

A Worldly View for Preventing Tragedies in Periods of Paradigm Shift: Reviewing the Thoughts of Shan-tao and Kitarō Nishida

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Introduction

At the present time, the world is confronted with a variety of crises: various frictions caused by economical globalism, widespread destruction of the environment in universal proportions despite advances in science, and unbelievable life situations for children in advanced countries. We would like to present this paper in light of these issues. In this paper, we would like to review how we should address these difficult problems from a philosophical background by focusing on various tragedies in periods of “paradigm shift.”

As you know, the concept of “paradigm shift”¹ as defined by Thomas S. Kuhn is related to a change of view of the world that religious thinkers and philosophers developed. When we reflect how their view of the world has been exerting a great influence on diverse movements in this age, we hope this paper’s topic will present a new perspective for consideration.

Paradigm in this instance refers to a certain world order and the common recognition by humans. Therefore “paradigm shift,” which is the key word in this paper, represents a shift from a certain order caused by a period of chaos.² Throughout human history, periods of chaos have caused paradigm shifts, and the world cannot avoid confronting various tragedies in relation to these periods of chaos. The human species has been evolving through the overcoming of tragedies caused by paradigm shift.

In the age of colonization under the great powers of the west (Europe) and with the cold war between the world’s superpowers there was a paradigm that the world was controlled by military power. At this present time we are experiencing a shifting period induced by the chaos caused by the breakdown of the paradigm that the world is dominated by military power and find a new paradigm fueled by information technology and globalization. Therefore, we believe that the various conflicts and tragedies of the present come from a paradigm shift. With these facts as our basis, we would like to take a look at some ideas for saving the world from its present tragedies.

In the first section, we will consider the unavoidable tragedies caused by the three kinds of conflicts that we are confronted with: the education problem, the differential society, and the conflict between globalism and fundamentalism. In addition, we will argue that there is the

¹ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

² Thomas Kuhn introduced the concept of “paradigm shift” based on his experience as a physicist in 1962. His definition of “paradigm” originally represented our recognition of a world in which a scientific revolution resulted in a revolution of how the world was seen. In modern physics, man succeeded in discovering the Big-Bang Cosmology. The universe at the present is composed of four kinds of interaction; gravitational interaction, electro-magnetic interaction, strong interaction, and weak interaction. Historically, it was clarified that these interactions were born through four phase-transitions in the early history of the universe. These phenomenon are known as “the spontaneous broken-down of symmetry” in the elementary particle physics and means the four-kinds of orderings in the chaos. Throughout approximately 13 billion years, the universe was a result of the infinite orders by repeating infinite changing of orders because of refrigeration. For example, we find the phase transition from t water to ice on the critical temperature, around 0 degree, which means the shift from a water-paradigm to an ice-paradigm. If we understand a paradigm as an ordered world, we could find the infinite paradigms in the universe. In addition, the history of life evolution is also understood as one of infinite paradigm shifts. The history of human beings should be the same as these constructions. Therefore, we define a paradigm as not based on our recognition of the world, but also as an ordered world. Accordingly, in this paper, a paradigm shift means a transition from an old paradigm to new paradigm.

theory of meritocracy which Michael Young coined on the basis of tragedies as the problem. Meritocracy means the existence of the human itself and the nature of a scientific civilization. Within these contents, we examine how humans should address the above problems without yielding to the unavoidable and the negative function of meritocracy.

In the next section, we will examine a paradigm shift in ancient China. The characteristic projects in the Sui Dynasty (581-618) represent the contradiction and the confusion between the quest for construction of the new paradigm, a nation with a law system based on the philosophies of Confucianism and Chinese legalism (律令国家 *lǜlìng guojia*), and the remainder from the old paradigm, based on military supremacy. We will take a look at the Buddhist monk Shan-tao (613-681) who lived during this tragic time in China, as a model for saving the world from these tragedies.

In the third section, we will argue how the *Lǜlìng* nation that the Sui tried to achieve influenced ancient Japan. In addition to this, we will consider the large impact of paradigm shift that the thoughts of Shan-tao brought about in medieval Japan and the thoughts of Shinran (1173-1262) which were created amidst the tragedies of this age; the view of a world for the True Buddha-land (真仏土 *shinbutsudo*) and the Land of the Transformation Body (化身土 *keshindo*).

In the fourth section, we will deliberate the common nature existing in both confronting tragedies presented in the first section and the tragedies of paradigm shift in ancient China and point out how meritocracy is included in its foundation. And, we have coined the word “amitacracy” which represents the opposite of meritocracy and will present the view of the world that existence itself as the absolute duality of meritocracy with amitacracy, a coexistent philosophy for the realization of world peace.

Confronting Three Conflicts and Unavoidable Tragedies in the Modern Nation

In the current century, among the problems currently confronting the world are (1) many difficulties in human childhood development, which is due to conflict at the family level, (2) the further polarization of people into the rich and the poor, and the problems of the working poor, which in itself is a conflict on the national level, and (3) the serious problems between globalism and fundamentalism, which is a conflict at the global level. This section will present causes of these three conflicts and their fundamental meanings.

