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Lecture II  
On the Zen Philosophy  
of Hisamatsu Shinichi

Katsumi Takizawa

Having heard my first lecture, you now recognize, I think, that my position is in some respects closely akin to that of Dr. Hisamatsu. Hisamatsu, too, asserts that man is one with the *dharmakāya*, the absolutely formless Subject, though man is not generally aware of this fact. He often spoke of man's different modes of self-understanding in the middle ages, in the modern age, and in the post-modern age, as distinct ways of living, thinking, and existing. It is said that the modern age is the age of humanism, or the age in which man has attained consciousness of himself. But according to Hisamatsu, the man who has become conscious of his humanity has in reality fallen into Nihil. For one who truly awakens, the true self awakens to itself. Though there are opportunities which lead to the awakening, it does not depend upon a Savior.

That which sustains me, the ground of my being, does not exist somewhere apart from me. In the event that I awaken, I awaken to myself. Of course in this case "I" should not be understood in the manner of modern humanism. Modern man does not recognize what the self really is. The self is one with the *dharmakāya*, but there is also a distinction between them. This very fact is the ground on which awakening takes place. Up to this point my opinions do not differ from Hisamatsu's very much. If so, one may ask, why does not Hisamatsu expound the primary and secondary contacts between man and the ground of being? The omission can be explained as follows: In Hisamatsu's view, Christianity teaches that man is saved only by the Savior, who came from a heaven which has always been separated from the world. Man's salvation depends on Him because man, having fallen into the absolute dilemma of sin and death, cannot get out of it, cannot save himself by his own power. According to Hisamatsu, modern dialectical theology also takes this position. But this is a misunderstanding. Karl Barth's theology, at least, is quite different. But, says Hisamatsu, though dialectical theology and existential theology are aware of the modern situation of nihilism and despair, they are nevertheless unable to over-

come it with their medieval theism; Jōdo Shinshū is in this respect at one with Christianity.

Hisamatsu's position is this: At the ground of each self there is the pact of which modern man has become ignorant. This self of mine is one with the absolutely formless; it *is* the absolutely formless. The real Subject, therefore, does not stand outside the individual self. Being individual, it transcends the individual being. It is the most fundamental fact, the very substance of nature, yet the modern age, with its various insights, has missed it. According to Hisamatsu, the awakening of the self to the Self takes place because this self of mine is one with the absolutely formless Self. In awakening the true Self becomes manifest in me. Man has fallen into Nihil because he tries to exist by himself, of whose oneness with the true Self he is ignorant.

If so, such awakening is not caused from the outside. If awakening is the manifestation of true Self, one cannot speak of discrimination between primary and secondary contacts. As far as awakening is the manifestation of true Self as this self of mine, it is impossible to posit a secondary contact. I do not necessarily reject the notion that the formless Self manifests itself as this self of mine. But I should like to ask what really happens, what is established anew, when man awakens to his true Self. With his awakening, man begins to stand and act upon the ground of being. Though he had previously ignored the fact that Buddha and sinful man are originally one, though he had been trying to live apart from the true ground of man, he now exists authentically.

On the other hand, Hisamatsu also says that man *becomes* true Self, that he *becomes* Buddha. Does he deny, then, that the negative forms of human being change, through a turning-point (Zero-point), into positive forms? His use of language suggests that the self in its negative form changes into the absolutely formless Self different from both negative and positive forms of man. The ordinary self, having become deadlocked, is suddenly transformed into the absolutely formless and infinite Self which manifests itself in awakening.

But in reality this is not so. The absolutely formless Self, being one with me, is always present. It does not change at all. So far as this awakening of mine is the activity of the Self, so long as we are speaking of this aspect only, it is permissible to express ourselves as Hisamatsu does. Where man stands, there is *tatbatā*. There is no anxious concern here, no desire, no sin at all. Here one can say quite naturally that he has no sin. Man awakens to this place. It does not follow, however, that this self of mine is transformed into the absolutely formless Self. It is a finite being who stands in this place. I see my finiteness and my sinfulness; I see also that my conduct and thought must be further trained. To be sure, the absolutely formless Self works through the boundary between God and man. But because this is so, we must distinguish all the more carefully between human forms and the absolutely formless and infinite Self of which all human forms are expressions.

