Monks as Role-Models for Ideal Attitudes in Japanese and European Cultural History

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INTRODUCTION

During the past six years Zen Buddhist and Christian monks have visited one another's monasteries and very cordially expressed mutual approval. They have actually shared each other's monastic lives and agreed that there is a common human link between these two central expressions of two totally different religions. (Hirata, 71–99). I frankly find this astounding—very *pleasantly* astounding, because until very recently both academic students of religion and believers themselves generally insisted that there are little or no communalities between the world's religious traditions. In today's presentation I would like to use the eminent American anthropologist Clifford Geertz's notion of religion to attempt to disclose the common human and cultural dynamic which can help us to understand why one Zen roshi told his disciples, "Catholic monks are digging in different holes but the water they find is the same as that which we find in zazen."

In my presentation today I will not talk further about this ongoing encounter between Buddhism and Christianity. Rather, I will examine the long historical process by which Buddhism and other Japanese religions have helped create one of the most characteristic Japanese cultural traits, and how Christianity has done the same for the whole of the western civilization.

In my previous lecture to this distinguished group of scholars I studied the lives and practices of Zen and Benedictine monks and listed numerous categories of religious practice where these two very different religious groups actually seem to be doing very similar things. I have reproduced the chart of those similarities today (see final page) and wish to use it to help illustrate the quite different focus of today's presentation. This should be of assistance because today I wish to disclose the manner in which the belief and practices of Zen Buddhist monks have graphically expressed, and so helped to permanently establish in the whole of Japanese culture even until today, a love of the distinctively Japanese characteristic which I will call "inner stillness and outward

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social and personal harmony and control." (Kishimoto, 118–119). Please pardon me if I appear impolite in discussing your own national character. In fact I intend my remarks to be complimentary, because I happen to admire very much this "inner stillness and outer harmony".

All of you no doubt know that western people find oriental people "mysterious and inscrutable". I am only half joking when I suggest that today's investigation might help to shed some light on the very admirable motives behind the presentation of the famous "inscrutable oriental face" so many of which I see looking at me this afternoon.

I would like to balance my presentation by also studying the Christian contribution to a parallel western cultural characteristic. I shall attempt to do this by investigating the possibility that the life and practices of Catholic monks historically expressed in a sort of ideal-typical manner, and thus helped to permanize into western culture, a special predilection for "brotherly love" as the proper way in which all men and women should relate to one another.

The first step towards our goal is to more carefully understand Clifford Geertz's famous cultural definition of religion.

RELIGION AS A PRACTICAL WAY FOR A SOCIETY TO PASS ON ITS MOST SUCCESSFUL ATTITUDES TO ITS YOUNGER GENERATION

Geertz's notion of religion is refreshingly secular and business-like. Up until the past few decades, whenever historians or social scientists approached religious phenomena they looked primarily at doctrines, rituals, and practices. Geertz looks instead at what he calls the favorite *"attitudes, moods, and dispositions"* (9) which any given religion tends to produce in its believers. He tries to show that actually the main function of ideas like "God", gods, or the "Buddha" is to bring into clear expression a certain set of key "moods" and "attitudes" towards the general "climate of reality" which a given people find most attractive. He argues that the religious stories and ideas about central symbols like God or Buddha and religious practices which accompany them actually reproduce these moods and attitudes and give them great importance by showing them as being the direct expression of the ultimate nature of the world and of man.

I will contend in this lecture that for the Japanese, perhaps the most favored and characteristic mood is what I have called "inner stillness", and its corresponding external and social expressions are a certain calm and おちついている external attitude, together with a corresponding emphasis on group harmony. Perhaps the scholars and professors in my audience may disagree, but at least from the point of view of the 外国人 this com-

bination seems to be the quintessential Japanese "attitude-mood" combination. For us westerners, on the other hand, the key attitude-mood might be something like "we are all fair to one another because we love one another as equal brothers and sisters".

Of course, both Japanese and westerners realize that these are only たてまえ, which very often conceal very opposite feelings. Nevertheless, we like them; they somehow seem "proper". In other words they seem to be among our favorite attitudes and moods. Here, I wish to disclose the role which religious notions, beliefs, and practices played in the long historical process whereby these favorite moods and attitudes were actually brought permanently into our cultural repertoire, becoming our characteristic way of solving the very difficult problem of how to relate socially to one another.

Geertz maintains that religious notions and practices shape the climate of the world "by inducing in the worshipper a certain distinctive set of dispositions, tendencies, capacities, propersities, skills, habits, liabilities, and pronenesses which lend a chronic [i.e. permanent] character to the flow of his activity and the quality of his experience." (9)

To be more specific, he is saying that religion acts to express—by means of symbolic stories about the origin and nature of mankind and reality—the favorite attitudes, feelings, and values of a given culture, and then to permanize these favorite attitudes and give them graphic expression and meaning. He means that the ritual and religious practice of such religion serves to reproduce these favored attitudes and moods and give them special status as being in precise accord with the ultimate nature of mankind and the universe. He says that religions are thus both "models *for* and models *of*" (8) a society's most valued attitudes, moods, and ways of looking at things. He uses the American Plains Indians' lifestyle and their religious search for mystic visions of gods as an example. These Indians' life in semi-desert conditions where food supply was scarce and uncertain and where dangers from hostile tribes were constant, made the ability to endure pain and hunger central to their survival. Hence their general religious doctrines and practices—and one practice in particular which sends the young warrior alone into the desert to fast and search until he has a vision of a certain divine tribal hero—are symbolic expressions of the vital, ultimate importance of an unflinching attitude towards danger, pain, and hunger. Religious belief and practice served these Indians as schools to teach them well these important attitudes virtues. As Geertz puts it, "The endurance, courage, independence, perseverance, and passionate willfulness in which the vision quest practices the Plains Indian are the same flamboyant virtures by which he attempts to live." (9).

