

# Two Types of Civilization: Transcendental and Hermeneutic

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Some people refer to the Japanese way of thinking as ambiguous or dualistic. This article attempts another approach by introducing a distinction between two modes of human reflexive thinking, that is, the transcendental mode and the hermeneutic mode. Some philosophical preparation is provided. Two attempts to explain Japanese culture, one by Eastern religion in general and the other by Confucianism, are critically examined. Finally the article suggests an alternative interpretation of Japanese culture in terms of relative dominance of the hermeneutic mode vis-à-vis transcendental mode.

*Keywords:* TRANSCENDENCE, HERMENEUTICS, WORLD (HISTORIC) RELIGION, CONFUCIANISM, BUDDHISM. IE (家), MURA (村), SHINRAN (親鸞).

## THREE WAYS TO EXPLAIN CULTURE

Many people have argued that the Japanese way of thinking is characterized by indulgence in dualism, lack of logical clarity, absence of abstract principles, and ambiguity. Although these characterizations may not be totally off the point, they do not seem appropriate because, among other things, they involve a host of basic yet controversial concepts such as ambiguity, abstraction, logic, etc., and so will create confusion rather than clarity unless some consistent theoretical (or philosophical) basis is provided. This essay will attempt to offer a consistent basis for properly locating various lines of reasoning, and to characterize Japanese culture in a hopefully more convincing way.

To start with, let us define "culture" in its widest sense as those patterns of actions shared by the members of a society. Here, action means not only visible, physical behaviors but also invisible, mental activities. In other words, culture is a world-image or, rather, a basic image fabric commonly shared by the people in a society. Therefore, culture in this sense will maintain and control, latently via people's minds, the fundamental patterns of action in a society. In contem-

porary philosophical terms, culture may be defined as a latent basic structure common to a people's *Lebenswelt* (life-world) or *monde vécu* (literally, the world as lived or experienced).

As many twentieth-century philosophers have argued, our world-image (life-world) consists of *objects*, that is, those entities which attract our concern or attention. And the objects include *self*, *others*, and *things* (that is, other entities than the self or others; things include *body*), though the self is a special kind of object, as we will discuss below in more detail. Accordingly, action may be broken down into the following three categories:

- Thing-oriented action (or nature-oriented action; nature includes body)
- Other-oriented action
- Self-oriented action (or reflexive action)

Correspondingly, culture shows the following three aspects: nature-focused, other-focused, and reflexive. The nature-focused aspect may also be called technological culture in its broadest sense (including preindustrial techniques and know-how). The other-focused aspect may be called organizational culture in a broad sense (including even the most primordial group activities). The reflexive aspect often manifests itself as expressive culture or culture in the narrow sense (e.g. religion, philosophy, literature, arts, music, etc.). Although actually these three aspects intertwine, they do not always share the same pattern. They interact at least through reflexive interpretation (expressive culture such as philosophy or "social sciences") yet they are not always fully integrated. In discussing culture, we need to differentiate these three aspects.

For example, there are three approaches to explaining "Japanese culture." First, emphasis may be laid on a nature-focused explanation; for example, the climatological model, the geopolitical model, a model emphasizing the characteristics of Japanese riziculture, and so forth. Second, there can be diverse other-focused explanations or organizational culture models; for example, the social exchange model elaborated by Befu or Murakami (Ruth Benedict's analysis in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* also belongs to this category), Nakane Chie's vertical society model, Kumon-Sato-Murakami *ie-mura* hypothesis, the familism model, and many others.<sup>1</sup> Third, there can also be explanations in terms of reflexive action; for example, a model stressing a religio-

<sup>1</sup> See Murakami, Yasusuke (1988): A Tale about Interpenetration of Social Exchange. A manuscript prepared for JPERC Conference III held in January, 1988. Also see Murakami, Yasusuke (1984): *Ie* Society as a Pattern of Civilization. *Journal of Japanese Studies*, 10, No. 2, Summer 1984. This is an abridged and modified version of Murakami, Y., Kumon, S. and Sato, S. (1979): *Bunmei to shūteno Ie Shakai* (*Ie* Society as a Pattern of Civilization). Chūō-kōron-sha, Tokyo. (in Japanese). 村上泰亮ほか『文明としてのイエ社会』中央公論社. Benedict, Ruth (1946): *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture*. Houghton & Mifflin, New York. Befu Harumi (1980): A Critique of the Group Model of Japanese Society. *Social Analysis*, 5/6, Dec. 1980.

philosophical difference between the East and the West, a model focusing on the Chinese and particularly Confucian influence, a model emphasizing the legacy from the tribal past of Japan, and so forth. In most of the current arguments, these three types of explanation are intermixed in an *ad hoc* manner. Three types should be distinguished, although it will turn out to be impossible to account for Japanese culture by any single one of these three types, as many *nihonjinron* (Japanese nationality) arguments attempt to do.

This essay as a whole will focus on the reflexive action model that is, in effect, the religio-philosophical explanation. Section 2 will introduce some philosophical preliminaries of my own. Sections 3 to 5 will examine three differing religio-philosophical explanations which often appear in the relevant literature. However, my argument will finally have to touch on the other two types of model, as in section 5.

## PHILOSOPHICAL PRELIMINARIES

### Lebenswelt and reflexion

The following explanation may be called “phenomenological” in a broad sense. When we are living an ordinary everyday life, each of us is experiencing what might be called *a naive state of consciousness*. In this naive state, our attention is mainly oriented to objects (*Gegenstand* in Husserlian terms or “thought objects” in Alfred Schutz’s term).<sup>2</sup> While doing so, we take it for granted that we have our own bodies and can somehow communicate with other people such as spouses, parents, children, lovers, friends, neighbors, and finally all other human beings. We have no difficulty in distinguishing our own body, other people, and things other than body and others. And what is most important, while we are intent on the objects facing us, we do not concern ourselves with the so-called “inner self.” In ordinary, everyday conduct, we forget about our “selves.” This is the world-image which emerges in our naive everyday consciousness—what Edmund Husserl called *Lebenswelt* or Maurice Merleau-Ponty preferred to call *monde vécu*.<sup>3</sup>

This *Lebenswelt* (life-world) may also be viewed as a world consisting of contexts. No sensation, perception, conception, judgement, etc. is ever isolated but always occurs in some context (consisting of other sensations, perceptions, etc.) which is, in its turn, placed in another, wider context that also has a still wider context.... Thus, the *Lebenswelt* is taken to be a rough, overall image or interpretation that often centers on particular objects yet extends toward an

2 Husserl, Edmund (1954): *Die Krisis der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie, Husserliana VI*. Martinus Nijhof, Haag. Schutz, Alfred (1967): *Collected Works I*. Martinus Nijhof, Haag, p.3.

3 Husserl, Edmund (1954): *Op. cit.* Merleau-Ponty, Maurice (1945): *Phénoménologie de la perception*. Edition Gallimard, Paris.

ever-broadening horizon. The *Lebenswelt* is thus a whole which cannot be reduced to an aggregation of elements such as sensation.

The characteristics of the *Lebenswelt* may be summarized as a set of the following premises:

*The premise of intentionality (in the sense of Brentano-Husserl):* Any naive consciousness is oriented to (or intent on) objects. That is, the naive consciousness is unaware of the inner self *per se*.

*The premise of body-ness:* Any naive consciousness perceives its own body as distinct from other types of objects.

*The premise of other-ness (or premise of intersubjectivity):* Any naive consciousness believes itself able to communicate with other people or, more exactly, other conscious beings.

*The premise of contextual totality (Heidegger's *Bewandtnisganzheit*):* Any naive consciousness is a non-closed whole consisting of multi-layered contexts, that is, an overall image with a latently ever-broadening horizon.<sup>4</sup>

These premises are quite common in the phenomenological literature. All major past philosophical or epistemological theories started from some doubt about these premises and came to create such opposing views as idealism vs. realism or rationalism vs. empiricism, depending on where the doubts are focused. However, none of these philosophical endeavors can ever be possible without naive consciousness or *Lebenswelt* in this phenomenological sense. In the last phase of the twentieth century, when we face conflicts among diverse world views, the confrontation between science and anti-science, the contrast between East and West, etc., we should probably return to the very origin of all human thought, that is, the naive state of consciousness.

However, these four premises cannot exhaust all essential features of *human* consciousness in its full modality. No human consciousness ever remains naive but always *reflects* on itself. Reflexion in the present context is to be understood in the broadest sense. In fact, any effort (including ours in this essay) to describe the naive state of consciousness is already an example of reflexion. For to describe the naive consciousness, we need another, higher-level consciousness that can look over, re-scan, or reconstruct the previous, naive one. Some element of reflexion can be found in any human expressive effort from everyday conversation up to science, philosophy, and so forth. Even when not outwardly expressed, human consciousness is always engaged in reflexive activity. In the most general terms, we may define reflexion as "self-reference" by human consciousness.<sup>5</sup> Thus, we must present another crucial premise concerning

4 Heidegger, Martin (1957): *Sein und Zeit*. 8 Auflage. Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, p.86ff.

5 Similarly, Luhmann, Niklas defined reflexion as *Selbst-Thematisierung*. See Luhmann (1975): *Selbst-Thematisierungen des Gesellschaftssystems*. *Soziologische Aufklärung* 2, Westdeutscher Verlag, p.73.

human consciousness:

*The premise of reflexion:* Human consciousness is inherently reflexive, that is, always refers to itself, giving rise to a successive process of reinterpretation. In reflexion, the inner self reveals itself.

The human being is a reflexive animal. In fact, there exists no *completely* naive consciousness. The reality is that any consciousness has already experienced some reflexion and is always headed toward further reflexion. In this sense, naiveness is always relative.

In the premise just stated, consciousness refers to consciousness. However, these two "consciousnesses" are not the same. To be more exact, one should say, "*post-reflexive* consciousness refers to *pre-reflexive* consciousness." In the eyes of post-reflexive consciousness, naive or pre-reflexive consciousness appears as an interpretative image in which the (pre-reflexive) self faces (or is intent on) various objects such as its own body, others, and other objects. In this way, the inner (pre-reflexive) self is now revealed. On the other hand, however, the post-reflexive self has not yet been revealed—just as the pre-reflexive self was not revealed prior to reflexion. To state this more precisely, the post-reflexive self is merely the ongoing actuality on which post-reflexive consciousness is performing its conduct of reflexion. Therefore, at the time of reflexion, we embrace the double meaning of the self: the one is the explicit pre-reflexive self while the other is the latent post-reflexive self.

