

A Critique of "Absolute Phenomenalism"

Royall TYLER

Introduction. It is often said that Japanese religion is "this-worldly" or "life-affirming," whereas Indian religion is "life-denying." This perfectly balanced proposition is very attractive, but one may also suspect it. Perhaps the realities of human nature and experience are not so simple in either country. Moreover the generalization is not always disinterested. Although it is made first of all by the Japanese themselves, it is often charged with an unfavorable evaluation of Japanese religion and culture with respect to the religion and culture of certain other regions of the world—India, the source of Buddhism, and the West, the source of modernization. This evaluation seems designed to sustain an image of the Japanese as at once culturally unique and religiously backward.

In this paper I will examine some aspects of the so-called "life-affirming" character of Japanese thinking. My conclusion will be that in Japanese culture man's relationship to himself and the world is complex; and that it is inaccurate simply to insist on the "this-worldly" outlook of the Japanese. Ideas of transformation or transcendence are pervasive in Japanese culture, even if they are expressed paradoxically, or in terms not particularly familiar elsewhere. In fact the mutual otherness of different dimensions of the world and man makes Japanese religion both rich and vigorous. There is nothing simplistic about it. Moreover it exhibits an underlying spiritual tension fully as great, and as fruitful, as that of any other people.

The phenomenal world as absolute. Nakamura Hajime wrote in *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples*: "The way of thinking that recognizes absolute significance in the phenomenal world seems

to be culturally associated with the Japanese traditional love of nature" (1964, p. 355). Professor Nakamura called this way of thinking "absolute phenomenalism," or "the phenomenal world as absolute" (pp. 350, 351). He made it clear that in his opinion the attitude is very old in Japan, and very stubborn. He also made it plain that although charming, this same attitude rendered the Japanese people unable to understand real Buddhism. He wrote (p. 370):

The Japanese had been this-world-minded and optimistic long before the advent of Buddhism. It was because the mundane view of life had long remained with them that the idea of regarding this world as the strained [*sic*] and impure land could never take root. The theory of impurity as preached by Buddhism, therefore, was never adopted by the Japanese in its original form.

Nakamura's sentiments seem to be shared by other writers on Japanese Buddhism. One finds a general disapproval of this-world-mindedness and of interest in this-worldly benefits (*genze riyaku*). These are treated as inferior, if they must be mentioned at all, and may be relegated to the province of folk religion. Alas, from this perspective all of Nara and Heian Buddhism tends to acquire the features of a popular cult: a cult which revealed all too clearly the character and the limitations of the Japanese national genius. As Nakamura put it: "All through the Nara and Heian periods, almost all the sects of Buddhism aimed at tangible rewards in this world and they mainly depended upon incantation and magic" (1964, p. 363). These are not complimentary words. When presented with the inspiring Buddhist truth, the Japanese people turned it to trivial, worldly ends, and amused themselves with "incantation and magic." At best they perverted the Buddhism they received, so as to bring it into accord with their own limited views. For example, Nakamura wrote (p. 351):

The Japanese Tendai scholars were not very faithful to the original texts of the Chinese T'ien-t'ai, but sometimes interpreted the original texts in a rather unnatural way, their interpretation being based upon the standpoint of Absolute Phenomenalism.

So slighting a judgment of the Japanese religious genius casts doubt upon the very affirmation it seeks to make. One may wonder whether any people, and particularly the Japanese, need be considered religiously backward. Moreover one may go on to wonder what “Absolute Phenomenalism” means, and whether it applies to the Japanese at all.

Tendai hongaku thought. The most thoroughgoing philosophical expression of “absolute phenomenalism” may be found in the writings of the Japanese Tendai school of Buddhism—the school which Nakamura, in the passage just quoted, charged with “unnatural” interpretation of the doctrine it received from the continent. This philosophy is commonly known, even in English, as Tendai *hongaku* thought (*hongaku shisō*, or “philosophy of fundamental enlightenment”). What I write about it will rely on “Tendai hongaku shisō gaisetsu” by Tamura Yoshirō.

Already in an article published in 1927, Shimaji Daitō summed up Tendai philosophy as “concrete absolutism” (*gutaiteki zettai ron*) or as a “philosophy of absolute affirmation” (*zettai kōtei no shisō*) (Tamura 1973, p. 478). Tamura cited in connection with these expressions such technical Tendai language as “the eternal abiding of phenomena” (*jijōjū*), and he explained (1973, p. 478): “This means that phenomena themselves, as they appear before our eyes, are the active manifestation [*katsugen*] of the eternal truth [*shinri*], and that they are a demonstration [*kengen shita mono*] of the original enlightenment-nature (fundamental enlightenment).” Thus “Tendai thought . . . transcended all such dualistic concepts as ‘passions’ and ‘enlightenment,’ ‘life-and-death’ and ‘nirvana,’ . . . and explored to its uttermost limits the realm of absolute non-duality” (p. 478). Indeed Tamura characterized Tendai *hongaku* thought as a “philosophy of absolute monism” (*zettaiteki ichigen ron no tetsuri*); and he appraised this achievement of Japanese Tendai as the “culmination” (*kuraimakkusu*) of Buddhist philosophy (p. 478).

