

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ASIAN COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

The present situation on earth, endangered by the ecological destruction and the possibility of nuclear war which make us doubt about the survival of mankind in the future, demands us to change our way of thinking and living basically. The problems menacing the mankind can not be solved simply by the techno-scientific developments. Our way of thinking and living should be changed. We should learn how to live together peacefully with other religions, cultures, and civilizations. To realize this, the higher vision of the co-existence between nature and man, between man and man, which can cease the attitude of regarding others only as a means or an object of domination, should be shared by all mankind. In this humble essay we should try to arrive at the recognition of the invisible interpenetration and the interdependence of the real world, which will lead us to the common effort of co-existence and harmony.

Keywords: Asian community, co-existence between nature and man, ecology, Confucianism, Buddhism

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It is not difficult to see that the confined specialities of knowledges, even if they are rational and efficient in their isolated domains, often arrive at the negative results against the interrelated total system. With only such knowledge, losing the sight of essential interconnection, we can not solve the problem of the system. Under the inertia and the superficiality of the fossilized paradigm, the hidden structural problems become more and more serious. In that sense, today's techno-scientific civilization, which apparently pursues only technical knowledge for the maximization of efficiency, truly needs philosophical thoughts. The possibility of harmonizing the nature, the mankind, and the society will be seen only when we can read the dynamic interacting processes in the invisible structural interconnections of the system of the Being.

Here, we should raise the question whether the philosophies of today are going ahead toward this way, or are repeating the blind paradigm of yesterday in different forms. That question is important because we can now see that, in the history of western philosophy, the fundamental illusions concerning the Being, dissimulated in the root of it, have led its history to the false, even to the reverse direction. The confusion between the process-reality and its spatial projection, more fundamentally the confusion between the time and the space, has made the western philosophy unable to approach the inner essence of the true reality of the Being. So, the history of the western philosophy is the history of faults. These faults become more serious when they are integrated to a particular system of interests of a society, of an age, or of a civilization.

In this context, we can see evidently that the Asian Community is approaching us as a historical necessity. The western civilization, caught in a trap of the oblivion of the Being, cannot open for us the way to the true community of mankind. Because of the fundamental illusions hidden in its root which were to be followed by the oblivion of the Being, it has not been able to overcome the limit of the intellect, namely the instrumental reason, alienating itself from the true meaning of the Being and the Life. That is why we see nowadays that the western civilization, in spite of its great success in the techno-scientific field and in the political modernization, is in a far distance from performing a leading role for the global community of the mankind. In religion, philosophy, culture, and politics, the western history was strongly governed by the hidden social instinct of the Identity of which the function was to exclude, conquer, dominate, oppress, or abolish the otherness and the heterogeneity. Such a lack of the capacity of tolerance and inclusion comes from the fact that the Philosophy of Identity cannot enter into the true meaning of the Being and the Life. This is the tragedy of

the western civilization as a kind of closed society which declines naturally in the direction of uniformity and mechanical inhumanity, in spite of its exterior material prosperity. In its history, the power politics has echoed the Philosophy of Identity. The western civilization has not made itself compatible with other civilizations.

Now, for the survival of mankind, there is no other way than to realize the true global community where all members interact in mutual interdependence and harmony. We see that such a possibility will come, not from the western religious-cultural tradition, but from the Asian tradition in which the great teachings of peaceful co-existence have permeated deeply the cultural sub-consciousness and morality through its long history.

I. THE HISTORY OF ILLUSIONS AND OBLIVIONS

The social and political relations of a particular historical period are influenced by the knowledges and cultures commonly shared in that age, and also inversely the latter are often defined or even made by the formers. Such knowledges and cultures contain the implications on the relations between nature and man, between man and society, suggesting at the same time a certain attitude of life, a certain value direction. Under the network of those relations determining a social form of life, there lies a certain definition of the Being at the bottom. Thus the metaphysics is the root of the philosophy, history, social theories, politics, etc.. Through it, we can see the traits, the structure, the form, and the limit of a certain age. So, to really understand an age, we should be able to read out the contents compressed in the abstract symbolical expressions of the metaphysics.

If there are the hidden illusions in the basis of the metaphysics of the Being, naturally they will cause the oblivion of the true reality, or the inversion of the value system, which will arrive finally at deforming, or oppressing the life. In the history of the world, we can find many such cases in which the hidden unconscious illusions have dominated the totality in the name of religion or rationality. In effect, a well organized interest group which could legislate the dogmas has dominated the society by its uniform principles, sacrificing the majority of the people.

