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An Existential Analysis of
“Limit Situation” in the Japanese Philosophy of Religion:

Ishizu Teruji and Takeuchi Yoshinori

Although many studies have been conducted on the Japanese philosophy of religion, the close relationship between this and existential philosophy has not yet been discussed. To exemplify the profound significance of the latter in the developmental trajectory of the former, this article examines the cases of two Japanese philosophers of religion, Ishizu Teruji (1903–1972) and Takeuchi Yoshinori (1913–2002). The key idea under discussion is “limit situation,” which originated in the philosophy of Karl Jaspers. Taking into account the findings of anthropology and psychology, Ishizu assimilated the concept of limit situation into his philosophical system and proposed a new theory of human crisis response. By modifying the same concept, Takeuchi created the idea of “extraordinary events” as a religious action. With their backgrounds in Buddhist thought, both philosophers concluded that any limit situation has the potential function of transcendence, transforming the existential subject into a religious one through anxiety.

KEYWORDS: Japanese philosophy of religion—limit situation—functionalism—otherness—anxiety

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RELATIVELY little attention has been given to the fact that existential philosophy, if not existentialism, has played a crucial role in developing the Japanese philosophy of religion, especially that of the Kyoto school. The founder of the Kyoto school, Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), was sympathetic to Kierkegaard’s religious intuition; his final essay, “The Logic of the Place of Nothingness and the Religious Worldview,” referred positively to what Kierkegaard had called the “knight of faith” in *Fear and Trembling* to explain the contradictory unity of God and the human individual (NISHIDA 1987). Tanabe Hajime 田邊元 (1885–1962), the other pillar of the Kyoto school, developed his religious theory of “metanoetics” under the influence of Kierkegaard (TANABE 1986) and, throughout his life, wrestled with Heidegger’s existential thought of *Being*. Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 (1900–1990), Nishida’s most eminent disciple, dedicated his life to overcoming nihilism with Nietzsche and Heidegger, which led him to develop a philosophical position based on the Buddhist idea of emptiness (NISHITANI 1982).

This article further investigates the relationship between the Japanese philosophy of religion and existential philosophy. Thus, we focus on Ishizu Teruji 石津照璽 (1903–1972) and Takeuchi Yoshinori 武内義範 (1913–2002), and examine how they applied existential thought to the problems of religion. Strangely neglected by today’s researchers, Ishizu Teruji is well known for his research on Kierkegaard and Tiantai Buddhism (Ch. Tiāntāi 天台). Having completed religious studies at Tokyo Imperial University, he accepted a professorship at Tohoku Imperial University and eventually became its president. He served as president of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies for four terms beginning from 1956 and was vice president of the International Association for the Study of Religions and the History of Religions in 1960, contributing to religious studies in Japan. While Ishizu had nothing to do with the Kyoto school, Takeuchi Yoshinori, ten years younger, was one of Tanabe’s favorite disciples and taught philosophy of religion at Kyoto University along with Nishitani. Takeuchi, who was also a priest of the Jōdo Shinshū 浄土真宗 sect founded by Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), left behind philosophical reflections on Pure Land Buddhism (Ch. Jīngtǔzōng; Jp. Jōdokyō 浄土教) and early Buddhism. “The Philosophy of the

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Kyōgyōshinshō,” Takeuchi’s main work, is a philosophical reading of Shinran’s thought and is said to have inspired his teacher, Tanabe.¹

Although there is no documented evidence of direct interaction between Ishizu and Takeuchi,² a noteworthy convergence exists in their philosophical ideas. They shared a common interest in the existential concept of “limit situation [boundary situation]” (JASPERS 1919).³ They became interested in this concept in 1950; Ishizu published an article, “Genkaiteki jōkyō ni okeru shūkyōteki tekioi” (Religious Adaptation in Limit Situations), in *Tetsugaku zasshi* (Journal of Philosophy), the oldest philosophical journal in Japan, and Takeuchi contributed an essay, “Shūkyō tetsugaku” (Philosophy of Religion), to the sixth volume of *Tetsugaku kōza* (Philosophical Lectures), wherein he explicitly related his idea of “extraordinary events” to Jaspers’ concept of the limit situation. Therefore, at first glance, the common source of their inspiration lies in Jaspers’ philosophy of existence. However, in reality, both relied on Heidegger’s conceptual systems. Some key concepts in Heidegger’s main work, *Being and Time* (1927), were deeply influenced by Jaspers’ *Psychology of Worldviews* (1919).⁴ The primary purpose of this article is to demonstrate how Ishizu and Takeuchi established new theories by redefining or modifying the existential idea of the limit situation from their respective perspectives.

1. For further details on Takeuchi’s thought, see chapter 7 of Fritz Buri’s work on the Kyoto school (BURI 1997, 224–49).