Nishida's "identity of the absolutely contradictory" must be distinguished from the "absolute contradiction" and "absolute sin" of man in Hisamatsu's

writings. Nishida points to the identity of the absolutely contradictory at the ground of human being. At the ground of human being there is "reverse response" or "reverse limitation," to use Nishida's words. If man does not respond to the call which is present at the place of identity of the absolutely contradictory, if the forms which man takes are not its expression, then man falls into Nihil, which he cannot overcome. Man's nihilistic attitudes are but extreme forms of man's negative response to his origin, i.e., the identity of the absolutely contradictory. Though Hisamatsu speaks of absolute sin and absolute death, these are not Sin itself, but merely its forms. And since form is changeable, negative forms can disappear and positive forms appear. Unfortunately, Hisamatsu's diction suggests that the ordinary self is transformed into the absolutely infinite and formless Self, and I do not think that this is what he wants to say.

Hisamatsu further asserts that *tathatā* becomes real only when man awakens, that it remains only a possibility till that time. But the word "possibility" is not used accurately here. When we speak of possibility, we should understand it as *potential*, not merely as an alternative to reality. *Tathatā* is archreality, true being, of which so-called reality is only a reflection. Indeed, transition from negative forms to positive ones occur upon the ground of the absolutely formless Subject. But this does not mean that the Subject itself changes somehow, that it becomes reality out of possibility. One may ask how it is possible that man does *not* awaken, given the powerful *tathatā* at the ground of human being. This is not a question which arises out of vulgar curiosity. I am responsible for not recognizing the ground, *tathatā*. It is my sin.

What Hisamatsu calls "absolute sin" is not Sin itself, nor that which Christianity calls Original Sin. It is only one of the forms taken by Nihil. Unless we discriminate clearly between the absolutely formless and infinite Subject and the particular figures of awakened man, we cannot distinguish between Nihil itself and its forms. Awakening is a form of the self-determining of man who answers to the Subject. The awakening of man implies no corresponding change on the side of the ground. The awakened man remains sinful. Though the head of sin has been destroyed, its body, still living, writhes. This is the true image of man.

Having brought out this distinction, we can see historical realities as they are, from the original standpoint of man. We are now in a position to criticize them. For we relate ourselves to the formless Subject not only directly, but also through other men and things. How we do this is judged by the Subject. There is, I believe, an area of understanding common to religion and the sciences. But so long as religion confines itself to discussing man's direct relation to the absolute, no common method can be established. Yet religion also speaks of the transition from negative to positive forms. In economic development there is a corresponding transition, from capitalistic to socialistic forms of society, and there is an axis along which this development occurs. If religious thought ignores the distinction between the Subject and its reflection in sinful men,

then it is bound to overlook the distinction between the ground and its forms in the sphere of economy also, and a method common to religious and scientific knowledge will lie beyond its grasp.

Now on the other hand Hisamatsu has extraordinary strength. He knows clearly what lies at the bottom of our existence, "the identity of the absolutely contradictory," as Nishida put it. His thought is based on it and cannot be shaken at all; everything is viewed from this point. He never admits any subjectivity or liberty which can ignore it. In this he is quite correct; it is his strength. His insistence on an absolutely formless Subject, without human subjectivity standing against it, has been criticized as being too one-sided. This objection does not quite hit the mark. There must be this one-sidedness. Yet surely there is room in his philosophy for a more accurate explication of the structure of the transition from the negative form to the positive. We can say that the Zen philosophy of Hisamatsu went a step beyond that of Nishida. Nishida speaks of both individual and general moments in the identity of the absolutely contradictory. History, he says, is formed dialectically through the mutual limitation of the general and the individual. In such naive diction we can discern a remnant of the liberal and individualistic self-understanding of the modern age. Though his philosophy seems to be inclusive of all moments, this is finally of no importance. While Hisamatsu does not affirm any such individual as stands against the Subject, in Nishida one finds vestiges of individualism. One could also say this, with slight exaggeration, of Tanabe's philosophy, though in his case the firmness necessary to define historical realities is to some extent lost. In Nishida, the more the individual limitation becomes independent of the general, the more, in my terms, does the self-decision of man become independent of the archedecision of God. The improper weight ascribed to the individual, a residue of European liberalism, remains a flaw in Nishida's philosophy to the last. This failure is absent from Hisamatsu's work, and therein lies its strength.