The problem. Nonetheless Tamura wrote in his book *Nihon bukkyō shi nyūmon* (1969, p. 27): "On the whole the Japanese accepted nature just as it is, and man just as he is, and felt no need to seek any transcendent realm. This is a peculiarity of the mode of thought of the Japanese people." He approached here the position of Nakamura Hajime. He came even closer when in the same work he characterized the Japanese people as "too prone to affirmation and accomodation, and too liable to be deficient in confrontation and denial" (1969, p. 71). This is the sort of criticism which Professor Nakamura has often expressed.

The gist of this criticism seems to be that because of their "absolute phenomenalism," which Professor Tamura himself called "affirmation of the actual" (*genjitsu kōtei*), the Japanese simply do not aspire. Their spirits do not thirst for any higher realm, and they have no fear or awe of what awaits man after death. Therefore (so Nakamura and Tamura seem to suggest) they tend not only toward a kind of innocent hedonism, but toward simple laxness. Nothing moves them to strive. Nakamura drew just this sort of conclusion from certain poems by Ōtomo no Tabito in the *Man'yōshū*, in which the poet celebrated life and wine (Nakamura 1964, p. 362; *Man'yōshū* 3, nos. 341, 344, 350). Yet since the poetry of practically every people contains similar sentiments, these verses strike me as having nothing in particular to do with the essential character of the Japanese.

Tamura, for his part, cautioned in "Tendai hongaku shisō gaisetsu" that "Tendai *hongaku* thought reached the position of . . . affirming (*kōtei*) the passions [for example, the pleasures of life and wine] just as they are" (1973, p. 504). Perhaps this is true in terms of the history of Tendai philosophy. However in *Nihon bukkyō shi nyūmon* Tamura applied the caution more generally. That is, he described the vigor of Pure Land faith in Heian times (which does seem to argue for ideals of transcendence) only to deny that this vigor meant what it appears to have meant. He wrote (1969, p. 100): "Strictly speaking, however, the Fujiwara faith in a paradise to come was an extension of the pleasures of the present

world; it was not a thorough denial or transcendence of the present world moved by despair over human life.” In context this statement bears upon the character of the Japanese people as a whole. And yet it seems to me to be quite unfair. Why should the average member of *any* aristocracy, or indeed the average member of any ordinary population, genuinely and unremittingly despair of life in this world? Surely the author of *Ecclesiastes* was unusual even among the Jews. And why would anyone think of a future paradise at all, if this world is so thoroughly acceptable?

A hermit's verse. Not all nobles accepted an easy life, and expected a heightened version of the same ease in the life to come. One boy of very high birth became the great Tendai prelate and ascetic Gyōson (1052?–1132).¹ The following verse by Gyōson is included in the *Kin'yōshū* (no. 568), a late Heian imperial anthology:

<i>Kusa no io o</i>	My hermitage of grass:
<i>nani tsuyukeshi to</i>	why did I imagine
<i>omoiken</i>	that it let in the dew?
<i>moranu iwaya mo</i>	In this cave of solid stone
<i>sode wa nurekeri</i>	I find my sleeves wet.

The ordinary modern reader might first note the dew and the wet sleeves, and so class this poem with countless other Heian court verses. Should he realize the poem is by a monk, he will conceive no particularly high opinion of the writer's spiritual life. However, according to *Kokonchomonjū* (2, no. 18), Gyōson first inscribed the poem not on paper at court, but on a post in a cave high in the Ōmine mountains; and when he wrote it he was nearly out of food after surviving most of the winter alone in this cave, without fire. Gyōson was doing a thousand-day retreat in the cave. The poem may look mild, but it distills a great feat of ascetic endurance. Gyōson's disciple Gyōkei recognized this immediately when he,

1. Son of Minamoto Motohira, and adopted by the Minister of the Right Fujiwara Yorimune, the second son of Michinaga. He rose to be Tendai *zasu*, the title of the prelate who presided over Mt. Hiei.

in his turn, attempted the same retreat. Gyōkei wrote (*Senjūshō* 8, no. 32):

<i>Tsuyu moranu</i>	Had I not learned
<i>iwaya mo sode wa</i>	that in this dew-proof cave
<i>nurekeri to</i>	his own sleeves were wet,
<i>kikazu wa ika ni</i>	how swiftly despair
<i>ayashikaramashi</i>	would have overwhelmed me.

On can hardly say of such men as these that they “accepted nature just as it is, and man just as he is, and felt no need to seek any transcendent realm.” They were striving mightily toward *something*. Perhaps they had no “afterlife” in mind, but aspired to Buddhahood-in-this-flesh (*sokushin jōbutsu*).² Nonetheless, their energy was superb, their aspiration impeccable. If what they sought was not a transcendent realm, then it was something just as difficult to reach. In other words, if Buddhahood-in-this flesh is “nature just as it is, and man just as he is,” then nature and man are as hard to attain as any heaven.