2. As far as we have been able to ascertain, Ishizu mentions Takeuchi’s work only once, in 1959, in a survey article examining trends in studying religion in Japan. Ishizu cites Takeuchi’s work alongside numerous other studies as an instance of contemporary inquiry into the philosophy of religion. He states, “Takeuchi Yoshinori has persistently undertaken rigorous investigations and attained accomplishments in the realm of early Buddhism” (ISHIZU 1968, 338). In contrast, there is no mention of Ishizu in Takeuchi’s collected works. This tenuous relationship between the two implies the arduousness of engaging in comprehensive discourse across different academic lineages within the Japanese philosophy of religion during that era. Nevertheless, considering that the 1956 General Conference of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies was held at Kyoto University, where Ishizu was elected president, and that Takeuchi published a paper on early Buddhism in the *Journal of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies* the following year, it is difficult to believe that the two eminent scholars were completely unacquainted with each other.

3. In *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Psychology of Worldviews, 1919), Jaspers defined “*grenzsituationen*” as the critical situations that we can neither avoid nor change in life, such as death, suffering, struggle, and guilt. In the second volume of *Philosophy* (1932), in which the English translator translates the term as “boundary situation,” Jaspers defined the term as “situations like the following: [...] that I cannot live without struggling and suffering; that I cannot avoid guilt; that I must die” (JASPERS 1970, 178).

4. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger directly refers to the concept of “limit-situation,” especially to reinforce his analysis of death. He also praises Jaspers as “the first to have explicitly grasped the task of a doctrine of world-views and carried it through” (HEIDEGGER 1962, 496).

Basic Ideas in Ishizu's Philosophy of Religion

Before examining Ishizu's study, "Religious Adaptation in Limit Situations," reprinted in chapter 2 of his book *Shūkyō tetsugaku no bamen to kontei* (Scenes and Bases in Philosophy of Religion, 1968), we will first summarize his philosophy of religion by referring to the first chapter of this book. For Ishizu, the task of the philosophy of religion is "to investigate the ultimate meaning and structure of religion" (ISHIZU 1968, 7). He argues that we must consider possible experiences unique to religion and distinct from everyday experience to achieve this. He further argues that the philosophy of religion must not ignore empirical studies of religion, but must focus on results and approach religion from within religious facts (ISHIZU 1968, 9). However, philosophy differs from the empirical sciences because it is necessary to consider *possible* experiences in the basic realm of existence.

Inspired by Buddhist thought and existential philosophy, Ishizu introduced the three-domain theory in his previous book *Tendai jissōron no kenkyū* (Studies in Tiantai Theory of Reality, 1947). In his view, people generally believe that the self and its counterparts (other beings) exist independently as separate entities and then interact with each other. The self pertains to the domain of the psyche, denoting what has been philosophically conceptualized in terms of subjectivity. Ishizu designated this as the first domain or the initial world. If we significantly broaden this domain and establish it as the exclusive metaphysical foundation for all entities, it serves as a locus for spiritualism or idealism. Conversely, we may consider the objective realm, specifically, the realm of external phenomena concerning the psyche that Ishizu referred to as the second domain (the second world). If we refine philosophical deliberation by equating this domain to the material world, materialism will emerge. Within the frameworks of these domains, subjects and objects inherently exist from the outset, and the two are interrelated based on their differentiation. However, Ishizu overturned this sequence. A specific sphere exists wherein the self and its counterparts are already intricately "intertwined" before manifesting as distinct and autonomous entities (ISHIZU 1947, 3, 34–35). This sphere of reality is the third domain, which, according to Ishizu, "does not consist in the first and second domains nor succeeds them" (ISHIZU 1968, 19), as it instead transcends the other two domains where everything is conceived as relatively autonomous through discriminative understanding. Our naïve conviction tends to rigidly demarcate all beings, rendering us oblivious to the fact that reality exclusively unfolds within the third domain as an intricate web of interdependence.

Ishizu suggests that the third domain ("the scene of reality") is dominated by possibilities, in which a thing can be anything (this or that). Owing to this instability, the constitution of reality is radically indeterminate, and we are not free

to choose what we want. In the inevitable “lack” where we cannot do as we wish, we discriminate between things, desiring one and rejecting another. Thus, we attempt to limit and define the initially undefined beings belonging to the third domain by transferring them to the first and second domains. It is a function of delusory discrimination in the human intellect or understanding that compels us to attach to something specific. To illustrate this, Ishizu uses the example of death (ISHIZU 1968, 21). When people say they want to die or do not want to die, they have “death” in mind, as it is understood distinctively as such. They imagine death as an entity that exists there. They mistake “death” for the de facto death that comes at the end of life; they confuse two different domains, and thus they are passionately obsessed with the former. Actual death is never identified as “death” (as perceived intellectually). This in-determinacy, which is ultimately negation, lack, or void, is characteristic of the third domain.

