anyone may practice Shinto. Through these ritual activities, we can see that, on the one hand, Shinto shrines overseas continue their association with the land, culture, and people of Japan,

while, on the other hand, interest in Shinto is expanding due to its association with the environment, tourism, and fandom.

Because the majority of global Shinto practitioners are far removed from these shrines and ritual events, the focus of their practice has shifted from shrines to their personal *kamidana*. As most shrines in Japan will not send *ofuda* and other sacred items overseas by mail, overseas shrines are responsible for their creation, distribution, and ritual disposal. In a previous article, I examined how both global Shinto practitioners and shrines in Japan and around the world have negotiated the glocalization—a process of simultaneous globalization and localization—of Shinto offerings (Ugoretz 2022). For example, a practitioner might substitute a local spirit for the traditional offering of *sake* or oats for uncooked rice. Contemporary global Shinto practitioners are not alone in their glocalization practices, as there are shrines such as Meiji Jingū that serve wine instead of sake on some ritual occasions, and there is precedent for localization to be found in the history of colonial and settler shrines, such as the offering of a local spirit made from sugar cane called *cachaça* at shrines in Brazil (Kebbe 2021, 156; Shimizu 2022).

Conclusion

In this article, I have shared a brief sketch of my ethnographic research on overseas Shinto shrines and digital Shinto communities. Outside of my dissertation research, I am committed to creating publicly accessible resources for understanding Shinto and Japanese religions more broadly. One of my projects is an educational YouTube channel called "Eat Pray Anime," through which I use popular culture media such as manga, anime, and videogames to share religious studies research. I have also created a digital map of historical and extant *torii* gates built outside of Japan to demonstrate the global history of Shinto. Finally, since joining the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture, I started a series of popular explanatory posts about *torii* of different shapes, sizes, and colors under the hashtag #ToriiTuesday which I share on the social media platforms Twitter and Bluesky. I eagerly look forward to continuing to develop my research, contributing to the publication of cutting edge scholarship as Associate Editor, and collaborating with my new colleagues at Nanzan in the future.

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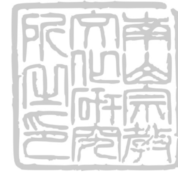
Current Transformations of Shugendō Practice



Josko Kozic
Heidelberg University

The following essay was first presented at the Nanzan Institute as part of the Sixteenth Nanzan Salon held in July 2023.

The Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs designated Shugendō as part of Japan's cultural heritage in 2020 under the nationwide "Japan Heritage" campaign. Since then, this recognition has been utilized to promote Shugendō practices in Wakayama and other regions. These efforts include offering ascetic workshops to the public and enhancing tourism marketing locally, for example by supporting temples or individuals engaging in agricultural activities such as rice-planting or the production of *sake*. Additionally, Shugendō groups nationwide are increasingly active on digital platforms, forging connections and collaborations with international counterparts, such as the Korinji Shugen Dojo in Wisconsin, USA. These developments have sparked debate on various fronts, including environmental policies, sustainability, questions about national identity, and cultural heritage. It is important to explore the dynamics between practitioners of Shugendō and external stakeholders, whether they interact through collaborative ventures or conflicts of interest. Moreover, the current situation raises questions about how religion influences socioeconomics and shapes perceptions of the categories of "tradition," "religion," and "culture" in contemporary society.

My recent field research and extensive engagement with local stakeholders have yielded valuable insights into the cultural heritage campaign and the evolving role of Shugendō, particularly in anticipation of Expo 2025 in Osaka. According to Amada Akinori (2020), Shugendō has become an increasingly prominent feature in mass media and has benefited from a surge in tourism linked to sites deemed sacred or powerful by various religious practitioners. Furthermore, over the last several years Shugendō has undergone a transformative process of national and international proliferation, as well as commercialization and populariza-

tion through media channels. In his lecture at Harvard University titled "Ancient Spirit, Modern Body: The Rise of Global Shugendō," Shayne Dahl (2021) described Shugendō as evolving into a "transnational religion." This evolution has seen Shugendō practices in some contexts diverge from their original exclusively ritualistic religious framework. Shugendō has even been utilized as a tool to promote rural areas grappling with depopulation, contributing to their revitalization efforts (Amada 2019, 148).

The international and interdisciplinary focus on Shugendō studies has intensified in recent years. Many practitioners, both Japanese and non-Japanese, have responded positively to the diverse research initiatives undertaken. For example, one practitioner created his own brand "Hijirisha" in Yamagata Prefecture and is actively involved in various activities related to "modern" Shugendō practice. He engages in cultural revitalization, wilderness exploration, handicraft promotion, and educational initiatives spanning from junior high to university levels, alongside his research on local culture.

Alena Yushu Eckelmann, a female non-Japanese practitioner, engages in Shugendō in the Wakayama area. Beyond her role as a *yamabushi* 山伏, she is a licensed forest-bathing (*shinrin yoku* 森林浴) guide and contributes occasionally to online magazines such as *Buddhist Door* with her "Shugendō Diaries." Her contributions focus on her personal experiences as a non-Japanese woman participating in contemporary Japanese Shugendō and document the revival of Shugendō groups, rituals, and the revitalization of historic Shugendō sites. Eckelmann has also conducted interviews with academics studying Shugendō and filmmakers producing documentaries about its current practice. In essence, these examples highlight the dynamic and multifaceted engagement of Shugendō practitioners who are active in the media or digital "natives." They come from various backgrounds and affiliations and contribute to practice, education, environmental advocacy, and media representation both within Japan and internationally.

In addition, Shugendō has become associated with environmental activism, as exemplified by figures such as Richard Pearce (also known by his *yamabushi* name, Yanchabō やんちゃ坊), a non-Japanese Shugendō practitioner and ecotourism consultant. Pearce is the founder of "Sustainable Daisen" based in Tottori Prefecture, an organization that focuses on initiatives including the protection of the Japanese giant salamander and promoting sustainable lifestyles through educational programs. Similarly, Tim Bunting (known as Ryosen 諒宣), a Shugendō practitioner from New Zealand, operates from Yamagata and serves as a project manager at "Yamabushido," a platform that offers *yamabushi* training tailored for non-Japanese audiences. Aside from their own media platforms, these individuals and others have been featured in interviews with Joy Jarman-Walsh on the YouTube channel "Seek Sustainable Japan."

These examples underscore the growing visibility and accessibility of Shugendō as well as its related themes in the contemporary digitalized and globalized world of the twenty-first century. They also suggest Shugendō's role as a manifestation of "diffused religiosity" and "ecospirituality," reflecting a global trend towards integrating ecological and spiritual concerns rooted in animistic and shamanistic worldviews (Roth 2019).

Though many have examined Shugendō as a distinctly Japanese tradition, Kikuchi Hiroki (2020) critiques religious discourses that emphasize ethnic affiliation. In particular, he argues against ethno-anthropological perspectives that assert mountain religions like Shugendō are inherently Japanese (*Nihon koyū shinkō ron* 日本固有信仰論). Instead, he suggests the emergence of ideas centered on fundamental beliefs (*kisō shinkō ron* 基層信仰論). These fundamental beliefs may resonate within broader cultural debates such as theories of Japaneseness (*Nihonjinron* 日本人論), and Shugendō may thus serve as a platform for Neo-Nativist interpretations and expressions. At the same time, these beliefs may also resonate with individuals and organizations outside of Japan.

Alongside Japanese Shugendō groups, international groups also use the internet to establish their YouTube channels and share content on social networks. When exploring social networks related to religion in Japan, one encounters numerous public groups, official accounts (such as those of Buddhist temples or schools), and profiles of various religious stakeholders. These platforms facilitate discussions, debates, and the exchange of information on a global scale, reflecting the diverse and interconnected nature of contemporary religious discourse and practice.

Within the realm of Shugendō-related groups on social media, there exist various categories that cater to different styles of interaction and information sharing. One notable example is the Facebook group "Mountain Religions," managed by two international scholars. Despite its broader focus on mountain religions globally, the group prominently features discussions and posts related to Japanese mountain religions, including Shugendō. It boasts 230 members from around the world and allows for open participation. Members contribute information and engage in discussions on events, publications, and various topics related to mountain religions.

In contrast to the inclusive and seemingly neutral approach of "Mountain Religions," there is the official profile page of Koshikidake Shōdō, a Japanese man who claims to be a certified Shugendō priest. His profile, presented in both Japanese and English, has gained over 5,290 followers worldwide. He claims to be the head of the "Koshiki tradition" and the founder of the International Shugendō Association (ISA). On his page, Shōdō regularly shares photos depicting rituals, lectures, and mountain ascents involving international participants. His posts often attract comments, including positive feedback, expressions of interest in participation, and expectations regarding various rituals, often accompanied by emojis symbol-

izing prayer gestures (*gasshō* 合掌). Additionally, he extends invitations to paid instructional training opportunities and shares his critical perspectives on various aspects of Shugendō practice, clarifying what he considers to be authentic within the tradition. These examples illustrate the diverse ways in which Shugendō is represented and engaged with online, ranging from scholarly discussions in international forums to the personal and authoritative voice of practitioners and leaders within the tradition.

In a recent post on Facebook, he shares information on an upcoming program called "Koshikidake Mountain Training 2025," including details on participation fees and other logistics while also reflecting on most recent Mountain Training events in one of his Facebook posts:

> This time, more than 40 participants gathered, with over half coming from overseas—a situation unprecedented in our history. We conducted various events, including mountain ascension, religious services, waterfall meditation, reciting the Heart Sutra a thousand times, ordination ceremony, fire ritual, and the Esoteric Initiation. Each event was meaningful and significant.
>
> Despite preparing since the end of last year, the smooth execution of the events was challenging, causing some frustration. However, by viewing these challenges as unique opportunities, I was able to maintain a calm mindset. Through this experience, I reaffirmed the importance of perceiving everything positively and never forgetting to express gratitude.
>
> I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all the participants and everyone who supported this event. I am also deeply grateful for the blessings of the deities and Buddhas. I intend to apply the experiences and insights gained from this training to future activities. (Facebook post published by Shodo Koshikidake on 30 May 2024)

Posts like these received a reaction of around 60 to 120 likes and 10 to 30 comments by Facebook users throughout 2024. Followers of Shōdō's page often share self-doubts concerning ritual practice or ask further questions regarding opportunities for participation. As mentioned above, some individuals or groups within Shugendō assert claims of authenticity and exclusivity within their respective traditions. Utilizing digital tools, these stakeholders project a sense of "sacred power" associated with Japan's mountains through digitally mediated Buddhist semantics, practices, and aesthetics. These stakeholders often express their views online while

simultaneously promoting paid training programs that promise self-optimization through participation.