1-1. Difficulty in Human Development

At this present time, we find children in advanced (industrialized) nations facing various social problems such as bullying, truancy, group delinquency, violence, and so on. The numbers of truancy and juvenile delinquency are at their highest levels ever except for the period right after World War II. Moreover, these problems occur not from poverty and the collapsed family structure, but seem to occur with no due reason. In order to accurately assess these situations, it will be necessary to take a look at what happened to the parameters of childhood education and what social changes came about after World War II.

In on-going studies, it is said that the history of the earth goes back some 7,000,000 years, and that homo sapiens only appeared about 200,000 years ago. We believe that human life during these 200,000 years of history must have coexisted with tough domestic duties, and included domestic duties for the children who must have shouldered some of the responsibilities as important helpers in the basic family structure.

In industrialized nations, domestic duties are greatly reduced by the prevalence of home electrical appliances which deprives the children from playing a role as a domestic duty helper.

To share in these types of chores was part of the home education for children. Therefore, the current home education process which depends on technology is not a traditional one, but it is just an extension of the school education system. For children, the home is no longer a training place for childhood development.

According to John D. Bernal's research of science history, we find that the European scientists of the latter 19th century had the common recognition and belief that they wanted to dissolve poverty and discrimination on earth through the development of technology.³ This belief has been accomplished to a certain degree by their efforts, however, at the same time, it created the impetus for weapons of mass destruction which deprived the lives of 46 million people in the last century alone. We should not forget that this is the one of the results brought on by advances in technology.

At this moment at the beginning of the 21st century, the belief has not changed and will not change. However, we believe the fact cannot be denied that the development of technology has played a role in destroying the home as a place for childhood development because of the loss of the traditional home education which had continued for centuries and centuries in humankind history. This fact can be considered a true and common cause for some of the educational problems we find in industrialized countries.

As proof of this situation, we would like to introduce the book, *Gakkō Sōji: Sono Ningenkeiseiteki Yakuwari (School Cleaning: Its Role in Human Development)* written by Yutaka Okihara.⁴ This book presents the theory that in Buddhist societies such as Japan and Thailand, an emphasis is placed on children cleaning the school. The word "cleaning" is a key point in the 200,000-year history of home education and points out the necessity of traditional home education as a part of the current school education curriculum.

Losing the traditional home education system means that children are socially judged by the very simple scale of success or failure. In other words, their lives are measured by these extreme points.

Michael Young, the sociologist and a school master, expressed the character of civilization of science with using his coined-word "meritocracy," which implies the business world and societies which are controlled by the pursuit of the economic merit.⁵

Teruhisa Horio, a professor at Tokyo University, suggested that meritocracy makes the system of the business world a controlled school educational environment. The term "schooling society" represents that school is not one of social function, but rather that the school overpowers society. This society then forces students to endure the obsession of a competitive society.⁶ In addition, the expressions of their parental love are focused on making their children ride on this social tide.

As Martin Buber points out, meritocracy means, for the child, that human development is based on utilitarianism and ability.⁷ Therefore, the human relations of "you and I" are lost, and a new objective relation "it and I" is created. Therefore, in this environment, there is no view of bringing-up the "Art of Loving" as emphasized by Erich Fromm, the fascist researcher of human

³ John D. Bernal, *Science in History 4* (London: C. A. Watts & Co. Ltd, 1969).

⁴ Yutaka Okihara, *Gakkō Sōji: Sono Ningenkeiseiteki Yakuwari (School Cleaning: Its Role in Human Development)* (Tokyo: Gakuji Shuppan, 1978).

⁵ Michael Young, *The Rise of the Meritocracy* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1982), pp. 93-115.

⁶ Teruhisa Horio, *Gendai Shakai to Kyōiku (Contemporary Society and Education)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1999), p. 78.

⁷ Martin Buber, *Ich und Du (I and Thou)* (Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider, 1979), pp. 19-20.

development.⁸

Moreover, meritocracy logically leads to a drastic result orientation. This brings the devastation of the human heart and leads to decline of social ethics. It is no exaggeration to say that the present age is consumed by this overwhelming vanity. The condition where humans live in an academic background-oriented society drives people to the life of nihilism.

The 200,000 years of human history represents various ages of humans that developed by the sharing of their domestic duties. At the same time, these domestic duties provided means for two important human attributes; one for human development and the other for the development of profound traditional religions. However these attributes have been lost by the development of technology. We believe that in losing these places for the cultivating of religious education, which was very important for traditional religion, has evolved into a heavy crisis in this century.

1-2. The Problem of the Polarization of People into the Rich and the Poor and Working Poor

Principles based on ability created a form of discrimination that no one can deny. In fact, humans have been suffering because of the discrimination against the poor for a long time. However, a certain level of the rich that live in an industrialized nation are materially assured by technology. This assurance has a mechanism that ensures that those with ability get ahead but on the other hand, at a certain level, a life of those with “no-ability” is also warranted. These extremes warrant a “restructuring” that nobody can contradict.

Margaret Hilda Thatcher, the ex-prime minister of the United Kingdom, launched a restructuring system based on a rationalized theory of reduction, to reorganize the nation. The success of this British economic policy succeeded from her drastic changes in restructuring the system. This year, a drastic restructuring system has been implemented in Japan. As a result, temporary staff numbers have increased, and the polarization of the society into the rich and the poor is intensifying. In addition, the problems of the working poor, the condition of life for these part-timers, is a serious problem which has to be dealt with and solved by the government.