However, the negativity encountered within this context does not denote mere nullity or “nothing.” Instead, it corresponds to what is known as “emptiness” (Sk. *śūnyatā*; Jp. *kū* 空) in Mahayana Buddhism. The third domain constitutes a realm that suspends on the substantial nature of all entities and purges them of any independent essence. This state of emptiness must not be regarded as an enduring void, for falling into such a perception would lead to the pitfall of substantializing it. Emptiness does not imply the absence of existence; rather, it signifies that various phenomena are only temporarily or provisionally established in the realm of actual reality. The third domain is never a sphere wherein these phenomena exist autonomously and persistently in isolation. Failing to comprehend this provisional existence as truly “provisional” (Ch. *jiǎ* 假; Jp. *ke* 仮) would result in an immediate regression to a realm of illusory discrimination, where everything possesses its own essence. If the empty and provisional are rigidly delineated, they pertain to the first and second domains, failing to reflect the true essence of the third domain.

Consequently, Ishizu introduced a third category, the middle (Ch. *zhōng* 中; Jp. *chū* 中), relying on the “intersection of threefold truth” (*ennyū santai* 円融三諦), which he underscores as the cornerstone of Tiantai doctrine (ISHIZU 1947, 154, 156; MURAKAMI 2015, 122). The middle truth resides in the claim that reality is simultaneously empty and provisional while transcending emptiness and provisionality. Ishizu understands this truth “to express the third domain as it is” or “to integrate the empty and the provisional while keeping them intact” (ISHIZU 1947, 9). Although Ishizu’s hypothesis possesses such a complex structure rooted in the Tiantai tradition, reducing it to a simple variant of the Buddhist theory of emptiness may relate it to “the place of absolute nothingness” in Nishida’s philosophy, the thought of “emptiness” in Nishitani’s philosophy, and the concept of absolute “non-articulation” raised by Izutsu Toshihiko 井筒俊彦 (IZUTSU 1982, 125). Nevertheless, this article does not follow up on the similarities between

these concepts; instead, it highlights the uniqueness of Ishizu's concept mainly because of its structural functionality.

Unlike the first two domains, the third domain is beyond the range of our thinking with discrimination and calculation. Our minds lose this reality, taking nonexistence for existent things and desiring them. In this case, the third domain of reality, where all things should occur as they are, is structurally heterogeneous to the discriminating subject, clinging passionately to particular objects. Thus, it functions as the Other or the rejection of our ordinary mentality. "The supernatural," says Ishizu, "can be said to be a mental sign or symbol that appears or presents itself to those exposed to such rejective and alien function" (ISHIZU 1968, 24). He sees this function as an essential feature of the religious experience, one that differentiates it from everyday experiences. Whether it is the spiritual being in Tylor's animism, the supernatural power in Marett's pre-animism, or the sacred in Otto's theory, the rejective otherness implies the structural uncontrollability, unmanageability, lack, or "nothingness" in existence. From this, Ishizu concludes that the basic meaning of religion is for humans to live in that structure of inability, surpassing and eliminating our egocentric subjectivity so that each self becomes genuinely as it is in the immediate reality.

Ishizu's Analysis of Crisis and Adaptation

In "Religious Adaptation and Its Base in Limit Situations," chapter 2 of *Scenes and Bases in Philosophy of Religion*, Ishizu explores the fundamental mechanism of religious acts or facts in human existence, likened to a basement below the actual stage in which they are performed. The clue to this elucidation is "limit situation," as a crisis in real life, which causes "frustration or conflict" (ISHIZU 1968, 28). For Ishizu and Jaspers, every limit situation is experienced as "unbearable" for life and thus causes "suffering" (JASPERS 1919, 202, 218). For example, Jaspers cited the "struggle" against mutual aid, "death" limiting life, "contingency" limiting meaningful connection, and "guilt" making innocence impossible. Using the word "crisis," Ishizu extended this to all harsh situations that bring danger or significant stress to human life. He also argues the limit situation problems with two other disciplines: social anthropology and psychology. First, Ishizu intensively discusses Malinowski's functionalist theory of culture to analyze crisis and adaptation. For the same purpose, he referred to positions close to Gestalt psychology, such as Lewin and Goldstein. The last section synthesizes these findings to provide a kind of existential philosophical interpretation, suggesting a theoretical bridge to Heidegger's philosophy of existence.

In his posthumous book, *A Scientific Theory of Culture and Other Essays*, more often cited in Ishizu's essay, MALINOWSKI (1944) expanded the

anthropological principles used in studying uncivilized societies to analyzing cultures in general. From this perspective, culture is a new artificial environment to be constructed, reproduced, and maintained to solve the problems set by human organic needs; it can be defined as a secondary environment based on the transformation of nature. His theory comprises two axioms: “Every culture must satisfy the biological system of needs” and “every cultural achievement” is “an instrumental enhancement of human anatomy” (MALINOWSKI 1944, 171). In Ishizu’s reading of Malinowski, the primary focus seems to be the concept of needs because the installation of “subjective” existence differentiates Malinowski’s functional analysis from other structural social theories, such as those of Durkheim and Radcliffe-Brown.⁵

The human subject is primarily determined as another animal species by basic needs, specifically, nutritive, reproductive, and hygienic needs. Human beings must create a new environment called “culture” to utilize various artifacts or institutions to meet these needs. It means that all human beings meet basic needs only indirectly by fulfilling “derived needs” or “cultural imperatives” (MALINOWSKI 1944, 120). When they begin to use shelter, fire, or clothing for protection from the cold and weather, these items become indispensable to their lives and thus constitute new needs. After arguing that derived needs have the same stringency as biological needs, Malinowski categorized four cultural responses to these derived needs: economics, social control [law or morality], education, and political organization, distinguishing these imperatives from integrating and transmitting them as a custom or tradition through symbolism. These “integrative imperatives” are embodied in “knowledge, religion, and magic.” Notably, from a functionalist standpoint, Malinowski interpreted religion and magic as “the indispensable complements to pure rational and empirical systems of thought”; he believed that bridging gaps in human knowledge led people to “the assertion of supernatural forces” (MALINOWSKI 1944, 173–74).