There is a well-known analogy according to which the self is actor as well as audience. To apply it to the present context, the pre-reflexive self is an actor on the stage, while the post-reflexive self is the audience or even the director. When an actor is wholeheartedly playing his role, he is merely reacting or interacting with other actors or with the stage setting, scarcely aware of himself, and only latently conscious of the whole stage. On the other hand, in the eyes of the audience or the stage director, the actor is one component of the whole stage or an object to be evaluated from the viewpoint of the whole drama. It is interesting to note that a good actor is partly a director himself, and that a good director should have the imaginative ability to feel as though he were actually performing on the stage. As this analogy suggests, the self is a kind of Chamissoian doppelgänger. We cannot tell which figure of the self is the truer one. In a sense, both figures are shadows, yet this shadowiness does not imply that the notion of the self is unimportant.

Reflexion may be classified into several types. An important distinction is the one between

"overall reflexion" and  
"partial reflexion."

By overall reflexion, we mean that a range of reflexion is extended to *all objects*

including the inner self (which are now explicitly located in the pre-reflexive consciousness). In humanistic studies as well as in most social (scientific?) analyses, reflexive activity is always concerned with the inner self, so that the reflexion in these cases tends to be "overall." On the other hand, partial reflexion means reflexions restricted to only a part of the *Lebenswelt*. An important subclass of partial reflexion is reflexion which is not concerned with the inner self. Typically, natural science is a partial and self-exclusive reflexive activity. In natural science, the self is placed outside the range of reflexion and, as a result, treated *as if* it were an agent that transcends the *Lebenswelt*, or a transcendental cognitive agent. More concretely, each scientist is an observer uninvolved in the world he analyzes: he is a pseudo-transcendental agent. In order to reduce an overall reflexion to a partial, self-exclusive reflexion, we often use a philosophical construct usually called the "Cartesian approach." This approach will be discussed further below. Because of the strong Cartesian influence, most natural scientists seem unaware of the partiality inherent in their interpretation of the world.

Overall reflexion (or non-self-exclusive reflexion in general) may be further broken down into two categories, depending on which figure of the doppelganger is to be viewed as more truthful. That is to say, one either stresses the post-reflexive figure, so that the self is primarily separated from the *Lebenswelt* as a transcendental cognitive agent: or emphasizes the pre-reflexive figure, so that the self is re-embedded into the *Lebenswelt* as one of its elements. Thus, overall reflexion can be classified into the two categories which may be called, respectively,

"transcendental reflexion" and  
"hermeneutic reflexion."

The reason for adopting these terms will be given later.

### **Transcendental reflexion**

In the case of transcendental reflexion, the self soars above the original, naive consciousness. The self now discovers the pettiness and relativity of the naive state. To this transcendental self, the "world" no longer consists of objects in the original sense but of a host of world-images. In the eyes of the transcendental self, the pre-reflexive consciousness it watches is only one actualized possibility among the whole array of possible world-images. Returning to our analogy, the director imagines innumerable possible interpretations of the drama. Thus, the transcendental self faces (or is intent on) a system of possible interpretative systems, a system of systems, or a meta-system. Here the same thing occurs as before. The transcendental self or meta-self *per se* is incapable of revealing itself. If the meta-self is to be truly revealed, it requires a meta-meta-self that looks from above, and this process of transcendence will escalate infinitely.

This process of successive transcendence may be called the process of upgrad-

ing or the “vertical” process. Some attempts have been made to formulate this type of “transcendental or vertical reflexion.” For example, a Buddhist doctrine called the *Vijñānavāda* (consciousness only) school pictured a hierarchy of consciousness, from lower to higher, and exhorted the practitioner to ascend this hierarchy.<sup>6</sup> An obvious problem with this process is that it forces an infinite escalation probably beyond the capacity of the human intellect. Therefore, this cognitive escalation must give way either to gnostic training such as *yogacara* training, or to the introduction of an absolute being that can arrest this infinite, upward regression. The “historic religions” that emerged in several places on earth in the first half of the first millennium B. C. always included attempts in this direction.

“Historic religion” is a concept coined by Robert Bellah who maintains that religion evolves according to the following stages:<sup>7</sup>

- primitive religion
- archaic religion
- historic religion

According to Bellah’s argument, “archaic religion” is a belief system based on cosmological mythology that explains the origin of the world and society, particularly the line of descent from ancestor gods to existent human beings. Archaic religion existed everywhere in the world before the emergence of historic religion/philosophy. Examples were numerous, such as the religious systems of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Indus valley, Mexico, Mayan and Incan civilization, and so forth. Early belief systems in pre-Chou China, early Hinduism in the Vedic period, or ancient Judaism may also belong to this category. These societies were, in the words of Henry Frankfort, societies “before philosophy.”<sup>8</sup> Then, in the early part of the first millennium B. C. which Karl Jaspers called the “Axial-Age,” there emerged the systematization of transcendental thinking in the East Mediterranean region, the Indian subcontinent, and the Yellow River Valley.

Examples are Greek philosophy including Socrates and Plato, later Hinduism including Gautama Buddha, and the so-called Hundred Scholars including Confucius and Mencius. These systematic transcendentalist teachings gave birth to the historic religions such as Buddhism, Confucianism, and, at a much later date, Christianity and then Islamic belief.

Historic religion means, in the first place, the systematization of transcen-

6 As far as I know, the oldest example of this argument is that by Dignaga in early-sixth-century India. Also see, Moksākaragupta, *Tarkabhāṣā* (Words of Logic).

7 Bellah, Robert, N. (1970): *Beyond Belief: Essays on Religion in a Post-Traditional World*. Harper & Row, New York, p.29ff.

8 Frankfort, Henry, Frankfort, H. A., Wilson, John, A., and Jakobsen, Thorkild (1946): *Before Philosophy: The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*. The University of Chicago Press, Chicago.

dental reflexion which itself is no more than a meditative activity. Secondly, and more importantly, historic religion means the introduction of the *absolutely* transcendental, that is, of either a divine being which arrests the infinite escalation or an ultimate truth that warrants a convergence of escalation. This configuration brought about, for the first time in human history, a crystalization of the concept of the sacred "other world," that is, the world that transcends the mundane "this world." In earlier religions, such as archaic or primitive religion, the sacred and the mundane interpenetrate, and gods are not dissociated from human beings. Historic religion not merely initiated transcendental thinking but also, by presenting the notion of the absolute, set a boundary to human transcendental efforts. Generally, human beings, or at least those endowed with ordinary ability, cannot perfectly carry through the transcendental way of thinking. In other words, religion functions as a popular prescription for transcendental thinking or, in Nietzsche's rancorous term, "platonism for the populace."<sup>9</sup> Conversely, transcendentalism *without god* will arouse limitless anxiety in the human mind. Examples are existentialist philosophers such as Martin Heidegger (his notion of death) or Jean-Paul Sartre (his notion of nothing-ness).<sup>10</sup>

The Cartesian approach is one way of dealing with this infinite escalation. The approach is symbolized by the well-known Cartesian dictum: *cogito ergo sum*—I think therefore I exist. The essence of "thinking" is, in the case of Descartes, "doubting." Thus, the dictum should be: *dubito ergo sum*—I doubt, therefore I exist. In other words, I can doubt everything, but I cannot *doubt* the doubting I (because otherwise a contradiction would occur). However, this is a typical example of the confusion of order. The first doubt is "object language" while the italicized *doubt* is "meta language." Therefore, the statement "I can *doubt* the doubting I" is no contradiction. The self that *doubts* and the self that doubts are the doppelgangers of our previous argument. Descartes chose to treat the meta-self that *doubts* as intrinsic and attributed to it the status of a transcendental cognitive agent. Thus, the naive self that doubts evaporates, so to speak, leaving behind a "body." Thus, Descartes broke the world down into two categories, the transcendental self (*mens*) and objectified things (*corpus*). This is the famous Cartesian subject/object dichotomy.

By taking this dichotomy as divinely ordained, Descartes contained the process of transcendental regression within the domain of human capability. The fear and anxiety inherent in the human mind were dissolved or at least very much attenuated. In this way, Cartesianism ushered in the enormous development of (truncated) transcendentalism in modern Western civilization. A historic religion called Christianity gave birth to Cartesian philosophy and, indirectly through Cartesian ideas, brought forth the supremacy of human

9 Nietzsche, Friedrich (1886): *Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorwort.*

10 Heidegger, Martin (1957): *Op. cit.* Sartre, Jean-Paul (1943): *L'être et le néant*, Editions Gallimard, Paris.

cognition (→ individualism) as well as limitless pursuit of objectified things (→ science). Modern civilization would not have come into being without Christian-Cartesian transcendentalism.

It may be noted that modern industrial society in the West outgrew, in many ways, the Christian-Cartesian tradition. Since the end of the nineteenth century, anti-Cartesian arguments have been mounting even in Europe. All major twentieth-century thinking, even pragmatism or analytical philosophy, includes some anti-Cartesian elements. However, modern Western thinking does not seem really to override this deep-rooted stance. For example, Husserl's phenomenology started as if it stood for an anti-Cartesian approach but finally arrived at another thesis of the transcendental cognitive agent or, in Husserl's words, "new Cartesian ideas."<sup>11</sup> The later anti-Cartesian trend from Merleau-Ponty to Gilles Deleuze also turns out to end up with only a negative assertion such as "déconstruction." The Christian legacy seems to make it very difficult to go beyond the Cartesian tradition.

### **Hermeneutic reflexion**

However, it is a misconception, though a widely held one, that transcendental reflexion is the only possible mode of reflexion. One may also adopt the "hermeneutic reflexion" mentioned above. In this second type of reflexion, the higher-order self is re-embedded into the system it has just transcended, and superimposed, so to speak, on the lower-order self. The transcendental self *per se* dissolves, while the self (thus superimposed) finds its new location or status at the original level of interpretation. From the self-centered viewpoint—that is, if the self is treated as a fixed point—the self may be said to change its interpretation of the world. This successive process of re-interpretation is typified by each person's stream of life experiences or by the history of an individual life itself.