However, humans cannot stop living with meritocracy. The development of home electrical appliances has destroyed the home as a training place for human development, but we cannot stop using appliances. The revolution of production based on meritocracy has many problems, but it is also a necessary element of productivity.

1-3. The Conflict between Globalism and Fundamentalism

Globalism, a current national strategy in industrialized nations, was born out of economical globalism and the sharing of the information in information technology and has a nature of destroying time honored traditions. Although some people may not want globalism to destroy their traditional way of life, there is a dilemma that technology faces with its global nature.

At the present time, globalism faces two problems. One is that it creates an unfair feeling amongst developing nations against industrialized societies, while at the same time recognizing that globalism is part of their egoism. The other is the conflict with fundamentalism. As globalism has a nature of destroying traditions, it is also creating a severe conflict with fundamentalism, which prevents the continuing of the traditional way of life as favored by fundamentalists. This could be considered as a background cause for terrorism.

Globalism was originally related to the thought of “world union” which was advocated

⁸ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1962), *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Avon Books, 1969), and *Psychoanalysis and Religion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967).

for the realization of world peace by Hideki Yukawa, the renowned Japanese physicist who analyzed the theory of nuclear power. Globalism shares the philosophy of “One Earth” and “the Eradication of War on the Earth,” and never denies ethnic individuality. However, in order to work toward the eradication of nuclear weapons and the problem of the shortage of food, an earth network as one world nation has to be constructed. However, we feel that globalism is moving in the wrong direction at this time.

We find a mutual point in the consideration of these three conflicts: we know that each conflict is problematic, but we cannot stop it in the face of our existence to live. The economic growth and the development of technology are idealisms emphasizing a steady growth. This idealism emphasizing a steady growth including the serious problem of egoism, but it cannot be stopped. The fact that these conflicts cannot be stopped is a terrible tragedy. This realization is “existential suffering.”

These three unavoidable conflicts influenced by meritocracy have brought the efforts for world peace and the foundation of traditional religion to the point of crisis. Meritocracy has created various negative influences and describes the undeniable “existential human.” In other words, it is the nature of a scientific civilization. With these facts, how can we address the undeniable problems to construct a peaceful world? This subject will be discussed in the fourth section.

The Thought of Shan-tao, Born in the Paradigm Shift Age of Ancient China

2-1. The Paradigm Shift from the Military Supremacy to the *Liling* Nation

The Qin Dynasty (B.C. 221-206) and the Han Dynasty (B.C. 206-A.D. 220), were major powers in ancient China, creating nations centralized by military supremacy. Following these eras, the period of great powers’ disruption caused by military supremacy continued for 360 years throughout the Three Kingdoms’ period (A.D. 220-A.D. 280), Jin (A.D. 265-A.D. 420), and Southern and Northern Dynasties (A.D. 420-A.D. 589). In 589, the Sui Dynasty was founded but it only lasted 40 years. Nonetheless, during this time, this nation achieved a very important role in creating a paradigm shift from a military nation to becoming a *Liling* nation, a lawful nation. *Lü* means criminal law, and *Ling* means administration law.

2-2. The Meaning of Various Confusion and People’s Tragedies

In order to view how much contradiction existed in the Sui Dynasty, let us look at the 5 main outcomes of Sui Dynasty.⁹

1. Issued the imperial system, started an officer’s examination system, and founded a bureaucratic system of centralized politics.
2. Encouraged reviving Buddhism to give relief to the people and in order to maintain peace.
3. Opened a canal from Huang He to Chang Jiang. In addition, they@ completed the 1,500 kilometer grand canal called the Bian Qu, which ran from Beijing to Hangzhou.
4. Constructed many imperial villas and the long castle wall to prevent the Turkic people of ancient central Asia from invading China.
5. Supported three unsuccessful expeditions to Koguryo.

⁹ See more Chōfū Nunome and Masuo Kurihara, *Chūgoku no Rekisi 4: Zui Tō Teikoku (The History of China 4: Sui Dynasty and Tang Dynasty)* (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1997), pp.8-38.

Of these five outcomes, items #1 and #2 created new paradigms by which the lives of the people could be maintained by the new order. However items #4 and #5 were of the old paradigm, based on military supremacy, which made the people seriously suffer. At the end of the Sui Dynasty, people greatly suffered from famine and the plague because of the fierce damage caused by the Huang He flood. The destruction of nature caused by outcome #4 might have been related to this disaster. Item #3 was a grand project which led to the planned integration of the Huang He and Chang Jiang regions. This project also must have created numerable victims.

The failure of the three expeditions planned by the second emperor, led to the Sui Dynasty people's estrangement, causing an internal collapse, and many internal rebellions, and led to the eventual fall of the Sui Dynasty. At the time of the third expedition, 1,000,000 troops were sent, but only 2,000 people were said to return. The era of the Sui Dynasty was one of extreme confusion and contradiction. People endured war, penal servitude and suffered from disaster, famine, and plague. However, it should be noted that this age should not be understood merely as a time of confusion and tragedy, but should be recognized as a chaotic time which led a shift toward a new nation, unified by *Lüling* and the Tang Dynasty. In other words, the period of the Sui Dynasty meant the start of a new order and led to a period of paradigm shift which was defined in the introduction of this paper.