Given the dynamic and abundant nature of accessible online materials from these online Shugendō groups, it becomes crucial to discern which individuals and groups are disseminating what types of content, rituals, ideas and practices. This observation helps distinguish between neutral information exchange, collective religious activities online, and the personal teachings published by individual actors within the community. Such distinctions could be important for understanding how Shugendō is represented and engaged with in the digital age, where various interpretations of authenticity and practices are showcased to global audiences interested in Japanese mountain asceticism.

As the tradition has undergone digitalization and mediatization, Shugendō has also undergone a process of heritagization. Shugendō was officially recognized as a form of Japanese "heritage" in 2020. This heritage status acknowledges narratives of Japanese culture and tradition according to regional historical significance or unique characteristics. The program, run by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, aims to encourage regional revitalization by preserving, utilizing, and strategically promoting cultural properties that embody these narratives. In 2020, Katsuragi Shugen in Wakayama Prefecture was designated as a Japan Mountain Heritage Site, one of ninety-one cultural properties included under this designation. The representation of Shugendō within the Japan Heritage campaign is overseen by the Katsuragi Shugen Japan Heritage Promotion Council Secretariat, part of Wakayama Prefecture's Tourism Promotion Division. This body develops informational materials and websites in both English and Japanese. Recent outcomes of this initiative include digital and printed pamphlets, maps, and content available on their official website. Additionally, the Katsuragi Shugen Department offers training for *yamabushi* who wish to serve as guides for tourist groups visiting the area. The campaign also successfully partnered with the hiking app YAMAP to digitally map popular pilgrimage routes and significant sites associated with Katsuragi Shugendō practice.

Governmental and private entities seek recognition from UNESCO and other bodies as a means to validate and promote specific historical narratives, thereby gaining national and international legitimacy (Rots 2019; Teeuwen 2020; Reader 2023). These efforts may lead to visible transformations in worship sites and ritual practices, potentially transitioning them from private to public properties that are simultaneously secular and sacred. Heritage-making processes could ultimately redefine these sites and practices as national, public, and secularly sacred entities. Therefore, it remains crucial to monitor future developments and transformations in the practice of Shugendō. These questions highlight the evolving nature of Shugendō and its adaptation within the broader context of cultural heritage and tourism promotion strategies.

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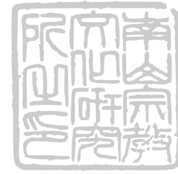
The Apophatic and the Political



James W. Heisig
Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture (emeritus)

The following are two short lectures delivered at a conference on "Nothing in Common: Apophatic Philosophy and Political Theology" held at Boston College in April 2024. The first addresses the general question of apophasis and the second is a response to the writings of Reiner Schürmann and John Caputo on anarchism and the dismantling of principles. As they were both addressed to an audience of theologians and philosophers, the arguments were drawn up in a terra nullius *where apophasis and the case against ethical universals seek a foothold in ordinary experience and the commonsense limits of critical reason.*

the apophasis of the everyday

I have long defended the mysticism of the everyday as a necessary condition for appreciating the higher reaches of mystical thought and experience. Rather than think of mysticism primarily as an exceptional temperament or influx of divine grace, closer attention to how it forms a continuum with ordinary thought and experience seemed the solider approach: to make the strangeness of mysticism more familiar and their familiarity with the everyday stranger. The same may be said of apophatic theology. For all its esoteric philosophical pedigree, at its core, apophasis is part and parcel of the most ordinary circumstances of human communication.

The exercise of apophasis in *negative theology* is usually set up as a systematic erasure of verbal expression, if not the whole of logic and grammar, with the aim of heightening the sense of divine mystery that language obscures. Varieties of this sort of rhetorical tool have stalked rational doctrine throughout religious and philosophical history, across cultures and intellectual traditions, with such regularity that it seems to be a universal condition for any system of thought to survive the shifts of time and the challenges of competing modes of thought. Language, after all, is more than a tool at our service. It makes demands of its own on us that

turn the master-servant relationship inside out. At bottom, apophasis is a rebellion against the chronic unsureness of language itself.

So, apart from the exercise of apophasis as a rational discipline, at some point we have to ask whether it might not just be a permanent feature of all human communication. If not, it remains a curiosity, a kind of mental museum designed to temper the tedium and excesses of doctrinal apologetics and tone down the general mood of confidence in which philosophers present their work. In other words, aside from the forms of apophasis deliberately cultivated to protect reason from its tendencies to arrogance, its roots may reach deeper, into the routine requirements of human language itself. Follow that thought for a moment with me, if you will, and I think you will find that evidence for the primal prestige of the everyday floods in almost effortlessly.

Obviously, reality does not coincide with our expressions of it. How often we are not dazzled by words in their purest and sublimest form that we need to be reminded of just how trapped and misshapen they are, like Michelangelo's unfinished *schiavi*. What we intend to communicate with our words and the gestures that punctuate them is always and forever more than we can tell. At the same time, the telling always communicates more than we intend. The way in which the telling resonates in the mind of the recipient never quite coincides with what we have in mind. Then, too, we may find ourselves the unwitting voice of ideas and sentiments not of our own doing, wisdom and stupidities alike—*ex ore infantium*.

For these simplest of reasons, even statements generated in a publicly verifiable community of knowledge are never more than a low common denominator, lower than the reality that is spoken of and less than the fullness of how our statements are received. The world itself and the minds that process it are both too full of mystery to cater to language, however we manipulate it. Not even the cold logic of basic arithmetic is exempt from this condition. In the bigger picture, literalism and objectivity are fictions. The truth of those fictions—that is, whether they are guiding or misguiding, convivial or discordant—is not a function of their independent distance from the tellers and the hearers but of their consequences for our relations with others and the wider natural world. But that is another discussion for another time.

For now, let us imagine communication as a continuum, at one extreme of which we have *speech*—articulate, made of pieces linked by the conventions of grammar and usage—and at the other end, *utterance*—inarticulate and unconventional. Opposite the pure *logos*, typified in the arithmetic formula, is pure *pathos* marked by the typesetter's exclamatory *pling*. As we move from one exchange of words to the next, we shift our balance on the spectrum. The crude order of everyday communication is always a mixture of the articulate and the inarticulate which can never be torn completely from that continuum.

The apophasis of the everyday, I would suggest, begins as the pull of *pathos* on *logos* across the continuum. The unwelcome silence of having words stuck in one's throat or feeling tongue-tied reminds us again and again, with a frequency all the more shameful for our refusal to stop and think about it, that we don't really know what we are talking about. The negation or verbal "shunting" of apophasis—the *apo*—is clearest when it works *transitively*, deliberately silencing what has already been spoken. Even so, most of the time our negations and denials do not rise above mere contradiction and do not lead us to question our very confidence to communicate. It is in its *intransitive* mode that apophasis takes us beyond the mere logistics of erasing one string of words with another. Here negation and silence take the form of an involuntary deprivation of speech that urges the mind towards what Dionysius called "the darkness beyond understanding." It is dark not because it is sinister but because it tears us away from the pull of *logos* and into the unknown and uncontrollable.

The thirteenth-century Zen master Dōgen exposes the logic of transitive apophasis when he states, "The mountain is not a mountain, therefore it is a mountain." The meaning is clear: what I call a "mountain" is not the actual mountain, which is what makes it a mountain and not what I have to say about it. But this is only a prelude to the intransitive state of appreciating the world, as he says, "without thinking." Here the distinction between the mountain and the one who perceives it is restored to a primordial unity in which mind becomes the mountain's way of thinking about itself and the mountain becomes the mind's way of disassociating the world from the data we gather from it.

Allowed to run its course, the transitive regulation of language through negation prevents the identification of the spoken with the world not to humiliate us but to restore the mystery of the world. The intransitive renunciation of speech enables us to revel in that incommunicable mystery. It is here that apophasis achieves what we may call enlightened awareness or revelation of the divine, away from the *logos* of the speakable and into the *pathos* of the unspeakable. Apophasis is not silence as an *askesis* of the self or an overwhelming of reason by sentiment, but rather the silence of a delicious *aesthesis* of the non-self in which the sensing, feeling, desiring, and thinking mind is reawakened by an elemental bond with the world tattered by too many words.

Compared to our daily struggles with expressing ourselves and the occasional insight into the limits of all human communication that these struggles open our eyes to, the unexpected and random interruptions of silence that overpower all of us from time to time seem incidental occurrence. These intransitive invasions of the apophatic may temporarily collapse communication into incommunicable *pathos*, but they are simply too fleeting and too muddled to take seriously. A child giggles, we breathe in the warmth and sweetness of the air after a thunderstorm,

something tastes odd, out of nowhere a melody makes us smile, we walk down the street and for the time it takes to bat an eye we know the happiness of everything being just as it should be and we ourselves being just where we should be. We take these little tears in our habitual patterns of perception for granted. We see something that isn't there, we hear something that has no voice, we sense the presence of something that is absent—and we let it pass. Our jaw drops and we pick it up again without even realizing that we have no way to communicate to anyone what has just happened. We take a step into that darkness beyond understanding and then retreat back to the light. The pause in the score that is meant to echo what went before and prepare for what comes after is squandered, swallowed up in the familiar rhythms of the workaday world.

Of course, all of us have also known more serious interruptions of the ordinary perception—flashes of wonder or awe or terror or ecstasy without any apparent source or explanation—that do not let us off so easily. At such times, we exorcise the feeling of discomfort by covering it with a plaster of abstractions to relieve the sting of their incommunicability, passing it off as fantasy or hallucination or the residue of some earlier event. But the opportunity is always there to hold on to that discomfort for as long as we can, until we can find a way to make room in mind for expressing the voice of the voiceless and the form of the formless. Unless we pay attention to these breaks in what we expect of the everyday, there is no superstition, and without superstition, no religion, no myth, no revelation, perhaps no real art.

Etymologically, *mysticism* suggests a seeing by "shutting out" what is seen. So, too, apophasis requires an *ob-audire* and an *ob-ligare*, an intensification of listening to and connecting to the world through the shutting out of language. The recovery of apophatic obedience and obligation towards the unexpected strangeness of the everyday loosens our hold on the reins on our lives and reconnects us, if only for a heartbeat, to the higher rhythms of the darkness out of which language was born and to which it must inevitably surrender.

All of this may seem to derail the term *apophasis* from its customary meaning, but keeping it on track is the whole point of insisting on its everydayness. My point is not to wrestle the term away from the rational discipline of a *theologia negativa* but to thaw the mystery of the divine with the warm breath of ordinary experience so that what has been frozen in the language of transcendence can flow freely again into our lives. At least that is what I understand to happen when the exercise of apophasis, transitive and intransitive, is allowed to run its course.