At this point I must refer to Karl Barth. Many theologians attack his theology as too one-sided, claiming that he does not recognize human moments at all. An instance of a contrary tendency is Emil Brunner, who holds that if man has no ear to hear the Word, he cannot accept it even though God Himself preaches it to him. He thus posits the human subject as the object of preaching, seeing in it the subject of decision. Bultmann also holds this opinion. Nevertheless it is not true. The relation *is* one-sided, as it should be. What is to be regretted is that this one-sidedness was not completely articulated in Barth's theology. Absolute determination on the side of God is absolute determinateness on the side of man. The carrying through of this one-sidedness is sufficient to explain the arising of human history out of the primary decision. The history of the Israelites took place in it so that Jesus appeared from it. This utter one-sidedness is the cause of human history. According to Barth, however, the primary contact between God and man was not established until the appearance of the man Jesus. Because of the undue importance thus ascribed to the figure of Jesus, Christianity must maintain the salvation of man in dependence upon

the visible figure of Jesus, making an absolute of this one historical-relative event.

If I may say a word in connection with Jōdo Shinshū: What Hisamatsu calls *hōbenbutsu* (the Buddha-body assumed by the Dharma-body for the sake of man) is in reality the figure of awakened man. In contact with him, helped by him, other men awaken to themselves just as chickens are helped to hatch by the hen who pecks at the eggs. In this way the awakened man plays the role of *hōbenbutsu*, while the awakened man himself is called the Original Buddha. But in the teaching of Jōdo Shinshū, Amida Buddha is not this kind of *hōbenbutsu*. In the writings of Hisamatsu we cannot distinguish between these two kinds of *Buddhakāyas*. At the ground of each person *dharmakāya* is present. Insofar as *dharmakāya* is immanent in each person, it is called Amida Buddha who alone is called *hōbenbutsu* in Jōdo Shinshū. The human form taken by the *dharmakāya* (for instance, Gautama Buddha) is called not *hōbenbutsu* but *nirmanakāya*. In the case of Christianity, true God, insofar as he is with each person, is the Eternal Son (Christ His only Son), who corresponds with the one Amida-Buddha. As God the Father and God the Son are one, so, in Jōdo Shinshū, are *dharmakāya* and Amida Buddha one as *hōbenbutsu*. There is no difference of rank between them in any sense. The oneness of the Father and the Son means that God acts in this finite world through the boundary between God and man, where the archedecision is valid.

To this extent Jōdo Shinshū is at one with Christianity. Though Jōdo Shinshū does not use the word "judgment," it proclaims an order which cannot be reversed. It therefore distinguishes between right and wrong, and the calling and not calling of the name of Amida Buddha. For Christianity, the absolute determining of God and the self-determining of man can never be confused. We need not equate them, nor should we. That man is nonetheless free I learnt from Karl Barth, whereas Nishida's philosophy did not teach it to me. This is the point that we all should examine quite carefully so that Jōdo Shinshū and Zen Shū, or Christianity and Buddhism, can understand each other. There is no need to mitigate the one-sidedness of Hisamatsu and Barth even a little. When this principle is held firmly and thoroughly at the center of religious inquiry, what I have said above becomes evident.

According to the traditional Christian theology of Europe, the contact-point between God and man was established by the appearance of Jesus in the world. Even Barth wrote that Jōdo Shinshū was not a true religion because it did not call the name of Jesus Christ. No matter how much it might be at one with Christianity on other respects. This was not, however, his final thought, as I can testify, for I had talks with him on the problem. Barth was gradually freed from such a view, and wrote at last that no Christian should approach the believer of another religion confident in his superior knowledge of God. In his posthumous lectures we read that what has changed as a result of the event of Jesus is not that the boundary was established anew by him, but that the completely accurate answer to God arose on the side of man. It was finally necessary for

Barth to rewrite his doctrine of Providence, at the center of which was the appearance of Jesus. It is said that he desired to reread the second volume of his *Church Dogmatics* together with his pupils.

To my regret, post-Barthians and such theologians of note as Ebeling, Panenberg and Moltmann have gone astray on this point. But I believe that we can truly see history, society, and nature only when we understand that all human self-determining—including Enlightenment and the so-called Unconscious—is put under the reign of God's absolute determining, which is absolute and unconditional determinateness on the side of man.