2-3. Globalization of popular economy

It is not quite understandable why the Sui Dynasty had to embark on such destructive challenges such as the five projects throughout a period of two generations. However, the economy of the Huang He and Chang Jiang regions and the globalization of the distribution economy with the western region of China through the Silk Road were preceding and influencing events. This is proof that the nation pursued the previously stated globalization of its popular economy for its own well being. Although the Sui Dynasty had a short history, it led to the rise of a new order, the *Lüling* national system, which led to a period of a new paradigm, the Tang Dynasty.

The new order system was based on a system of published laws and bureaucratic politics that spread to surrounding nations rapidly, and became a model of creation for nations. Japan sent imperial ambassadors to the Sui, learned their politics and culture, and schemed to import the new order. What we have to focus on here is that globalization of a popular economic system brought about the paradigm shift.

2-4. The Thoughts of Shan-tao Born in the Tragedies, the Period of Paradigm Shift

In A.D. 613, around the end of the Sui era (581-618), Shan-tao was born in the Shandong region of China. He took Buddhist ordination before his 10th birthday. At that time, it was common for parents to deposit their children at temples because of social conditions in this region were quite chaotic. Fierce damage was caused by the Huang He flood of A.D. 611 and the war which continued from the end of the Sui era until the beginning of Tang era (618-907) created an overwhelming sense of chaos. People suffered greatly from the famine and war. Within the time of this paradigm shift, ordinary people had to face and suffer through various tragedies. Therefore, we could assume that Shan-tao was also deposited in a temple for the safety of his own life.¹⁰ Shan-tao searched for salvation in the teachings of the Buddha and found his path in

¹⁰ Concerning this section, see more Hiromasa Akiyama, Kazuo Harada, and Masanori Matsuda, "Zendō no Realism to sono Rekishiteki Tenkai (Realism Spirit in Shan-tao and its Historical Development)" in *Bulletin of Kurashiki*

the Pure Land way, which is based on *The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus*. He was led by his experiences in early childhood confronting his “oceans of suffering.”

This sutra describes the Buddhist story about a tragic Magadha king’s family who are saved by the Buddhist theory of dependent origination and contains the unique content which focuses on the salvation of lay women. In the teaching of the true salvation way, Shan-tao realized for all humankind and himself a realization of “the self as absolute duality.” This is described in his writing, *Commentary of the Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus*;

By the “deep mind” is meant the mind that cherishes a deep faith. Two kinds are distinguishable. The first is to believe deeply in a most decided way that this body as it exists here now is a humble, sinful existence subject to birth-and-death; that since the incalculable past it has thus always been in the state of transmigration with no chance whatever for final emancipation. The second is to believe deeply in a most decided manner that the forty-eight vows of Amida Buddha are meant to take in all beings; and that therefore, having no doubt and unhesitatingly relying on the authoritative power of his vows, they are sure to be born in the Pure Land.¹¹

This was Shan-tao’s realization which emerged from his interpretation of *The Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus*, and in the tragedies of paradigm shift was called “two deep minds,” which would later have a great influence on Japanese *Mahāyāna* Buddhism. Moreover, what was revolutionary was that this realization had the unique spirit of questioning the ways in which a karmic sentient being could be saved and where their salvation could be found. In this interpretation, this view was called “realism spirit” which means a realization of “the self as absolute duality.”

Kitarō Nishida, the 20th century philosopher, named this realization “existence itself as absolute duality” (absolutely contradictory self-identity).¹² It could also be called “realism spirit” created by the historical condition which could not help facing up to the human existence and the strong spiritual culture which sustains its tragic confrontation. “Realism spirit” means the penetrating sight that does not accept any notions against the existence of self and human and became the basis for the Japanese Buddhist master, Hōnen’s spirit of religious reformation about five hundred years later, causing a great paradigm shift in Japan. There lies the root of Nishida’s “symbiosis philosophy” to solve many conflicts such as destroying peace.

Great Influence of the Paradigm Shift in Medieval Japan Brought by Shan-tao

3-1. The Foundation of Nation learned from Sui Dynasty

Buddhism came to Japan in the middle of the 6th century and was centralized as a basis for Japanese culture, a national system arranged by a “Seventeen-article Constitution” and “Twelve level cap and rank system.” It can be said that Japan learned from the projects of the Sui dynasty

Sakuyo University & Sakuyo Junior College Vol. 38 No. 1 (Kurashiki: Kurashiki- Sakuyō University, 2005), pp. 1-51.

¹¹ Daisetz T. Suzuki trans., *The Kyōgyōshinshō: The Collection of Passages Expounding the True Teaching, Living, Faith, and Realizing of the Pure Land* (Kyoto: Shinshū Ōtaniha, 1973), pp. 93-94.

¹² Kitarō Nishida, “Zettai Mujunteki Jikodōitsu (Absolutely Contradictory Self-identity)” in *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū 9 (The Complete Works of Kitarō Nishida Vol. 9)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2000), pp.147-222 and “Bashoteki Ronri to Shūkyōteki Sekaikan (The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious World View)” in *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū 11 (The Complete Works of Kitarō Nishida Vol. 11)* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2004), pp. 371-464.

as explained in the previous section: 1) establishing an imperial system, and 2) reviving Buddhism to give relief to the people. It was at this time, that Japan was recognized as a nation by the Sui for the first time.