In the broader view, I have tried to make the rehearsal of ideas in everyday experience—the turning over of the soil of intellectual history to find its roots in the ordinary and the familiar—a general superintendent of my sanity these many years. Time and again, the effort to keep one foot planted in the world of my primary education in Europe and the Americas and the other in my secondary

education in Japan has made it hard to walk in any direction without falling on my face. Flight into the pure skies of philosophical speculation has often been the surer course, and one I have learned to navigate comfortably in my own way. Ironically enough, it has been the world of religion, with its rituals and stories, its teachings and superstitions, that has helped me see the everyday as the final frontier for making sense of life.

Religion, for me, has been a reminder that I know better than I let on. If I had to put in a few words what I expect from the varieties of religious tradition that I have crossed paths with, I would say I look for something to imitate rather than something to venerate. Once the temptation to analyze and compare the words of figures like Jesus and Gautama, the question that remains is this: "How can I find the place where they were standing when they said what they said, so that I might say the same thing?" Understanding by standing *under* the words instead of standing *over* them like a warrior with his foot on their neck or kneeling before them in silent adoration—this is the sort of rehearsal of religion in the familiar and everyday that has offered me an anecdote to the hazardous waste of religion's shadier history.

Religion has also given me a better appreciation of the rich tradition of arcane, esoteric, apocryphal, and heterodox ideas flowing beneath the surface of the catechesis that formed the bedrock of my religious and moral education. I was not at all surprised to discover that the strongest impressions which Western religious ideas and imagery left on the thinkers of the Kyoto School, on whom I cut my philosophical teeth in Japan, were not drawn from established doctrine but from what they met in the backwaters of Neoplatonism and mysticism, not to mention the heretical philosophies that flourished alongside Christianity, often fed by the same springs.

Finally, religion has given me a way to describe the struggle to overcome the human condition—not in the sense of transcending it, or elevating it to a higher plane through an economy of salvation, but by *transdescending* it, rising above it by burrowing into it. In the same way that scraping the words away apophatically can help uncover a mystery directly underfoot of our everyday lives, so, too, we honor the desire to have done with the trials and tragedies of our human condition not by gritting our teeth with forbearance or clinging to fantasies of a world beyond, but by finding for that desire a proper iconography to keep us from losing sight of the overriding mystery of it all—by seeing the nothingness writ small on the awakened mind as a reflection of a nothingness writ large on the pages of the universe.

I apologize for these rude generalizations, but I hope to have the chance to discuss some of this in more detail in our discussions today and tomorrow.

THE POLITICAL CAPTIVITY OF THEOLOGY

In keeping with the topic and primary sources of today's discussion, I would like to pull on a loose thread at the end of Reiner Schürmann's masterful analysis in *Heidegger on Being and Acting* of the rise and fall of epoch-defining principles to consider what it might mean for the relation of theology to politics. But in so short a time, and so little of his knowledge at my disposal, I cannot hope to reproduce the subtlety and careful weave of his argument. My presentation will be closer in style to John Caputo's *The Weakness of God* and *Against Ethics*. Let me explain.

Those of you who have read their respective writings on anarchy and principle will have noticed a marked difference in their approaches. Schürmann sets up a question and orients himself toward its analysis with an orderly, almost obsessive fixation. This does not make for easy reading. Again and again I had to back up and reread a paragraph to understand how it fits in with what went before and how it opens up to what comes next. It's a slow slog across a spongy marsh. You can only plant yourself one step after the next and keep your eyes ahead. And when you finally close the book and return home, you find that you are traipsing mud all over the carpet. I am sure this is just as he would have wanted it.

Caputo's way of dealing with principles and anarchy, in contrast, is more of a performance whose steps have been orchestrated in advance. His arguments are convincing not so much for the progression of their logic as for the flourish with which his initial ideas are repeated and paraphrased. One has the sense of watching an ice-skater circling around the rink, twisting and jumping and posturing for the spectators, scoring patterns in the ice that disappear as soon as they are skated over. The beginning and the end are not controlled by any recognizable working hypothesis but by the melodic movement of the background music. When you finally close his books on ethics and anarchy, you may find yourself without an actual argument in hand, but you cannot help feeling exhilarated over the range of authors and quotable quotes he was able to bring to the discussion.

My reflections here today on Schürmann's work will be rather more Caputesque in style, a laying out of conclusions without properly defending them but also, I am afraid to admit, without the flair and finesse of his assault on principles. My apologies to both authors and to their admirers.

Schürmann closes his restructuring of Heidegger's critique of principles and praise of anarchy not with a full stop but with an ellipsis. Let me explain. Insofar as each new historical age begins with a shift in guiding principles and solidifies with a closure of those principles into a metaphysical worldview, it entails a hobbling of truth, an obscuring of our experience of reality in favor of an agenda of problems identified for solution within the context of principles embedded in law, social institutions, language, religious doctrine, and the philosophical imagination. The

imposition of principles, he says, obstructs the unveiling of being to an open mind. (In his later massive work, *Broken Hegemonies*, he takes up three such epochal shifts of principle, or *fantasms* as he calls them.)

To engage with problems whose very statement is controlled by a predetermined view of the world is to forsake the possibilities of critique based on an open view of the world and human being. If the world is made up of objects reimagined as part of a network of instruments with a purpose, the world cannot disclose itself to us as it is. A critique of principles is only possible by tracing a path back to the generation of the controlling principles in search of what it is that gave them the control. It is, we might say, a way of popping out the lenses from glasses with which we see the world and examining the prescription of their grind, and then trying to look at the world without corrective lenses, to accustom ourselves to the dizziness we feel at the unknown, uncontrollable, inexhaustibly intelligible mystery of it all—that that is to say, to its primal anarchy. To do this, Heidegger (or more accurately, Schürmann's Heidegger) argues, is to turn away from the violence that economies—the immutable norms that govern the household—justify by appealing to the overarching, unquestioned principles of the age.

Anarchy is the restoration of the world to its aboriginal state of a flowing river into which one cannot step a second time. This is called the "presencing" of being, which requires that everything, every idea, ever norm that tends to place itself between us and the living reality of the world be let go of. In place of an overarching dome of eternal verities or a map on which we can pin any thing, any sentiment, any event as a destination for thought or action, the anarchic walk through life is a network of *Holzwege*, wooden paths that lead nowhere and end up in the untrodden. If reality is to open its mystery to us, we must first accept that it is contingency—all of it, start to finish.

It is in this praise of absolute detachment from principle that Schürmann sees Heidegger's thought landing us. But scattered references throughout his account to the writings of Hannah Arendt hint that this anarchic view is incomplete because it closes an eye to the fact that the everyday is broken, in pain, hungry, imprisoned, embattled, naked, and even the very least of those who suffer deserve more than an inspirational invitation to detach themselves from the principles that create and sustain their condition and its general anonymity to social conscience. The final *Gelassenheit* of "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do" must not be understood as a reason to prevent us from overturning the tables of the money lenders and driving them from the temple when the need arises. Enlightened equanimity without compassion, taste without distaste, resignation without disgust, only deepens the *avidyā*, the darkness of ignorance.

In other words, Schürmann shows us a philosopher whose concerted turn away from religion with its doctrinal and ethical principles ends up endorsing a

caricature of religion: a kind of mystical paralysis in which an enlightened, anarchic economy fits as well in a Walden Pond as in an *Animal House*. We need a better standard for goodness than a detached, disinterested philosophical critique of principles. If it is always *in loco* and *in tempore*, then goodness is a messier, closer-to-home experiment with truth in everyday life. Any philosophy that would prejudge my grandmother's piety, theologically naïve as it was, an inauthentic form of existence in a close metaphysical world is a philosophy I find it impossible to defend.

Arendt extends this skepticism to the political realm. She accepts Heidegger's critique of "political philosophy" as a form of submission to the rule of principle, but she also draws a line at how far this criticism can go in its deference to anarchy. In *The Promise of Politics* she draws attention to this ambiguity. On one hand, if politics is the relationship between the rulers and the ruled, then to be political requires defending the proximity of both sides to one another, keeping them in contact and mutual vigilance. The value of the individual here is defined in terms of this socially patterned freedom, subjecting it to epoch-specific principles of law and order with all their inherent biases. On the other, when politics involves global dominion (in the economic realm, for instance), then the gap between the ruler and the ruled is no longer primary, or even relevant. Human beings become agents of a system that cannot be overturned, only adjusted. The value of the individual is then defined primarily in terms of the benefits it gains from the ruling establishment. But if rulers hold in their hands devices capable of destroying or crippling not only the social order but the very life of the planet, we need to recover some measure of trust in our admittedly epoch-specific principles and close an eye to the political impotence and absolute skepticism regarding any and all control of the relationship between rulers and ruled. In such circumstances, she warns, total anarchical rejection of the political ends up in service to totalitarianism.

This same ambiguity—a philosophical distrust in principles shaken by a practical need for them—carries over into theology's engagement with the political realm. Theologians must be critical of identifying with and enforcing the universal principles of the age, for many of the same reasons that brought Schürmann and Heidegger to the posture of detachment from principles. At the same time, those very principles—limited, contingent, culturally conditioned, even imperialistic as they are—can voice a warning against counter principles of greed, injustice, and irreversible violence to the planet. The challenge for theology is to find a way to administer this ambiguity without surrendering to political captivity. Finding that balance is always a precarious adventure and always subject to the same doubt and uncertainty as all theology's claims. To phrase it in the context of yesterday's discussion, it must seek a way to communicate the presence of evil that does not

erase the need for apophasis and awareness of the provisional character of its own reasoning.

Put as simply as I can, the fundamental task of theology—or any form of faith aiming at reasonableness—is the refinement of superstition. By superstition, I mean over-belief, the stretching of words to speak the unspeakable rather than simply lay a hand over one's mouth in silence. When superstitions are confused with claims to certitude—and this is nowhere more evident than in the political realm—they become idolatrous. Refining their reasonableness is a way of acknowledging their inexhaustible intelligibility, not a way of dispensing with their conventionality and epoch-specific stuffings. To align theology with apparently universal, perennial principles and reinstate her as the queen of politics is to sanctify the biases of those who seek to coronate her. To detach her from all principle is to sanctify the biases of those who seek to condemn her to servitude.