Geertz defines religion as, "A system of symbols [i.e. myths and doctrines] which acts to establish *powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations* in men by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence, and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely

realistic." (4, emphasis is mine). Applying this definition to our present subject matter, Buddhism (together with other religious systems) came to be gradually accepted by the Japanese because it —in its adapted, Japanese form— symbolized, expressed, and produced the moods and attitudes (among them interior stillness and exterior harmony) which the Japanese people already favored, and it went on to give them reinforcement and specific expression which helped make them last through centuries. That is, far more than simply being a *model of*, or expression of, certain important socially successful moods and attitudes, Buddhism became a very specific *model for* producing and permanizing in the hearts and minds of future generations of Japanese a certain specific kind of interior stillness and exterior calm. Eventually this attitude became so "powerful and pervasive" that it lingers unconsciously today, even among those who no longer believe in—and might even dislike—Buddhism. Such is my thesis today. Of course, Confucianism and countless other religious and non-religious factors entered into the formation of this attitude, but today we will look only at the Buddhist influence.

In the same manner and according to the same typical human and cultural dynamic of religion, Christianity rapidly shot across the Roman empire and overcame the determined resistence of entrenched Roman religious and political systems because men and women in that age of brutal military domination found Jesus' teachings on gentle love and brotherhood to be precisely the mood and attitude which corresponded to their preferences. Once Christianity became generally accepted it gave the whole cultural ethos of the West a definitive and "long-lasting" bias towards love—and towards the presumption of equality and justice which are love's necessary social concomitants. It seems to me that this cultural bias remains unconsciously in place today, even where Christianity is no longer either believed or appreciated.

The first step in my attempt to disclose the religious and historical manner in which this formation of central Japanese and western cultural characteristics came about will be to focus once more on the life and practices of Zen and Christian monks. The comparative study of Zen and Christian monks seems to me to be a particularly effective vehicle with which to pursue this goal. This is true because both of them wielded considerable direct influence on the formation of philosophical, artistic, and literary tastes of their respective civilizations; and also, because they both are ideal types—i.e. something like paragons or ideal embodiments—of far more general religious worldviews subscribed to in a general way by almost everyone in Japan or Western Europe over many centuries.

In studying monastic life and practice and using it to understand the human cultural dynamic of religion it is not my intention to praise either monks or religion. My purpose here is neither to praise nor to condemn them, but to uncover the very

interesting manner in which religion acts to enrich cultures with some of their most typical habits and predispositions.   Later we will note that whereas the life and practice of monks is extremely beautiful in its ideals, it seems to be too utopian to be fully embodied by more than a small portion of exceptional men and women.   Typically, the actual manner in which the monk succeeds in putting his ideals into practice falls considerably short of what he sincerely wants and hopes for.   The fact is that monks— like every other particular group of men and women—present a mixture of good and bad, or of success and failure; in a word, they present a very human—and so a very ambiguous—picture in every respect.   But this does not seem to keep them from fulfilling an important role in their cultures.

Modern secular critics like Voltaire, Hobbes, Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud have not allowed the dark sides of either religion in general or monks in particular to remain hidden.   In fact they have done their job too well in that their revelations of both real and imaginary economic, psychological, and social weak points of religion and religious practice have all but succeeded in eclipsing the equally well-documented positive sides and functions of religion in general and of monks in particular. The present investigation would restore the balance, as it were, by documenting the constructive human dynamic of religion without hiding or ignoring its very real negative potentials and actualities.

ZEN MONKS AS PARAGON-MODELS OF CHARACTERISTIC JAPANESE INTERIOR STILLNESS, EXTERIOR CALM, AND SOCIAL HARMONY

As our first step we must return to the Zen *sodo* (僧堂) or Monks' Hall and once again briefly look at the life and practice of the *unsui* (雲水) or monk.   The most prominent activity there, in simple fact the very center of the whole life of the monk, is the practice of zazen.   During the active training half of the monk's year he ordinarily takes part each month in one small and one large sesshin in which he sits from eight to sixteen hours or more a day.   That, for those who have experienced the discomfort involved in sitting even for a half hour of this intense, unmoving concentration, is a *lot* of zazen.

During zazen the monk learns to sit with such concentration that neither the mind nor the body moves.   Slowly the whole metabolism—the heart beat and the breathing —becomes very slow, and the brain waves change markedly to a kind of very gentle rhythm which marks states of deep inner peace.   The consciousness remains sharply awake, but the conceptual mind is quiet.   Few or no images or concepts are formed, and one experiences a state of calm well-being known as *samadhi* or *zammai* (三昧). The road to *satori* (悟) or enlightenment lies though the doors of samadhi, but whether

the monk experiences deep enlightenment or not, he learns how to achieve a state of solid, concentrated, inner calm.

During his other types of religious practice—*samu* (作務) or Work Practice, and *chōka* (朝課) and *banka* (晩課) or Morning and Evening Sutra Service, in fact during literally every part of his day, the *unsui* is expected to turn everything into zazen. That is, he strives to deepen the inner state of concentration to such a degree that he lives completely in the present moment. He learns to focus all of his attention on what he is doing right now: eating, working, or whatever. He strives never to let his mind be filled with either dreams or worries, and he experiences to one degree or another the marvelous freedom of spontaneous reaction to immediate situations, without the inner tension of wondering what will be the consequences or the impact of his actions on others. Such is the intent and goal of the *unsui*'s whole life and practice. Without a doubt the average monk achieves these goals sufficiently to convince him that there is actual substance in the claims of the Buddhist worldview. In Geertz's words, the "moods and motivations" produced by zazen "seem uniquely realistic." The further question of how well he can transfer these dispositions into the whole remainder of his everyday life is of course another matter. The whole history of Buddhism, I would say, indicates that his batting average is something a little less than five hundred—but that is not bad for either religion or baseball. Certainly the Catholic monk does no better. When the typical *unsui* leaves the monastery to take up his duties as a priest at some local Zen temple he is supposed to shed the light of the bodhisattva or *bosatsu* (菩薩) on all those around him.