In A.D. 741, during the middle years of the Nara period, provincial temples for monks and nuns were established under the order of the emperor in Japan. With this, Buddhism became the religion for the nation with the purpose of spiritual protection of the state (鎮護国家 *chingokokka*) through a central temple, *Tōdai-ji*. People of great talent were assembled at *Tōdai-ji* and its provincial temples, and Buddhism became the core of academic prosperity and cultural formation for Japan. Additionally, *Enryaku-ji* in Shiga, *Tō-ji* in Kyoto, and *Kongōbu-ji* in Wakayama which were established during the Heian period (794-1185), were supported by the aristocrats and also played a role in the spiritual protection of the state.

3-2. Paradigm Shift in the War Time of Medieval Japan

At the end of the Heian period, 600 years had passed since Buddhism was introduced to Japan. During the time of the Genpei wars (1180-1185), Japanese Buddhism changed its role from “the religion for nation” to “the religion for salvation of the people.” This paradigm shift was brought about by Hōnen, and was the starting point of a new type of Buddhism, called Kamakura Buddhism which was espoused by such eminent Buddhist masters as Eisai (1141-1215), Shinran (1173-1262), Dōgen (1200-1282), Nichiren (1222-1282), and Ippen (1239-1289).

Katsuichirō Kamei, the specialist of literary criticism, calls this paradigm shift “the beginning of the way of religious reformation” and considers that this period began in 1198, the year when Hōnen finished writing his book, *A Collection of Passages on the Nembutsu Chosen in the Original Vow (Senjaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū)*.¹³ He indicates that “religious reformation” in this book meant the denial of *Sangharama* Buddhism which had over a 600-year history in Japan, was supported by elite, intelligent monks, with the aristocracy at its center. In addition, he points out that the “religious reformation” also meant the establishment of Buddhism as a way of awareness that exists for ordinary human beings who found it difficult to be saved by following specific Buddhist regulations and requirements.¹⁴

Although Hōnen was a distinguished Buddhist monk who mastered three types of learning (conduct *śīla*, concentration *samādhi*, and wisdom *prajñā*), he discarded this status and left *Enryaku-ji* which was the highest institution of Buddhist learning in Japan. Instead, he lived in downtown Kyoto and strived to teach the people his understanding of Buddhism. The representative Buddhist masters of that era such as Eisai, Shinran, Dogen, Nichiren, Ippen as well as Hōnen all left *Enryaku-ji* and stood up for the sake of the common people. The spirit of Hōnen’s “religious reformation” mentioned by Kamei was the realism spirit flowing in Shan-tao.¹⁵ Hōnen’s thoughts are founded upon Shan-tao’s thoughts because Hōnen, himself, declared that he “relied solely on Shan-tao as [his] master.”

The realism spirit is not limited merely to the academic theory for correct interpretation of Buddhist scriptures. The thoughts of Shan-tao were born from a realism spirit which were

¹³ Genkū (Hōnen), Morris Augustine and Tesshō Kondō trans., *Senchaku Hongan Nembutsu Shū: A Collection of Passages on the Nembutsu Chosen in the Original Vow* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1997).

¹⁴ Katsuichirō Kamei, *Nihonjin no Seishinshi (The Spiritual History of Japanese)* 3 (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 1975), p. 220.

¹⁵ H. Akiyama, K. Harada, and M. Matsuda, “Zendō no Realism to sono Rekishiteki Tenkai (Realism Spirit in Shan-tao and its Historical Development)” in *Bulletin of Kurashiki Sakuyo University & Sakuyo Junior College Vol. 38 No. 1* (Kurashiki: Kurashiki Sakuyō University, 2005), pp. 36-37.

transmitted to Japan over a period of 500 years and eventually produced Hōnen's epic writing, *A Collection of Passages on the Nembutsu Chosen in the Original Vow*, the so-called book of "religious reformation." With this fact, we use realism spirit as the key term which in this paper means a modern civilization relating to and facing up to human existence. Therefore in thinking about the realism spirit, both the historical circumstances which correspond with the human existence and the strong spiritual culture which sustains its tragic confrontation were more necessary than the problem of individual talent. "Realism," in this paper, means neither realism nor the literary theory of Marxism. It literally means "to penetrate the reality."

3-3. Shinran's View of the World based on Shan-tao's Realism Spirit

Shan-tao states the following in his writing;

To seek the fruition of Buddha hood means "the reward proper" and to seek to be born in the Pure Land by awakening the aspiration for enlightenment which is known as "the dependent reward." One is "the proper," and the other is "the dependent," so these cannot coincide with each other. It is difficult to gain "the reward proper" because no one has ever attained the reward land by wishing. Although, it is easy to seek "the dependent reward," it is difficult to enter in the reward land because of human desires. In other words, this is like the metaphor that it is easy for the king of the capital to make merit for those who live in a remote village, but it is very difficult for them to be the people in the city. However, in this last Dharma age that passed 1,000 years since Shakyamuni attained in Nirvana, all people are embraced by Amida Buddha's workings and can be born in the Pure Land where Amida Buddha resides. Then, would it be difficult to be born in the Amida's Pure Land? Those who rely on the power of the Original Vow can all be born in the Pure Land.¹⁶

In the above, "the reward proper" means "I wish to be a Buddha," and "dependent reward" means "I wish to be born in the Pure Land of Amida." The former is the path for the subjective achievement, and the latter is the path for the achievement of land. The latter subject is Amida Buddha, and Amida's Vow and its land of merit (working) represents "sentient beings who recite the name of Amida, will be taken in and never abandoned." This is implied in the sentence of "this is like the metaphor that it is easy for the king of the capital to make merit for those who live in a remote village, but it is very difficult for them to be the people in the city."