Nature as one and yet two. What is “nature”? People always say that the Japanese love nature, and Tamura (1969, p. 68) distinguished Japan from India and China on the basis of the way Japanese culture “follows nature” (*shizen junnō*). In fact, Tamura cited (1969, pp. 138–9) the early *ikebana* principle of “establishing past and present, near and far” (*kokin enkin o tatsuru*), among other things, as evidence that *shizen junnō* does characterize Japanese culture. “Establishing near and far” refers to the eloquent spatial relationships which should exist, from the standpoint of the viewer, among the elements of the composition. “Past and present” refer to combining in one composition flowers or plants of different seasons. The two ideas draw unmistakably on the rhetoric of paired opposites (near and far, past and present, dream and reality, high and low, etc.) which pervades medieval Japanese discourse.

2. When in peril elsewhere in the same mountains Gyōson exclaimed, “It is not my life I would keep, but the peerless Way.” (*Kokonchomonjū* 2, no. 18)

This principle of *ikebana* may be natural, but it is not natural in the same sense as one speaks of flowers growing “naturally.” It has to do with essential or ideal nature, while flowers growing wild are nature raw and unkempt. A successful arrangement is most assuredly not “nature just as it is.” In fact one might say that the art of *ikebana* springs from the tension between one nature and the other. In *nō* too this tension is explored, and is itself a major underlying theme.

Three excellent examples of this theme are the *nō* plays *Tōru*, *Akoya no matsu*, and *Yamanba*. All three treat, though in different ways, a common theme: that of the crucial difference between capital and hinterland, or between civilization and wilderness. This distinction is equivalent to the distinction between essential nature and raw nature. All three plays affirm the union of the two terms of this polarity, but not in such a way that the polarity itself is abolished. The two are displayed as non-dual and yet still two.

Tōru (by Zeami) is based on the story of a historical Heian gentleman named Minamoto no Tōru (822–95), a son of Emperor Saga. The gentleman was so impressed with the beauty of Shiogama Bay (whether he had actually seen Shiogama Bay or not) that he sought to reproduce the view in the garden of his residence in Kyoto. Shiogama, on the northeast coast of Honshū just beyond Sendai, is the site of an important shrine. It appears in *nō* and elsewhere as a wild and remote, but potent area. Schematically speaking, it is the “far” of the “near and far” of *ikebana*. The “near” is the Capital itself. Moreover Shiogama was famous in poetry as a place where the humble folk of the seashore made salt. Therefore the gentleman had brine brought from Naniwa, and actually watched correspondingly humble folk tend salt-fires on the shores of his own miniature Shiogama. Although the idea sounds a bit tasteless, the play *Tōru* celebrates the excellence of the gentleman’s gesture.

This excellence as I see it has two aspects. (1) The gentleman, with great care and at great expense, transmuted the raw nature of the original Shiogama into the civilized (conscious) beauty of art. Aesthetically he tamed the wilderness, abstracted its essence, and

incorporated this essence into the Capital, the center of the land. Thus he endowed the Capital ("near") with the qualities of the hinterland ("far") and so made Miyako complete. Since he could enjoy Shiogama without leaving the Capital, the two were one. (2) At the same time the gentleman conferred full recognition upon that distant corner of the land which is Shiogama. This aspect of his gesture is equal in importance to the other. Without it the unity of Capital and hinterland would have remained one-sided, so to speak. His gesture affirmed the worth of the original Shiogama. Thus it acknowledged that Miyako and Shiogama, although one, are distinctly two.

The separateness of Shiogama and the Capital, despite their unity, is confirmed by an early but otherwise undistinguished play entitled *Akoya no matsu*. In this play a courtier travels to Shiogama in order to admire its beauty, and particularly to enjoy in this lovely landscape the red leaves of fall. When he gets there he meets an old man who identifies himself as the god of Shiogama. The old man then dances a dance which, as he scrupulously points out, is identical with one performed by a nobleman on a famous occasion in the Capital itself. The situation in this play is a mirror image of the one in *Tōru*. Whereas *Tōru* shows the essence of the hinterland present in the Capital, *Akoya no matsu* shows the essence of the Capital present in the hinterland. In either play the tension between the poles (near and far, Capital and hinterland) is fundamental. If the difference between Miyako and Shiogama were not so clear, demonstrations of their essential unity would be tedious at best.

The lesson of Yamanba. The famous masterpiece *Yamanba* provides a magnificent discourse upon raw and essential nature. The discourse progresses as follows. A dancer has made her fortune in the Capital thanks to a single song-and-dance piece. This piece, which she composed herself, tells the story of an extraordinary hag who lives in the wilderness of the high mountains. The hag's name is Yamanba, and the dancer's stage name is Yamanba

as well. By and by the dancer goes on pilgrimage to Zenkōji in distant Shinano province. On the way she must cross a mountain range. Deep in these mountains, beyond any human habitation, an old woman invites her to spend the night in her hut. When the dancer accepts, the old woman demands that she perform the Yamanba dance. The old woman says, “I have come tonight to hear the power of my own name.” The dancer refuses until she realizes that the old woman before her is Yamanba in person. When she does so, she is struck with terror and awe.