Following Malinowski’s argument, Ishizu reconsidered human existence based on functionality as adapting or adjusting to a natural or artificial environment. The critical question is how human beings overcome the state wherein all adaptations to primary and secondary environments have become impossible: their eventual inadaptability or maladjustment. The central premise is that the satisfaction of desire is essential to life. Regarding functionalism, human life

5. Alfred Radcliffe-Brown (1881–1955) was a British social anthropologist renowned for his accentuation of social structure, diverging from Malinowski’s psychological viewpoint. His theory served as the foundation for an analytical paradigm referred to as “structural functionalism.” Radcliffe-Brown’s ideas were profoundly shaped by the insights of the French sociologist Émile Durkheim (1858–1917), who positioned the collective societal representation at the core of his analysis, as opposed to individual psychology.

requires the fulfillment of basic and derived needs; nevertheless, they can be impossible to satisfy comprehensively and adequately, because of the limitations of natural materials or forces in the primary environment, and because human acts are very often thwarted by economic, political, legal, moral, and technological constraints in the secondary environment. These are the roots of conflict and frustration. Ishizu highlighted that, exceeding the limit of such a conflict, the living entity faces ruin at the dead end, where it can no longer meet any needs. “It [dead end] is what we call a crisis of life, an extreme situation,” says Ishizu, “each of which happens to human beings in a culture for the reasons mentioned above, but if we dare to divide its types, it frequently occurs in a natural, social, physiological, or psychological way and never ceases to happen” (ISHIZU 1968, 34). Nonetheless, Ishizu also emphasizes that the living entity makes a desperate effort to survive in such cases, uses selective interests to adapt, and is governed by particular values, indicating a new adaptation through religion or magic.

Accepting Malinowski’s thesis that “the whole religion is a by-product of man’s adaptation to his environment” (MALINOWSKI 1936, 57), Ishizu perceives existential limit situations at the source of that religious adaptation. They can be compared to what Malinowski thought were the situations from which religion and magic arose. In *Magic, Science and Religion*, he defines them as “situations of emotional stress: crises of life, lacunae in important pursuits, death and initiation into tribal mysteries, unhappy love and unsatisfied hate” (MALINOWSKI 1948, 87). It does not mean that every emotional crisis creates a new magic or religion; magical or religious acts performed during crises are traditionally modeled following past inheritances as collective rituals. However, such adaptations along these traditional models are similar and correspond to the natural adaptations of the body and mind in critical situations.

Referring to an anthropological textbook (CHAPPLE and COON 1947, 13–50), Ishizu focused on the correspondence between the physical or physiological processes of the autonomic nervous system, which automatically returns to a state of equilibrium to maintain a stable internal environment, and the mechanism of religious adaptation during a crisis. In a religious institutional society, when a crisis shakes the equilibrium of a living entity, whether an individual or a group, leaders such as shamans and priests attempt to restore that equilibrium through rituals or magic. Ishizu also considered the functional relationship between the subject and the environment from a psychological perspective (ISHIZU 1968, 45–48). In Lewin’s topological psychology, behavior (B) is a function of a person (P) and their environment (E), and the totality of these factors is defined as “the life space (LSp)”; it is formulated as $B = F(P, E) = F(LSp)$. With this formula, Ishizu relied on psychological research by Schaffer, Rosenzweig, and others to link the life space to

the problem of adaptation.⁶ He explained that, as the form of the life space always determines and limits the range of “possible locomotion,” the adaptability of the relationship between P and E is highly restricted and often results in desire inhibition, maladjustment, conflict, and mental disorders (ISHIZU 1968, 46). Among these psychological phenomena that display the inability to adapt, Ishizu emphasizes the emotion of “anxiety,” about which philosophers, psychologists, and psychoanalysts have expressed multiple views. According to Goldstein, a psychiatrist whom Ishizu held in higher regard than the neo-Freudians, anxiety belongs to catastrophic conditions or situations and states that endanger the organism’s existence (GOLDSTEIN 1940, 91). Goldstein defined anxiety as a subjective experience of that danger to existence. After observing many patients, Goldstein came to the following proposition: unlike fear, which has some object, anxiety does not reference anything definite. Thus, he adds: “Anxiety deals with nothingness. It is the inner experience of being faced with nothingness” (GOLDSTEIN 1940, 92). In his terminology, nothingness indicates a state of “uncertainty” about one’s existence caused by external or internal difficulties. This theory reminds us of Kierkegaard’s and Heidegger’s existential analysis of anxiety. However, Goldstein emphasized the psychiatric claim that uncertainty in anxiety leads to abnormal activities, neurosis, or even suicide (GOLDSTEIN 1940, 113). Ishizu’s reading of Goldstein implies that such abnormal behavior is a loss of freedom of decision, whereas “the sincere faith of the really religious man, which is based upon willing devotion to the infinite” (GOLDSTEIN 1940, 115) involves free self-decision and is accompanied by the capacity to bear anxiety.