In Shinran's writing, *The Collection of Passages Expounding the True Teaching, Living, Faith, and Realizing of the Pure Land*, a world for the True Buddha-land and the Land of the Transformation Body are explained.¹⁷ Shinran's view of the world could describe a view of world in *The Larger Sutra on Amitāyus (Infinite Life)* as viewed by Shan-tao. "A world for the True Buddha-land" means "dependent reward" based on wishing of "the reward proper" for Amida. Therefore the people constructing "the Land of the Transformation Body" represents the people of today, and original "dependent reward" means exactly to be born in "this world." Nevertheless, the matter of the world itself becomes "the Land of the Transformation Body" in the merit of "a world for the True Buddha-land."

¹⁶ Shan-tao, "Kan-muryōjubutsukyō Sho (Commentary of the Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus)" in *The Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Vol. 37*, (Tokyo: Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō Kankōkai, 1962), p. 250.

¹⁷ D. T. Suzuki trans., *The Kyōgyōshinshō: The Collection of Passages Expounding the True Teaching, Living, Faith, and Realizing of the Pure Land* (Kyoto: Shinshū Ōtaniha, 1973), p. 5.

Those people today, who have a wandering heart, pursue their desires, and are consumed by blind passions, are excluded from salvation. However, such people are the purpose of salvation by being embraced by the “land” and experience the self-reformation from “the ordinary people” to “those who are rightly established and never fall back” with the significance of “the Land of the Transformation Body.” That is, the suffering of “the world” takes on the significance of “the Land of the Transformation Body” by being embraced and taken in by “a world for the True Buddha-land.”¹⁸

Moreover, this thought is representative in the story of Vaidehī, the wife of King Bimbisāra, who left the Vulture Peak near Rājagraha and experienced her salvation at Magadha, which represents the salvation of all sentient beings. This salvation is “Shakyamuni’s true intent for appearing,” which “Shan-tao alone, in his time, clarified as the Buddha’s true intent,” and later came to represent Shinran’s view of the world. The tragedy in the capital of Magadha is healed by recalling *The Larger Sutra on Amitāyus* and represents “Shakyamuni’s the true intent of appearing.” These are Shinran’s view of the two worlds which were opened up by Shan-tao and the dynamism of the Bodhisattva’s power of the Vow directed toward all beings.

The View of a World for Realization of World Peace: A Coexistent Philosophy

In this final section, we will consider the common nature between the existential tragedies in the present world and the tragedies of paradigm shift in ancient China and Nishida’s philosophy to construct the view of a world for realization of world peace.

4-1. The Common Nature between Ancient China and the Present Paradigm Shift

In the first section, we examined the three unavoidable tragedies that modern society is confronting. One of them was the problem of a destroyed education system and the modern problem of technological advancements facing our civilization today. In the second section, the 5 main projects of the Sui Dynasty in the ancient Chinese paradigm shift were considered, and we found that they led to a contradiction and confusion between the constructing of a new paradigm, *Liling guojia*, and the old paradigm of a nation based on a military supremacy.

The common factor between these historical conflicts and modern ones are the problem of the victim caused by such a radical revolution of society. In the time of the Sui Dynasty, the harsh reality was that those who lived in the country must have suffered so much due to the military. The modern problem of the polarization of society into the rich and the poor and working poor is also related to the radical revolution which came into being. These problems should be quickly resolved by a national administration.

Globalism in the Sui Dynasty was brought about by globalism of the people’s economy. In other words, a worldwide globalism of the economy created by the East- West trade on the Silk Road and the idea of globalism of amongst the general culture because of the trade between the economy of the Huang He and Chang Jiang regions. Because of this, the conflict and confusion occurred between the fundamental dynamism based on the power of military supremacy and the global dynamism based on the law.

At the present, we find these conflicts are continuing as a serious problem. If we realized the number of respectful lives lost due to war as a tragedy of paradigm shift in changing from the age of power politics to the age of constructing of a world order composed of international legislation, justice, and administration, we could find the mutual commonality between the

¹⁸ “The world” originally means *Sabā* in Sanskrit and the world in which Shakyamuni Buddha preaches the law. In this paper, however, this represents the world we live in.

ancient Chinese paradigm shift and the present. Modern globalism and economic globalism at the general level and the formation of an information society, is also preceding the construction of a world order.