In this point, we cannot help raising the questions about the fundamental character of the western civilization and its historical development. Seen from the aspect of the metaphysics and the ontology, it has repeated the history of illusions, inversions, and

oblivions, in spite of the bright success in techno-scientific field. The ironical crisis of today's techno-scientific civilization in which even the survival of mankind is menaced by its own scientific achievements is coming from this double aspect of the western civilization. At first sight, this phenomenon may seem self-contradictory. But the self-contradiction is only apparent. We should be able to see how the scientific civilization is estranged from the realization of the true Being through the philosophical misunderstandings derived from those illusions. The rationalism, the intellectualism, and the logos-centrism, misled by those illusions, could not escape the closed circuit of uniformity and superficiality, incapable of penetrating into the essence of the Being. Those forms of the Philosophy of Identity, captured by its strong tendency of absolute deduction or unlimited reduction, could not accept the heterogeneous othernesses of the world. Their metaphysical fault made it impossible for them to enter into the true meaning of life, at the same time closing the way to the community of mankind. In this respect, the western rationalism was transformed surreptitiously into the instrument of exclusion and domination of otherness. The so called Western modern reason declared itself as the ideal model of the evolution of all civilizations, underestimating other civilizations as the savages, barbarous, or undeveloped. Such an error of extremely linear interpretation of history was a natural result of the modern rationalism.

The unconscious tendency of the absolute deduction, the monistic reduction, or the total unification makes the Philosophy of Identity fall into the dichotomical way of thinking. The world affairs are divided by two sides, one within the boundary of the definition, and the other outside the boundary of the definition. According to the Identity Principle, the latter should be excluded, expelled, dominated, or annihilated as heretics, or irrationals. The principle, or the ideology of the western medieval society is a good example of the mistake of the Philosophy of Identity. Its ideal was to integrate absolutely the religion, the politics, the law, the economy, the arts, the culture, and the morality into one closed coherent circuit, while excommunicating and extinguishing the others which exist outside that circuit as heretics. The medieval society was a perfect model of the totalitarian society. Such a historical fault did not stop with the end of the medieval age. In modern philosophy, the totalization of knowledge reappeared in the form of Cartesian rationalism, mechanism, dialectic, positivism, etc. And our contemporary techno-scientific society is exposed to the danger of one-dimensional uniformity. Lyotard calls this danger of totalization as "terror against life."¹

1 Jean-Francois Lyotard, *La condition postmoderne*, Les Edition de Minuit, 1979, 8.

Fundamentally, it is the false conception of the Being, hidden in the root of the Philosophy of Identity, which is distorting the life world in various ways. Bergson indicated well the fact that, in the origin of the western metaphysics and epistemology, certain basic illusions were hidden, and he demanded rightly that the western philosophy should be transformed fundamentally.² Heidegger, who insisted on the metaphysical transformation by his Fundamental Ontology, shows the deep influences he received from Bergson. His conception of the oblivion of the Being (*die Seinsvergessenheit*) and the homelessness (*die Heimatlosigkeit*) certifies this fact. The new vision of the contemporary metaphysics began with the Bergsonian thinking on the essence of time. The time as a pure duration is a dimension where the Being reveals itself.

Bergson made it clear that the traditional western philosophy did not understand the time as time, because it confused the time with the space. This fundamental confusion means that the vision and the thinking on the true essence of the Being has been closed to the traditional western philosophy. Because of this fault, instead of the mature consciousness penetrating into the deep essence of the Being, the contrary phenomenon has been proceeded in the history of philosophy. This fact has an inseparable relation with the present situation of the Western civilization where, in contrast to the great success of science and technique, the human existence is falling into an arid land of devastation, inversion, nihilism and inhumanity. That is why the western civilization is now overwhelmed by the sensual materialism.