Religious superstition, whether in the theory or practice of a particular tradition, is a form of iconography. By that I mean that it is a *sym-bolein* or binding of our experience of the limits of the human condition on the one hand and the presence of dark forces in ordinary experience on the other. The frustrations and tragedies of life are clear and distinct to reason: the interruptions of dark forces in everyday life, in contrast, are dark and impenetrable to reason. Together they shape religious consciousness. Insofar as the shaping collapses the two into a rational certitude whose goal is to harness the dark forces to vanquish the human condition, in this life or in the expectation of some future life, the icon is idolatrous. Only if the two are kept in tension can one hope to live life to its fullest: attached to the reality of an everyday mind unable to deliver itself from its limits but conscious of a higher rhythm that transcends it.

Gianni Vattimo has argued, more or less approvingly, that secularization has taken over the role of religion and replaced its dated symbols with more acceptable and up-to-date ideals. This may be so, but if the attachment to contemporary causes is as unrepentant as the attachment to traditional religious ideals, little is gained in the transition. Here again, engagement in the political relies on the same mode of thought and is subject to the same temptation as the religious imagination is. The political captivity of theology not only severs theological reflection from its foundations; it risks absorbing its role in social consciousness into the pursuit of more reasonable and practical solutions that lose sight of their limited, human-all-too-human resources. Absent obedience—or attentive awareness—to the impulse to superstition, political engagement hobbles theology.

As a refinement of superstition, then, theology is a shift from idolatry to iconography. Idolatry flourishes in uncompromising veneration of religious certitudes; iconography, in contrast, flourishes in imitation and appropriation. Veneration suspends critical reason; imitation tests its limits. In philosophies that

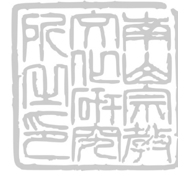
do not draw a clear line between philosophical and religious reflection, which is more often the case in the Japanese thinkers with whom I am most familiar, religious figures from the past like Hakuin and Dōgen are cited in the same breath as Aristotle and Hegel, Kant and Heidegger—not for the careful logic of their theories but for their down-to-earth, everyday descriptions of the experiences from which philosophy and religion begin and to which they must finally return. Neither mode of reflection is complete, however, until it has awakened to its own limits and the forces that assault it from without, until it recognizes the difference between clarity it can achieve through discipline and the clarity that forever eludes it.

The threshold of political engagement beyond which theology ceases to exercise its original vocation and indeed begins to work against it is, for each generation, a moveable frontier. So, too, is the threshold of religious reflection beyond which political thought loses touch with its basic impulse to a goodness beyond its control. To ignore these thresholds is to reject the insight into what anarchy *can* do to temper principled action and what it *cannot*. To accept it is to open both theology and political thought to mutual transformation.

The principles inscribed in law and logically strung out in a linear, syllogistic progression of ideas help us identify evils and to aim for a goodness defined as the overcoming of those evils, much like the doctor whose expertise allow for the diagnosis of illness but who is powerless to define health except as the absence of symptoms. Goodness and health cannot be accessed through principles. They are both by nature dyslexic, and it is this dyslexia that protects theology from political captivity.

This, in a word, is the *agora* or marketplace within which political theology must frame its categories—κατά-ἀγορά—and grind us lenses for discovering our nobler impulses and babbling about them as best we can.

Observations of Auspicious Signs in the Self-Ordination in the Precepts



Takamatsu Setsuko
Yagotosan Kōshōji Institute for Buddhist Culture

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Self-ordination (*jisei jukai*) is ordination according to the threefold pure precepts.[1] When no qualified monk is available to serve as master preceptor, one ordains oneself in front of an image of a buddha or bodhisattva, vowing to become a bodhisattva *bhikṣu*.

According to an account in the *Enryaku sōroku* (Monastic Records from the Enryaku Era), self-ordination was accepted in Japan before Ganjin established the formal method of ordination.[2] However, it was Saichō who first proposed such a practice in the *Sange gakushōshiki* (Regulations for Students of the Mountain School) and *Kenkairon* (Treatise Revealing the Precepts). Based on passages in the *Sūtra on Contemplation of the Practices of the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra*, Saichō outlined two methods for ordination: one through the "Mahāyāna precepts" and the other through the "Hīnayāna precepts." Citing the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net*, he held that, in the case of the Mahāyāna precepts, one could invoke five "invisible masters," such as Śākyamuni, the bodhisattvas Mañjuśrī and Maitreya, or all the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the ten directions. He further stipulated that when no "visible precept masters" were available, it would be possible to perform a self-ordination once one had repented and had received auspicious signs.[3]

1. "The threefold pure precepts" refers to three groups of precepts: the precepts of restraint (*shōritsu gikai*, the upholding of all precepts in such groups as the five lay precepts, the eight lay precepts, the ten precepts for novices, or the complete precepts), the precepts for the accumulation of wholesome qualities (*shōzenbōkai*) in which the practice of all wholesome qualities is taken as a precept, and the precepts for action on behalf of the welfare of beings (*shōjushōkai*).

2. Takeda Chōten, "Shūso to jisei jukai," *Tendai gakuhō* 22 (1980).

3. Takeda, "Shūso to jisei jukai," note 2; Takeda Chōten, "Jisei jukai no igi," in *Takeda Chōten sensei chosakushū*, ed. Jōfukyōkai, 1999.

During the precept revival movement of the Kamakura period, Kakujō and Eison conducted rites for the cultivation of auspicious signs based upon Saichō's interpretation of the *Zhancha jing* (Scripture of Divining the Requital of Good and Evil Actions) and the *Yogācārabhūmi-śāstra*.[4] They carried out self-ordinations that required the practitioner to receive "auspicious signs," that is, manifestations of the approval of the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Accordingly, Eison established a tradition for the ordination of monks in his own congregation, increased the numbers of subtemples where such practices were performed, and engaged in social welfare activities. In the early Edo period, there ensued an early modern precept revival movement led by Shingon Ritsu monks, such as the precept master Shunjō Myōnin, who adopted Eison's teachings. This movement even influenced other schools, such as Tendai and Pure Land.[5]

The early modern-era precept revival movement began when Myōnin and others ordained themselves at the Makino'osan Saimyōji Byōdō Shinnōin in Kyoto in 1602, becoming *bhikṣu*s who had accepted the comprehensive Mahāyāna precepts. According to Fujitani Atsuo, the early modern precept revival movement in the Shingon Ritsu lineage, which valued the precepts, was centered at the three training temples of Saimyōji, Jinpōji, and Yachūji and later influenced the Anraku Ritsu in Tendai, the Pure Land precepts, and the Sōzan Ritsu (Lotus precepts).[6] Monks representative of this movement are Myōnin of Shingon Ritsu, as well as Jinin Emyō and Jiun Onkō. And even within the Shingon lineage, such figures as Jōgon and Gakunyo engaged in a variety of activities.[7]

The practice of cultivating auspicious signs requires the practitioner to continually engage in this practice until one has sufficiently repented of past offensives and purified one's mind and body, which is confirmed by the manifestation of auspicious signs. The source of this practice is a passage from the twenty-third minor precept in the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net*:

> You should practice repentance in front of the buddha image for seven days, and once you have experienced auspicious signs, you will receive the precepts. If you are unable to obtain auspicious signs from the buddhas or bodhisattvas, then you should continue this practice for fourteen days, twenty-one days, or up to an entire year until you

4. Minowa Kenryō, *Chūsei shoki Nanto kairitsu fukkō no kenkyū* (Hōzōkan, 1999), part two, chapter three; Ōtani Yuka, "Nissō sō Shunjō to Nanto kairitsu fukkō undō," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 65, no. 2 (2017).

5. Fujitani Atsuo, "Kinsei shoki ni okeru kairitsu fukkō no ichi chōryū: Kenshun Ryōei o chūshin ni," *Shitennōji Kokusai Bukkyō Daigaku kiyō: Jinbun shakai gakubu* 37 (2003).

6. Fujitani, "Kinsei shoki ni okeru kairitsu fukkō no ichi chōryū"; Fujitani Atsuo, "*Sangoku bini den* ni miru kinsei Shingon Ritsu no tokuchō ni tsuite," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 54, no. 2 (2008).

7. Ueda Reijō, "Jōgon no jukai no shūhen," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 17, no. 1 (1968).

> obtain the signs. Once you have obtained auspicious signs, you may immediately receive the precepts before the image of the buddha or the bodhisattva. If you were unable to obtain signs but received the precepts before the image, then you have not [actually] obtained them.[8]

This practice is conducted six times a day, although there is also a "three-time" version. The "six-time" practice is conducted every four hours six times per day: at the time of the regular service (sunset), the first watch of the night, the middle watch of the night, the final watch of the night, sunrise, and noon. As a rule, it is an ascetic practice in which neither sleeps nor rests. The "three-time" version prescribes the same practices but only three times per day. This strict Buddhist practice is conducted with the goal of removing sin. In a state of having mental obstructions, karmic obstructions, or obstructions due to sin, one lacks the karmic capacity to view sacred beings, such as the buddhas and bodhisattvas. Thus, one must conduct repentance rites, *shōmyō* chanting, and prayer to remove such obstructions. As a result of eradicating sin and obtaining purification, it becomes possible to receive auspicious signs.[9]

Fujitani has explained the practice of self-ordination and the cultivation of auspicious signs at Yachūji, one of the three training temples for the precepts. According to Fujitani, monks at the time all conducted self-ordinations requiring the reception of auspicious signs.[10] Building on this research, this article analyzes as yet unexamined sources for the cultivation of auspicious signs, as well as the signs themselves. Moreover, this article touches upon the problem of why acknowledgement from sacred beings was valued and systematized in Shingon Ritsu ordinations in the early modern period, with reference to the influence of the Kamakura-period movement for the revival of the precepts and to Eison's actions. This article sets out the history of, and the reasons for, the necessity of direct acknowledgements from the buddhas and bodhisattvas and offers preliminary observations concerning their essential significance.

8. *Taishō daizōkyō*, vol. 24, p. 1006, 7c; Charles A. Muller and Kenneth K. Tanaka, trans., *The Brahmā's Net Sutra*, Taishō volume 24, number 1484 (BDK America, Inc., 2017), 57.

9. Arai Shinobu, "Hokekyō to kugyō to metsuzai," *Tōyō tetsugaku kenkyūjo kiyō* 24 (2008).

Auspicious signs also have a textual basis in a passage from the forty-first minor precept in the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net*: "An auspicious sign would be something like a buddha coming to touch one's head; seeing halos; seeking flowers; or other various types of wondrous signs. Once the sign is witnessed, the sin is erased" (*Taishō daizōkyō*, vol. 24, p. 1008, 17c; Muller and Tanaka, *The Brahmā's Net Sutra*, 69). Eison also regarded the exposition in a certain *Extended Sūtra* as a basis for this practice. See Matsuo Kenji, "Yume no ki no ichi sekai: Kōsō nikki to jisei jukai," in *Nihon chūsei no Zen to Ritsu* (Yoshikawa Kōbunkan, 2003); Minowa Kenryō, "Yume to kōso to zange," in *Nihon shoki Nanto kairitsu fukkō no kenkyū*; and "Jisei jukai ki," in *Saidaiji Eison denki shūsei* (Hōzōkan, 1977), 338.