When the newly imported sect of Zen Buddhism swept through the Japanese aristocratic and samurai classes in the Kamakura period, its antiritualistic and severe ideals left their mark deeply on literally every aspect of life. The swordsman sat zazen until an utter inner stillness erased the fear of either life or death. Miyamoto Musashi's famous apprenticeship to the monk Takuan can serve as a good example of how Zen practice and attitude were applied to both curb and temper the fierceness of the warrior. In the Ashikaga period Noh drama was developed into a fine art, as the great master Zeami and others worked to instill the Zen attitudes of inner stillness and concentration into this art. Zeami, using such Zen-related terms as "no action", "mindlessness", and *yugen* or Mysterious Power, clearly emphasizes the inner discipline and stillness and external tranquil serenity of face and general bodily decorum which, we are here maintaining, link Zen with one of Japan's favorite attitude-moods.

> Sometimes spectators of the *No* say that the moments of "no action" are the most enjoyable . . .The actions before and after an interval of "no action" must be linked by entering the state of mindlessness. . . The ability to move audiences depends, thus, on linking all artistic powers with one mind. . .
> *Yugen* is considered to be the mark of supreme attainment in all the arts and

accomplishments. . . the essence of *yugen* is true beauty and gentleness. Tranquility and elegance make for *yugen* in personal appearance. . . A dance will possess *yugen* when the discipline has been thoroughly mastered and the audience is delighted by the performer's movements and by his serene appearance. (As quoted in Keene, 258–260)

From the Muromachi to the Azuchi-Momoyama periods, great Zen monks like Ikkyu and the Zen disciple Rikyu—Hideyoshi's tea master and the founder of the Omote school—brought the Zen monastic spirit of simple, quiet elegance and calm into what had already degenerated into snobbish and pretentious art. (Sansome, 400ff.) It was in these and in similar ways that the pure and noble moods of inner stillness and exterior calm of Zen Buddhism were instilled into the life and art of the leaders—and, eventually, of the common men and women as well—of Japan.

Of course neither Zen nor all of the many religious currents together created this phenomenon single-handedly. Michel Foucault correctly points out the many different kinds of political, economic, military, religious, literary, and philosophical "power" or influence which go together in an apparently haphazard manner to produce and support such giant civilizational currents of mood, attitude, and of knowledge itself. (104–205). As a matter of fact, the *anshin* (安心) or "peace of heart", which was the central goal of Honen's and Shinran's Pure Land Buddhism, no doubt exerted on the peasant and lower classes far more influence towards inner peace than did Zen. Confucian ideals of harmony surely were equally powerful with Zen in fusing together the single cultural ideal which we have termed "inner stillness and exterior harmony". Without intending to distort, it is necessary here to focus on a single religious force in order to reveal the general dynamic.

When, during the Ashikaga and Momoyama periods the merchant class grew stronger, it gave rich merchants the leisure to pursue the arts and interests of the upper classes and so further extended the influence of Zen. Then, the incredible violence of the Sengoku period gave both merchant and samurai a passionate appreciation for the Zen ideals of an inner stillness which finds exterior expression in a calm countenance and in the self-effacement so necessary for strict social harmony. It was in this general manner that the "moods, attitudes, dispositions" and values of the Zen monk—not only in the gentle calm of the tea ceremony and in the arts of gardening, painting, poetry, and Noh drama, but also in the discipline whereby social harmony is attained through rigorous suppression of personal tastes in the name of social harmony—became, in Geertz's phraseology, more and more "powerful, pervasive and long-lasting".

To make specific Geertz's general interpretation, we can say these favored moods and attitudes were given their typical form by Zen Buddhism and their ideal form in the Zen monk, and in turn were spread socially when they were powerfully experienced in the zazen of the warrior and in the Noh and tea ceremony of the upper classes.

These moods and attitudes reinforced the Buddhist notions of ultimate reality as conceptless *sunyata* and *tathata*: Emptiness and Suchness. Both the mood of stillness and the religious symbol system of Buddhist teachings reinforced once another; they made each other "seem uniquely realistic".

As the ideals of *bushido* (武士道), *sado* (茶道), and the other *michi* (道) or Ways spread beyond the warrior class and the merchant class to the common man in the more modern times, and as Buddhism fell from favor and Confucianism and Shintoism received more and more of the support from the imperial court and the bakufu during the Tokugawa period, the favorite attitudes and moods which Zen Buddhism had done so much to permanize finally lost most, if not all, of their direct connection with Buddhism. But they did not disappear.

Basho's haiku poetry, and that of his followers and imitators, is perhaps among the most splendid indirect and not specifically Buddhist portrayals of the passionate love of the Japanese for gentle calm, both in the heart and in social relations.