Owing to the general unification of anthropological and psychological approaches to understanding religion, Ishizu hypothesized three stages (ISHIZU 1968, 52–53). First, living subjects typically use commonsense or scientific methods of adaptation. Second, when it comes to an impasse where they are useless, the subject uses and relies on something else, even if it is slightly unconvincing, as an object of selective interest or regressed mental function. We may consider this an object of extraordinary experience, colored by imagination and fantasy (FLOWER 1927, 26). Third, however, in a deadlock or a crisis at a higher level, where no means are available, the only thing we can do is “to decide ourselves.” For Ishizu, self-decision means “deciding oneself” to accept what is unmanageable, uncontrollable, unpredictable, unreliable, and uncertain in the environment; resigning oneself to the lack or absence, to the “nothingness” expressed by the prefix un-, that appears in anxiety. Although admitting that the above is only “an operational hypothesis,” Ishizu suggests that the second and third

6. Heinz Rudolf Schaffer (1926–2008) was a British developmental psychologist who studied mother-child interactions. Saul Rosenzweig (1907–2004) was an American psychologist who, influenced by Lewin, refined his frustration theory through experimental psychology.

stages correspond to the essential distinction between magic and religion (ISHIZU 1968, 53–54). The second stage remains magical, strengthening the selfness by adding “supernatural” power to the self’s ability or inability.⁷ In contrast, the third stage becomes religious if it forces us to abandon ourselves to nothingness in a realm dominated by possibilities and uncertain factors. According to Ishizu, the functionalist analysis of religion by anthropology and psychology failed to fully grasp that self-abandonment or self-denial is at the core of (non-magical) religious attitudes such as faith and devotion, leaving the distinction between the second and third stages unclear. Ishizu’s thought consistently maintains that religion is not in a supernatural entity or power but in otherness or rejection capable of abolishing the egocentric self.

Takeuchi’s Theory of Religious Action

In the transition from the early period, centered on his main book, *The Philosophy of the Kyōgyōshinshō*, to the period of his research in early Buddhism, TAKEUCHI (1999a) conceived a comprehensive theory that covers religions not limited to Buddhism. This theory was initially proposed in an essay titled “Philosophy of Religion” in *Philosophical Lectures* (1950), an introductory book consisting of essays by various philosophical experts. He established ideal types of religious action and explained the emergence of religious structures in terms of their relationship. They are respectively called “extraordinary [or nondaily] events and everyday life” (Type I), “religious anxiety” (Type II), “world transcendence” (Type III), and “prayer” (Type IV). The same theory was published over thirty years later, “Four Types of Religious Action” (1984), where its theoretical role is redefined as “a mediator between the so-called descriptive phenomenology of religion and the philosophical phenomenology of religion” (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 75). Takeuchi mentioned Heidegger, Jaspers, and Scheler as the sources of his thought. More importantly, this typological idea is directly derived from Scheler’s description of “*der religiöse Akt*” (SCHELER 1960). When studying Takeuchi’s theory as a whole, we must remember that the German term “Akt” means action or activity (*Handlung*), process or event (*Vorgang*), actuality, and conscious experience.

We define the four types (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 6–9) as follows: Type I models a situation wherein an extraordinary event occurs, disrupting daily life and

7. This definition of magic is aligned with Frazer’s classical understanding that it is characterized by coercion: “It [magic] constrains or coerces instead of conciliating or propitiating them [inanimate agents] as religion would do” (FRAZER 1911, 225). See also the following demarcation by a leading scholar who contributed to the foundation for the comparative study of religions: “Religion differs from magic in that it is not concerned with control or manipulation of the powers confronted” (WACH 1958, 53).