10. Fujitani Atsuo, "Kinsei kairitsu fukkō to Yachūji rissōbō," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 59, no. 1 (2010); also notes 5 and 6.

The Cultivation of Auspicious Signs at Precept Temples

In this section, I examine the actual circumstances of the cultivation of auspicious signs in self-ordinations held at the Shingon Ritsu temples Yachūji, Jinpōji, and Saidaiji from the early modern period onward.

Yachūji

One of the three training temples for precepts, Yachūji in Kawachi is a Shingon Ritsu temple located in the municipality of Habikino, Osaka Prefecture. Thought to have been founded in the Nara period, it was revived by Jinin Emyō and became central to the early modern precept revival. The *Ichiha sōmyōroku* (A List of Monks of Our School) of 1846 enumerates the names of monks not only of Shingon Ritsu but also of other schools such as Tendai, Jōdo, and Nichiren.[11] It is clear that Yachūji opened its gates to monks of other schools in an effort to revive the precepts. Among the three training temples for precepts, it is the only one to preserve its monastic quarters as a place for practicing the precepts since the Edo period.

From Jinin's revival of Yachūji in the early modern period until the early decades of the Meiji era, *śramaṇa*s at the temple all conducted self-ordinations and cultivated auspicious signs to that end in order to become *bhikṣu*s. For instance, the *Chiji nichiyō* (Daily Tasks of the Steward), a manuscript copied by Tatsudō Daitoku in 1783, records the tasks of the monastic office of the steward at Yachūji and includes a passage laying out the procedures and method for self-ordination.[12] In it, the ordinand is recorded as "one [who performs] a separate practice." This "separate practice" signifies the cultivation of auspicious signs, and the ordinand is instructed to master this practice. Furthermore, a document titled *Jukai shōshō kaimon* (A Circular Notice of a Summons to Ordination), which was circulated by messenger to summons the monks of the Yachūji school living throughout the country to witness an ordination, includes this passage:

> A certain *śramaṇa* named X, having completed his separate practice, has obtained auspicious signs. Therefore, between X day and X day of X month, he will ascend the ordination platform and receive the precepts. If you eminent monks, without declining or begrudging the trouble, would certify [the ordination], then our rejoicing would be complete.[13]

11. "Yachūji shōzō seikyōrui," part 12, in Inagi Nobuko, et al., *Nihon ni okeru kairitsu denpa no kenkyū* (Gankōji Bunkazai Kenkyūjo, 2004).

12. "Yachūji shōzō seikyōrui," part 39.

13. See the copy of the original "Jukai shōshō kaijō" (Edo period) among the compilation of sources created when Master Noguchi accepted the precepts at Yachūji.

From this passage, we may infer that a prerequisite for ordination when a *śramaṇa* became a *bhikṣu* at Yachūji was the cultivation of auspicious signs and the confirmation of having received such signs.

The following are some partial excerpts concerning the cultivation of auspicious signs from the *Chiji nichiyō*: "Whichever buddha, bodhisattva, or *vidyārāja* is the main deity of practices preceding ordination, its image must be enshrined, but no other images of main deities may be enshrined [alongside it].… He who conducts the separate practice must not attend the *upoṣadha* (fortnightly retreat)." Again,

> Only the following objects may be allowed into the monastic quarters in preparation for embarking on the practice: an image of the main deity; a pair of lamps; an incense clock; a single vase for flowers; one rope chair; a futon; an inkstone; paper and writing implements, etc. Floor cushions may not be placed before the main image. At the "six times" of day and night (sunset, the first watch of the night, the middle watch of the night, the final watch of the night, sunrise, and noon), the ordinand must perform the five types of repentance[14] and chant sutras and *dhāraṇī*s. In the intervals, he must [continue to] recite without interruption. As he likes, he may also practice worship or walking meditation. He must perform the repentances of the "six times" and copy them out along with the text of his repentance at the time of his ordination. That will be extremely useful when he memorizes the ecclesiastical proceeding before his ordination.

In this way, a *śramaṇa* who desired self-ordination would choose just one main deity and enshrine it in the monastic quarters; he would shut himself up alone, conducting either the five types of repentance or other repentance rituals before the main image at the prescribed six times per day. At other times, he would conduct recitation, worship, or walking meditation as he saw fit. This was an ascetic practice in which even during the intervals between repentance practices of the "six times" the ordinand constantly recited the mantra of the main deity, was only allowed to sleep upright in a rope chair, and continued practice indefinitely until he received auspicious signs.[15]

A version of such practices persists today at Yachūji, as is evidenced by the experiences of the current abbot, Noguchi Shinkai. According to Master Noguchi, the practice begins with a formal statement of intention. Then, the practitioner

14. The five types of repentance were originally established by Zhiyi as a Tendai practice of calming and contemplation.

15. Fujitani Atsuo, "Kinsei kairitsu fukkō to Yachūji rissōbō."

worships the three thousand buddhas and, during the six daily intervals of practice, the one hundred buddhas, hence six hundred buddhas per day. These practices occur over a period of five days. In the case of Yachūji, the worship of the three thousand buddhas takes place over a five-day period. During the day (at sunrise, noon, and sunset), the practitioner performs the five types of repentance, seven repetitions of the [*Foding*] *zunsheng tuoluoni* (Incantation of the Glorious Crown of the Buddha), recitation of the *Yuga kaihon* (Code of the Treatise on the Stages of Yogic Practice; one complete reading across the five days), reading of a repentance text, and five hundred to one thousand repetitions of an incantation associated with the main image. At night (the first watch, the middle watch, and the final watch), the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net* is read instead of the *Yuga kaihon* once over the five-day period. Between the six intervals of practice, the practitioner is instructed to "intone the *dhāraṇī* of the main image nonstop."[16]

In addition to these practices, the practice of burning incense on one's arm, in which a bundle of stick incense is placed on the arm of the practitioner and burned, also took place at Yachūji as an "offering of the body." As a sign of his determination as temple abbot, Master Noguchi also engaged in this practice. The textual bases for the practice of burning incense on one's arm are the "The Former Affairs of the Bodhisattva Medicine King" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* and the sixteenth minor precept of the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net*.[17] The biography of Kaizan Eken, the third-generation abbot of Yachūji,[18] gives an account of the abbot burning incense on his arm and copying sutra texts in his own blood multiple times as a component of his Pure Land faith. Because the practice of burning incense on the arm has been passed down as an oral transmission, it is unclear when this practice is suppose to take place. However, at Yachūji it is treated as part of the cultivation of auspicious signs. Until the mid-1890s, small, lozenge-shaped scars would have been visible on the arms of the *bhikṣus* who practiced self-ordination at Yachūji.

Jinpōji

Jinpōji, the second of the "three temples for training in the precepts," was founded by Gyōki in 708 as part of the shrine-temple complex at Ōtori Shrine located in the province of Izumi. It later burned down, but around 1672 it was restored by Shinsei Ennin and Kaien Ekū as monastic quarters open to monks from various schools.

16. This information is based on sources compiled in 2000 when Master Noguchi received the precepts. With regard to the formal statement of intention, his statement was in line with the main image that he himself had chosen (an image of Aizen Myōō). He practiced the cultivation of auspicious signs for the set period of one hundred days. Interview with Master Noguchi, 16 May 2019.

17. *Taishō daizōkyō*, vol. 43, p. 843, 23b; vol. 24, p. 1006, 18a.

18. *Tōhōzan An'yōji chūkōso Kaizan Eken wajō den* was written in 1704 by Tandō Eshuku. This text is from a collection housed at Tōhōzan An'yōji.

When the temple was destroyed in 1868 as a consequence of the campaign to abolish Buddhism and destroy Śākyamuni (*haibutsu kishaku*), many of its images, books, and documents were relocated to Kōmyōin, a subtemple at the time.[19] One of these sources, the *Jinpōjiha jisei jubosatsukai sahō* (Ritual Procedures for Self-Ordination in the Bodhisattva Precepts in the School of the Jinpōji; 1709) states:

> The chamber for the god is to be adorned; one is to pray only for auspicious signs, and every night there must be three thousand prostrations before the image of Acalanātha. With every bow, offer one flower and one pinch of incense and unceasingly repent of your misdeeds. Also, recite the *vinaya* or the sutras, and intone the mantra for Acalanātha. As you might save yourself when your hair is on fire, repent of all your sins without holding back and seek signs with your utmost sincerity. Then you will receive a numinous omen.[20]

That is to say, monks at Jinpōji practiced the cultivation of auspicious signs centered on Acalanātha as the main deity by repenting with full-body prostrations three thousand times each night. Upon receiving auspicious signs, they conducted self-ordinations.

Additionally, in the Tendai school from the early modern period to today, as a prerequisite for the twelve-year practice of seclusion at the mausoleum of Saichō, monks recite the names of the three thousand buddhas in the *Sūtra of the Names of the Buddhas* and perform full-body prostrations three thousand times each day until they receive auspicious signs. The worship of the three thousand buddhas has been conducted since the early Heian period at the Assembly of the Names of the Buddhas (Butsumyōe). However, the revival of this rite, which had gradually become abbreviated and conducted as a *shōmyō* dharma assembly, was an aspiration of Eison, who cultivated repentance rituals to eliminate karmic obstructions.[21]

Saidaiji

Saidaiji was founded in the Nara period, but fell into decline in the Heian period until it was revived by Eison. In 1236, Eison conducted rites for the cultivation of auspicious signs at Saidaiji along with Kakujō and others. After receiving signs, they conducted self-ordinations and became *bhikṣu*s. Then, they developed a precept revival movement based at Saidaiji.[22] In this section, I evaluate historical

19. Fujitani, "Jinpōji (Kōmyōin) no rekishi."

20. Thanks to Prof. Fujitani, I was able to photograph a manuscript of this text among the documents at Kōmyōin.

21. Takahashi Shūei, "Kamakura jidai no Butsumyōe," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 53, no. 1 (2004).

22. I surveyed archival sources at Saidaiji as well as consulting Inagi Nobuko, et al., *Narashi, Saidaiji shōzō tenseki monjo no chōsa kenkyū* (Gangōji Bunkazai Kenkyūjo, 1993).

sources concerning the practice of cultivating auspicious signs, housed at Saidaiji since the early modern period.