Furu ike ya	The ancient pond
Kawazu tobikomu	The leap of the frog
Misu no oto	The sound of the water

By this time these sentiments had already been too deeply embedded in all the other nonreligious modes of thought and expression to disappear when their original Buddhist models fell into decline. Inner stillness and calm became, to use the notions of Foucault, a part of the unconscious "atmosphere" made up of a whole "archive" of notions and confluent streams of political, economic, religious and ideational "power". (205ff.). To use Thomas Kuhn's categories, the paradigms created by Buddhism underwent a slow erosion and finally were largely replaced by scientific and technological ones in the modern age. But the attitudes and moods, though perhaps weakened, and though today endangered by the lack of any ultimate legitimation (Berger, 3ff.), still remain. Even today every Japanese person breathes this invisible cultural atmosphere and unconsciously assumes these typical attitudes. He imbibes it "with his mother's milk", or better, with his mother's language.

BENEDICTINE MONKS AS PARAGON-MODELS OF CHARACTERISTIC WESTERN MOODS AND ATTITUDES OF LOVE

The motto of the Benedictine monk—both the Trappist who wears white and the black-clothed Benedictines, both of whom follow the same *Regula Monacorum* written in sixth century Italy by Benedict of Nursia—is "Work and Prayer", but the goal and center of his practice is love. The monk sees himself simply as an imitator of the perfect

god-man Jesus, who said, "By this sign shall all men know that you are my disciples: if you love one another." (Jn. 13: 35). In the Second Letter of John the centrality of love for the Christian is even more strongly put: *"God is love* and he who lives in love, lives in God, and *God lives in him."* (I Jn. IV, 7–8, emphasis mine). In this way *agape* or the selfless love taught by Jesus is both the heart of the Christian "attitude" and the Christian's direct contact with Ultimate Reality. The monastery is, in Benedict's words, "A school of the Lord's service." This school will at first seem difficult, Benedict says in his Rule, but if the monk perseveres he will eventually "run the way of the Lord's commands with the unspeakable sweetness of love." (Prologue).

What exactly does this mean for the believer? It means that for the Christian— and hence preeminently for the monk—when one feels within oneself the warmth of love and affection for one's neighbor or for the invisible God who is the source of all of the marvels of mankind and beauties of nature, then one is actually feeling the real presence of God himself living within one's heart. Nothing is more important: God is love and mankind's perfection lies in perfection of love of God and neighbor. The utopian vision, which converted the West to Christianity and remained the ideal of both kings and popes for a thousand years, is simply that selfless love is the quintessence of the Kingdom of God, which will bring perfect peace and brotherhood to the whole world in God's good time.

Hence, learning to forget one's own selfish desires and living in a spirit of warm brotherly love is the whole purpose of Benedictine monastic life. It is the central mood and attitude of the Catholic monk just as inner stillness and outer harmony is the central mood and goal of the Zen monk's life and practice. This is evident on almost every page of the Benedict's Rule and of the writings of monastic Fathers such as Anthony, Basil, Gregory the Great, and Bernard of Clairveau. The famous modern American Trappist monk, Thomas Merton expresses this theme by quoting Aelred of Rievaulx, "[We] must leave this world in thought and contemplation; we must also, if we can, raise our hearts above the senses of the flesh, and take up the bright armor of obedience. Our obedience must be inspired by disinterested love, so that all that we do is done out of love for God." (*Thomas Merton on Cistercian Life*, 7–8).

Merton himself explains, "The monastic vocation is then built on an apparent contradiction. The more the monk loves God, the more he is united in a silent, hidden way to his fellow man. The purity of love that draws him into solitude with God, actually opens his heart to love and understanding of his fellow man...he is united by his love and prayer to the secret and inner self of his brother in Christ." Merton goes on to indicate that this love is—like *samadhi* and *satori* for the *unsui*—fulfilling the ultimate end and nature of mankind: "The monk is united to God and man not by natural communication, or by human expressions of affection, but by one Love which

is born in the depths of God Himself and given to us in the Person of the Holy Spirit."
(18–19).

In other words, God is love and the love the monk feels is God's divine Life and Love which are living within him and which his own human life and love have come to share by his mystical rebirth.

The life and practice of the Benedictine monk, as can be seen in the Chart, (see page 19) center around some three or four hours of daily formal community prayer called the Divine Office, about six to eight hours of daily labor by which he supports and disciplines himself, an hour or more of spiritual reading, and a continual spirit of silence, obedience, and humility. This monastic practice is seen by Benedict as the "schooling" or discipline whereby the monk imitates these virtues in Jesus in order to purify himself of self-love so that the interior divine and unselfish Love can flourish.

Monks like Columban, Bede, and Boniface were key in the Christian conversion of England, Ireland, Germany, and the Nordic countries. These were extraordinary—and extraordinarily *rare*—men who, like Mother Theresa today, actually practiced what they preached and so handed on by example their vision of universal peace and brotherly love to millions of people. Once converted, the people of these countries—like those of France, Italy and Spain who had become Christian much earlier—looked to the monks as the ideal embodiments of the life of love which Jesus had preached and exemplified. Like Jesus they were celibate, poor, humbly obedient, and lived lives centered on love of God and neighbor. In external form at least, if not always in actual practice, their lives of poverty, celibacy, obedience, and fraternal charity" gave a set of ideal attitudes, moods, virtues, and values which came to be reflected in ideals of kings and emperors like Charlemagne, in the code of knights like the legendary figures of Roland and Arthur's knights of the Round Table, and in the visions of poets like Dante and Spenser.

This Christian ideal of love carried over into romantic love between the sexes as well. Even the teachings of the celibate—and sometimes antisexual—monks emphasize that this heterosexual love too, if it avoided self-indulgence, could and should teach lovers to forget themselves in love of one another and of the children engendered out of the marital union. God created sex and marriage in Adam and Eve and it was considered both good and—like Plato's *Symposium* taught before Jesus—a way of leading men and women to "higher and purer" forms of love.