Here, we should ask whether the Western rationalism and intellectualism have rightly explained the reality of the world, or have continued unjustly the distortion, concealment, and the compulsion. In fact, the western traditional rationalism was distant from the truth of the reality. Today, we see that the philosophies severely criticized as irrational until the beginning of 20th century give us the deeper understanding of the world. As Bergson rightly indicated, the paradigm of the rationalism, being molded on the inert matter, can not be the guiding conceptions in our study of the Being and the life world. The sympathy, co-existence, and harmony with the other civilizations and the other religions, in short, with otherness, are possible when we open our eyes into the true meaning of the Being and the Life. But the traditional Western philosophy, lacking the vision of the essence and the whole of the real world, has been confined to the obstinate inert habit of uniform thinking, which has made it closed in the established superficial preconceptions.

The inert habit of thinking makes us understand the world superficially. The habit of mechanical thinking neglects the indivisible whole processes within ourselves continuing

2 Henri Bergson, *L'evolution creatrice*, chap.IV.

from the inner affection to the outer perception. Our psycho-behavioral processes pass the stages of unconscious memory, memory image, conscious perception, and physical behavior which constitute an indivisible continuity. But in the eyes of the mechanical thinking, only the physical body appears as the real entity. Naturally, the blind mechanism will do its best in vain to reduce all process-realities to physics and chemistry. The man absorbed in such an idiocy will forget the essence and the true meaning of life. As he is thus alienated from the origin of all values, the meaning of his existence will fall into the superficial one-dimensionality where he tries stupidly to unify all values into the material value.

Today, the positivism, which is most influential in ordinary life among the various forms of philosophies the modern age has produced, regards the type of scientific knowledge as the ideal model of all kinds of knowledges. It is not difficult to see that positivism is the inert prolongation of the modern reason. Such a uniform thinking, best shown in the Logical Positivism of Vienna Circle, is a case of the happy illusion and self-oblivion, which menace the techno-scientific civilization. Deceived by the concept of pure objectivity, the modern reason insisted on the dichotomy of intellect and emotion, objectivity and subjectivity, concept and intuition, giving the full value of reality only to the former and at the same time underestimating and neglecting the latter. The intellect, the objectivity, and the concept thus defined could not approach the reality of the Being, nor could be conscious of their own geneses from the activity of the life. This means that the modern reason could not read at all the contents of the processes of experience. The discussion of modern philosophy on experience could not arrive even at the elementary explanation of the representation and the perception. The rationalism, the empiricism, the Kantian constructionism, the dialectic, and the positivism etc. could not escape from this fault. In these philosophies, the basic concepts like the Being, the meaning, the experience, and the knowledge, etc., are misunderstood.

II. THE FUNDAMENTAL TRANSFORMATION OF METAPHYSICS

The degradation of the philosophy to the mere mechanical analysis of the language of the sciences aggravates the state of the inversion of the values in techno-scientific age. Such a philosophy, by its unconscious metaphysical illusions and its obstinate inertia, is becoming more and more superficial and uniform, instead of penetrating into the infinite profundity of

the Being and the Life. In this point, it is important to consider the relationship between the debates in the modern metaphysics on the nature of life and the fundamental transformation of contemporary metaphysics. Bergson indicated that the mechanistic explanation of life is entrapped in the confusion of 'the living' and 'the inert'. In the conceptual thinking on the reality of the world, between these two concepts, what is original and anterior and what is derivative and posterior? He rightly showed that the mechanism who stole the name of science evidently confused the order of the concepts. From the concept of 'the living', we can arrive at the concept of 'the inert' by gradually diminishing its contents, and not vice-versa. In the genetic root of all concepts, the concept of the living and thinking are already immanent as originality. But the modern Western philosophy, forgetting this metaphysical foundation, was absurdly captured by the monistic reductionism which tended to apply unlimitedly the system of concepts useful for the domination of the inert matter to the world of the living, the conscious, and the social. As the world of the living, the conscious, and the social is an open system in its nature, the trial of confining it in the closed circuit of determinism will bring about the grave result of oppressing the life processes. By its superficial misreading of the experience, the modern philosophy made itself separated from the dynamic activities of the Being underlying the experience. The important substantial discussions on unconsciousness, memory, genetic processes of the psychological structure, indivisible connection between memory-perception-physical body-behavior, and interacting network of knowledge and power, were totally absent in the rational modern philosophy.