Yamanba is angry with the dancer for appropriating her own existence without giving her, the original Yamanba, any recognition. The god of Shiogama would be similarly offended if the Capital forgot about the original Shiogama. On the other hand, Yamanba is very anxious indeed to see the dancer’s Yamanba dance. This is because Yamanba is the boundless energy and variety of untamed nature. The play makes the point abundantly clear. Being rude and unkempt, she does not know herself or the pattern of her existence. It is the dancer from the Capital who knows this pattern. If she did not know it, the Yamanba dance would not have made her a star, and Yamanba herself would not demand to “hear the power of my own name.” However the dance is like the miniature Shio-gama: it is perfect in design, but lacks substance. Correspondingly the real Yamanba in all her awesome substance lacks design. It is no wonder that the dancer and Yamanba meet. However their meeting is also extraordinary. The dancer will go on to Zenkōji; Yamanba will continue her endless roaming. Although for a moment the two have been as one, they are still two. Which of them is “nature”?

As the dancer from Miyako, “nature” is pattern, pure skill, intelligence, consciousness. As Yamanba, “nature” is the vast and stubborn concreteness of the material world. The genius of the Capital is like a seed which contains all things in germ, but which is not yet all things. The genius of the hinterland is like a fruit which does not know its principle, its true “name.” Thus the inhabitants of the old capital have in fact long since been generally

appraised as highly skilled in the arts of civilization, but deficient in depth and "character." To use a modern American expression, they are imagined as lacking "grit." Conversely the inhabitants of the hinterland have frequently appeared as what one might call "earthy," that is, at once vigorous and crude.

The above discussion of "nature," as I have already begun to make plain, cannot help including "man." The character of man is likewise dual. In the play the dancer and Yamanba gain equally from their encounter. Each gives the other what the other lacks, and they become as one. Only great effort and singleness of purpose on the part of both have made their conjunction possible. Neither has stopped at any simple "affirmation of the actual"; and "following nature" has meant for each a striving toward that side of "nature" (including human nature) which she did not yet know.

Landscape and religious work: A model. The religious dimension of this endeavor appears in exemplary fashion in the traditional schematization of the Yoshino-Kumano pilgrimage, the great pilgrimage of the *yamabushi*. In this schema Yoshino plays approximately the role of the Capital as I have described it, while Kumano plays the role of the hinterland. We have seen that the Capital is a repository of patterns, or potentials, or "seeds." This is the overall value attributed to the *Kongōkai* mandala of Esoteric Buddhism (*mikkyō*), as distinguished from its counterpart, the *Taijōkai*. It is also the value attributed to Yoshino. Kumano is associated with the *Taijōkai*, the realm of fullness, or fruit.³

Thus Yoshino is referred to as "seed" (*in* 因) and Kumano as "fruit" (*ka* or *ga* 果). Since there are two possible directions to the

3. The values of the two mandalas as I describe them may also be reversed. The view I present here is the one associated with the Ōmine pilgrimage route. This interpretation of the pilgrimage, and of the "seed" and "fruit" which I discuss below, is distinctively Tendai in character, as Tamura Yoshirō has clearly shown (1973, pp. 514–515). Therefore I suggest that the schema I have derived from *Tōru* and *Yamanba* may also be traced to Tendai thought.

pilgrimage, north-south and south-north, one may proceed "from seed to fruit" (從因至果) or "from fruit to seed" (從果至因). The latter direction is considered normal, since the common conception of the religious endeavor is that man moves from an unenlightened condition (life in the world) toward enlightenment. Therefore the pilgrimage from Kumano to Yoshino is called *junbu*, "normal pilgrimage." Whether or not he knows it, however, man does participate in enlightenment. Therefore he may move from enlightenment toward the world, from seed to fruit—from spirit to matter, as it were. This is *gyakubu*, or "reverse pilgrimage" from Yoshino to Kumano.⁴

Since the *Kongōkai* and the *Taijōkai* (and all that they imply) are non-dual, either direction is bound to be valid. But since seed and fruit are not the same, one must make a great effort to bridge the distance between the two. This effort is the pilgrimage itself, a task which the practitioner must perform at all costs, however he may conceive the direction of his aspiration. The urgency and significance of the Yoshino-Kumano pilgrimage cannot be deduced from any general idea that the Japanese held "nature as it is" to be "the sacred," or "enlightenment." In the mode of thought which I am describing, "nature" means mandatory hard work.

Mountain and plain. A truly whole apprehension of the world is an extraordinary achievement. In the world seen whole there are no distinctions as to gain or loss, high or low, near or far, self or other, etc. The list is long and familiar. But ordinarily people see things otherwise. Even the visible world is divided by invisible but real boundaries. Beyond such-and-such a line, defined perhaps by a doorway, a street, a river, or the edge of a wood, lies another realm. Thought and behavior on either side of such a line are not the same. Some such discontinuities in space are private. Others, however,

4. This schema seems to be largely theoretical. In practice the *yamabushi* have not often followed the whole route, the southern half of which has over time fallen repeatedly into disuse.

are thoroughly public. These last may resist indefinitely the most convincing philosophical demonstrations that they are not real.

There is such a boundary in Japanese religion between mountain and lowland. The lowland where people live, whether valley or plain, is "this world." The mountain heights, where spirits live, are the "other world." This understanding of mountains as another world (*sanchū takai kan*) has been described by many scholars. It is tempting to call the lowland realm "profane" and the mountain realm "sacred," but to do so might raise a false issue. What is essential is that the two realms are quite *different* in character. There exists between them the kind of tension I have been discussing.