driving us into fear. Type II represents the process by which this emotional state of fear is heightened and crystallized into religious anxiety. According to Takeuchi, religious anxiety leads to religious questions with fundamental skepticism about the value and meaning of life (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 24–25). Type III indicates that the answer to these questions is in the transcendent realm. The subject’s awareness of finitude, produced through the extraordinary (I) and revealed in anxiety (II), is essentially constituted toward the infinite and transcendent. Takeuchi claimed that this awareness spreads from our inner depths to the entire entity. In the self-awareness of our finitude and that of all beings, the world comes to be as it is for the first time (“*Die Welt waltet*” in Heidegger’s terms). The whole of finite being is discovered as the world only from a transcendental perspective and in the act of transcendence. This is the world-transcendence (“*Welttranszendenz*”⁸) of Type III, where the subject transcends the world in its intentionality to the realm beyond the world. This can be divided into two aspects—its accomplishment and falling—the former being defined as “vertical” transcendence to the Transcendent and the latter as “horizontal” transcendence to the world. According to Takeuchi, the temporal transcendence described by Heidegger is nothing more than the latter, a convenient variation of the former. The reverse experience of turning from horizontal to vertical transcendence is called a conversion. This action or attitude of religious existence toward the Transcendent is categorized as “prayer” (Type IV). Based on Friedrich Heiler’s argument, Takeuchi broadly used this term to comprehend various relationships with divine beings. Particularly noteworthy is that prayer cannot be one-sided but inevitably becomes two-way through return from the Absolute—as the “transfer of merit” is regarded as mutual in Pure Land Buddhism. Consequently, prayer is “the pure expression of living cooperation with the Transcendent” (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 10).

The religious actions begin with an extraordinary event from the outside, going through a cycle from Types I to IV and eventually reaching a new and higher order that Takeuchi calls “the ordinariness.” In this scheme of ideal types, Types I and IV imply transcendental actions from outside life, while Types II and III imply reactions to them from inner life. Classified from a different perspective, Types I and II represent opposing forces against life, whereas Types III and IV embody the positive forces of restored life. These positive forces distinguish ordinariness from the initial order of life before an intrusive event. Filled with the Transcendent, the ordinariness is higher than “everydayness”

8. This term comes from *On the Eternal in Man*, Max Scheler’s phenomenological work on religious experience. It means that through the intentionality of revelation, the religious subject is always correlated with an object transcending beyond the world’s finitude (SCHELER 1960, 250).

and becomes a genuinely religious reaction to the intrusion crisis (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 11). However, there is another cyclical pattern; as extraordinary events are repeated, the subject may become accustomed to them and integrate them into life without completing a religious response. In this case, although everyday life is not elevated to ordinariness, the original order is restored. Takeuchi calls it a “pseudo-religious reaction” and explains that it corresponds to the type of “primitive religion” that has remained in its primordial state and has not undergone any historical development (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 11–12). However, the religious response of ordinariness belongs to the type of “historical religion” as it can create and develop history. Takeuchi refers to the similarity in Bergson’s distinction between static and dynamic religions (BERGSON 1935). However, he adds that we cannot wholly identify it with the distinction between primitive and historical religion. Bergson’s view of religion presupposes the discontinuity of “two sources,” whereas Takeuchi finds only qualitative differences between them.

Extraordinary Events and Human Crisis

Takeuchi’s philosophy of religion aimed to construct a phenomenology of the religious spirit by combining the four types of religious actions and the two reactions. In practice, this attempt failed. Takeuchi’s first essay comes to a sudden end before going into a detailed analysis of Types III and IV. His later paper contains only an overview of the theory and a lengthy description of Type I. Neither comes close to a complete and thorough analysis of the four types. A positive reason for this setback may be that he did not need to explain Types III and IV further because they had been specifically described and developed in his articles on Shinran. Takeuchi’s notion of transcendence, drawn from Shinran’s thought, contains a unique structure of “trans-descendence.” In the misery accompanying deep sin, there is a “direction of infinite and hopeless fall to the bottom of oneself” from the inherently exalted position as a member of the human race. The recognition of such an infinite downfall is termed a “trans-descendental” awareness because it forms a descending movement that “subverts the upward trajectory of transcendence” (TAKEUCHI 1999b, 62). The awareness of sin can prompt an individual to make a religious decision through a collision with the power of the Transcendent (an I-Thou encounter), culminating in an inverted leap toward salvation. This path of Other-power leads from the misery of radical evil to salvation, thereby revealing the paradoxical continuity between the finite and infinite. These fundamental concepts underlie Types III and IV. Takeuchi clarified this structure through a detailed analysis of

Shinran's interpretation of Amitabha's vows,⁹ particularly the "twentieth vow," which has the potential to transition to the eighteenth vow (TAKEUCHI 1999a, 84–134).

However, when highlighting Takeuchi's thought in comparison to Ishizu's, more attention should be paid to Types I and II, for these remind us of Ishizu's existential idea of crisis. According to Takeuchi, "extraordinary events" put everyday life into what Jaspers called a limit situation (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 18). It seems reasonable to suppose that they function as equivalents of the rejective otherness that Ishizu regarded as a severe threat to life. Type II, "religious anxiety," is aligned with the anxiety that Ishizu, relying on Kierkegaard's and Heidegger's existential thought, described with Goldstein.

Type I, representing "the occurrence of extraordinary events during everyday life," is the central issue addressed. Takeuchi begins with a philosophical reflection on everyday life and draws three arguments (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 16–17, 85–89):

(1) People cannot perceive the structure of everyday life if they only live in the facts of immediate experience. To perceive and understand this structure, they must stand in a position beyond everyday life through the medium of extraordinary events. Takeuchi called this position "extraordinariness." Just as stillness can be understood well when contrasted with movement, everyday life can be seen clearly from the perspective of extraordinariness.