Descartes, though he made clear the anteriority of the concept of *Cogito* to all concepts, could not enter into the realm of the true reality either from the side of the thinking, or from the side of the Being, because he remained in the typical framework of modern reason. For example, the notion of unconsciousness has been treated as irrational and self-contradictory by the Cartesian rationalism. This negative view has been commonly shared by other modern philosophies until the beginning of the 20th century. Modern reason, with its great success in dominating the material world as its instruments, has come to a wrong conclusion that those instrumental concepts and way of thinking are the best universal guide in apprehending the reality of the total world. Such a confusion of the artificiality of instrument with the essence of reality is not limited to the modern reason, having been hidden from the beginning of the western rational metaphysics. The ancient Eleatism and the Platonic metaphysics, though in different forms, had the same fundamental confusion. Bergson made it clear that this confusion originated from the absurd spatialization of time. It means that the traditional

Western metaphysics, not having discussed at all the true Being during its history, should return to its origin and restart from the new dimension of time.

His philosophical thoughts of the Being make us interested in its relationship with the Zen Buddhism. Bergson, denying the immutable eternal Being, recommends us to apprehend the reality as the process, movement itself. He insisted on overcoming the way of thinking in which the movement is understood as the spatial displacement of the mobile, namely the unchanging substance. Movement is the process itself, which means that under this process, there is no immutable entity.³ This thinking reminds us of the Buddhist philosophy, 諸行無常 (*there is nothing that is constant*). And in epistemology, Bergson leads us to the level of the philosophical intuition where we can penetrate into the profound parts of ourselves and coincide with them. When we go down into the deep unconscious self by introspection and coincide with it, and by doing this, when our past as the total personality penetrates into the present, we find ourselves really free. Bergson thinks that our self-consciousness most highly enhanced in this way can arrive at the true nature and meaning of life, namely, the profundity of the Being. He makes it clear that the ultimate meaning of life thus perceived is the *elan d'amour* and he proposes proceeding into the world of the open dynamic religion from this revelation. His conception of the *elan d'amour* is not different from the buddhistic 眞如佛性 (*the truth is the same with the Buddha's nature*), nor from 仁 (*benevolence*) of Confucianism.

The Christian mysticism which emphasizes the vivid inner experience of the open religious mind does not stick to the perfect systematization of the orthodox theology.⁴ For, the practice following the original revelation which opened the religion is much more important than the perfection or the absoluteness of the theoretical system of theology. Bergson indicates well that the Christian theology could have been systematized by the completely different metaphysics. Between the original teachings of Jesus and the Christian theology there is no necessary logical connection. In this respect, it will be helpful to mention the teaching of Buddha. Answering the ultimate metaphysical questions concerning the world, he gave an example of a man who was shot by an arrow. He said, '*what is important is to pull out the arrow and remedy the injury, not to know when and from where the arrow was shot*'. It is in this context that the Zen Buddhism which seems to continue well the early Buddhist mind gives more importance to the practice and training than to the theoretical doctrine.

³ We know that Whitehead was deeply influenced by Bergson.

⁴ Bergson and Borges indicated this fact well. Henri Bergson, *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, 247, 286. Jorge Luis Borges, *Que es el budismo*.

III. THE PHILOSOPHY OF IDENTITY AND THE CLOSED SOCIETY

Considering the history of Western philosophy and religion, we can see that in their roots, the tendency and the preconception of the Philosophy of Identity is deeply hidden. All kinds of rational metaphysics have tried to deduce logically, by the pure non-experimental reasoning, the complete system of the whole world from one ultimate and absolute system of principles. That's why the geometry was the ideal model for those metaphysics. But they did not know that, in their bottom, there were lying already certain illusions and misconceptions on the Being and the thinking. It was quite natural that the philosophical theories deduced in such a way have gone in the wrong direction. It is easily seen that the Christian religion of the medieval age is one good example of such repeated faults. A society dominated by a monistic and absolute system of theory is necessarily closed and exclusive. It can not include, nor tolerate the heterogeneity and the otherness. The disputes of heresy, the excommunication, the religious torture, the execution, and the crusade war were the consequences of the closed religion of the western medieval age. The critic of Christianity by Jacques Derrida as the white religion has a persuasive ground. What are the original teachings and messages of Jesus Christ? Did he teach to exclude, excommunicate, dominate, oppress, torture, and execute the other religions? The history of exclusion and intolerance in Christianity is in clear contrast with that of inclusion and tolerance in the Turkish Empire and the Mughul Empire.