In the section entitled "Practices at Fixed Times" in the *Kōsō rokuji gongyō hōsoku* (Regulations for Perpetual Service for the Cultivation of Auspicious Signs) of 1845, the practices at Saidaiji are described as follows:

> Texts for worship: *Dhāraṇī of the Thousand-Armed* [*Avalokiteśvara*] (five repetitions), *Dhāraṇī of the Sūtra for Humane Kings* (three repetitions), *Great Dhāraṇī of Amitābha* (seven repetitions), *Dhāraṇī of Acalanātha for Salvation through Compassion* (twenty-one repetitions), *Dhāraṇī of Rāgarāja* (seven repetitions), *Mantra of Clear Light* (seven repetitions), and *Thirty Verses on Consciousness-Only*.[23]

Practices outside of the fixed time periods differ in content, but also center on *dhāraṇī*s and include chanting of "The Life-span of the Thus Come One" chapter of the *Lotus Sūtra* (or the verse section of that chapter).

In the section "Morning Practice" in the *Jukai kōsō zengyō hōsoku* (Regulations for Practice of Cultivating Auspicious Signs Before Receiving the Precepts) of 1909, practices are prescribed as follows:

> Texts for worship: *Abbreviated Sūtra on the Precepts of the Seven Buddhas*, [*Foding*] *zunsheng tuoluoni* (seven repetitions), *Heart Sūtra* (three fascicles), *Middle-Length Incantation to Acalanātha* (twenty-one repetitions), *Dhāraṇī of Rāgarāja* (twenty-one repetitions), *Mantra of Clear Light* (twenty-one repetitions), *Thirty Verses on Consciousness-Only*, the twelve verses of praise for Śākyamuni, and one hundred prostrations. Then exit the hall.[24]

The "twelve verses of praise for Śākyamuni" are, in total, sixty lines of adoration for Śākyamuni, beginning with "The true golden form of the Tathāgata Śākyamuni / His marks and dignity without parallel / His wisdom and compassion clear and bright as the ocean / His merit as vast as space," etc. The practitioner voices these verses, bowing once every five verses. Other than practices conducted in the morning, the content of these practices differs and includes an extraordinarily large number of practices. Of the two documents quoted above, most of these are

23. Document 55-14 in the sutra repository at Saidaiji written in the hand of its author, Kankō, on the fifteenth day of the tenth month of the second year of the Kōka era (14 November 1845). The document measures 16.3 cm high, 5.6 cm wide; the entire page being 25 cm high, 47.2 cm wide, and folded into eight panels.

24. Document 55-13 written in the hand of its author, "Ryūkei, a *śramaṇa* of the Saidaiji," in the tenth month of a *tsuchi no to tori* year during the Meiji era (1909); 24 cm high, 16.5 cm wide; 19 folded leaves.

described in the text composed in the late Meiji era, suggesting that practice of cultivating auspicious signs became more difficult over time.

I would also like to touch on the topic of drawing lots known as *saguri*. According to Ueda Reijō, "In the old days [at Saidaiji], even if someone had received auspicious signs, we would still decide whether or not to receive the precepts by drawing lots."[25] A relevant passage is found in chapter thirty-five of the *Chōmonshū* (Collection [of Teachings and Admonitions] Which We Heard [from the Bodhisattva Who Made Orthodoxy Flourish]), which is a record of Eison's teachings:

> When you draw lots for an auspicious sign, by no means should you worry about your worship. Only have aspiration for buddhahood…. By all means, you must rouse up the aspiration for *bodhi* and work to attain the precepts. If you do not rouse up such aspiration, then you will not be approved, and you may not receive the precepts.[26]

Chapter twenty-four also quotes Eison:

> If you draw lots with nothing hidden, then you will be approved. But if you do not give rise to the aspiration to benefit sentient beings, then no matter how many times you draw lots, you will not be approved.

In all, topics related to "lots" are recorded in six sections of the work. Previous scholarship by Oishio Chihiro has shown that the drawing of lots was a common way for deciding matters at Saidaiji, which played an important role in sustaining the group.[27] The passages quoted above clarify that the drawing of lots also served the purpose of confirming that the buddhas had granted permission to receive the precepts after the attainment of auspicious signs.

Examination of historical sources demonstrates that, at Shingon Ritsu monasteries during the precept revival movement of the early modern period, the practice of cultivating auspicious signs was essential to obtaining precepts, although the content of such practice differed by institution. Furthermore, although the worship of the three thousand buddhas was sometimes distributed across several days, it was common to all temples. There were also temples in which practices included the offering of the body, the burning of incense upon the arm, and the drawing of lots to confirm the acceptance of the precepts. In addition, previous research has shown that, apart from these three temples for precept training, it was standard

25. Ueda Reijō, "Jukai satsuyō: Hoi" (2004). This text is a pamphlet by Saeki Shungen with explanations from Ueda Reijō.

26. Kōshō Bosatsu Gokyōkai Chōmonshū Kenkyūkai, ed., "Kōshō Bosatsu gokyōkai chōmonshū yakuchū kenkyū," in *Nihon Bukkyō sōgō kenkyū* 2 (2004), 97–152.

27. Oishio Chihiro, "Eison ni yoru kuji to kyōdan kiritsu," in *Chūsei no Nanto Bukkyō* (1996), 214–215.

for monks of the Ritsu tradition to obtain auspicious signs before receiving the precepts and officially becoming *bhikṣu*s.[28]

Auspicious Signs at Precept Temples

This section examines records of auspicious signs at Yachūji, Saidaiji, Shōmyōji, and Enmeiji.

Yachūji

In practices he undertook before his self-ordination, Jinin Emyō, the reviver of Yachūji, received auspicious signs allowing him to proceed with self-ordination. Jinin received the full precepts at Saidaiji, but the signs he experienced were kept secret. The existence of a record of such signs was first discovered by Kaizan and his disciples after Jinin's death. This record, the *Jukai kōsō* (Auspicious Signs on the Acceptance of the Precepts) of 1641, has been preserved at Yachūji as a temple treasure. The manuscript reads as follows:

> Auspicious Signs on the Acceptance of the Precepts Ikkū
>
> Sign in a dream. Item: In my dream during the night of the twenty-seventh day of the first month, to the left and right of the main image of Acalanātha there appeared golden reliquary stupas, each over two *shaku* (feet) in height.
>
> Same. Item: In a dream one night, the flames of the main image of Acalanātha were alight [illegible]
>
> Manifest sign. Item: At dawn on the eighth day of the second month, bells pealed in the sky before me. Immediately as I looked, the place of practice was unobstructed and it was as light as if it were noon. About one *jō* (about ten feet) above the ground was a treasure stupa in the midst of smoke, from which white smoke was furiously arising, and it remained for a little while.
>
> Sign in a dream. Item: In a dream during the night of the nineteenth of the same, a peacock came flying from the west and landed on the roof of the place of practice.
>
> Same. Item: In a dream during the night of the twentieth, I looked at the sky and saw through all eighteen heavens in the realm of form.
>
> Manifest sign. Item: On the morning of same, there manifested in the sky a bell which rang with a deep sound. At once, I perceived all sounds in the dharma realm. Also, there appeared in the place

28. Fujitani Atsuo, "Jōgon Risshi no kairitsukan ni tsuite," *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku kenkyū* 65, no. 1 (2016).

> of practice a single persimmon. Its leaves were yellow. Also, a cool breeze blew from the east. Fronds of dwarf bamboo swayed to the west. When the cool breeze touched my body, [the sensation] was utterly beyond description with language.
>
> Sign in a dream. Item: In a dream during the night of the twenty-fifth of same, moon disks were ranged brightly in the sky. Further, a single great ship passed away to the west in the sky above the River Kura, trailing five-colored adornments. In the preceding, I have written [only] a little, and I have left out the rest.[29]

"Ikkū" is a name for Jinin Emyō. According to the record, in his dreams he saw a peacock, radiance, the eighteen heavens of the realm of desire, moon discs, and a great ship of five colors. As for manifest signs, there were the sound of a bell expressing all sounds in the dharma realm, the appearance of a hedge of dwarf bamboo, and a cool breeze blowing over him (sensations of vision, hearing, and touch). Also, he saw a golden stupa for relics as a sign in a dream and a treasure stupa as a manifest sign.

Similarly, the auspicious signs that Master Noguchi Shinkai, the current abbot of Yachūji, received in April 2000 included the appearance of a comet. Also, his deceased master appeared in a dream, speaking with him and performing a service and a dharma assembly.[30] These auspicious signs are similar to those described in the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net*.

Saidaiji

The historical sources related to auspicious signs at Saidaiji are not open to the public. Therefore, as a reference to such signs, we must rely on Eison's *Jisei jukaiki* (Record of Self-Ordination) for an account of auspicious signs that he received on the twenty-seventh day of the eighth month of the second year of the Katei reign period (1236). The text notes:

> When [Eison] was staring into the eyes of [an image of] the Buddha Mahāvairocana and praying earnestly, the eyes of the Buddha Mahāvairocana opened, and then two paper flowers came fluttering down. When he looked up, surprised, there was a third [manifest sign].
>
> In a dream [Eison] had while napping past midnight at the Kaizen'in, Eison's father offered him a young noblewoman and told him to take her as his wife for the rest of his life. When he awoke,

29. Ikkū (Jinin Emyō), *Jukai kōsō*, in document 2-6-1 among the sacred teachings held at Yachūji; 29.5 cm high; 42.7 cm wide, 1 leaf.

30. Interview with Master Noguchi Shinkai and transcribed by the author.

> he grieved that he had been unable to receive an auspicious sign, but instead had a nightmare in which he was married to a woman. However, as he prayed before buddha images, he came to believe that the dream expressed that liberation through acquiring the precepts and practicing them was the truth, that he would acquire the precepts, and that fortune would result [as sign in a dream].
>
> While [Eison] was praying without sleep, there appeared before the Great Ajari (Seikei), his former master at Ryōzan'in of Chōkokuji, the dual-realm mandalas inscribed with root Siddham syllabus (on paper, two *shaku* in width), and this was his receipt of auspicious signs. Before long, he had a dream in which he unrolled and viewed a mandala of the vajra realm (manifest sign, and sign in a dream).[31]

It is evident from such records that the cultivation of auspicious signs was conducted at Saidaiji from the early modern period onward and even after the Meiji Restoration. According to extant diagrams and the explanations, the paper on which the signs were written would be folded in two. Then, this paper would be wrapped in a larger piece of paper. On top of that, a paper string would be tied in a cross-shape, and it would be sealed with a paper band labeled "auspicious signs." On the cover of the envelope would be written the name of the person who had received the signs.