(2) In everyday life, various orders, rules, and regulations arise from habits or customs. Considering Eliade's analysis of circular time, periodicity, and eternal return in religion (ELIADE 1954), Takeuchi returns those orders to the most basic order of "repetition." For the most part, people do the same thing every day. Takeuchi compared them to polar bears in a zoo, shaking their heads and moving incessantly in their cages. How do people living in such cages feel fresh every day? This is because they are not fully aware of the structure of their everyday lives. In a faint consciousness of boredom, they sometimes try to bring about changes in their daily lives. However, like social fads, these changes are repeated and eventually settle down to the original order.

(3) Repetition, the basic order of everyday life, permeates the space. Most objects around us are arranged in a way that makes them repetitive in everyday life. In his famous analysis of *Being and Time*, Heidegger defined the things in the surrounding world as "equipment," or as means to fulfill some purpose, and

9. For a sophisticated philosophical understanding of Shinran's interpretation, see also chapter 6 of Tanabe's *Philosophy as Metanoetics*. There, Tanabe writes, "Among the forty-eight vows made by Amida Buddha, three vows—the nineteenth, twentieth, and eighteenth—are intended, according to Shinran, to show the process of conversion to authentic faith in Other-power" (TANABE 1986, 201).

found purposes in the world (HEIDEGGER 1962, 97; 115–17). Similarly, Takeuchi named the things within our range as “utensils” and emphasized that these follow the repetitive orders of everyday life. For example, a professor turns on her laptop, has coffee every morning at 8 a.m., and checks emails. The laptop and cup of coffee are the utensils that repeat their activities and constitute the spatial order in the room. In daily repetitions, this order converges with the temporal order.

Extraordinary events can suddenly disrupt the order of everyday life. Such an event can cause chaos, sometimes putting lives at risk, bringing confusion, fear, and palpitations to the living entity. Here, we find a more profound and stronger correlation than the noesis-noema structure of intentionality: the correlation between emotions and events. Takeuchi noted that this correlation disappears when an extraordinary event thoroughly and immediately extinguishes life. When a volcano or an earthquake destroys a town or village entirely, or when someone dies instantly in a traffic accident, there is no longer any victim to feel fear or trembling and, therefore, no religious response (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 18). Takeuchi concluded that some interval between life and death must exist for a religious response to be possible and that this interval corresponds to the (dis)order of everyday life intervening between life and extraordinary events (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 18). In other words, a religious response arises when the extraordinary event does not obliterate everyday life but places it in a “limit situation.” Only in this sense can an extraordinary event be defined as negating everyday life or, more precisely, something that causes us to deny the value and meaning of life. From this definition, Takeuchi provides various examples of extraordinary events, including “wars and disasters,” “famines and maladies,” “defeat and social unrest,” and “illness, death, other unfortunate accidents, and guilt” (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 15). All these are considered fear-inducing.

Taking the example of a mouse cowering in front of a cat, Takeuchi argues that mere fear cannot be a “religious” response and therefore does not cause religious awakening (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 19). For Takeuchi, anxiety is the deepest emotion in the religious sense. The essential difference between fear and anxiety is that the former is bound to each extraordinary event as an individual object, whereas the latter helps us understand these events from the perspective of extraordinariness. When extraordinary events are successfully passed through, they do not arrive at the core of life, and nothing is left behind. In contrast, if they intrude into everyday life and at the core of life, they can rise to a level of extraordinariness and transform fear into desperate anxiety (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 20). When we suffer from an illness—an extraordinary event—our fear is associated with the sole desire to escape. However, once we realize that illness is an essential and inevitable part of life and question why we are destined to get sick, the fear of illness deepens into anxiety (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 19). Takeuchi thus

combines fear with extraordinary events and anxiety with extraordinariness. The former combination belongs to Type I and the latter to Type II. Compared with the crisis theory of Ishizu's philosophy of religion, Takeuchi's analysis is unique in dealing with emotion and otherness.

Ishizu emphasized the functionalist approach to crises and their psychological understanding, addressing "emotional stress" or "frustration" (Malinowski) and "anxiety" (Goldstein). However, the relationship between these states was not clear, and they were only discretely presented. In contrast, Takeuchi distinguished between fear and anxiety, explained the transition from fear to anxiety, and considered their relationships with other emotions. According to him, extraordinary events arise suddenly and bring fear. They soon fade, but the disruption of order caused by them persists. These disruptions indirectly condense the emotional resistance of life to them. Takeuchi calls this "passion," which, in Bergson's thought, meant a mass of psychic elements colored with a certain quality or shade (BERGSON 1910, 8). In Takeuchi's example, even after an extraordinary event has passed, the passion of grief returns repeatedly, never eclipsed by other emotions (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 22). This return of passion (*leidenschaft*) is metaphorically represented by the movement of waves, that converge on suffering (*leiden*).