Of course, even a mediocre life includes from time to time a moment of transcendental reflexion. When faced with a shocking experience, everyone becomes a philosopher. In other words, when some unpredictable event befalls him, everyone is forced to look at the world from a new angle radically different from the old one and, moreover, will feel a potential urge to compare the new world image and the old and to pursue a general framework that transcends the two images. Time as well as ability being limited, however, an average person cannot stay a philosopher but has to be carried away in the stream of adaptive re-interpretation at the level of everyday living—probably with a lot of lingering uneasiness of mind. Nevertheless, this second type of reflexion should not be taken to be merely a degenerate case of transcendental reflexion.

The second type of reflexion is deeply related to what is called "hermeneutics." Although the definition of hermeneutics differs from person to

11 Husserl, Edmund (1929): *Cartesianische Meditationen—eine Einleitung in die Phänomenologie. Husserliana I*, Martinus Nijhof, Haag.

person, even after its modern restorer Wilhelm Dilthey, originally it was understood as an interpretation or *Nacherleben* (retro-experience) of the great writings of the past (especially the Bible) in the context of the present. In other words, hermeneutic action is to impose and embed a world-image from some past work onto, for example, one's own world-image. If the past author and I share some sphere of communication (which our "premise of otherness" guarantees), hermeneutics is a natural extension of the second type of reflexion. In this way and this way only, each human being can have a history beyond his scope or lifetime. The history of a collectivity such as a nation, a region, a family, etc., and, above all, the history of ideas, thus exemplifies the same pattern of reflexion. In this sense, we may call the second type "hermeneutic or historiological reflexion."

In hermeneutic reflexion, two figures of the *doppelgänger* (the self) are not separate but overlap each other in a fluctuating manner. Yet we now face the problem that there is no higher-order cognitive agent entitled to appraise and validate the on-going effort of interpretation. This implies that the interpretative effort must and can validate itself. This argument is well known since Martin Heidegger as the problem of "hermeneutic circle." However, Heidegger maintains:

*"But if we see this circle as a vicious one and look out for ways of avoiding it, even if we just 'sense' it as an inevitable imperfection, then the act of understanding has been misunderstood from the ground up .... What is decisive is not to get out of the circle but to enter into it in the right way .... This circle is...the expression of the existential fore-structure of Dasein itself.... In the circle is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing.... Because understanding...is Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being, the ontological presuppositions of historiological knowledge transcend in principle the idea of rigour in the most exact sciences."*<sup>12</sup>

While transcendental reflexion tends to follow an infinite upgrading process toward the sacred "other world," hermeneutic reflexion remains in the mundane "this world" and tries to endlessly re-interpret the life-world. To eyes accustomed to historic religion or modern science, this process in which one interpretation demands another may look like merely a vicious circle. However, this infinite circle is not meaningless. Each human being re-interprets the world not simply by looking into his own experience but also by trying to "retro-experience" other persons' life-worlds, particularly those expressed in linguistic form. Through this process, the self absorbs and assimilates, to some extent, the others as something more than mere *objects*. This process of re-interpretation is, therefore, that of mutual interaction between one self and another, which might

<sup>12</sup> Heidegger, Martin (1957): *Op. cit.*, p.153.

lead to a discovery of some common denominator. *Gemeinsinn*, *bon sens*, or common sense in the sense of Hans-Georg Gadamer, Paul Ricoeur, and others are expressions aimed at this something in common.<sup>13</sup> As far earlier examples, we may also recall the concept of *esprit de finesse* by Pascal or *Urteilkraft* or *Geschmack* by Kant. More general notions such as tradition, taste, *Bildung* (approximately, liberal arts), etc. are other examples. All these ideas share an interest in *concrete* human experience in its *totality*.

Hermeneutics is usually understood as belonging to the realm of artistic, literary, or aesthetic concern, as seen in the example of Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode*. Indeed, the aesthetic concern represents the core feature of hermeneutic reflexion. For the feeling of pleasure in beautiful objects is born and diffused in the richness of naive consciousness and nowhere else. This view was shared by Kant:

“Pleasure or displeasure, not being modes of cognition, cannot be defined in themselves, and can be felt but not understood.”<sup>14</sup>

On the other hand, however, as the transcendental cognitive subject rises level after level and its world-image becomes more and more abstract, details of the life-world are washed away and richness is replaced by colorless abstraction. Richness of pleasure or beauty is filtered out through the process of transcendental reflexion. This is exemplified by Max Weber's efforts to make social analyses a “science.” The world-image under the restriction of his *Wertfreiheit* or *Objektivität* is a monochrome, depersonalized world. The world-image obtained after Husserl's phenomenological reduction (or *Geltungsvariation*) is another neutral world. Transcendentalist arguments, whether by Weber or Husserl, cannot explain why we feel beauty. It follows that historic religion as a form of transcendentalism cannot acknowledge the feeling of pleasure or beauty as being essential. For example, no historic religion in its sublime form permits idolatry. Humanity in the transcendental understanding is to be best expressed in abstract ideas, while humanity in the hermeneutic sense is an image running through our life-worlds in their totality, including all concrete details and shadows. The following lines by Ricoeur may be a good summation of our argument so far.

Reflexion [transcendental reflexion] aims at grasping the self in its existential efforts....Here, reflexion requires interpretation [of the human

13 Gadamer, Hans-Georg (1975): *Wahrheit und Methode: Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 4 Auflage. Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr. Ricoeur, Paul (1965): *De l'interprétation, essai sur Freud*. Editions du Seuil, Paris.

14 Kant, Immanuel (1790): *Vorrede zur ersten Auflage, Kritik der Urteilkraft*. VIII, 20:232. The English translation is from Guyer, Paul (1982): *Pleasure and Society in Kant's Theory of Taste, Essays in Kant's Aesthetics*, Cohen, Ted, & Guyer, Paul (ed.), The University of Chicago Press, Chicago. p.29.

products testifying to these efforts] and tends to reappear as hermeneutics.<sup>15</sup>

If we may dare to oversimplify, historic religion symbolizes transcendental reflexion, whereas history (history as told and written or what might be called historiology) represents hermeneutic reflexion. Prior to historic religion, religion and history (mythological history, in this case) were fused. After historic religion, however, religion came to depend on transcendental ideas (god or a cosmological principle) but no longer required historical justification. (Therefore, Bellah's term "historic religion" is, in fact, paradoxical in the sense that it means a religion in the era in which history gained independence from religion.) Regardless of how history develops, the validity of religion is never damaged. History can at most serve religion as an eschatological story. As is well known, Indian civilization, which created the most thorough-going transcendental philosophy, had very little interest in history. It is probably "profane" for human beings to be involved in writing their own history.

Thus, religion (historic religion, to be exact) and history are two different axes and, if not totally unrelated, ought nevertheless to be distinguished. In reality, both types of reflexion work and interact in the mind of each human being. Even historic religion in its actual form is a mixture of transcendentalism and hermeneutics. For example, Confucianism is by far more hermeneutic than Hindu thought.

It is important to note here that religious practices and historiological attempts, at least as observed in actual experience, both embrace their own problems. The initiation or reformation of a religion requires an enormous (transcendental) reflexive ability. However, as the initiator's or reformer's ability cannot be limitless, this reflexion cannot achieve full universality. Hence, there arise diversified doctrines on the level of praxis. Intense conflicts, therefore, arose among diverse historic religions or between orthodoxy and heterodoxy in the same religion. It is indeed ironic that much misery and bloodshed resulted from religions which should have relieved the anxieties in life. This irony symbolizes a serious contradiction inherent in the transcendental orientation. Transcendentalism is, in its essence, progressive or revolutionary in that it leads to unrelenting pursuit of *abstract* ideas.

On the other hand, historiology has its own limit because its perspective has to be restricted to the *concrete* experiences (including past literary or artistic works, etc.) it has encountered or, more concretely, to the experiences of a particular society or group. In this sense, our interest in history is originally conservative or traditionalistic. It can be otherwise only if it is subjugated to some transcendental principle. Will we lose our interest in history unless we commit ourselves to such abstract ideas as millenarianism, evolutionism, Marxism, etc.? The answer seems definitely to be "no."

15 Ricœur, Paul (1965): *Op. cit.*, p.53. Translated into English by the present author.

In this way, religion and history (tradition) are the two axes running through the life of humankind. At least in actual practice, the two axes embrace each other's shortcomings so that they are relativized. The general understanding up to now is that historic religion is the highest achievement that mankind has ever attained. As we have been arguing, however, historic religion is not absolute. At the same time, the pursuit of history, tradition, *Bildung*, or taste has no absolute basis, either. To express this relativity differently, whereas there can be some historic religion across several social traditions, there should be some tradition or *Bildung* that can be shared by the societies of different religious beliefs. If this is not the case, the ties among mankind would be too weak in the global society of today, in which the legacies of opposing historic religions (or diverse versions thereof) are still influential. For example, otherwise, how would we be able to define freedom of belief or ecumenism?

### EXPLANATION STRESSING THE INFLUENCE OF EASTERN THOUGHT IN GENERAL

As already mentioned, Japanese culture in this essay means culture in the broadest sense, including the patterns of action observed in the contemporary Japanese economy and political system. Thus, any explanation of Japanese culture should answer the following two seemingly contradictory questions: (1) Why has modernization (= industrialization) been achieved more quickly in Japan than in other non-Western societies, and (2) Why is the pattern of Japanese modernization different from that in Western societies? This essay as a whole will focus on the religio-philosophical explanation. This focus does not mean, however, that the religio-philosophical model has a universal primacy vis-à-vis the nature-focused model or the organization-focused model. In the final section, we will characterize Japanese culture by its relativization of transcendentalism.

Let us first examine the model emphasizing the contrast between Western (Judeo-Christian) historic religion and Eastern historic religions (including Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism). Japanese culture is, of course, regarded as being under the influence of Eastern historic religions. The most basic contrast is related to differing concepts of god or different assumptions regarding the limit of transcendental reflexion. In the Judeo-Christian religious tradition, the divinity preceded and created the world. Particularly, the divinity created man in his own image. Thus, man is accorded a privileged status above that of any other mode of existence. From this position follows the anthropocentric attitude which may well lead to opposition to, or conquest of, nature. Moreover, as each human being is created as an image of the divinity and thus is entitled to directly communicate with the divinity, each human individual has an inviolable right and reason for existence. Under the Western religious influence, individualism is deeply rooted in the interpretation of

ultimate reality.