4-2. Nishida's Prediction of the Failure of the Civilization of Technology and A Coexistent Philosophy

As we mentioned in the second section, the core thoughts of Shan-tao who lived during the age of an ancient Chinese paradigm shift was the “realism spirit” which emerged through his interpretation of Shakyamuni’s teaching and in facing up to the tragic reality in the paradigm shift. In other words, this could be represented as “the awakening of existence itself as absolute duality” as noted by Kitarō Nishida’s words. In the third section, the thoughts of Shan-tao which had a big influence on the paradigm shift of medieval Japan and brought Hōnen’s religious reformation was explained. In addition, Shinran’s thoughts created by this tragic period, were also considered. The root of Nishida’s view of world, “existence itself as absolute duality in the construction of existence,” is in line with Shinran’s two views of the world; the True Buddha-land and the Land of the Transformation Body. This connotes Nishida’s thoughts of his view of world for saving the present tragedies.

Modern western philosophy was composed of the concepts of “the subject” and “the object.” Concerning this, Nishida came up with the concept of “place,” as the foundation of the subject, into the western philosophy and predicted the deadlock of relationship between “the subject” and “the object.” The relation between subject and foundation in Nishida’s thoughts is expressed as the relationship between the citizen and a city-state by the researcher, this relationship, however, had been represented as the concept of “the reward proper” and “dependent reward” in Buddhism from ancient times.¹⁹ In other words, this relationship is the relationship between “Amida Buddha and the world” and also the relationship between “sentient beings and the land of endurance.” The dependent reward for the proper reward of Amida is the Pure Land. On the other hand, the dependent reward for the proper reward as sentient being is this world.

Akira Ōmine, a Japanese philosopher, states that there are two meanings in Nishida’s thoughts of “existence itself as absolute duality.” One means awareness, and the other means existential structure.²⁰ The theory of “existence itself as absolute duality” in Nishida’s last thesis “The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious World View,” is directly related to Shinran’s view of the world and is also connected to the thoughts of Shan-tao. Although Nishida himself does not make the relationship between his thoughts and Shinran clear, his theory of “the aware of existence itself as absolute duality” is found in Shinran’s writing, *Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith*;

When I reflect deeply on the Vow that Amida fulfilled after five kalpas @ of contemplation, I find that it was for me, Shinran, alone! How compassionate, therefore, is the Original Vow of Amida, who was moved to free me from so many

¹⁹ “The reward proper” means where a person’s karma in the past was correctly lived as the reward. On the other hand, “the dependent reward” means the place where the body received the karma. The former represents the way for the subjective realization. The latter is the way for the realization of the land. This relationship means the relation between “Amida and Pure Land” and “sentient beings and their world.”

²⁰ See Akira Ōmine, “Symposium: Inochi no Songen Kyōiku (Education for the Dignity of Life)” in *Shinshū Hoiku Kenkyū Vol. 10* (Kyoto: Shinshū Hoiku Gakkai, 2006), pp.23-30.

karmic defilements.²¹

In addition, Nishida's theory of "the awareness of existence itself as absolute duality" is related to the quotation of Shan-tao's thoughts of "two deep minds" which was introduced in the section two and section four.

The workings which create our awakening of "existence itself as absolute duality" is the working of the "place" that Nishida emphasizes. This "place" means the place as "existence itself as absolute duality in the construction of existence" and is the foundation of subject. Although Nishida does not mention it, we would like to suggest that the thought of "existence itself as absolute duality in the construction of existence" was the view of the world created from Shan-tao's interpretation of the relationship between the study meeting of *The Larger Sutra on Amitāyus* and of "Shakyamuni's the true intent of appearing in *the Sutra on Contemplation of Amitāyus*. It was also Shinran's view of the land composed of the True Buddha-land and the Land of the Transformation Body, which Shinran learned from Hōnen's interpretation of Shan-tao's thoughts.

Shinran stated his view of these two worlds in his writing, *The Collection of Passages Expounding the True Teaching, Living, Faith, and Realizing of the Pure Land*. "The world" has the significance of "the Land of the Transformation Body" through the experience of being submerged by "the True Buddha-land." This is the structure of human existence as the existence which was born from the theory of Buddhist non-duality and the root of Nishida's "existence itself as absolute duality in the construction of existence." "Existence itself as absolute duality" represents the structure of true existence which denies the empty human existent structure. That is, Nishida's "subject and foundation" in "the logic of the place of nothingness" could be "a coexistent philosophy."

The Dharma world embraces all existences, and "the absoluteness" subsumes all finite things in its inside. When the finite realizes that it is embraced by the Dharma, it knows the meaning of its true existence. This is stated in *the Sutra on Amitāyus Buddha*;

In the ponds are lotuses as large as chariot wheels—the blue ones radiating a blue light, the yellow a yellow light, the red a red light, and the white a white light. They are marvelous and beautiful, fragrant and pure.²²

4-3. Existence Itself as Absolute Duality of Meritocracy with Amitacracy

The theory of meritocracy serves as the basis of tragedies as the three problems introduced in the first section; (1) many difficulties in human childhood development, (2) the further polarization of people into the rich and the poor, and the problems of the working poor, and (3) the serious problems between globalism and fundamentalism. For the solution of these problems relating the difficulty of human formation and the lost of human nature, we would like to find them in the coexistent philosophy.

Currently we find the American ideal of globalism being criticized, however, in its original meaning, globalism meant the concept of "the principle of world" and "a peaceful world

²¹ Yuien, Bandō Shōjun trans., *Tannishō: Passages Deploring Deviations of Faith* (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1996), p. 21.