From the time of Dante and his friends who created the *dolce stil nuovo* of poetry, romantic love was seen to be both the central theme for poetry in its own right and a mystic symbol and school of the heart which led men and women to selfless love of both God and mankind. "That Sun which fired my bosom of old with love had thus bared for me in beauty the sweet aspect of truth..." (*Paradiso* 3, 1–2). This poetic theme was

brought into the mainstream of actual life through its application by the medieval knights, troubadours, and noblemen to the art of "courtly love" wherein the lady was idealized into the pure heart which could change the sinfully selfish desires of the knight into holy love.   Naturally, such exalted ideals were rarely if ever achieved in actual fact, but that does not negate the usefulness of such religious ideals and worldviews. They succeeded in powerfully shaping the typical sentiments, moods and attitudes of a whole civilization.

This is how marriage came in the West to be "for love"—and even in our post-Freudian world still is, to a large degree at least.   One "falls in love", and if it is "really true love"—originally that meant if it really shared in the divine selfless *agape*—that sacred fire leads man and woman to the altar.   In Japan, marriage is primarily for the *ie* (家) or family, and romantic love is generally seen as being too flimsy a foundation for holding the centrally important family line and structure together—and if we judge from contemporary comparative divorce statistics of the West and Japan, that is correct.   It is interesting to note that these favorite Japanese attitudes towards love and marriage too have religious—largely Confucian—roots and legitimations.

From the passionate and vividly sexual descriptions of love in the Old Testament "Song of Songs", to Dante's exalted love of and discipleship with the pure and divinely wise Beatrice, to Shakespeare's absolutely loving and absolutely morally uplifting Juliet, Cordelia, and Ophelia, on down through Donne and Milton and—to a much lesser degree—even into the popular songs of the present era, love tends to be a sacred, permanent, and mystic, if unfortunately more often than not a silly romantic and sloppy sentimental, thing.

Due to lack of space I cannot elaborate properly on the close connection between the notions that everyone is essentialy equal and deserves rigorously equal justice, and this central notion of love.   Suffice it to say that the love which Jesus showed to the poor, the sick, and to prostitutes and other "sinners", presumes and requires a divinely sanctioned notion of the equality of all as children of God.   Jesus' famous definition of "our neighbor" who deserves our sincere love was the man nearly killed by robbers but rescued by a "foreigner" who had more reason to hate than to love.   His "golden rule" was the classic biblical notion of justice: "Do unto others in the manner you would want them to do unto you."   In the Christian world this came to be but an extension of that perfect human virtue of love.   In Paul's description, "If I speak with the tongues of angels or men but lack love I am like sounding brass or tinkling cymbals... If I give away all I possess or deliver up my body to be burned but lack love, it profits me nothing.   Love is patient, love is kind, it is never jealous, it never boasts, it is never rude or selfish...Love never comes to an end...In short, there are three virtues: faith, hope and love, but the greatest of these is love." (Cor. 13, 1–13)

CONCLUSIONS

When we think of "Buddhism", "Christianity", or "Islam", we immediately think of the doctrines, worldviews, and peculiar practices of each of these religions. Clifford Geertz, has argued—and illustrated well with his studies of Indonesian religious forms—that this is only the more visible half of the complex cultural and human dynamic of religion. The "other half" is what we have described as its role in expressing, stabilizing, and legitimating a people's "favorite attitudes and moods". "[L]et us begin with a paradigm: viz. that sacred symbols [myths, doctrines, and rituals] function to synthesize a people's ethos—the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood—and their world-view—the picture they have of the way things in sheer actuality are, their most comprehensive ideas of order." (3)

This insight has furnished us with the key wherewith to attempt to break the code of the religious role in the historic formation of existing favorite attitudes in Japan and the West. By studying the lives and practices of monks we saw the human cultural dynamic of religion writ large as it were, and we attempted to illustrate in a very general manner how it has in fact operated in our own two cultural histories. Buddhism and Christianity helped to synthesize our societies' warm predilection for inner and outer peaceful harmony or love.

Geertz goes on to explain that, "In religious belief and practice a group's ethos is rendered intellectully reasonable by being shown to represent a way of life ideally adapted to the actual state of affairs the world-view describes, while the world-view is rendered emotionally convincing by being presented as an image of an actual state of affairs particularly well arranged to accommodate such a way of life." (3) This explains perhaps the tenacious hold which religious belief still has on many minds today, particularly in America. Traditional Buddhist and Christian stories about the ultimate nature of reality often seem childish and incredible to modern people, but they still furnish a rich symbolic framework for expressing and holding together a whole complex of attitudes which men and women see as too precious to be entrusted to the "democracy" of marketplace morality.

It seems that it was always so. Our brief look at history indicates that the motives for "believing" or being committed to stories about the ultimate nature of things have always had at least as much to do with beloved "habits of the heart" (Bellah, Introduction) as with convincing paradigms of ultimate reality. As Pascal pointed out, "The heart has its reasons of which the mind knows nothing." In times when traditional values are disappearing and the social structure seems endangered people turn, in every age, to religious forms of affirmation and legitimation for their most beloved values, moods, and attitudes.

Typically, Buddhist and Christian monks are idealistic men and women who attempt to embody perfectly the ideals which millions of people subscribe to in a very general manner.   By way of a concluding summary we must turn briefly to a closer look at the whole complex of these monks' beliefs and practices in order to see in the light of our investigation the wider cultural dynamic which produced the central cultural preferences which we have termed "inner stillness and outer harmony" and "neighborly love".   Through the lens of these monks' intense efforts we will now hopefully be able to discern with still greater clarity the nature of a wider religious dynamic which otherwise would be difficult or impossible to see distinctly.