Mountains constitute most of the landscape of Japan. Perhaps downtown Tokyo is farther from the mountains than anywhere else, but even from Marunouchi mountains are not hard to reach. Some of the mountains which surround the Yamato or Yamashiro plains loom large in Japanese history and lore; and so do more remote peaks like Tateyama, Dewa Sanzan, Fuji, or Hikosan. Mountains are integral to the nature of Japan, and the landscape they create is, for Japanese culture, the very shape of the world.

No doubt most peoples have perceived mountains as a separate realm. In early Japan, those few humans who did live in the mountains (hunters, for example, or the folk of remote hamlets) were regarded almost as alien by the people of the lowlands. Meanwhile few humans, if any, climbed up to the summits. The histories of most religiously important mountains begin roughly in the Nara or early Heian periods with a first ascent by a Buddhist ascetic. Surely these men were not always in fact the very first to reach the top, but it is clear that the mountains they "opened" had hitherto remained untrodden by anyone who represented civilization.

Those who looked up to the mountains from below saw them as the abode of numinous powers. These powers may be roughly divided into divine beings who now and again descended onto the mountain from the empyrean, and spirits of the dead who rose to the mountain heights after death. The treatment of the dead in

early, or conservative Japanese folk religion provides a splendid illustration of the dual character of a mountain landscape.

The corpse was typically taken from the village to the nearby mountain, by a route carefully devised so as not cause further pollution. There it was left with very little ceremony to return to earth or to feed the birds of the air. Certain surviving place names even bear witness to this custom. No one ever again paid homage to the dead at that site. Instead a monument was established within the village, and it was to this monument that all prayers and offerings were addressed. This was the “two grave system” (*ryōbo sei*) described by Hori Ichirō (1975, pp. 58–60). The place of disposal was in a realm apart, too terrible to be visited except in dire and specific need. For the spirit of the dead to receive the care it required, it had to visit the realm of the living.

On the other hand some men did go up into the mountains. They were not “mountain men” like the hunters, etc.; instead they were religious specialists. They were yogins. Some might call them the ancestors of the *yamabushi*. However since their spritual descendants also include Gyōson whom I mentioned above, as well as Kūkai, Saichō, and countless other distinguished Buddhist monks—men who are not generally identified with *shugendō*—I will call them simply the forerunners of the rich tradition of Japanese mountain asceticism as we know it from historical records.

Certain broad features of historical mountain practice are particularly relevant to my discussion. These are (1) preparatory purification; (2) the existence on sacred mountains of a *nyonin kekkaï*, a boundary beyond which women were forbidden to proceed toward the summit; and (3) the principle of *metsuzai*, or “abolishing of sins.” The first two stress the character of the mountain as a separate realm, while the last has to do with linking this other realm and the common world.

The practitioner did not tread the slopes of the mountain without rigorous purification. This was not only because he had to purge himself of impurities proper to the lower world, but also because he had to take on the spiritually powerful character of the upper realm

itself. Many Japanese tales show that someone who passes the boundary between major zones of the cosmos must change nature or even form.

The *nyonin kekkai* obviously and concretely confirmed the existence of this boundary. The exclusion of women from the mountain proper is normally explained in terms of Buddhist ideas about the spiritual inferiority of women. However there seems to be another aspect to the matter, at least in the period of fully developed *shugendō*. In *nō* plays and in other medieval writings it is women who appear as the emblematic inhabitants of the lower world. That is to say, the character of the lower world is conceived on the whole as feminine. In contrast, the character of the higher realm is conceived as masculine. Such a schematization clearly shows the influence of yin-yang thinking (*onmyōdō*). At least philosophically it makes no judgment about the *value* of male or female. It merely insists that male and female are different from one another, and that each has its place. This view is consistent with affirmations of the non-duality of the passions and enlightenment, etc., but it does not diminish the tension between the two.

Metsuzai, the "abolishing of sins," can be most simply explained with reference to the idea of the mountaintop paradise. This paradise was an essential aspect of the mountain's special power. Most such paradises were strongly colored by Buddhism, being identified as the paradise of Amida, for example, or of Kannon or Miroku. The example of Kinpusen (Sanjō-ga-take in the Ōmine range) as the paradise of Miroku is particularly well known because of the pilgrimage made to Kinpusen in 1007 by the great Fujiwara Michinaga.

The practitioner who climbed such a mountain aspired to enter this paradise, which was another expression of the principle that the mountain was a realm apart. In fact this paradise *was* in effect a transcendent world. It was not a world in which the practitioner could live indefinitely in his mortal body, and it was not one either which he could visit without much preparation and exertion. One might say that for all his trouble, and despite all the assurances of

his teachers, he could hope for only a glimpse or a passing taste of this lofty realm. This consideration is at variance with any assumption that the understanding of mountaintops as paradisaic realms is an expression of the Japanese tendency to affirm the here-and-now. On the contrary, it follows from what I have said that the mountain pilgrim would aspire more ardently than ever to permanent rebirth in paradise after his death. Indeed that is precisely the burden of the prayer which Michinaga made on Kinpusen. He vowed to recite the Nembutsu at his death so as to be reborn in Amida's paradise, and so as to proceed from there to the paradise of Miroku when Miroku should at last come into the world.