On the other hand, all Eastern religions give primacy to a cosmological principle such as *Brahman* in India or Heaven in China. In this Eastern case, the cosmological principle is placed high above ordinary human cognition, ensuring only the ultimate, if practically unattainable, convergence of reflexive efforts in the transcendentalist sense. (Greek philosophy from Thales to Aristotle is not a religion in that it did not urge any specific religious practices, yet it has every characteristic of transcendental reflexion and belongs to the Eastern version rather than the Western because it was concerned with the cosmic principle but not with the notion of a monotheistic creator god.) In the Eastern creation myths, cosmological order first emerged from chaos, and then there appeared divine beings such as the Olympian gods in Greece, Vishnu and Shiva in India, or Panku or other divine figures in China (or Izanagi-Izanami in Japan). The cosmological principle transcends anything that belongs to the realm of human sensation and perception, for the human perception of god, particularly if god is personified, is intrinsically imperfect and even misleading. All Eastern historic religions are originally religions that do not rely on the concept of god. The "god" in this Eastern context is not god in the Judeo-Christian sense but an intermediate being between the absolute and the human (e.g. the Olympian gods, Buddha in India, ancient sage kings in China, etc.).

In Eastern religion, human beings are only one mode of existence comparable to other modes such as animals, plants, or even inanimate beings. Thus, in Eastern mythologies, folktales, etc. (including Greek myths), human beings can change into animals or plants. In contrast, such transformations, most in the Judeo-Christian view, are of the devil. The Hindu notion of *samsara* (transmigration) is a typical manifestation of this view. Each human individual is caught up in the cosmological order and cannot claim an independent reason for existence. In other words, there can be no intrinsic religious foundation for individualism in the East, though individualistic behavior can often be found in everyday life. In this way, the contrast between Western religion and Eastern religion can give rise to the contrast between conquest of nature and fusion with it on the level of nature-oriented action, and those between individualism and collectivism on the level of other-oriented action.

The Western and Eastern religions were both the products of transcendental thinking. Differences arose as to how the infinite escalation is to be dealt with. In the Western type, transcendental reflexion is circumscribed as well as contained by the concept of god, while in the Eastern type the upgrading process is, in principle, open to the infinite and converges to nirvana.

This East-West contrast is most clearly shown by the outstanding philosopher on each side. After the Reformation, Christian ideas were freed from the control of the church and directly took root in the mind of the public in Europe. It is Descartes, among others, who paradigmatically represents the Western religio-philosophical tradition, particularly in this phase after the emergence of Protestantism. The Cartesian dualism of *mens/corpus, cogitatio/extensio*, or

subject/object reflected the notion of man's unique relationship with god and provided a conceptual framework to establish man's supremacy as a cognitive agent. Man was thus liberated, as he was not in India, from endless reflexive meditation and could turn his efforts to cognition of the material world. In these cognitive efforts, *corpus* (matter) is decomposed into atoms which only have extension and movement—the so-called mechanic approach. *Mens* (mind) is embodied in each self that “thinks and therefore exists”—hence individualism. On the one hand, this Cartesian philosophy provided those patterns of nature (*corpus*)-oriented action that gave birth to analytical thinking about and manipulation of nature; in short, modern science and technology. On the other hand, Cartesian thought ushered in those patterns of human interaction that would nurture individualistic behavior as well as a certain system compatible with that behavior, that is, the system based on contract and competition. The combined outcome is modern industrial society as we see it today.

Descartes' Eastern counterparts are probably such Mahayana Buddhist philosophers such as Nagarjuna in the second century or Vasubandhu in the fourth century.<sup>16</sup> More than a millennium before Descartes, these Indian philosophers developed incisive and profound criticism on a Cartesian-like notion of matter, self, dualism of subject/object, or even atomistic thinking. Their famous notion of *sunyātā* (emptiness) means, in terms of our argument so far, that any level of cognition is to be transcended by some higher-order cognition and, therefore, is itself empty. Thus, Vasubandhu argued that everything is a phenomenon in our consciousness. In this, he sounds phenomenological. As these Buddhist philosophers clearly recognized, transcendental cognition has to surpass the human intellectual ability and to enter the realm of Buddha (which originally means one who has arrived at the ultimate truth). One consequence is that some Buddhist sects (including the latter-day Zen sect) emphasized more *yogacara*-type training than intellectual learning. At any rate, the inherent tendency in Buddhist philosophy is infinite pursuit of transcendental being and rejection of return to the mundane. Every secular desire or attachment is thus to be discarded. From here, we cannot find any passage to industrialization.

Obviously, this East-West contrast cannot be taken as the key to understanding the Japanese way of thinking, at least in the period of modernization. The Japanese people were indeed influenced by Mahayana Buddhism and its underlying philosophies. For example, regular priests in Japanese Buddhist institutions were obliged to study Nagarjuna or Vasubandhu as early as the eighth century, and the founders of later Kamakura new Buddhism seem to have

16. See Bhavavivēka (6th century): *Pajñāpradīpa: A Commentary on Nagarjuna's Madhyama-kasāstra* (Essays on Middle View), Chap. 18. Vasubandhu (5th century): *Madhyānta-vibhāga-bhāṣya: A Commentary on Asanga's Madhyānta-vibhāga* (Distinction between the Middle and Both Extremes). Vasubandhu (5th century): *Vimsatikā vijñaptimātrāsiddhih* (Twenty Verses Proving that the World is only Consciousness).

always had in mind these philosophical doctrines. At the more popular level, various Mahayana Buddhist notions, although vulgarized, left an indelible imprint on the everyday life of the Japanese. We will discuss this point in more detail below.

However, a natural assumption which arises from the East-West contrast is that the pattern of Eastern thinking is basically dissonant with the prime products of Western thinking, such as industrialization and science. A powerful piece of evidence to support this conjecture is the fact that the major centers of Eastern civilization (India and China) have to struggle much harder than peripheral civilizations in the effort to industrialize. This suggests that the crucial factor in Japan's success story is not a universal legacy central to Eastern religio-philosophical thought itself but some more specific—or even Japan-specific—element that could ignite industrialization *in spite of* the religio-philosophical influences from mainland Asia. Once industrialization was under way and had gathered enough momentum, the religio-philosophical tradition would affect industrialization in its modality or even in its direction. But this does not mean that the Eastern intellectual tradition is a main *explanans* for the success of Japanese industrialization. In this sense, the East-vs.-West model can only be auxiliary.

### CONFUCIANISM AS AN EXPLANATION

While the East-vs.-West model seems of limited relevance, a recent development is the emergence of a similar interpretation which may be called the "Confucianist model," although this model does not yet seem to be viewed as a serious academic topic.<sup>17</sup> An obvious reason for this new approach is the remarkable economic performance by such Asian NIEs as Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. All of these countries can be considered to share more or less the Chinese heritage and presumably the Confucian legacy. All (including Japan as its earliest successful such example) seem to be characterized by a capacity for hard work; zest for education; devotion to some type (differing from country to country) of group; and, more generally, by respect for social order and discipline. (Some people would add the habit of saving to this list but, in my opinion, it is highly debatable whether Confucianism exhorted frugality, even if it warned against excessive luxury.) It does indeed seem possible to associate these characteristics particularly with the Confucian tradition, among the various Eastern ways of thinking. Confucianism is secular, pragmatic, and hermeneutic in our sense if compared to Hinduism, which is more metaphysical, meditative, and transcendentalist.

However, it should first be noted that Confucianism has never dominated

17 For example, Vandermeersh, Leon (1986): *Le nouveau monde sinisé*. Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.

even China the way Christianity dominated Europe. Confucianism was not a religion that monopolized the power over people's minds but a kind of moral philosophy mingled with Buddhism, Taoism, or various folk beliefs, particularly at the popular level. In this limited way, however, Confucianism may be said to have provided Chinese society (or some societies nearby) with a certain consistent social framework. As such, Confucian ideas originally included two aspects. One aspect is related to the macro level, in the sense that the social and political order is to be based on Confucian moral principles and managed by scholar-bureaucrats who have mastered the quintessence of Confucian philosophy.

The second aspect is related to the micro level in the sense that each person should abide by Confucian virtues for the sake of his/her family (*jia*) or clan (patrilineal descent group called *zong-zu*).

These two aspects give rise to opposite effects in industrialization. The first (macro) aspect is likely to be a serious obstacle to forging a societal consensus for industrialization because the scholar-bureaucrat leaders are unwilling to unleash the full momentum of commercial or economic activity and thereby promote industrial development. In their eyes, the economy should be subordinate to the political order. Entrepreneurs or engineers cannot be acknowledged as leaders of society according to Confucian ideology. Common people of little learning are not entitled to actively participate in those issues raised at the national level. On the other hand, the second (micro) aspect can provide the basis for a socio-psychological climate that strengthens the virtue of hard work, eager learning, and behavioral discipline, and consequently cultivates industrial managers as well as workers among the general public.

It may also be noted that even this second aspect includes one serious problem. Can devotion to ascriptive groups such as *jia* (a kind of extended family) or *zong-zu* (clan) be expanded or transformed into willingness to organize large-scale, achievement-oriented industrial firms? We can conceive of many interesting test cases. For example, there used to be a theory that overseas Chinese were excellent merchants but were not—at least not equally—devoted to manufacturing. Many reasons for this were advanced. For example, the overseas Chinese were politically fragile in their host countries in Asia, so that they had to invest in working capital rather than in factories. But the argument remains that commercial, not industrial activities may be more in harmony with the framework of families or clans. As another example, in present-day Korea, all large corporations seem to be controlled by able founders and their kin. Therefore, when leadership has to be passed on to the second generation, Korean corporations are likely to face a major test of how to transcend the limitations of family capitalism. These tests will have important implications for the comparative study of societies.

Thus, we may say that the Confucianist model involves two problems, although to a certain extent it can prepare some compatible micro basis for industrialization. One problem is how to overcome the traditional macro

political order, while the other is how to override the limitations of the ascriptive group-principle. Both problems are bound to be major determinants of the success or failure of industrialization.