We should distinguish the open religions started by the revelation of the ultimate meaning of life from the closed religions born naturally, in the primitive societies, by the social instinct of self-conservation. The closed religions have the instinctive hostility against the other religions and cultures, and pursue the way of war and domination to assimilate or annihilate them. We should recognize the fact that even the most civilized rational societies proud of their sciences and techniques are often subject unconsciously to such primitive instincts hidden deeply under many layers of the civilization. Contrary to the closed religions, the open religions begin from the revelation that the ultimate nature and meaning of the Being is love and charity. The revelation is followed by the action and practice, and here, the loving and the loved coincide, love being propagated toward the whole world like the shining light which can not help emanating from it. In the Buddhism, the Islamic mysticism, and the Christian mysticism, we can see these facts of the open religions. We should reflect on the past history where the religions, open in their origins, have been degraded to the closed ones

through the institutionalization, being shut in the absolute orthodox theology, holding hands with the social powers.

The modern metaphysics and the modern sciences until the end of the 19th century, in spite of their different paradigms from those of the ancient and the medieval ages, could not still escape from the hidden obstinate tendency of the Philosophy of Identity. Fundamentally the monistic reductionism of the modern reason could not understand, nor include the otherness and the heterogeneous pluralism. The Western modern reason, gaining the world hegemony owing to its success in industrial revolution, fell in the trap of illusion which made it regard the other civilizations as primitive, barbarous, or undeveloped. Inspired by this fault, the Western civilization has continued the deviant way of exploiting others, whether they are the nature or the man, as mere instruments, and of sacrificing them. Such attitudes and behaviors have made the Western civilization a closed society under the mask of rationality. From such a closed society, we can not expect the ideals, or guiding principles, or actual directions of the true human community. The true community will be realized only when we have the mind of understanding others and sympathizing with them sincerely, not treating them as a mere means but as an end in itself. The positivistic tendency of philosophy which reproduces the uniform culture of superficial thoughts concealing the inner structural problems of the society, the neo-liberalism which totalizes the life-world with its logic of capital, the linear globalism as an ideology for the established system of interests, and the hegemonism captured in need of war, etc., obscure the way to the human community. The pollution of the environment is more and more transferred to the poor countries and poor people, and even to our descendents who are not yet born. The Western traditional individualism have not cared about the descendents. In this respect, the Asian traditional attitude of life in which care about the descendents of the remote future has taken so much importance stands out itself. When he asks whether the mankind wants to go on living or not, Bergson is reflecting with worry on the history of the Western civilization. To the mankind who treats each other only as a means, not as an end, today's techno-scientific civilization may present a disaster of the total destruction. It's like the case of a thoughtless child in a storehouse of explosives with the torch in his hand. Rightly here lies the reason why we should share together the comprehension of the deeper nature of ourselves and the world.⁵

5 In this context, the Buddhist teachings of the Avatamska Sutra (華嚴經) have the significant meanings for the contemporary techno-scientific civilization. We should not forget to see an important similarity between the Buddhist thoughts and the philosophy of Bergson. In the following phrases of the Buddhist priest 義湘 of 7th century Korea, we can find the fundamental vision of the interpenetrating world. ...一中一切多中一 一即一切

IV. BEYOND THE INTELLECTUAL LEVEL OF EPISTEMOLOGY

Concerning this matter, we should distinguish clearly between the level of intellectual thinking and that of philosophical intuition. The intellect reduces artificially the reality of the interpenetrating world, by projecting it to the space, to the indestructible elements separated and isolated from one another. Naturally it divides infinitely the continuous inseparable duration of time, and defines time as a set of discontinuous instants infinite in number.⁶ In the eyes of the intellect, the time and the instants are in the same relationship as are the mathematical line and the points. By such an artificial operation of the intellect, the reality of the world as the continuous genetic processes interpenetrating one another in dynamic structural interconnection disappears from our mental vision. Now the strong tendency of reductionism will dominate our thinking, explaining the whole world monistically by the mechanical laws governing the isolated elements juxtaposed in space. The reduction to the mechanical laws of mathematical form became possible with the spatialization of time. But ordinarily we forget the important fact that this way of explaining and understanding the world is an artificial product of the intellectual operation to instrumentalize and dominate the matter, thereby entrapped in the illusion that these intellectual mechanisms are the most rational way to approach the ultimate nature of the whole world. The faults of the world view of modern sciences which have professed themselves objective and rational have their origin in these oblivion and illusion. Such faults continue their inertial force in the ordinary habit of thinking of today. It is natural that this intellectual level of thinking, by the confusion immanent in it, becomes superficial and finally uniform. This fact shows clearly the limits of the Western techno-scientific civilization. Today's positivistic trends of thinking demonstrate its crisis. When these wrong trends become the dominating paradigm of the social system, aiming at the totalization of knowledge and the maximization of efficiency, 'the terror against life' will happen to us. The modern reason has excluded and oppressed the others lying outside of its Cartesian definition of rationality. We should make clear why the Western rationality, in spite of its efficiency, has the unhappy somber side of human alienation, inversion of value,