²² Hisao Inagaki and Harold Stewart, trans., *The Smaller Sutra on Amitāyus*, (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1995), p. 122.

union” which has no war. This concept could be connected to the thought of “coexistence” in universal proportions. However, under the meritocracy, globalism has come to be driven by the fight for the concession of economical development in the developing nations by major economic power countries.

In brief, to live within the civilization of science means to live within meritocracy, and both people who measure and are measured with the simple scale based on the merit-demerit system, become the substance and the tool. This brings us not only the desolation of individual spirits – nihilism, but also leads to a decline of civilization which means “politics without regulation, business without morality, work without wealth, education without character, and science without human nature.”²³ We cannot help facing up to these deep tragedies as existential sufferings. What is “science without human nature”? This can be exemplified by monkeys peeling shallots. He will peel the shallots while analyzing each peel by peel and eventually lose everything. Humans have done the same thing and opened the door for the destruction of humankind by creating the atomic bomb.

However, can humankind abolish meritocracy? Even if a scientist were romanticist, the world of science technology itself is meritocracy. Therefore we cannot deny meritocracy even if it is a bad influence, because the development of “the ability of measuring an object” today is composed of the tradition of “to use the tool” and “to make the tool” and this is also related to the essence of human evolution. What we have to focus on is how we could control the monster of meritocracy. This will allow us see the dynamism of civilization.

In this paper, we have suggested the coined word “amitacracy” as the opposite of the word “meritocracy” as coined by Michael Young. In Sanskrit, the term “*mita*” means “measurable” and “*a*” represents a negative meaning, so “*amita*” means “immeasurable.” The surface culture of meritocracy as the representative of science technology and the depth culture of amitacracy as the representative of deep spiritual culture which does not allow measuring the life are opposite and, at the same time, support each other. The surface culture of meritocracy can be called “the culture,” and the depth culture of amitacracy can be called “the counter culture.” We call this relationship “the construction of a dual culture.” The historical origin of this thought is discussed in sections three and four.

But we cannot expect the meaning of the above in the relation to the term “culture” and “counter culture” to be the same when we look at the cultural history of humankind. The relationship of between the two terms is not “the construction of dual culture,” and they should be understood as the literal sense as “culture” and “counter culture” because their relationship is an absolute division. The reason why we can refer to them as “the surface culture of meritocracy” and “the depth culture of amitacracy,” in spite of this, is not to limit this paper to national and the ethnic divisions but to expand this to a global perspective.

Additionally, as we explained in previous section, “meritocracy” is the world of relationship between the “subject” and the “object,” and the amitacracy is the world of relationship between “the subject and the foundation of subject.” We should pay attention to these relationships which immersed within the dual culture of “culture” and “counter culture.” In other words, this can be expressed as the relationship between “the surface culture” and “the depth culture” and “existence itself as absolute duality.”

²³ See Jirō Watanabe, *Nihilism* (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppan, 1975).

Concerning the statement of “the politics without the regulation, the business without the moral, the work without the wealth, the education without the character, and the science without the human nature,” this has mentioned in seven great sins of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi.

4-4. Conclusion

Under individuality, meritocracy refers to a social existence which makes us endure various restrictions for our productive activities. On the other hand, amitacracy means the non-conditional trust for self-existence, the recognition of fundamental faith which psychology indicates. Because of this fundamental faith, humans come to be able to live within the various life restrictions. That is, in the sense of value, the culture of pursuit of profit and priority of efficiency and the counter culture which drives for the realization of a dignified life are contrary each other, however, in actual existence, they help each other to realize one's character. In other words, this can be expressed as the "surface culture" and the "depth culture" in which we realize one character by being contradictory and compensating for each other. These thoughts represent the ultimate thought of *Mahayāna* Buddhism.

In the 19th century Europe, the culture of science technology was born due to the industrial revolution in England and represented "culture," while the culture of religion and art represented "counter culture." In an age of paradigm shift in the name of the industrial revolution, the culture of science technology brought about the tragedy of the "objective culture." This created the theory of colonization and led to humankind's drive for the greatest tragedy of the 20th century, the world war.

Today, we can understand that the relationship between "culture" and "counter culture" mirrors the relationship of scientific technology and spiritual culture. Therefore, "existence itself as absolute duality in the construction of existence" represents the relationship of culture of meritocracy as the representative of science technology and the counter culture of amitacracy as the representative of deep spiritual culture which does not allow for the measuring of life are contradicting and yet, support each other at the same time. When we lose the existential construction of "existence itself as absolute duality," we will not be able to avoid the destruction of the individual, the home, and the humankind. This had been predicted by the devout Shin Buddhist Saichi Asahara (1850-1932), a shoe craftsman, who lived at the end of 19th century in Japan. He wrote;

To be ashamed of one's sins and to rejoice are treasures of the Dharma
All the world is ashamed of one's sins,
All the world is to rejoice,
To be ashamed of one's sins and to rejoice in *I take refuge in Amida Buddha*.²⁴

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²⁴ *Daisetsu T. Suzuki, Myōkōnin (Wondrous, Excellent Person)* (Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1993), p. 135.

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