A Saidaiji document titled *Kōsō aru no koto* (Concerning the Existence of Auspicious Signs) from the late Edo period explains what one should expect when receiving auspicious signs. The text includes an admonitory note, stating, "having arrogance about auspicious signs that you have received will be a hindrance to your practice." To summarize the content:

> Even if you were to see an auspicious sign in which the main object of worship appears, you must not give rise to the arrogant notion "I have accomplished the buddhadharma." In olden times, Māra manifested as an Amitābha triad, but because he was seen by someone who always had great faith, he vanished, and in the end, a true triad came to welcome the dying individual. On the other hand, for someone who is arrogant, even the true object of worship will appear as Māra. The buddhas merely respond to karmic dispositions. Auspicious signs do not really exist, but merely depend on their own transient conditions. Just because you have seen a buddha, you must not believe that you have accomplished all merits. Through some minor causes and conditions, you have been able to sense a buddha, so if you continue

31. Nara Kokuritsu Bunkazai Kenkyūjo, ed., *Saidaiji Eison denki shūsei* (1977).

> to strive you will eventually reach the seventh *bhumi*. Receiving auspicious signs ought to produce profound faith.[32]

This passage expresses the basic Buddhist philosophical concept that all things are empty, and objects and consciousness arise through causes and conditions. Also, the existence of this source informs us that there was a tendency among monks who had received auspicious signs to boast of them and to be lax in their practice. The receipt of auspicious signs, that is, the manifestation of a buddha or bodhisattva or having a dream of being granted sacred objects, could change depending on that individual's daily practice and mental state; the signs could either help to advance one's practice or corrupt the practitioner due to arrogance.

In the early Kamakura period, Myōe, who was a role model for Eison, recorded auspicious signs that he received both in his dreams and manifestly throughout his life. Myōe was a rare monk who understood the true purport being communicated by auspicious signs and who responded to real situations with earnestness.[33] The monks of the early modern Shingon Ritsu conducted the cultivation of auspicious signs as part of a rigorous initiation, received those signs as evidence that they had been permitted to become bodhisattva monks by sacred beings (buddhas and bodhisattvas), and they took it as a primary goal that they were to continue their striving on that basis. However, these sources also show that it was difficult for monks to continue to discipline themselves after having received auspicious signs.

Shōmyōji

This section examines fourteenth-century documents on auspicious signs that have been transmitted at Shōmyōji, a center for the precept revival movement in the Kanto region. Shōmyōji was the mortuary temple for the Kanazawa Hōjō clan and was patronized by the Kamakura shogunate as a seminary for the study of multiple Buddhist lineages, beginning with the Saidaiji lineage.[34]

In one of these documents, the *Jōchi jukai kōsōki* (Record of Auspicious Signs on the Acceptance of the Precepts by Jōchi) dated to 1341, we find the following passage:

> At just the hour of the hare (6–8 AM) on the third day of the twelfth month of the fourth year of the Ryakuō era (1341), he completed receiving the precepts at Gokurakuji.... The man of virtue lamented that his acceptance of the precepts had occurred without any won-

32. Saidaiji sutra repository, document 58-83-8.

33. Kōshō Bosatsu Gokyōkai Chōmonshū Kenkyūkai, ed., "Kōshō Bosatsu gokyōkai chōmonshū yakuchū kenkyū," 78. Eison deeply sympathized with Myōe's faith in Śākyamuni.

34. Such documents are housed at the Shinagawa Prefectural Kanazawa Bunko. Matsuo Kenji, "Yume no ki no ichi sekai: Kōsō nikki to jisei jukai."

> ders, so he asked [Jōchi] if he would accept any mementoes or *śarīra*. Jōchi was overjoyed, and when he said that he would accept them, he granted him a white *śarīra*, its shape like a chestnut, a single grain in appearance. Overjoyed, he went from Gokurakuji to Kanazawa, and when he showed what he had received to the congregation of monks there, as this *śarīra* had increased from its original number of (original text illegible), they looked upon it, rejoicing.[35]

This account is a record of a dream in which, having been permitted to receive the precepts, Jōchi obtained a grain of *śarīra*. When he returned from Gokurakuji to Shōmyōji, a miracle occurred in which that *śarīra* divided many times over. Furthermore, in another record, the *Tansen kōsōki* (Record of Auspicious Signs of Tansen), there is a similar account of auspicious signs:

> In a dream during the night of the twelfth day of the third month, I saw *śarīra* of the Buddha on the table before the main image, appearing like human skin. I took five grains in my hand, sorted them, and when I thought that I would protect them, I awoke from the dream.

Dreams of receiving relics, regarded as expressing the all-powerful functions of Śākyamuni and of the buddhadharma, were thought to express approval from the gods and buddhas for the receipt of the precepts. Four other records from the fourteenth through fifteenth centuries are of dreams in which a sacred being grants something precious or some food: the *Sokunyobō shamikai kōsōki* (Record of the Auspicious Signs of the Śramaṇa Precepts of Sokunyobō; dated to 1315), the *Ryōhonbō shamikai kōsōki* (Record of the Auspicious Signs of the Śramaṇa Precepts of Ryōhonbō; 1319), the *Sen'i shaminikai kōsōki* (Record of the Auspicious Signs of the Śrāmaṇerī Precepts of Sen'i; 1329), and the *Sennyobō jusha kōsōki* (Record of the Auspicious Signs of Sennyobō; 1432).[36]

The preceding records of auspicious signs were significant for rituals regarding precepts for monks and nuns at Gokurakuji in Kamakura, which was a branch temple of the Saidaiji. Matsuo Kenji has analyzed these records of auspicious signs as objects written on folded paper in place of memory or the spoken word, which were supposed to be destroyed after reporting to one's master. Thus, these extant records are but stray remainders of oral reports of auspicious signs that happened to be written down and forgotten.[37] Compared with the few examples of written accounts of auspicious signs at Saidaiji and other temples, these differ in that they

35. Kanazawa Bunko, document no. 6196. Folded leaf.

36. These documents are housed at Kanazawa Bunko and are numbered 6192, 6193, 6194, and 6195, respectively.

37. Matsuo Kenji, "Yume no ki no ichi sekai: Kōsō nikki to jisei jukai."

were written on the back of folded paper. This fact suggests that they were personal memos that just happened to survived by chance.

This process of receiving the precepts was undertaken by all monastics at Shōmyōji who became *śrāmaṇera*s. In the religious community surrounding Eison, the practice of cultivating auspicious signs may well have been a frequent occurrence in order to receive proof that one had the karmic capacity to uphold the precepts. There is also the possibility that this system of obtaining auspicious signs, which was common to the early modern precept revival, was already common practice at the temple.

Enmeiji

Enmeiji in Kawachi is a Ritsu temple of the Shingon esoteric tradition founded by Jōgon. Jōgon was a critic of the disorder in monastic decorum in his day and promoted strict adherence to the precepts. An account recorded in the Meiji-era *Kōsō no ki* (Record of Auspicious Signs), which survives at Enmeiji, includes the following statements:

> In a dream, I saw that I was seated atop a lotus blossom, having acquired all the virtues inwardly and adored by all sentient beings outwardly.
>
> In a dream, when I had hung a sacred image of the founding patriarch, our Great Master [Kūkai], and was practicing the rites that precede a precept ordination, all at once thunder rumbled, I saw Vaiśravaṇa appear above the sacred image, and I awoke.[38]

The cultivation of auspicious signs in the Shingon Ritsu movement were considered direct acknowledgements by the buddhas of the acceptance of the precepts, and their content differed by institution and individual, but it aligned with the exposition concerning the forty-first minor precept in the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net*. While signs in dreams are predominant, there are also manifest signs. These sources communicate the actual character of auspicious signs, which could be obtained as confirmation from the buddhas only as the result of purification of mind and body through the conduct of repentance practice. Furthermore, the masters who supervised self-ordinations would determine whether something was a genuine auspicious sign or not. This role was fulfilled by *bhikṣu*s who had previously obtained auspicious signs themselves.

38. Quoted in Matsuo Kenji, "Yume no ki no ichi sekai: Kōsō nikki to jisei jukai."

The Necessity of Auspicious Signs in Precept Revival Movements

The fact that multiple Shōmyōji records from the fourteenth through fifteenth centuries provide detailed accounts of attaining auspicious signs as a prerequisite for taking the precepts suggests that a similar system of ordination existed at Gokurakuji. Might this have also been the case for Eison's religious community at Saidaiji and elsewhere during that time? To answer this question, it is first necessary to consider the means by which the precepts were received.

Fujitani explains that in Nara it was mandatory that after one received the threefold pure precepts through a comprehensive ordination (*tsūju*), one would additionally receive all two hundred fifty *bhikṣu* precepts through a separate ordination (*betsuju*). However, in the Kamakura period, after Kakujō and Eison instigated a revival of precepts, the method of accepting the precepts and becoming a *bhikṣu* through comprehensive self-ordination took on an increased significance.[39] Specifically, during the precept revival movement of the Kamakura period, Kakujō, Eison, and others held that it would only be possible to become a bodhisattva *bhikṣu* through the comprehensive ordination into the bodhisattva precepts, which are in accordance with the complete monastic precepts outlined in the four-part *vinaya* as the "restraining precepts."