多即一 一微塵中含十方 一切塵中亦如是 無量遠劫即一念 一念即是無量劫 九世十世互相即 仍不雜亂隔別成 ... For Bergsonian conception concerning this point, see *L'evolution creatrice*, 204.

6 Here we should distinguish the meaning of the word 'continuity' in metaphysics from that in mathematics. In spite of the identity of the word, they have the contrary meanings. In metaphysics, the word 'continuous' has the original meaning of 'indivisible'. But the mathematical continuity means the infinite divisibility.

mental devastation, nihilism, etc. The intelligence is the operational function of utilizing the objects as instruments, not aiming at the essence of the reality. From objects, the intelligence extracts only the parts of its interests and concerns, and operates by projecting them into the space. So the realities, such as objects themselves as a whole, invisible interconnection of the world, internal sympathy, and coincidence, are closed to the eyes of the intelligence. So far as we harbor this level of intelligent thinking, the way to the true community of mankind will not be open.

The philosophical intuition overcomes the limits of intelligent thinking. It is the consciousness penetrating into the infinite essence of the open world to coincide with the true Being. By this intuition, retracing the genetical process of the intelligence, we can engender it as a kind of living function. Here we are in the dimension of the pluralism of the worlds of meaning. But the plurality of the worlds of meaning does not stand in isolation from one another, because they reaffirm their dynamic interconnection through reflection on their geneses from the activity of the Life-Being. The philosophy should make all meanings and values re-find their origin in life-activity. Their worlds are open to the future creation. In this intuition, the othernesses would not arouse mutual confrontation, because they will be seen as the works of the various creative efforts of life in different situations. The room for sympathy, inclusion, and tolerance will be assured.

Thus, the intuition advances toward our profound self and the inner essence of the Being. Our existence consists in the perceptive field in which our real selves interact with the world in an indivisible total circuit. Closely considered, it is seen as a continuous dynamic process which combines our unconscious past memories, present conscious perception, corporal action, and the outer world in a mutually interpenetrating way. Our self-consciousness is a process of self-realization by action, not a simple contemplative one. In the eyes of the intuition, the relationship between living things and nature, between individual and society, appears as that of interpenetration, mutual dependence, and interaction. The reality of the world exists not in numeral multiplicity but in qualitative multiplicity. The history develops in the network of interaction between the spontaneities immanent in these multiplicities. The schematic understanding of historical development by the modern reason, whether it was mechanical or dialectical, made a grave mistake of distorting the open world into a closed deterministic system. It is the duty of the philosophy of today to restore the reality of the world by the deeper intuition.

These considerations on the multiplicity and the genesis will open for us a new way of

getting along with other religions, cultures, and civilizations. Evidently the fundamental basis of these thoughts and attitudes lies in the revelation of the meaning of life. We should think of what messages the deep great emotions of religion, arts, and literature transmit to us. When we are moved deeply by them, sometimes the mystic experiences of entering into the infinite divine world are given to us. Do these experiences tell us the existence of the transcendental God of Trinity? Or rather do they not tell us that the essence of life we feel in our deepest self is the *elan d'amour*⁷ itself, and that the essence-world of the Being, ordinarily concealed by the manifold thick strata of interests and desires, sends us the flashing light of verity through a crack made for a few seconds by the great spiritual vibration? And finally isn't it true that the teachings of the Buddhism, the Islamic mysticism, and the Christian mysticism are the messages of the revelation that the ultimate essence of the Being is charity and love?