In our previous study we attempted to outline the whole of the Zen and the Catholic monks' lives, beliefs, and practices, noting that in both cases the monk's life and practice were seen as simply an attempt to perfectly embody the ideals and teachings of the Buddha or Jesus.   Although both types of monks were seen engaging in a variety of distinctive practices, in both cases these many practices were seen to constitute a very simple whole.   In other words there was a single, central symbol at the center of each "symbolic action system" (Parsons and Shils, 158–189) around which everything else revolved and to which all else was reducible.

The practices which make up the Zen monk's day and year are reducible, as the chart at the end of this presentation indicates and as was presented in our last study (Augustine, 1–33) to the following daily and yearly practices.   The monk engages daily in morning and evening sutra-chanting, *samu* or "work-practice", ritual prayer services before the Kitchen Deities and before Manjusri the Bodhisattva of Wisdom, lives a celibate life in minimal quarters, eats a minimal, vegetarian, diet, and survives with minimal clothing, money, and sleep, while scrupulously obeying his superiors and striving for perfect order and propriety in the arrangement of his body, possessions, and the components of his monastic environment.

All of these individual practices are seen as simply various ways of doing zazen, that is, various facets of realizing the stillness necessary for Insight into Empty Suchness: enlightenment.   As Dogen says, all these things *are* zazen, and zazen *is*, in itself, "perfect Enlightenment" (*Shobogenzo*, "Raihai Tokuzui", 2: 30).   Furthermore, Dogen insisted that this view was nothing more nor less than the authentic and orthodox teaching of the Buddha's dharma.   In this way the rich variety of practice and ordinary human activities which make up the very distinctive fabric of the Zen monk's life is reducible to a single notion: zazen-enlightenment.   And—the most important point here—this single-pointed attitude of the Zen monk came to be seen though hundreds of years by millions of members of Japan's most powerful classes as *one* kind of cultural ideal, paragon, or paradigm.

Of course this was not the ideal of the *Jodo* or Pure Land sects which came to be

equally or even more influential, but the *anshin* or Peace of Heart-Mind at which the *nembutsu* aimed actually corroborated that ideal of inner and outer peace among the masses. Of course the Confucian ideals of national and local group harmony actually arrived in Japan in the fifth and sixth centuries, as early as did Buddhism, and received equal offical support and popular acceptance—and often during Japan's long history greatly outshone Buddhist ideals as the perfect paradigm of the perfect man. And of course the primoridal animistic worldview of native Shintosim has at every age, even into the present, been a powerful—many say the most powerful—religious influence of all in forming the distinctive pattern of Japan attitudes, moods, values and virtues.

Actually, Shinto's emphasis on interior and exterior purity, simplicity, and harmony flow naturally together with Buddhist and Confucian ideals within the traditional Japanese mind to furnish a single religious expression and legitimation for characteristic Japanese inner peace and outer harmony. All of these influences entered into the millenial process which formed all of the typical Japanese cultural characteristics.

It has not been my intent to make either Zen or Buddhism in general into the central deciding religious factor in Japanese cultural history. Neither has it been my intent to make religion into the single decisive factor for the formation of the typical Japanese love of inner and outer calm. On the contrary, I subscribe to Foucault's contentions concerning the extreme complexity of the kinds of political, economic, epistemological and miscellaneous "power" which go into the formation of any society's unconscious cultural "atmosphere" and the "archive" of its typical notions and knowledge. (Dreyfus, 184–204) Nevertheless, unlike the early Foucault, I do wish to maintain that the role of religious notions have always been and still are extremely important.

The center of my contention here is that by looking at the Zen monk's life and practice one can perceive—under a microscope as it were—how religious doctrine and practice work together to express, unite, confirm, and actually put into daily practice certain complex configurations of beloved attitudes, moods, and values to help form a people's distinctive ethos.

The Catholic monks' life and practice are, like its Zen counterpart, both complex and simple. His daily life of communal chanting of the Divine Office, communal self-offering with Christ in the conventual Mass, his vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience, his subsistence-level food, sleep, clothing, and housing, all these and other multiple and distinctive practices reduce themselves to a single central act of imitation of Jesus' life of gentle love of God and all men and women. The Office is, typically at least, the exulting love of praise and thanksgiving to God for sun, rain, earth and life. The renunciation of overt sexual activity and the minimal use of food, speech, and other life necessities is never seen by the emotionally healthy monk as divinely commanded or condoned self-torture to control essentially evil sexual or other bodily appetites.

Rather, these practices are seen as an imitation of Christ's perfect reintegration and balancing of man's essentially good and God-given faculties which were disordered by Adam's original fall.   In fact they are, in Geertz's terms, both models for and models of western society's most favored attitudes towards man's own dangerous and volatile passions.

Sexual continence serves as a sort of idealization of the attitude that sexual appetite both can and must be controlled if grave social harm is to be prevented.   Complete submission of one's will to a superior in the vow of obedience is a concrete idealized "model of and model for" the favored attitude towards the human animal's incorrigibly egocentered willfulness and aggression.   The vow of Poverty expresses and models the favored attitude towards money and wealth: men and women can be happy and fulfilled with minimal personal goods so long as mutual good will prevails.

As we have noted, all of these many practices reduce themselves to a single practice: selfless love of all men and women and an equally selfless benevolence to the Source of sun, earth, sky, life, reason, and human—including sexual—love.   Jesus' self-sacrificing love, epitomized by his humble submission to an unjust death on the cross, becomes the ideal of the monk, who in turn historically became the ideal or paragon of Christian attitudes, moods, values and lifestyle for over a thousand years.   It is in this manner— through a study of the intense, concentrated, monastic embodiment of religious worldviews and corresponding practices both in the East and the West—that we can gain an insight into the cultural dynamic by which the favored attitudes and values of a whole civilization are symbolically expressed, unified, and legitimated.