With respect to the first problem, it cost these countries much time and political tragedy to overcome the traditional macro political order. Although one can try counter-factual arguments of "historical if," their disengagement from the former, restrictive political order was, in fact, the result of external coercion such as Japanese colonialism and its downfall, military-political incidents in World War Two, and exodus from former bases in mainland China, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, etc. These waves of political drama in East Asia were undoubtedly tragic experiences for the peoples involved but one cannot deny that such events removed traditional political shackles and prepared a transition to industrialization. An additional yet important factor is that these newly industrializing countries constantly face a challenge from unfriendly neighboring countries of the same racial origin—South vs. North Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan vs. mainland China, and, in a much weaker sense, Singapore vs. Malaysia. This tension obviously strengthens the motivation for intense development efforts. Parenthetically, it may be noted that mainland China faced a more difficult task because the traditional political order had more thoroughly pervaded the mainland. This seems to be a major reason why the immobile traditional order had to be replaced by an even more restrictive new, communist order. It remains to be seen whether this new order can overcome its own restrictions. All in all, the main factor underlying the newly industrializing countries of Asia is such combinations of political events, not the internal dynamic of Confucian culture. In this sense, the Confucian model also remains an auxiliary hypothesis in explaining the performance of such countries.

It is now evident that the Japanese case is different from the case of the newly industrializing countries of Asia. Certainly, Confucianism played an important part—though weaker than that of Buddhism—in Japanese thought from the seventh century on. However, even Tokugawa society was not really Confucian, although this last phase of premodern Japan is generally considered to be more visibly Confucian than any other preceding period in Japanese history. If the Tokugawa government had any orthodox ideology, it was more Confucian than Buddhist or Shintoist. Moreover, the schools or school-like facilities in Tokugawa Japan used Confucian textbooks. However, many Confucian norms were seriously violated in Tokugawa Japan: for example, as the seventeenth-century Confucian scholar Asami Keisai noted critically and as Korean scholars scornfully pointed out, the pervasive practice of adoption among the samurai stratum openly violated the Confucian norm.<sup>18</sup> For samurai, filial duty was often in conflict with loyalty to one's lord.

18 Asami, Keisai (1689): *Seiken igen*. 浅見綱齋(1689): 『靖獻遺言』.

More generally, the samurai virtue of valor and loyalty to military organization was in conflict with the Confucian ideal of civility and all-embracing harmonious order. From the thirteenth century onward, Japan was ruled by the samurai stratum and so samurai morality gradually diffused and translated into the moral code for the common people. For example, the well-known revenge of the forty-seven samurai was applauded by the common people and became a favorite dramatic theme for the urban audiences most of whom were non-samurai. The *shingaku* school, a body of moral teachings for the populace, was based not so much on Confucian ideas as on samurai morality. Of course, one can point out similarities between samurai morality and Confucianism, such as loyalty to the group, a sense of hierarchy, etc. Nevertheless, the difference is, in some cases, crucial. Samurai organization was basically achievement-oriented and artificial, although it often reached a high level of solidarity due to its long history, which included constant struggles with neighboring samurai organizations. On the other hand, family or clan in the Confucian context was, as exemplified in the Chinese *zong-zu* or Korean *munju*, an ascriptive and natural organization which could not easily adapt to the functional demands of industrial technology. The Japanese tradition of achievement-oriented organization was an obvious asset in giving shape to modern bureaucracy and firms. In this respect, one reason for the success of Japanese industrialization is that the society was not really Confucian.

Another notable difference between the Japanese case and the newly industrializing countries of Asia is the fragility of the traditional political order in Japan. After several incidents of gunboat diplomacy by Western powers, the Tokugawa regime disintegrated in a few decades and was easily overthrown in a few days of civil war. This was due to diverse reasons. For example, the legitimacy—religio-philosophical foundation—of the Tokugawa regime was basically fragile, and the balance between the power of samurai rulers and the influence of commercial interests was lop-sided toward the end of the Tokugawa regime. As will be argued in more detail below, this fragility can be traced back to the historical fact that the political order in Japan had never been unified with sufficient legitimacy. The traditional political order in Japan was structurally weak, while its organizational tradition at the level of societal substratum was more immediately compatible with the functional demands of industrialization. All in all, the explanation by the Confucianist model is not really applicable to the case of the new Asian powers, and still less so to the case of Japan.

## EXPLANATION STRESSING THE ALLEGEDLY INHERENT AMBIGUITY IN JAPANESE THINKING

### Japanese ambiguity?

Thus, the previous two models are not exactly to the point. The third model,

however, may be more relevant to the Japanese experience. This model emphasizes not so much the influence of major civilizations as the abortiveness of such influence. Particularly compared to the Western intellectual tradition, the Japanese way of thinking is, the model argues, deficient in clarity and integrity. In a word, it is ambiguous (note that the word ambiguity means double senses). To restate this proposition from the viewpoint of the study of comparative religions, the belief system in Japan has often been described as a curious mixture of "historic religion" (Buddhism or Confucianism) and "archaic religion" (often misnamed Shintoism).<sup>19</sup>

Historically, the early part of the first millennium B.C. was a clear dividing line between archaic religion and historic religions or philosophies such as later Hinduism (including Buddhism), Confucianism, Greek philosophy, and, at a much later date, Christianity. The origin of historic religion may be studied from diverse viewpoints but it seems certain that this origin was closely related to "big encounters" in the second millennium B.C. between agricultural people in the Eurasian South and nomadic peoples from the mid-Eurasian steppes (for example, one may think of the hypothetical Aryan-speaking peoples).<sup>20</sup> These big encounters occurred in three areas: the East-Mediterranean and Near-Eastern area, the Indus and then Ghandis valleys, and the Yellow River valley. They caused the rise of three types of historic religion/philosophy. It is suggestive that each area gave birth, at about the same time, to thinkers of great stature, such as (to mention only one for each area) Socrates, Gautama Buddha, and Confucius. Historic religion was probably an effort somehow to synthesize two vastly different cultures by universalizing the differing experiences into abstract concepts and principles, thereby enabling two kinds of people to live together. Historic religion was the outcome of an encounter of continental scale which may be called a "primary encounter." In a nutshell, big encounters created transcendental ways of thinking.

Once established, historic religions then spread and encountered or rather conquered the archaic or more primitive religions of neighboring societies. In most cases, such "secondary encounters" accompanied some physical impact such as military invasion or trade domination. The encounter between Japanese archaic religion and Chinese civilization was clearly one such example, but it may be an exceptional case in the sense that the element of physical impact was not significant. The center of the mother civilization (i.e. cities in northern China) was geopolitically remote, and the threat of military invasion was minimal because of the dynastic cycle characteristic of Chinese history. Absence of concomitant physical impact might be one of the reasons for the relatively weak influence of historic religion on Japan.

It should be noted that this Japanese encounter was, in many ways, compa-

19 Bellah, Robert, N. (1970): *Op. cit.*, p.29ff.

20 See, for example, Suzuki, Hideo (1979): 3500 Years Ago. *Bulletin of the Department of Geography, Faculty of Science, University of Tokyo*, 10.

rable to that of the Germanic belief system with Christianity, although Germanic belief has left only relics such as Nordic mythology. Both cases shared a similar experience in the sense that the physical influence of the mother civilization disappeared soon after the encounter. Either the mother civilization died out (in the case of Germanic peoples) or visibly lost its momentum for outward expansion (in the case of Japan). In fact, no cogent macro political order was inherited from the mother civilization in either case.

The timing of the encounters is also comparable: that is, the essential phase of the two encounters occurred in the period between the sixth and eighth centuries A.D., at either end of the Eurasian continent. This may be a major reason why both regions were to have—almost synchronously—a similar decentralized politico-economic structure roughly summarized as “feudalism.”

However, the process of religious (or intellectual) development after the encounter differed greatly in Japan and Europe. In Europe, Christian belief outgrew its original context in the Near East and was solidified. The Roman Catholic Church strictly prohibited any heathenism, including all ancient Germanic beliefs, and crushed all heresies from Arianism to the Cathari until the days of the Inquisition. The Reformation and subsequent religious wars demonstrated again the intense pursuit of unique orthodoxy in Europe. On the other hand, many religious beliefs coexisted in Japan, including archaic mythology, various versions of Buddhism, Confucianism, and reformist versions of so-called Kamakura new Buddhism. In the sixteenth century, the Ikkō sect (Jōdo-Shin sect) tried a large-scale military resistance against the samurai rulers but this was not so much a battle between religions as an ill-fated challenge by the new religion-based forces against the centuries-old samurai rule. As a symbolic example of coexistence, the imperial court has always (up to the present) practiced divine rituals originating from archaic beliefs while the emperors themselves were mostly Buddhist believers. These phenomena of religious coexistence are often taken to demonstrate that historic religion has never been really rooted in the minds of the Japanese.

Yet it should be noted that severe suppression of heresy as well as religious wars were not a characteristic common to all historic religions. In India, various kinds of Hinduist beliefs (including Buddhism, Jainism, etc.) coexisted usually peacefully. In China, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism were intermixed although there were political battles for the status of state religion. In fact, all Eastern historic religions are, as Max Weber pointed out, highly intellectual and elitist. Indeed, their core notion of a cosmological principle is transcendental in the ultimate sense and, therefore, irreducible to anything within the reach of human sensation, including the notion of a personified god. The cosmological principle in this sense is thus accessible only to those people endowed with particular resources and with the opportunity to develop their intellectual or gnostic ability.<sup>21</sup> At the level of the populace, however, these intellectual

21 Weber, Max (1917): *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie Bd. II*, 1921, S. pp.363-378.

sophistications were ignored or compromised, giving rise to mixed religious practices for secular benefit. Idolatrous worship of various divine beings of mixed origin prevailed among the peoples of India as well as China. Thus, the Eastern historic religions tended to polarize into the highly intellectual version and the vulgarized popular version. Such polarization may be more or less common to any historic religion but one can argue together with Max Weber that the tendency is more obvious in the Eastern historic religions.<sup>22</sup> The ambiguity in Japanese religious attitudes partly mirrors this characteristic shared by all religious practices in the East.

However, many people will disagree that Japanese characteristics can be simply reduced to those of Eastern cultures in general. For example, Nakamura Hajime, probably the foremost Japanese authority on Indian philosophy, argued that the Japanese are more ambiguous and eclectic in their way of thinking than the Indians or the Chinese.<sup>23</sup> In fact, he ranked India, China, and Japan in that order according to the degree of preference of abstraction over concreteness or metaphysical thinking over pragmatism. (Note that Confucianism is hermeneutically oriented if compared to Hinduism.) Robert Bellah and S. N. Eisenstadt may also be viewed as taking similar stands.<sup>24</sup> Among the literature available in English, Fosco Maraini's article provides a neat summary of the recent arguments along this line.<sup>25</sup> To quote from Nakamura:

“What stands out as a basic factor in the Japanese way of thinking is the disposition of the Japanese to accept as it stands the given objective world around them. They show a tendency to regard the phenomenal world of observed events as Absolute and to reject any Absolute as something far above the world of phenomena.”<sup>26</sup>

In essence, Nakamura came close to suggesting that the Japanese have not really become converted to historic religions. Many others have similarly argued that the Japanese have never adopted the essence of the notion of “the other world” which transcend this illusory world.