Furthermore, pilgrims to the mountain peaks went through many intentional, carefully devised austerities even after they had entered the mountain proper. As Hori Ichirō has pointed out, theirs was not a simple visit to paradise. At least one aspect of their intention was to embody (*taigen*) the power of the spirits and divine beings who dwell in the mountains. In particular their austerities involved, as is well known, a mimicked progress through all six realms of reincarnation. In Hori Ichirō's words (1975, p. 83):

The severe spiritual and physical purification which preceded the pilgrimage to Mitake [Kinpusen], and the pilgrimage itself, . . . involved a symbolic intention to link this world and the next by voluntarily experiencing in one's own present body the sufferings of the six realms of the afterworld to which one was destined to proceed in the life to come (*goshō*).

This is the “abolishing of sins” which allows the practitioner, as long as he lives, to lead a life in tune with the higher powers and to confer many blessings on those around him; and which permits him at death to go straight to enlightenment or paradise. Such is the mountain practitioner's goal. Indeed his highest ambition may be to achieve such flawlessness of spirit that after a career of training and of service to his fellow men he may in perfect equanimity renounce his own body (*shashin*). An outstanding and quite recent example is the *yamabushi* Jitsukaga who cast himself from the lip of the Nachi waterfall in 1884 (Bouchy, 1977). His gesture

crowned a life of unremitting effort to bridge in this flesh the lower and the higher realms. It confirmed at the last that although one, these realms are not at all the same.

Shōkū Shōnin and the prostitute. The duality of the non-dual is beautifully illustrated by the story of Shōkū Shōnin and the prostitute (*Senjūshō* 6, no. 10). Shōkū Shōnin (910–1007) is a Tendai monk famous for having founded the great Tendai establishment on Shoshazan near modern Himeji. Having recited the *Lotus Sutra* very diligently for many years, he conceived the ardent wish to see with his own, fleshly eyes, Fugen Bosatsu alive before him. He made a special retreat to pray that this should be given him. On the last day of the retreat he received an oracle to the effect that a certain prostitute was the “true Fugen.” Shōkū Shōnin was puzzled by this announcement, but he went to find the prostitute. She served him wine, and she and the girls of her house danced and sang for him. The words of their song, no doubt a quite ordinary party song, spoke of the sound of the wind, and of waves on the shore. “So this is the living Fugen,” thought Shōkū Shōnin, and closed his eyes the better to compose his mind. Whereupon he saw before him, with his eyes closed, the gentle and beautifully adorned figure of the Bodhisattva, mounted upon his customary white elephant; and heard Fugen speaking of the full moon illumining the great ocean of perfect enlightenment. When Shōkū Shōnin opened his eyes again, there was the prostitute. When he closed them again, there was Fugen. At last he left, awed and amazed; and he was satisfied that he had seen what he wished to see.

The compiler of *Senjūshō* appended this remark: “In the presence of awakening, the voice of the wind and the sound of the waves are all the marvelous Teaching.” This observation, and the story, certainly affirm that the phenomenal world and enlightenment are non-dual. They do not, however, affirm that the phenomenal world and enlightenment are identical. Shōkū Shōnin’s closed eyes did not see the same sight as his open eyes. He witnessed two actualities. No doubt he knew with every particle of his being that

these actualities were one; but his fleshly eyes still made a distinction. Moreover Shōkū Shōnin was able directly to cognize these two actualities as one only after many years of intense striving and aspiration. In fact in order to reach this insight he had to make a special retreat, receive a special oracle in a philosophically dubious manner, and make a special journey to a special place in order to find a very particular person. There is nothing easy or immediate about any of this. The gap between the terms of the non-dual is broad indeed.

Inherent co-identity and integral co-identity. In “Tendai hongaku shisō gaisetsu” Tamura Yoshirō proposed a fourfold classification scheme which may be applied either to the stages of *hongaku* thought as it developed historically, or to modes of thought which are philosophically related to *hongaku* thinking (1973, for ex. chart on p. 482). These four categories are [1] basic co-identity (*kihon sōsoku ron*); [2] inherent co-identity (*nai-zai sōsoku ron*); [3] manifest co-identity (*kengen sōsoku ron*); and [4] integral co-identity (*kenzai sōsoku ron*). The first and third need not detain us here. The second and fourth, however, are of interest.

“Integral co-identity” is the stage of affirmation of absolute identity between enlightenment and phenomena. It is *hongaku* thought in its mature form. One might expect that if phenomena and enlightenment are absolutely identical, there can be no “attaining Buddhahood” (*jōbutsu*); and indeed this is so. Tamura wrote (1973, p. 529): “In such a theory of the ‘eternal abiding of phenomena’ there is no basis even for the idea (*kan*) of ‘attaining Buddhahood.’ In fact [the theory] upholds rather ‘non-attainment of Buddhahood’ (*fujōbutsu*).” This is startling news to one who is used to hearing people talk about a spirit “attaining enlightenment” at the end of a *nō* play; or who has come to love the passages in *nō* about plants and trees “attaining Buddhahood.” Tamura even quoted the Tendai treatise *Shijūshikajisho* (included in *Tendai hongaku ron*) as follows (1973, p. 529): “Indeed, to learn the non-attainment of Buddhahood by plants and trees is [to learn] the

deeper truth.”