For Takeuchi, suffering is not a mere feeling, such as individual pain, but an anguish so great that it negatively colors the entire order of life. Nevertheless, this anguish is not religious anxiety. Whereas passion, suffering, and anguish are quantitatively definable states, anxiety is a qualitatively different emotion. There is a sufficient gap between these states that a drastic leap is required to move from the former to the latter or to complete what Takeuchi calls crystallization (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 21). Unlike the former conditions, which are susceptible to the past and pathologically fixated on memories, religious anxiety allows life to unfold creatively into the future. Such anxiety is accompanied by a clear sense of "resignation" in the face of the irreversibility of past events, and a sense of "wonder" about extraordinariness as a new horizon (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 20). Takeuchi suggests that the feeling of awe, which plays a vital role in religion, is born from the internal linkage between fear, anxiety, and wonder.

In addition, Ishizu found the origin of the supernatural in "the third domain," the place of reality where numerous crises strike us. From the perspective of our cognitive world, which centers on the distinction and separation of things, the third domain functions as the rejective otherness. In this domain, self-centered attachment is often thwarted, and the stability of the self is shaken to its core by something alien. Ishizu's view also indicates our inherent uncontrollability or unmanageability of reality, which can manifest as a supernatural holiness that transcends everyday experiences. Although different from Ishizu, Takeuchi considered the same issue: the proximity between rejective otherness and holiness.

The first of the two papers we mainly refer to here concludes with the question, “What is a truly transcendent holy being?” (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 29). The meaning of holiness continues to be discussed in another article Takeuchi wrote on “God” in the *Britannica International Encyclopedia* (1972). After mentioning the primitive experience of *mana* (a supernatural power beyond good and evil) in Melanesian culture and Eliade’s theory of ancient mythology, this article links holiness to Type I of religious action: “Where everyday life is denied through such human crisis, the absolute otherness of the sacred appears in an extraordinary form” (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 295). Immediately after that, Takeuchi referred to a passage in which Bergson discussed William James’s description of his earthquake experiences. In *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, Bergson noted that James had spoken of the great earthquake in San Francisco as an “individual being” or a “permanent individual entity” (BERGSON 1935, 131). Through this episode, he emphasized the human tendency to personify extraordinary events and pointed out that a similar “primitive” mentality still lingers among civilized people. “The disturbances with which we have to deal,” said Bergson, “combine into an Event, which resembles a human being” (BERGSON 1935, 132). As Takeuchi cites “extraordinary events such as disaster, war, bankruptcy, sickness, death” (TAKEUCHI 1999c, 295) when introducing Bergson’s analysis of the primitive mind, we may infer that Bergson’s word “Event” was the source of extraordinary events. Takeuchi’s theory of religious action did not focus on a mentality that personified extraordinary events but rather on the process by which they develop into a mutual relationship with the Transcendent or the Absolute. His theory did not derive the workings of “intellectual instincts” (as Bergson did) from the primitive mentality that stabilized life by personifying and simplifying those events. Nevertheless, it seems inevitable that Takeuchi’s idea of Type I originated in Bergson’s theory of primitive religion. It depicted human encounters with crises, such as the Great Earthquake in San Francisco and the First World War (BERGSON 1935, 134).

Conclusion

This study draws attention to the parallelism of thought between two Japanese philosophers of religion. Relying on anthropological and psychological considerations, Ishizu placed the concept of limit situations within his domain theory and refined it into a new philosophical theory of human crisis. However, taking a hint from Bergson, Takeuchi introduces the term “extraordinary events” to redefine the limit situation that strikes human existence as the first type of religious action. It is easy to identify the weaknesses of their arguments because of historical limitations. Indeed, as they heavily rely on the prevailing thought of the first half of the twentieth century, their views of “religion” uncritically internalize the

doctrine of religious evolution assumed by Western modernity. Ishizu's distinction between magic and religion and Takeuchi's distinction between primitive and historical religion form a dichotomous hierarchy based on arbitrary criteria. They are not likely to be accepted by today's religious scholars and anthropologists.

Despite these shortcomings, their ideas have philosophical significance. The argument that the existential self undergoes a decisive transformation facing limit situations is a characteristic aspect of post-Heideggerian phenomenological thought. Ishizu and Takeuchi's philosophical visions can be compared with those of Ludwig Binswanger (1881–1966), who applied Heidegger's existential philosophy to psychopathology, and with the phenomenology of Event proposed by Henri Maldiney (1912–2013), who modified the interpretations of Heidegger and Binswanger. Representing the development of a uniquely Japanese existentialist philosophy, Ishizu and Takeuchi's philosophical reflections provide an interesting case study on the history of comparative thought. From the standpoint of the philosophy of religion, it is safe to say that both described their ideas at the intersection of Buddhist problem spheres. Ishizu and Takeuchi attempted a new Buddhist philosophical approach by incorporating the “four sufferings” of birth, aging, illness, and death, fundamental issues in Buddhism since ancient times, into a more comprehensive existential concept of the limit situation. After the postmodern world of thought, the combination of existentialism and Buddhist ideas seems old-fashioned. However, today, with the universal experience of pandemics or wars, their analysis of “crisis” should be the starting point for thought that responds to the circumstances of the times.

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