22 Weber, Max (1917): *Op. cit.*

23 Nakamura, Hajime (1962): *Tōyōjin no shū hōhō* 3. Shunjū-sha, Tokyo. The abridged English version is available as Nakamura, H. (1964): *The Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples: India, China, Tibet, Japan*, translated by Wiener. East-West Center, Honolulu.

24 Bellah, Robert, N. (1970): *Op. cit.*, p.116ff. Eisenstadt, S. N. (1978): *Revolution and the Transformation of Societies: A Contemporary Study of Civilizations*. Macmillan-Free Press, New York, p.66 and p.144.

25 Maraini, Fosco (1975): Japan and the Future: Some Suggestions from Nihonjinron Literature. *Social Structures and Economic Dynamics, in Japan up to 1980*. In, Fodella, Gianni (ed.), Università Bocconi, Milano.

26 Nakamura, Hajime (1962): *Op. cit.*, p.11. Translated by the present author.

### A counterargument against the ambiguity theory

Nevertheless, other scholars such as Ienaga Saburo have disagreed.<sup>27</sup> Ienaga did not deny that the “continuity view” (continuity between this world and the other world) as well as the “optimistic view” were dominant in Japan before the sixth century. However, he stressed that, after the introduction of Chinese civilization, archaic “optimism” was gradually replaced by pessimism about this illusory world—that is, by concern with death, the miseries in life, the antinomies of man’s being, or of “ultimate being.” According to Ienaga, *Jūshichijō Kenpō* (“The Seventeen-Article Constitution”) and *Sankyō gisho* (“Commentary on the Three Sutras”) by Prince Shōtoku—the first intellectual works by a Japanese—were an early manifestation of this pessimistic trend. From around the tenth century, this basic theme of Buddhist-toned pessimism echoed in almost all Japanese literary works. Genshin’s *Ōjyōshū* (“Essentials of Salvation”) shows how Pure Land teaching typically exhorted people to go beyond this world by meditating on the land of Perfect Bliss in contrast to the most gruesome images of hell. Such Pure Land teaching may be taken as a simple yet practical guide to transcendentalism in our sense.

While it was natural that the declining court nobles should lament their age, many of the rising samurai were also Buddhist devotees, probably because they were keenly conscious of the sinfulness of their bloody duties. The conviction that this world is a defiled place was thus commonly shared. From time to time, particularly fervent religious movements arose in connection with famines, plagues, or civil wars.

The so-called Kamakura new Buddhism in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries (the Jōdo-Shin sect or Ikkō sect, the Nichiren sect, the Zen sect, etc.) arose from attempts at doctrinal revision in response to the diffusion of Buddhist faith among the common people, including samurai and farmers. It can be compared to Protestantism in the West in the sense that it aimed at *direct* salvation of all people. Judging from their written works, we can find that Shinran (the founder of the Jōdo-Shin sect) and Dōgen (who founded the Sōtō sect) reached a high level of sophistication in dealing with transcendental reflexion. In the sixteenth century, followers of the Ikkō sect gained political control over several important regions in central Japan and fought with samurai rulers in one of the bloodiest wars in Japanese history. From the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries, almost a million Japanese were converted to Christianity within several decades, and many of them later sacrificed their lives for the Christian faith when the Tokugawa regime tried to suppress it (the Catholic Church has canonized twenty-six of them). These facts confirm that the Japanese did not continue to retain an innocent this-worldly perspective from the archaic past. The Japanese may even be viewed as one of the more pessimistic peoples of the world, particularly in their medieval period. There seems to have resound-

27 Ienaga, Saburō (1940): *Nihon shisōshi ni okeru hitai no ronri no hattatsu* (The development of the logic of negation in the history of Japanese thought). Kōbun-dō, Tokyo.

ed in their lives the same voice of *memento mori* that Huizinga described in connection with medieval Europeans.<sup>28</sup>

Nevertheless, Nakamura's argument still seems to have some truth to it. As he pointed out, major Buddhist thinking in Japan, from Kūkai and Saichō through Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen, and on up to Rennyo tended to associate the possibility of salvation, in some way or other, with this-worldly human concerns rather than purely other-worldly ones. To be sure, original Indian Buddhism also admitted the possibility that an actual being can attain the cognition of ultimate reality (or *nirvana*) and make himself a buddha (which originally means a truly wise person). In India or China, however, such possibility is held to be so small that it applies only to Gautama or a very few others. In contrast, the Japanese Buddhist leaders tended to view this possibility as much more accessible. Kūkai or Saichō in the ninth century argued that, after severe training and discipline, an actual human individual can become a buddha (*sokushin jōbutsu*). As another example, Dōgen maintained that man can see, by means of Zen meditation, the ultimate truth in this phenomenal world (as he put it, *shinshin datsuraku*).

The most thorough-going such teaching was the Ikkō sect (or Jōdo-Shin sect) descended from Shinran. According to Shinran, it is contrary to absolute devotion to Buddha to doubt whether Buddha will save human beings because they behave in the way they themselves think of as wrong. Shinran's approach is, in a way, a mirror image of Calvin's, because to Calvin it is contrary to belief in the absoluteness of God to expect that God will save men because they behave in a way they think right. Shinran's famous saying, "If a good person can be saved, then still more so an evil person." is an aphoristic presentation of this view. Calvin's God awes us, while Shinran's Buddha tolerates us. This contrast between awful God and merciful Buddha is striking and should be studied more closely. Logically speaking, however, both views are allowable as modes of transcendentalism. We will never be able to fully characterize the absolute in terms of the phenomenal world, essentially because a characterization would be subject to higher transcendental reflection, leading to another infinite escalation. We can only say that both attitudes are consistent as ways of transcendental thinking, and that they form another case of antinomy. Nevertheless, there is an evident parallelism between Calvin or Luther and Shinran. They all attempted to develop the religion of direct salvation available to any man, which was not mediated by the Roman Church or the established temples around Kyōto.

Shinran had a clear understanding that absolute reliance on Buddha is the direct outcome of the absolute rejection of anything in this world. However, those common people to whom the religion of direct salvation should apply were not Christian monks or Buddhist ascetics but had usually to engage

28 Huizinga, J. (1924): *The Waning of the Middle-Ages*. Translated by Hopman, F. Penguin Books, New York, 1955, Chap.11.

themselves in worldly activities. This is a paradox common to both Calvin and Shinran—the paradox which was elaborated by Max Weber in his celebrated “Protestant Ethic hypothesis.” To the worldly people in Japan, including his followers, Shinran’s teaching of absolute reliance on Buddha and his infinite mercy is hardly distinguishable from innocent acceptance of this world. In terms of our argument in this essay, the transcendental, religious mode in this case is likely to dissolve into everyday worldly activities or, at best, to merge with the hermeneutic mode of reflexion. In effect, Shinran’s or other Japanese religious reformers’ teaching was increasingly given an interpretation that ultimate truth is sufficiently manifested in this phenomenal world itself and that the road to salvation can be found in the midst of this-worldly experiences rather than in un-mediated communication with ultimate being.

Thus, the new Buddhist sects which arose in the Kamakura period turned passive pessimism into something more active and secular. Among later, *non-Buddhist* thinkers, this trend was prominent. Notable is the fact that we can find no pessimistic thinkers, Confucian or otherwise, in the Tokugawa period. Especially, *kokugaku* scholars Motoori Norinaga or Hirata Atsutane advocated a return to archaic optimism and denied any value to the abstract argumentation (“*kotoage*” as Norinaga called it) represented by Buddhism and Confucianism. At the more popular level, this orientation took the form of the secularization of religion, the cult of nature, permissiveness toward physical pleasure, a preference for tangible concreteness, a passion for technical perfection, and, last but not least, rationalism in the instrumental sense. These social phenomena suggest to many people that the Japanese have never come to grips with the essence of historic religion or, more generally, with transcendental reflection. However, the secularistic trend in Tokugawa Japan was an outgrowth of Kamakura new Buddhism. We should not view the Japanese way of thinking simply as the legacy of the archaic past.

The historical development of Japanese society may be more complex than a simple carry-over process from the tribal past. As the *memento mori* psychology in the Heian period demonstrates, there is little doubt that the Japanese like any other people felt an inner need for religious salvation. As the Kamakura new Buddhism exemplifies, the Japanese intellectuals undoubtedly struggled with such antinomies as this world/other world, phenomena/essence, or concrete/universal. One must therefore ask: Why did Japanese thinking take a turn so similar, in a sense, to the Reformation in Europe? In particular, why did it do so in the violent, war-ridden Kamakura period? Further, why did it afterward follow a different path from that in the West? Still further, historic religion/philosophy is generally more capable of interpreting the world because of its higher level of abstract generalization. Therefore, historic religion provided a dominant intellectual framework almost everywhere in the world, once it was somehow accepted. Why didn’t this happen to Japan?

### Relativization of historic religion: the impact of the natural environment

To answer this question, we should first explain once more the relationship between the three explanatory models already mentioned: the nature-(or technology-)focused model, the organization-focused model, and the religio-philosophical model. First of all, one should note that any of these three models cannot be self-contained (even nature can be controlled to some extent). In other words, the three models interact in some way or other, though one cannot generally tell which is cause or which is effect. Many people seem inclined to give primacy to the religio-philosophical model because of their respect for historic religion or for science or, more basically, their concern for (transcendental) reflexive action. However, this inclination may well be simply a sort of intellectual inertia due to the far-reaching influence of western historic religion. For example, however, the origin of historic religion *per se* cannot be explained without reference to the climatological or geographical factors of, for example, 3,500 years ago. Religion or philosophy itself is partly an expression of underlying technological and organizational conditions. Any unilinear evolutionist theory (or self-contained dynamic theory) of religion from Edward B. Tyler to Robert Bellah should be viewed as a descriptive effort but not a prognosis. This type of relativization (among the three models of culture) seems necessary to explain Japanese culture.