The thought is an admirably radical one. However the stage of “inherent co-identity” is more familiar. Tamura wrote (1973, pp. 512–3):

At the stage of inherent co-identity, the principle of truth [*shinri*] . . . or the pure mind [*shinjin*] are concealed in phenomena . . . or in sentient beings . . . as a potentiality [*kanōtai*]; and attainment of Buddhahood means that this potentiality becomes manifest.

In other words, at this stage humans do not cognize themselves as actual but as potential Buddhas; and they do not cognize nature as absolute phenomenon. Something always remains unattained, or undisclosed. All the ideas, practices, and stories which I have discussed assume distance and tension between one state of being, or realm, and another; and all assume not only the need for effort to bridge this distance, but also the necessity of making this effort. “Inherent co-identity” is not the ultimate expression of Tendai *hongaku* thought, nor is it “the phenomenal world as absolute.” However it leaves plenty of room for aspiration and achievement, and in Buddhist terms it is the level at which Japanese thinking works.

The linked verse master Sōgi (1421–1502) wrote in *Azuma mondō* (Kidō 1961, p. 233):

Furthermore if, on the Path of Poetry, you set your mind on compassion and if, when you see [spring] flowers bloom or [autumn] leaves fall, you contemplate the truth of life-and-death, then the demons in your mind will become quiet, and you will return to the reality [*dōri*] of fundamental enlightenment [*hongaku*] and thusness [*shinnyo*].

Tamura quoted this statement (1973, p. 544), in slightly different form, to prove the importance of Tendai thought in the classical arts of Japan. This importance is undeniable, and deserves to be more widely recognized. However Sōgi spoke of “return,” etc. He evoked distance and striving. His words suggest that “integral co-identity” is, practically speaking, either a highly specialized philosophical position, or an almost fabulously rare mode of cogni-

tion. It could hardly be characteristic of a whole culture. Moreover if it were, no respected representative of that culture would be likely to question its validity as a "way of thinking."

CONCLUSION

Thus the proposition that Japanese thought is "life-affirming" or "this-wordly" turns out to be unsatisfactory. What is "this world" to which the interest of the Japanese is said to be confined? One should not assume, just because nature and man may be construed or discussed as belonging to the realm of the five commonplace senses, that they really are limited in Japan any more than anywhere else to the sensory realm. The famous Ryōanji garden, among a thousand other examples, is a radical abstraction, and an imaginative act of high order. Nor should one assume that even the material world, just because it is material and therefore the object of sense perception, is bound to be unitary in character from the standpoint of an actual subject. Certainly the possibility of realizing the fundamental unity of the world always exists, but great effort is required to achieve this realization. Therefore I have singled out Tamura Yoshirō's stage of "inherent co-identity" as useful to generalizations about Japanese culture, and rejected his "integral co-identity."

It may also be plausible to doubt the view that since the early Japanese recognized no particular difference between "sacred" and "profane," the early Japanese world was entirely sacred, and hence once again unitary. Even if the world is entirely sacred (or entirely profane), it still is not necessarily all one. A sacred world is variously alive and may, for example, require in one domain what it proscribes in the other. This is in part why I have suggested that to distinguish between sacred and profane in the present context may be to raise a false issue. There are other lines along which the world may divide. One possibility is a division into the domain of spirits and the domain of humans. Nakamura Hajime devoted the final section of his treatment of Japan in *Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples* to the "problem" of shamanism. He made it clear that shamanism is for him philosophically inadmissible, and

that its importance in Japan's past is regrettable. Nonetheless, even now some Japanese still do take seriously the idea that spirits and humans are equally real but distinct from one another, and that they can communicate with each other under special circumstances, and thanks to the gifts of special people. This view is in turn to be taken seriously and respectfully, in the light of its prevalence through the centuries, as significant for generalizations about the Japanese world view.

This paper has questioned common ideas of the this-worldliness or the concreteness of Japanese thinking. It is worth noting again, however, that these ideas have often been used to distinguish Japanese from other cultures. If some of the writings of Nakamura Hajime, or some of the statements of Tamura Yoshirō, make the Japanese sound a little simple, they at least affirm Japanese uniqueness. If the present objections are allowed any merit, does the uniqueness of Japanese culture thereby tend to disappear?

Such an outcome would be thoroughly unsatisfactory. In fact it would represent an untenable position. If one thing is obvious, it is that Japanese culture is different from others, just as all cultures are more or less different from one another. I do not for a moment question the distinctiveness of Japanese culture. I only question the grounds on which this distinctiveness is defined, and the qualitative difference between the Japanese and other peoples which is so often affirmed and made to serve as a way to prove a uniqueness that needs no proof. I believe that a divided consciousness and a divided world are basic aspects of the human condition, but that the resulting tension may be conceptualized and acted upon in many different ways—according, precisely, to history, geography, culture, etc. If the familiar ideas against which I have argued do not after all deserve to be taken quite for granted, then there is much more work to be done toward a proper definition of the Japanese genius.