V. THE ASIAN COMMUNITY AND THE FUTURE CIVILIZATION

Today, whether the sciences and the techniques are to lead our whole mankind to the well-being, or to the total collapse, is in our own hands. If men forget the meaning of the Life and the Being, even though they have highly succeeded in developing sciences and techniques, the danger of the mutual total destruction will be increased along with the scientific progress. From the intelligent level of the Western traditional philosophies, we can not expect a persuasive guiding principle for the future community of mankind. It is blind to the reality of the interpenetration and the mutual dependence of the world. We wonder if the Western civilization has now finished its past wrong history of sacrificing other civilizations for its vain arrogance and greed. The present techno-scientific civilization has lost its direction.

In this situation, the Asian Community is arising as a historical necessity. The crisis which is menacing our mankind can not be solved simply by scientific and technological progress. The fundamental transformation of the attitude toward life is really needed. The relationship between nature and man, between man and man, should be changed by a more thoughtful philosophy of the Being. That's why the philosophical meaning of the Asian

⁷ Henri Bergson. *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion*, 98. For more detailed discussion, see chapter 3, 'La religion dynamique'.

Community does not permit the simple understanding of it as the response system vis-a-vis the European Union. The Asian Community should not be regarded, in terms of power politics, as counterbalancing the European Union. The wisdom and the teachings of the Asian cultures and philosophies can play a role of the excellent guiding principles in our movement toward the Community of Mankind. Our ultimate ideal of the Community of Mankind demands as a necessary intermediate step the Asian Community where we can find the tradition of the high spiritual cultures of inclusion, tolerance, coexistence, and harmony which has been developed through the long history under the great teachings of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Islam. Reflecting the world history, we can say evidently that the duty of leading the closed selfish civilizations to the open community of mankind will be assumed by Asia. This means that the western techno-scientific civilization will be resolved in the wider and more human tradition of the Asian civilization.

From the beginning, Buddhism has permitted and included other native religions. This fact is well shown in the various pavilions of shamanism built in the Buddhist temples. The spiritual world of Buddhism has continued to teach that the origins and the final destinations of Islam and Christianity are not at all different from its own, even if the exterior forms and theologies are not the same. And Taoism has given us the holistic vision of nature and life, in which the parts are integrated into an organic whole. Its thoughts which emphasize co-existence and harmony can be a good basis of the ecological philosophy of today. And to the Western intellectual trends of thinking, the tradition of Taoism warns the danger of the artificial totalization of knowledge. The absolute definition of the world has an invisible interconnection with the political power inclined to the totalization. The sheer naturalism (無爲自然) gives a good direction to the Western traditional attitude toward life which has confused the instrument with the essence of the Being. Confucianism, even if it was fossilized into the bureaucratic ideology, has conserved the original values like benevolence (仁), justice (義), courtesy (禮), wisdom (智), and trust (信). These values can have the more important meaning than ever in the mechanized techno-scientific age where only the instrumental values like the efficiency and the money are pursued. And the greatness of the Islamic tolerance and inclusion shown in the world history should be refocused today. Such an open mind of Islam has made it a religion which comprises the most various civilizations and peoples. From a closed rational society like that of the Western civilization, we cannot find the true vision of the community for all mankind. These reflections show that the Asian cultural tradition of Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, and Islam can open a way to the true community of all mankind.

Now, the Asian Community is rising as a historical necessity. The high spiritual heritage, the sympathetic solidarity, and the union of abundant personal, material, technological resources will be able to raise the Asian Community to the level which excels that of the EU and the NAFTA. It is not difficult to see that a clash between the civilizations in nuclear age will lead to a mutual collapse. So, the power politics which has no other objectives than conquest and domination should be abandoned. Instead, the wisdom of mutual dependence between man and man, between nature and man, should be taught as the basic attitude of living. The philosophical intuition into our real deeper selves will open a way to this wisdom. We have seen that, in the long history of Asia, the Buddhist meditation on the true meaning of the Being has made the foundation of the peaceful coexistence of societies. With its cultural tradition of harmonizing with the heterogeneous others, the Asian Community will be able to build a road to the community of all mankind. The Asian philosophical traditions have always taught that we should not treat others as a means, but as an end. Now the time has arrived for us to change the paradigm of philosophy with a new vision of the Asian Community.

To meet this historical necessity, we propose the following plans to the governments of the Asian countries. First, an international committee should be organized to discuss the agenda of the formation of the Asian Community. Second, by the joint investment of the Asian countries, we will be able to establish The University of the Asian Community and The Asian Community Foundation. These two organizations will contribute to educating the future generation of our Asian Community.