Let us first examine the Japanese attitude toward nature: The Japanese often call the natural environment in the Japanese archipelago "moderate." Is this correct? In terms of latitude, the main part of the Japanese islands is comparable to Central China, Iran, Syria, Algeria, the American South, southern California, etc. It is close to the subtropical zone in many respects including average temperature. Of particular significance is its location on the *eastern* fringe of a major continent. In the winter time, north or northwest winds become dominant (because of a low pressure area in the northern Pacific) so that the temperature is lower than in comparable areas on the *western* fringe of a continent, such as Europe or California. In particular, because of the relatively severe wintry weather, tropical fauna or flora are scanty (e.g. as compared to California) and tropical diseases are rare. Moreover, as specific to Japan, the winter winds bring much moisture from the Japan Sea, so that the Japan Sea coast has one of the largest snowfalls in the world. In short, the summer is very warm while the winter is relatively cold. The climate in Japan is characterized by wider seasonal variation than, for example, Europe or the American West coast.

Another feature of Japan is that precipitation is high because the islands are mountainous and surrounded by sea. Apart from the snowfall in winter, rainfall is heavy in the period from spring to summer, that is, the growing season for plants. Thus, the Japanese islands *as a whole* seldom suffer from drought, and the vegetation there is almost luxuriant.<sup>29</sup> Still another feature is that fish are

29 A climatologist Yamamoto, Takeo argued that western Japan is sufficiently warm but some-

amply available because warm and cold currents meet offshore. All in all, life in Japan was relatively—or even exceptionally—easy for an agricultural society. In this sense, the climate may indeed be called moderate. Yet this climate is subject to such short-term changes or intermittent disasters as relatively wide seasonal variations, typhoons and subsequent local floods, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, etc. In sum, the Japanese climate is moderate in the large yet changeable in the small.

Our world-image naturally mirrors our relation with the nature surrounding us. Specifically, religion means, at least in part, a way to withstand or overcome the pain, anguish, and isolation imposed by nature, including the limitations of one's own physical body. Because of moderate climate, the inhabitants of the Japanese islands faced very little risk of death from cold, starvation, or thirst. As an indication, Japanese mythology did not record the memory of large-scale natural disasters, such as those symbolized by the Deluge myth in many other parts of the world (in Near East, China, and Southeast Asia). Nor had it gods symbolizing natural threats, such as the god of water (Mesopotamia) or the god of sun (Egypt)—anger-prone cosmic deities. The Japanese feared only gods symbolizing local calamities, such as the god of a particular river, mountain, or lake. Their natural environment—which was moderate in the large—hardly gave rise to a world-image in which nature as a whole awes men. Moreover, the Japanese islands are characterized by subtle changeability of weather and scenery replete with niches and shadows. In contrast, limitless expanses of desert or plains will magnify man's feeling of helplessness. Eternal return of cyclic changes on this monotonous scenery is likely to generate the notion of cosmological principle as found in India. Thus, it is a likely, if not necessary, corollary that in Japan there could hardly emerge the notion of a god whose absolute authority compels obedience or of a cosmological law which predetermines human activity. The Japanese version of Buddhism tends to embrace a more merciful image of Buddha than the Indian or Chinese version and to understand the notion of cosmic law merely in terms of changeability. An environment that is moderate in the large yet changeable in the small is largely responsible for this tendency. This kind of environment is not congenial to the transcendental mode of reflexion.

### **The impact of organizational environment**

Let us then examine the second aspect of culture, that is, organizational culture. Religion not only aimed at the salvation of individuals but also acted

times suffers from drought, while eastern Japan has sufficient rainfall but from time to time suffers from cold weather. He stressed that, when eastern Japan has enough warmth, western Japan tends to become dry. In other words, eastern Japan and western Japan are in a seesaw-like relation. Japan as a whole seldom suffers from bad crop. Suzuki, Hideo & Yamamoto, Takeo (1978): *Kikō to bunmei, kikō to rekishi* (Climate and Civilization, Climate and History). Asakura-shoten, Tokyo, pp.1-110.

as a guide for every person in his relationship with others, from the macro political order down to micro human ties. Religion was often an ideology to justify political integration. It is true that no historic religion—unlike archaic religion—directly legitimized the extant political structure. Any Chinese dynasty, let alone any European kingdom, could be legitimately overthrown if the emperor lost the mandate of Heaven. However, all historic religions *indirectly* justified the extant social system by supplying a unified conception of the source of political legitimacy. In India or China, the rise of the first empire (Magadha or Ch'in) followed the era of philosophers and religious leaders such as Gautama Buddha, Mahavira, Confucius, Mencius, and many others. In the case of Europe, Christian faith was instrumental in legitimizing Christian states, from the Holy Roman Empire under *Charlemagne* to the absolutist regimes at the dawn of modern age. The Japanese, on the other hand, never faced seriously the problem of unifying the religio-philosophical foundation of their macro political structure.

The establishment of the Ritsuryō state in the seventh century was an attempt to unify the country and to update its institutional structure in order to defend Japan against a supposedly imminent invasion from T'ang China. The Japanese tried then to pattern their society on the Confucian-Buddhist Chinese model. But the invasion never came, and the unification of basic ideas that should have formed the foundation for society as a whole remained incomplete, giving rise to a mixture of the Chinese influence and the archaic past. For more than a thousand years from the seventh century, Japanese society experienced no physical invasion from outside Japan, except for two abortive Mongol attempts in the thirteenth century, nor any significant immigration from abroad. Heian court culture (from the tenth to twelfth centuries), which produced so much distinguished literature including the world's oldest novel, *The Tale of Genji*, indulged in aesthetic sophistication in an atmosphere withdrawn from the real world—a world still riddled with unsolved dilemmas with respect to the basic principles of social structure.

After the self-complacency of the court-noble government in Kyōto brought about the disintegration of the Ritsuryō state, there emerged in eastern Japan, around the eleventh century, a new type of organizational mode. This mode resembled the "feudalism" of Europe, and its basic unit was an agro-military organization under the warrior (samurai) leadership. This unit is here called *ie* (roughly, "household"). Toward the end of the twelfth century, these samurai-led groups came to form a federation called *bakufu* which increasingly acted as a governmental body. In this way, the samurai government and the imperial court coexisted on Japanese soil for almost eight hundred years, from the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It is true that the samurai government gradually increased its control over society until the court-noble government became purely nominal. Nevertheless, the samurai government never went so far as to totally deny the nominal yet supposedly ultimate legitimacy of the emperor and his court—in spite of the fact that, from time to time, there occurred crises

of legitimacy for the samurai government. This was probably because no decisive threat from outside forced complete political unification. If the Mongol invasion had been more of a real menace, a more unified political structure might have come into being under samurai leadership. In reality, however, no samurai government felt the need to challenge the *fait accompli* of history.

Such a bi-cephalous state is no doubt exceptional in world history. This bi-cephalousness should be distinguished from the separation of the sacred and secular order as found in medieval Europe, because the Japanese court-noble government surrounding the emperor was not a religious organization in the ordinary sense. This reality of the bi-cephalous state seems to have discouraged any attempt to conceptualize a unified principle for the socio-political structure of Japanese society. Rare attempts at conceptualization, such as Jien's *Gukan-shō* or Kitabatake Chikafusa's *Jinnōshōtōki* merely confirmed this reality.<sup>30</sup> Political bi-cephalousness continued until it finally had to be abandoned when Japan faced a "real" threat from the West.

However, lack of political unity did not mean the disintegration of society. At the level of the societal substratum, enduring, relatively small-scale groups (i.e. "samurai household" or *mura* "village") formed the basic fabric of Japanese society. Insofar as these groups continued to survive, their members had a sufficiently stable basis for their livelihood as well as their psychological security. In this sense, premodern Japanese groups such as the *ie* or *mura* were crucially important in Japanese history.<sup>31</sup> The Japanese way of life was immersed in the microcosm of these groups within a generally unstable macro social milieu. In this context, we can understand why Kamakura new Buddhism, in its diverse versions, was largely populist and unconcerned (except for Nichiren) with the overall social order. The Kamakura period Buddhist reformers, each in his own way, provided the Japanese at the substratum level of society with a way of coping with a social environment that was unstable in the large but stable in the small. This explains why the turn from passive pessimism to secular activism occurred in the Kamakura period, in which the basic Japanese social groups were much more firmly established, compared to the Heian period in which the decline of the Ritsuryō state had made the societal substratum extremely fluid and disorganized. In sum, the organizational aspect of premodern Japanese society did not require a unified notion of political legitimacy that should have often been in great need elsewhere in order to assimilate immigrants, accomplish domestic integration, or build up societal substratum. All the foregoing arguments imply that Japanese life rested on a balance among the three facets of human action which was different from the balance established in many other

30 Brown, Delmer, M, and Ishida, Ichiro (trans. and eds.) (1979): *The Future and the Past: A Translation and Study of the Gukan-shō, An Interpretative History of Japan Written in 1219*. University of California Press, Berkeley. H. Varley, Paul (trans.) (1980): *A Chronicle of Gods and Sovereigns: Jinnō Shōtōki of Kitabatake Chikafusa*. Columbia University Press, New York.

31 Murakami, Yasusuke (1984): *Op. cit.*

societies under the dominant influence of historic religion.

### **The hermeneutic mode in Japan and its implications**

The development of historic religion was not simply due to the internal dynamic of reflexive thinking by human beings. As has already been noted, a major cause for the rise of historic religion was a major physical encounter between two heterogenous civilizations, the agricultural and the nomadic. More generally, the mode of nature-oriented action or that of other-oriented action often molded, to some extent, the pattern of reflexive thinking. The emergence of historic religion was due to both internal momentum and external conditions.

It is true that historic religion is capable of absorbing neighboring cultures thanks to its superior capacity to support abstract thinking. Moreover, a society based on historic religion is much larger in scale, encompassing many races. Therefore, such a society is much more able to conquer nearby societies by military means, even when internal conditions favoring historic religion have not yet matured in the neighboring societies themselves. For example, Korea and Vietnam, which are close to China, were often conquered by China and had to adopt Confucianism or Buddhism partly for the purpose of achieving their own political integration and thereby protecting their own identities. In the case of Japan, however, the threat of military subjugation was small, and the need for political integration still smaller. From the organizational or political viewpoint, conditions favoring the adoption of historic religion did not really exist in Japan.