The Japanese have seen nature and man divided into two realms which, though ultimately one, must still be reconciled. Whether or not Japanese Buddhism is faithful to its continental sources, it is certainly faithful to mankind's enduring preoccupation with what is

here and what is elsewhere. The preoccupation may be clothed in the language of philosophy, of myth, of folktale, of poetry, or of mute action, but it is perennial. When there is a “near” there is always a “far,” and the effort to bridge the two may absorb a lifetime, and bring into being much of value or beauty. But the task is never quite done. Indeed this truth is the burden of a poem by the twelfth century Indian śaivite mystic Mahādēviyakka (Ramanujan 1973, p. 127):

Husband inside,
lover outside.
I can't manage them both.

This world
and that other,
cannot manage them both.

O lord white as jasmine

I cannot hold in one hand
both the round nut
and the long bow.

No Japanese could have said it the same way; but Gyōson, Jitsukaga, and Michinaga surely would have known exactly what Mahādēviyakka had in mind.

GLOSSARY

Akoya no matsu 阿古屋の松

Azuma mondō 吾妻問答

Amida 阿弥陀

Dewa Sanzan 出羽三山

dōri 道理

Fugen Bosatsu 普賢菩薩

Fuji 富士

Fujiwara Michinaga 藤原道長

Fujiwara Yorimune 藤原頼宗

fujōbutsu 不成仏

genjitsu kōtei 現実肯定

genze riyaku 現世利益

goshō 後生

gutaiteki zettai ron 具体的絶対論

gyakubu 逆峯

Gyōkei 行慶

Gyōson 行尊

Hikosan 英彦山

hongaku shisō 本覚思想

ikebana 活花

Royall TYLER

jijōjū 事常住
Jitsukaga 実利
jōbutsu 成仏
junbu 順峯
kan 観
Kannon 観音
kanōtai 可能態
katsugen 活現
kengen shita mono 顕現したもの
kengen sōsoku ron 顕現相即論
kenzai sōsoku ron 顕在相即論
hihon sōsoku ron 基本相即論
Kinpusen 金峯山
Kin'yōshū 金葉集
kokin enkin o tatsuru 古今遠近を立つる
Kokonchomonjū 古今著聞集
Kongōkai 金剛界
Kūkai 空海
Kumano 熊野
Man'yōshū 万葉集
metsuzai 滅罪
mikkyō 密教
Minamoto Motohira 源基平
Minamoto Tōru 源融
Miroku 弥勒
Mitake 御嶽
Nachi 那智
naizai sōsoku ron 内在相即論
Naniwa 難波
nyonin kekkai 女人結界
Ōmine 大峯
onmyōdō 陰陽道
Ōtomo no Tabito 大伴旅人
Ryōanji 菴安寺
ryōbo sei 両墓制

[Emperor] Saga 嵯峨
Saichō 最澄
sanchū takai kan 山中他界観
Sanjō-ga-take 山上ヶ嶽
Sanjūshikajisho 三十四箇事書
Senjūshō 撰集抄
shashin 捨身
Shimaji Daitō 島地大等
Shinano 信濃
shinjin 真心
shimyo 真如
shinri 真理
Shiogama 塩竈
shizen junnō 自然順応
Shōkū Shōnin 性空上人
shugendō 修験道
Shoshazan 書写山
Sōgi 宗祇
sokushin jōbutsu 即身成仏
taigen 体現
Taizōkai 胎藏界
Tateyama 立山
Tendai 天台
Tōru 融
yamabushi 山伏
yamanba 山姥
Yamashiro 山城
Yamato 大和
Yoshino 吉野
zasu 座主
Zeami 世阿弥
Zenkōji 善光寺
zettai kōtei no shisō 絶対肯定の思想
zettateki ichigen ron no tetsuri
絶対的一元論の哲理

REFERENCES

- BOUCHY, Anne-Marie
1977 *Shashin gyōja Jitsukaga no shugendō* 捨身行者実利の修験道 [The teaching and practice of Jitsukaga, a yamabushi who sacrificed his life]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.
- HORI Ichirō 堀 一郎
1975 *Sangaku shinkō no gensho keitai* 山岳信仰の原初形態 [The primitive form of mountain cults]. In *Sangaku shūkyō no seiritsu to tenkai* 山岳宗教の成立と展開 [The origins and development of mountain religion], Wakamori Tarō 和歌森太郎 ed. Tokyo: Meicho Shuppan.
- KIDŌ Saizō 木藤才蔵 and IMOTO Nōichi 井本農一, eds.
1961 *Rengaronshū haironshū* 連歌論集俳論集 [Collection of treatises on linked verse and *haikai*]. (*Nihon koten bungaku taikei*, v. 66.) Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- NAKAMURA, Hajime
1964 *Ways of thinking of Eastern peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan*. Honolulu, Hawaii: East-West Center Press.
- RAMANUJAN, A. K., transl.
1973 *Speaking of Śiva*. Baltimore: Penguin Books.
- TAMURA Yoshirō 田村芳郎
1969 *Nihon bukkyō shi nyūmon* 日本仏教史入門 [Introduction to the history of Japanese Buddhism]. Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten.
1973 Tendai hongaku shisō gaisetsu 天台本覚思想概説 [An outline of Tendai hongaku thought]. In *Tendai hongaku ron* 天台本覚論 [Tendai treatises on hongaku thought]. Tada Kōryū 多田厚隆, ed. (*Nihon shisō taikei*, v. 9.) Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.