When millions of people over hundreds of years not only love inner and outer peace or selfless love but see the determined cultivation of those attitudes as the Way to becoming an ideal person, the cultural power of that belief is immense.   When one looks closely, one notices that the virtues, values, moods, attitudes, and morality which the monks work at are actually very useful for the general society: poverty or frugality, humility and obedience, inner peace, outer harmony, selfless benevolence, nonviolence, careful stewardship of and symbiosis with the earth, and the like.

Naturally, such virtues are not completely dependent on religious symbols.   They derive from what Schutz describes as the "sedimented interpersonal experience" of a particular society.   (189ff.).   In other words, everyday social experience teaches their necessity.   But they do depend on ultimate religious symbols for concrete, mandatory expression and legitimation.   That is to say, neither religious symbols nor favorite attitudes and moods of a society "come first" or are reducible to the other; they work together from beginning to end, and depend on one another for their authority and stability.   Naturally, this contradicts the purely nomenalistic notion of language and language games held by the early Wittgenstein and many of his followers who failed

to follow him in his *wende* or "turn" to a more symbolic and less mechanistic notion of language. It was precisely this purely linguistic and the purely structuralist models of knowledge and its relation—or lack of relation!—to human social action that the later Foucault strove to replace.

Another way to put Geertz's notion is that neither transcendent—that is, they transcend analysis by the rational mind—symbols nor commonsense love for certain attitudes and moods alone seems sufficient to bend man's stubborn selfishness to practice them very successfully. The solid basis for every major historical civilization—including, it would seem, contemporary Marxist ones—has been the fusion of the two: of transcending, apodictically accepted, symbolic notions and already tried, proven, and beloved attitudes, moods, and values.

As Feuerbach, Marx, and Freud each pointed out in his own way, the exalted religious notions we have examined here in their monastic embodiment are often facades hiding neurosis or self-interest, and are subject to corruption, degradation, and ironic transformation into their opposites. In Nietzsche's words they have always been, "Human, human, all too human". Thus, all too soon, the Buddhist attitude and mood of nonviolence which is perfectly symbolized and aroused in zazen, came to be bent by all too many samurai into simply a more effective means for more efficient slaughter. Not only did Hiei warrior monks terrorize Kyoto for centuries, Zen monsteries became such centers of an effete nobility's excesses that Ikkyu—himself capable of marvelous transformations of the Buddhist monk's ideal of abstinence from sex and alchohol—resigned in disgust from his post of head abbot of Daitokuji. (Covel, 123ff.).

The Benedictines were if anything a good deal more skillful than their Buddhist counterparts at turning their ideals into hypocritical caricatures. This dark side of the history of monasticism is too well known to need further chronacling here. However, our present mode of inquiry furnishes interesting insight into even this dark side of the religious dynamic. Religious faith is, among other things, a projection on and a commitment to a complex of utopian *ideals*. At least partial failure is a foregone conclusion. From this point of view the monks'—and also the everyday lay "believers' "—failure to "practice what they preach" does not mean hypocracy pure and simple—anymore than does the similar failure of the sincere lawyer, politician, or poet.

Similarly, the fact that neurotic minds often do indeed flee to monasteries as a shield against the too harsh realites of human life—the fact that they attempt to flee entirely into an artificial world of religious symbolism unnaturally broken away from its natural matrix in the whole society's interpersonal experience—does not permit one to conclude, as Marx and Freud tended to do, that religious beliefs as a whole are neurotic projections pure and simple. While such beliefs can be and often have been precisely

that for more individual members of monasteries than is often thought, objective and scientific studies of monks have revealed them to be at least as emotionally balanced on an average as nonreligious people.   In fact, the difficult life itself soon weeds out most of the emotionally unstable types without any need for a special process for their elimination.

The fact that monks are simply idealistic believers trying to embody their symbolic belief systems as perfectly as possible does not, however, constitute an excuse for their historical excesses and perversions of their ideals.   So poor has been the record of Christian monks that the word "monk" in Italy, France, or Spain carries connotations of great wealth and pious hypocracy.   Not the least interesting parallel between Buddhist and Christian monks lies in the fact that the word *bonsu* carries almost the same connotation among the majority of ordinary Japanese people.   *Ricco come una badia* ("As rich as an abbey") has its counterpart in Japanese temples, and the popular stories of hypocritical priests.

This degradation, however, is not the end of the story.   After every age of corruption of the lives of monks in both Europe and Japan have come ages of reform.   For every story of a bad monk there is at least one story of the genuine monk who earned the love and admiration of the people by his genuine embodiment of his religious ideals. In other words the beliefs and practices of monks were by no means totally ineffective.

Finally, we must return to the question asked in the Introduction: Is the recent successful encounter between Zen and Catholic monks of any real significance in the modern secularized world of today?   I would like to argue that it is very significant in one sense at least: It provides strong evidence that two totally different religions—and probably all religions—are in fact acting towards largely common goals.   Though, among many other differences, Zen monks put inner stillness at the center of their group of ideal moods, while Catholic monks put love at the center, the fact is that Zen also insists on the centrality of *jihi* (慈悲) or loving compassion and Benedictines have *Pax* or inner peace as one of their favorite mottos.

In other words, both groups use their own very different symbol-systems to school themselves in very similar virtues because both in their own way incorporate ideal virtues needed by every society.   It seems to me that a new era of self-understanding must be abroad among Buddhism and Christianity today, in that they seem to be realizing such things at the highest levels of their institutional structures.