What is the key characteristic of the Japanese way of thinking? My tentative answer is that it is a relative importance of the hermeneutic or historiological mode, compared to many other societies. My argument does not seem an isolated instance. In his celebrated short essay, Maruyama Masao also summarized the prototypical characteristic or, in his word, *basso obstinato* of Japanese culture as "reliance on *tsugitsugi ni nariyuku ikioi*."<sup>32</sup> As his phrasing is purposely very Japanese, the translation is extremely difficult. But a tentative translation may be "reliance on the force of successive becoming." The crux is that "becoming" (or *werden* in German expression) is not "being" (or *Sein*) and, moreover, "successive becoming" is not "successive transcendence." Thus, the *basso obstinato* of Japanese culture is neither commitment to complete static order, nor belief in dialectic development consisting of successive transcendence. In other words, it differs from the transcendental mode, whether found in the East or in the West. In my interpretation, Maruyama's expression is another way of saying that the Japanese way of thinking is in the hermeneutic or histor-

32 Maruyama, Masao (1972): *Rekishi ishiki no 'kosō'* (The Old Stratum of Historical Consciousness). *Rekishi shisō shū: Nihon no Shisō 6* (Historical Thought: Japanese Thoughts Vol. 6). Chikuma-shobō, Tokyo. For those interested in translation, *tsugitsugi ni* means "successively" or "one after another," *nariyuku* means to "become" or "grow," and *ikioi* means "force" or "trend."

iological mode.

The Japanese are often said to be preservers of tradition. At the same time, however, it is also widely recognized that they are highly sensitive as well as receptive to changes, external or domestic. Although this attitude is most clearly manifested in the modernization period or in relation to influences from abroad, it is not limited to such cases. The reason why the Japanese show such a mixed attitude is that they depend not so much on universalistic judgement (characteristic of transcendentalism) as on incremental expansion of hermeneutic reflexion. To them, changes themselves are somehow meaningful and, in principle, to be accepted and assimilated. Changeability is, in this sense, a basic theme in the Japanese mind. One consequence is that the Japanese tend to understand Buddhism as a teaching of changeability in the phenomenal world rather than inviolability of cosmic law (*dharma*). We have already pointed out that this tendency resounded in the pessimistic trend in medieval Japan.

A hermeneutic approach to deal with changeability is historiology (history as told or written). The meaning of history consists, among other things, in the pursuit of tradition, taste, or, in German expression, *Bildung*. The Japanese conceptualized this pursuit as the "way" (*michi* or *dō*), as in "the way of the warriors" (*bushidō*), "the way of poetry" (*kadō*), "the way of tea" (*sadō*), etc. All these "way" concepts are never theorized but understood as a core reality gained through accumulated concrete experiences. It is well known that the Japanese liking for cultural activities is unique in the sense that the Japanese taste for *waka* and *haiku*, flower arrangement, the tea ceremony, Noh or *kyōgen*, Kabuki, Bunraku, etc., was shared by all classes (many villages had the tradition of staging yearly *kyōgen*, Kabuki, or Bunraku), while in Europe or other societies such activities were generally limited to the upper class. This suggests that these Japanese tastes arose naturally and diffused gradually without the intervention of any overriding rule, religious or political. Stress on the dominance of what I have called the hermeneutic mode allows one to understand better these and many other characteristics of Japanese society or, more generally, its historical dynamic—instead of simply making a trait-psychological assumption that Japanese are innately eclectic and ambiguous.

In the contemporary world, two modes of reflexion, transcendental and hermeneutic, are both at work in people's minds. Historic religion has never *completely* dominated the human mind, though it symbolizes a certain stage of human history. In other words, it may not be, as most of us tend to believe, man's ultimate achievement. For example, modern Western society has been, so to speak, outgrowing Christianity. Apart from Friedrich Nietzsche, there is a long list of twentieth-century Western thinkers such as Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, Ludwig Wittgenstein, Jean-Paul Sartre, and many others who have in some way or another outgrown Christianity, or at least its Cartesian implications. Even in the natural sciences, the old analytical framework seems to be facing serious limitations as the "uncertainty principle," Gödel's incompleteness theorem, the notion of a particle without mass, the concept of "super vacuum,"

and so forth. There is good reason why the hermeneutics in the sense of Gadamer or Ricoeur is attracting increasing attention.

There are many cultures in the world. On the one extreme, American culture may be held to represent those oriented toward continual pursuit of transcendental thinking. This is a natural choice for the United States because American society is in a continual state of "major encounter" thanks to constant influx of various races and cultures. The reason why American culture fascinates many people in the postwar world is, no doubt, that it seems to represent an unyielding effort toward a new, more universal civilization. In dealing with international issues, however, American diplomacy tends to depend on abstract ideas or, as George Kennan once put it critically, "moralism."<sup>33</sup> This tendency carries a risk of imposing ideals on other societies and of avoiding overt compromise on concrete issues. It is still true, however, that if a global society is to really emerge in the twenty-first century, it will need some abstract principle that encompasses diverse races and cultures.

The opposite extreme is difficult to find, but Japan is probably one of the closest to it. The Japanese reliance on the diametrically opposite, hermeneutic mode of reflexion stands out in contrast not only to the societies in the West but even to many other Asiatic societies. However, the weakness of the hermeneutic mode is that it is too much bound to the accumulation of past experiences within a particular societal tradition. Therefore, its narrowness is likely to create serious problems particularly in dealing with international exigencies. On the other hand, the hermeneutic approach is more responsive to concrete issues and more prone to compromise, although the response process is incremental and time-consuming. U.S.-Japan conflicts on trade and other issues may result not so much from differing policy orientations as from this polar opposition between two cultures. To repeat, in order to facilitate a global society, we need to have abstract ideas which give each specific culture its own place but, at the same time, a deep sensibility that embraces the concrete experiences of various cultures. In other words, mankind faces an imperative to identify not merely a common science but also a common tradition. This imperative will require from each society something more than insistence on past intellectual practices, particularly in the case of the U.S. and Japan.

To discuss the case of Japan, the Japanese in the late 1980's are facing, for the first time in more than a millennium, what they now call "internationalization." I myself do not believe that the highly particularistic social structure of Japanese society will stand this challenge without serious revision. The Japanese must overcome the particularism included in their hermeneutic orientation—if not the hermeneutic orientation itself. The importance of hermeneutic mode vis-à-vis transcendental mode should be stressed in this historical juncture. Yet, when and only when the Japanese succeed in liberating themselves from the

33 Kennan, George (1951): *American Diplomacy 1900-1950*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago, Chap.6.

particularism in their past social philosophy and praxis, will the experience of Japanese history not merely offer an isolated example of a success story, but also substantively contribute to the formation of future global society. At this moment, however, it seems that no one can be sure how and when the Japanese can face and solve this enormously significant historical task.

文明の二つの型——超越論的文明と解釈学的文明

村上泰亮

要旨：文化（最広義の文化）の説明には三つの型がある。自然との関係からの説明（気候論・風土論・地政学など）、他人との関係からの説明（集団や組織の型からの説明）、そして宗教・哲学の型からの説明の三つである。この論文では、日本文化についての第三の型（宗教・哲学の型からのもの）を主として検討する。

人間は「反省する動物」である。反省行為の内容を考えると、そこには「反省する自我」と「反省される自我」の二重構造があり、したがって、「反省する自我」を無限に高次化する様態と、「反省される自我」にそのつど立ち返る様態との二つに、反省行為は分類される。それらをここでは、「超越論的反省」、「解釈学的反省」と呼ぶ。科学、哲学、有史宗教などでは、前者の超越論的反省が優越している。ここで「有史宗教」というのは、紀元前二千年紀の前半から、ギリシャ・ローマ、インド、中国で出現したいわゆる世界宗教をさす。

日本文化を宗教・哲学の型から説明するにあたっては、西方型有史宗教ないしユダヤ＝キリスト教と、仏教・儒教などに代表される東方型有史宗教との区別を考える必要がある。西方型と東方型の基本的相違は、超越論的反省の無限高次化に対処する姿勢の違いである。西方型有史宗教は、創造神の概念によって無限高次化を切断するのに対して、東方型有史宗教は、宇宙論的法則の概念によって無限高次化の取束を保証する。日本文化は東方型有史宗教から大きな影響をうけているが、日本社会の急速な、他の非欧米社会に先駆けた産業化は、この種の影響からは説明できない。むしろ課題は、東方型有史宗教の基本形からの逸脱がなぜ特に日本で起こったかの説明である。

日本文化の説明にかかわる第二の論点は、儒教の影響の評価である。儒教は仏教よりも世俗的であり、われわれの表現を使えば「解釈学的」であるが、最近とくに言われるほど産業化と直接に結びつくものではない。第一に、儒教的社会のマクロ政治構造は、静的調和を指向しており、経済というサブシステムの発展を解放したりはしない。第二に、儒教的社会のミクロ的基層は、血縁的であり、産業化に必要な機能的組織に適合しない。それに対して、日本の前近代社会は、マクロ的には政治統合が不十分であり、ミクロ的には血縁原則への依存が弱い。このような非儒教的特徴が、日本の急速な近代化の秘密である。アジア NIES の最近の急速な産業化の主要要因も、儒教的伝統であるとはいえない。

日本文化を説明するもう一つの仮説は、東方型有史宗教の影響が弱かったことを、逆に

産業化の促進要因とする考え方である。この考え方は、或る意味で正しいが、古代的要素の残存を強調したりするのは単純すぎる。事実、律令期から平安期にかけての仏教の浸透は著しいものがあり、「此世と彼世との対立観」は日本人の心を明らかに捉えていた。このベシミズムが鎌倉期以降で転換するところに日本歴史の特徴がある。

この転換の原因は簡単ではない。日本の風土が変わりやすいが穏和であることも、この転換をもたらした一因である。地政学的に孤立していて強力な政治的統一を必要としなかったこと、またその反面、ミクロ的社会組織が血縁を越えた機能的集団の形で強力化したことも、大きな原因になっている。これらは、最初に挙げた三つの説明の型の第一と第二にあたるものであり、三つの型の説明の相関によって文化を説明すべきだということのよい例である。

まとめていえば、日本文化は超越論的指向が弱く、解釈学的指向が強いという特徴をもっている。従来の常識からすると、この特徴は弱点と見られやすいが、それは正しくない。解釈学的指向が強い文化には、長所もあるが、短所もある。「国際化」という現時点の日本を担う課題からいえば、短所の克服に大きな努力を払う必要があるだろう。