They conducted complete self-ordinations (*jisei tsūju*) and called themselves bodhisattva *bhikṣu*s. However, the method by which they attempted to become *bhikṣu*s—through self-ordination—was conducted as an expedient to acquire the status of *bhikṣu*. For this reason, Eison's tradition did not necessarily mandate that all monks conduct self-ordination or obtain auspicious signs. Indeed, Eison told his disciples, "When you have no regard for your position, simply discard your life and limb, and have accepted the precepts for the sake of sentient beings, then you will have not the slightest doubt that you have received them.... That being so, all those who have not yet accepted them will truly wish to accomplish this method." Saying this, he seems also to have recommended self-ordination to a relatively strong degree.[40]

Concerning the superiority of comprehensive versus separate ordinations, Minowa Kenryō has argued that in Eison's community priority was placed upon the comprehensive ordination. As the comprehensive precepts came to be regarded as a distinct way of accepting the precepts, with efficacy across multiple lifetimes, the significance of the traditional separate ordination, which had efficacy only for one lifetime, substantially diminished. Minowa notes that, nine years after their self-ordinations, Eison and Kakujō accepted the precepts through separate

39. Fujitani, "Sangoku bini den ni miru kinsei Shingon Ritsu no tokuchō ni tsuite."

40. Kōshō Bosatsu Gokyōkai Chōmonshū Kenkyūkai, ed., "Kōshō Bosatsu gokyōkai chōmonshū yakuchū kenkyū," 42.

ordinations, with the implication of "reconciliation with the traditional mechanism for ordination in the southern capital." Minowa also analyzes the record of Eison's transmission of precepts in the first fascicle of the *Gyōjitsu nenpu furoku* (Appendix to the Veritable Chronology of the Deeds [of Eison]) and points out that separate ordinations, in the style of three masters and seven witnesses, were conducted for ordinations of monks and nuns, but that comprehensive ordinations were more common.[41]

At its start, the precept revival movement was a community of renunciants (*tonseisō*). It produced its own unique system for accepting the precepts, and it retained the system of accepting ordination from others. However, the earliest historical record of auspicious signs at Shōmyōji is from 1315, twenty-five years after Eison's death. Thus, we can infer that soon after the death of Eison self-ordination by means of separate ordination, which required the attainment of auspicious signs, was practiced at Gokurakuji. Minowa refers to sources showing that each of the seven divisions of Eison's congregation received its own precepts and that a single monk might accept the precepts any number of times through multiple types of ordination, such as the receipt of the ten precepts for novices, the bodhisattva precepts via comprehensive ordination, the complete monastic precepts via comprehensive ordination, or the complete monastic precepts via separate ordination.[42] Taking this into consideration together with the preceding records attributed to Eison, it is possible to conclude that comprehensive ordinations—administered by a quorum of qualified *bhikṣu*s as well as through self-ordination—were taking place during Eison's lifetime. Within Eison's congregation, there may have been a shift in the method of receiving the precepts.

Due to the circumstances of the Warring States period, there were no longer any precept-abiding monks. However, the formality of ordination ceremonies continued and was maintained at Saidaiji. Once the political situation in Japan became stable in the Edo period, there emerged a movement to revive the precepts. At the start of the precept revival movement in Shingon Ritsu during the early modern period, Myōnin and others conducted complete self-ordinations as comprehensive ordinations in the threefold pure precepts, relying upon the methods of Eison and others of the Kamakura period.[43] After that, many *bhikṣu*s were ordained through self-ordination at the three training temples for the precepts, which had been

41. Minowa Kenryō, *Chūsei shoki Nanto kairitsu fukkō no kenkyū*, chapter 9, section 4: "Tsūju to betsuju no kankei."

42. Minowa Kenryō, *Chūsei shoki Nanto kairitsu fukkō no kenkyū*, chapter 9, section 4: "Tsūju to betsuju no kankei.

43. Myōnin went to Tsushima in 1606 to plan a voyage in search of a formal separate ordination requiring three masters and seven witnesses. Hearing that even in Ming China Buddhism was in decline, he decided not to make the voyage. He later died of illness 1610 while still in Tsushima (*Gensei, Makino'o Byōdō Shinnō'in kōritsu shisō Myōnin Risshi gyōgōki* [1664]).

demarcated and established as monastic quarters open to schools of Buddhism.[44] As self-ordination required the obtaining of auspicious signs, not only the founders but all the precept monks in these monastic communities would have been able to become *bhikṣu*s only when they had repented, removed their attachment to their own viewpoints, and received approval from the buddhas of the purification of their minds and bodies. Implementing this system for ordination, they aimed to revive the precepts. The three training monasteries observed the regulations of the *Vinaya in Four Parts*, particularly according to their interpretation in the Nanshan precept lineage, though the complete acceptance of all the precepts (the two hundred fifty *bhikṣu* precepts) through separate ordination was no longer practiced.

The Influence of Eison in the Early Modern Precept Revival Movement

The early modern precept revival movement initiated by Myōnin and others adopted Eison's method of self-ordination. They were also involved in the copying and editing of accounts of the achievements of Eison, as well as those of other monks who upheld the precepts. Among its collections of sacred texts, Saimyōji Byōdō Shinnōin possesses several Eison-related manuscripts copied by Myōnin, such as Eison's *Gakushōki* (Record of the Study of Orthodoxy),[45] the *Kōshō Bosatsu gyōjō* (Deeds of Kōshō Bosatsu),[46] and the *Mahāpratisarā Mahāpratyaṅgirā Dhāraṇī*,[47] said to have been copied in Eison's own hand. Yachūji also houses such manuscripts, such as the Saimyōji edition of the *Gyōjitsu nenpu* (Veritable Chronology of Deeds)[48] and of the *Gakushōki*.[49] In a colophon to the latter, Myōnin records his feeling of joy at "having been able to copy this work by Eison thanks to Yūson at Saidaiji." Thus, it is clear that Eison was revered and taken as a sage for having accomplished the revival of the precepts.

Eison's achievements earned particularly high appraisal in the Ōbaku school, which likewise valued the precepts. The admiration for and influence of Eison in the Ōbaku school, as well as others, is evident from several extant documents. For instance, the *Saidai chokushi Kōshō Bosatsu gyōjitsu nenpu* (Veritable Chronology of Kōshō Bosatsu of the Saidai[ji], Granted His Title by the Court),[50] which lists the achievements of Eison, was edited over a thirty-year period between 1688 and 1704

44. Fujitani, "Sangoku bini den ni miru kinsei Shingon Ritsu no tokuchō ni tsuite."
45. Saimyōji sacred text 2-4.
46. Saimyōji sacred text 14a.
47. Saimyōji sacred text 15a.
48. Saimyōji sacred text 125-1, 2, 3, 4, 5.
49. Saimyōji sacred text 133. *Kanjin gakushōki* vols. 1-3, dated to 1658.
50. *Saidaiji Eison denki shūsei.*

by the *śramaṇa* Enichibō Jikō of the Jōjūji in Kyoto.[51] Jikō also edited the *Rakusai Hamurosan Jōjūji Kaizan Kōshō Bosatsu gyōjitsu ryakunenpu* (Abbreviated Chronology of Kōshō Bosatsu, Founder of Hamurosan Jōjūji, West of the Capital).[52] The *Kōshō Bosatsu den* (Biography of Kōshō Bosatsu)[53] was compiled by Teiyo of the Pure Land temple Zōjōji based on a work composed in 1300 by the Saidaiji monk Kōtai. In addition to these manuscripts, there are other works written by Ōbaku monks that record the accomplishments of Eison: *Nanto Saidaiji Kōshō Bosatsu den* (The Biography of Kōshō Bosatsu of the Saidaiji in Nara),[54] *Nanto Saidaiji Eison den* (The Biography of Eison of the Saidaiji in Nara),[55] and *Washū Saidaiji Shamon Eison den* (The Biography of the Śramaṇa Eison of the Saidaiji in Yamato).[56]

Eison and other Saidaiji monks who undertook the precept revival movement in the Kamakura period were revered for overcoming the limitations imposed upon official monks, having kept the precepts, and having initiated social welfare activities. At the time, Japan was under threat from a Mongol invasion, and these activities also served the function of protecting the nation. Bodhisattva-monks who were renunciants that kept the precepts were relied upon for their esoteric powers, which were undergirded by their observance of the precepts.

The three precept temples, including Yachūji, did not conduct funeral practices. Considering that funeral rites were one of the official functions of temples in the Edo period, one might presume that the viability of the temples was at risk.[57] However, the maintenance of the precepts tradition was deemed valuable to the shogunate. For instance, Yachūji had no parishioners, but was kept in operation through its landholdings and through contributions, which afforded it the necessary economic stability to focus on practices related to precepts. As a result, the shogunate recognized Yachūji as the head temple of the Ritsu school in 1746. Also, particularly in the early Edo period, Shingon Ritsu monks admitted monks from other lineages and were witnesses to their self-ordinations, which promoted the development of precept revival in other lineages.

51. In the latter Kamakura period, Jōjūji was a branch temple of Saidaiji. In the early Edo period, it became an Ōbaku temple. As sources concerning Jikō do not survive, the details of his life are unclear. See Matsuo Kenji, “Hamuro Jōjūji kō,” *Yamagata Daigaku rekishi, chiri, jinruigaku ronshū* (2007).

52. Held by the Imperial Palace Agency.

53. *Gunsho ruijū,* vol. 69.

54. See vol. 12 of the *Ritsuon sōbō den*, a collection of biographies of Ritsu monks edited in 1689 by Kaizan Eken, the reviver of the An’yōin in Ōmi.

55. This is included in the tenth volume of the *Tōgoku kōsō den*, a collection of biographies of monks edited in 1688 by Kōsen Seiton, an Ōbaku monk.

56. This is included in the fifty-ninth volume of *Honchō kōsō den*, edited in 1702 by the Rinzai monk Mangen Shiban.

57. “Honzan Yachū Ritsuji rinban kiyaku narabi ni shien no roku”; document 1-10-1 among the sacred documents held by the Yachūji.

Conclusion

The attainment of auspicious signs—that is, the approval by the buddhas and bodhisattvas of the acceptance of the precepts—was required in the self-ordination tradition of the early modern Shingon Ritsu school. This system, in which a practitioner obtained auspicious signs as proof of approval from a sacred being prior to receiving the precepts, rippled out into other schools and lineages. An examination of sources on the cultivation of auspicious signs as practiced at Shingon Ritsu temples demonstrates that monks who aspired to maintain the precepts were willing to revive even the most austere practices that had fallen into abeyance.

Based on extant sources, it is clear that, while the content of the auspicious signs varied by monastery and by individual, in essence they were in line with accounts in the *Sūtra of Brahmā's Net*. These acknowledgements by sacred beings signified that beings of superior realms, such as the buddhas and bodhisattvas, recognized that the practitioner had been able to extirpate attachment to his own viewpoints. For this reason, obtaining auspicious signs would deeply motivate the practitioner to obtain and observe the precepts.

Self-ordination and its antecedent practice of cultivating auspicious signs fell into decline at nearly all monasteries after the late nineteenth century. The establishment of a rationalist, modern educational system may have played a part in this decline, as well as a general loss of belief in the power of such miraculous signs. However, the cultivation of auspicious signs has continued into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, even if only very rarely at temples such as Yachūji or Enmeiji where monks with the lofty aspiration to keep alive the precept tradition have maintained such practices. For instance, self-ordinations at Yachūji declined after the late nineteenth century, but in 2000 the current abbot revived this tradition based on historical sources. Furthermore, the cultivation of auspicious signs is practiced in the Tendai school. The ideal of wholeheartedly repenting before the buddhas and bodhisattvas and of receiving their approval to accept the precepts lives on today.

Translated by Micah Auerback
University of Michigan

Institute Staff

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