The heart of this communality seems to be that their similar practices produce similarly nonselfcentered moods or interior levels of awareness.   Each society has historically developed its own symbolic beliefs and so given its own cultural bias to the task of handing on to the next generation special ways of successfully developing nonselfcentered attitudes and virtues.   To underline the crucial importance for the survival of such unselfish attitudes each society has, in its own way and with its own symbol-system, developed its own understandings of how these attitudes are rooted in the ultimate

nature of things. All of these religious symbol-systems, each in their own way, teach that the ultimate nature of things certainly does *not* have *me* at its center—and that if "I" persist in acting as if I am the center then both I and my society will surely end up in some sort of genuine hell or other.

CHART
Common Positive and Negative Elements* of Zen and Benedictine Monastic Life

Areas of Practice	The Zen Unsui	The Benedictine Monk	Vedanta Ashram Member
A. *Positive Practices:* Practices tending to arouse, support and reinforce special, relatively nonegocentric attitudes, emotions, activities, and levels of consciousness.			
MEDITATION	Zazen: the central practice of the unsui: 3–14 hrs. daily.	Meditation on Jesus, God, etc.; "Contemplation" and other forms of non-conceptual meditation: 1–3 hrs. daily.	Mantra and Japa, plus conceptual forms: 3 hrs. daily.
CHANTING	Morning *chōka*, plus frequent sutra and other chants daily: about 2 hrs.	Choral recitation or chanting of Office, at Mass and other times: 3–5 hrs. daily.	Japa, mantra, hymns: 1 hr. daily.
PRAYER	Praise and Thanksgiving to Buddhas, etc. *Dharani*, *eko*, and other: 1½ hrs. daily.	Many types of prayer are monks' central practice: praise, thanksgiving in Psalms, Mass, etc.: 5 hrs.	Krishna praises, etc.: 1 hr. or more daily.
RITUAL	*Chōka*, homage, and petition to Manjusri, *Idaten*, etc., bowing prostrations, etc. A central form of practice.	Mass, Office, Sacraments, bows, prostrations etc. A central form of practice.	Arati ceremonies, etc. 1 hr. or more daily. An important form of practice.
ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS	Various degrees of samadhi. Effort at living always with "Original Mind." Extremely important.	Chanting and Prayer raises mind towards non-selfconscious levels. "Contemplation" always a goal: very important.	Yoga and ecstatic union with divine. *Mukti* "liberation." The major goal in life.
LOVE/COMPASSION	Very important: central virtue of bodhisattva.	Extremely important: main goal of monk's life is perfect love of Christ and man.	Highly stressed: *Bhakti* or devotional love of God is a central goal of life.
USE OF MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS	Rhythmical striking of various instruments is ubiquitous. Bells seen as aid to samadhi.	Small bells punctuate Mass, Office, meals, etc. Organ at Mass, Vespers.	Frequent use of bells at ceremonies.
READING SACRED TEXTS	Outside of sutra chanting this is not much encouraged.	Daily Spiritual Reading, continual study of Bible, and other uplifting books.	Study of sacred texts an important practice.
SUBMISSION TO SPIRITUAL MASTER	Daily interview with roshi; utter dependence on his direction is central.	A central aspect of practice: rely on Confessor and Spiritual Director.	Reliance on Master insisted upon.
SECLUSION FROM SOCIETY	Quiet and concentration of *sodo* and zendo is of great importance.	Lifelong separation from secular society and the contemplative atmosphere of monastery highly valued.	Living in the Ashram, a place of seclusion and contemplation is very important aspect of life and practice.

Areas of Practice	The Zen Unsui	The Benedictine Monk	Vedanta Ashram Member
B. *Negative Practices:* Practices tending to suppress or deemphasize selfish and egocentered thinking, attitudes, emotions, activities, and levels of consciousness.			
DIET	Vegetarian: minimal in selection and quality; ample quantity.	Vegetarian for Trappists; simple but ample except when fasting.	Usually vegetarian; simple but ample.
CLOTHING	Minimal, rough quality, distinctive and symbolic.	Minimal, rough quality, distinctive and symbolic.	Simple, inexpensive, and distinctive.
HOUSING	Minimal: dormitory style in zendo is spartan.	Simple: sometimes dormitory but usually "cells."	Simple: dormitory style or small rooms.
PERSONAL POSSES-SIONS	Minimal: containable on small shelf in zendo.	No private property; articles for personal use minimal.	Minimal but not formally regulated.
SEXUAL ACTIVITY	Celibacy and continence mandatory while a monk.	Celibacy and continence vowed for life.	Celibacy while monk; vows usually for life.
SPEECH	Strict silence in zendo, dining hall, etc. and continual spirit of silence.	Strict silence after Evening Service and in chapel and halls. Continual spirit of silence.	Spirit of silence highly stressed.
SLEEP	Minimal: 6 or 7 hr. a night, sometimes much less.	Minimal: 8 hrs. or less.	Not highly regulated.
WORK	*Samu:* 3–6 hrs. daily. Seen as a form of practice.	"Work and Pray" is motto; self-sefficiency is ideal. Seen as form of practice.	Manual work and craft 3–8 hrs. daily as part of practice.
OBEDIENCE	Obedience to Master and seniors is strict obligation.	Highly stressed and practically absolute; seen as imitation of Christ.	Complete obedience to spiritual master strictly insisted on.
BEGGING	*Takuhatsu* several hrs., several times weekly is an important practice.	None, but it is respected since Jesus depended on others for all his needs.	None, but highly respected. A tradition for advanced *sanyasin.*
SEVERE ASCETICISM	Seen as dangerous for all but advanced, with advice of roshi. Middle way stressed.	Seen as dangerous for all but highly advanced, with consent of Director. Benedict stressed, "Moderation in all things".	Seen as dangerous for all but highly advanced.

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