D. T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), pp. 271-289.

WHAT is common to Zen and the art of tea is the constant attempt both make at simplification. The elimination of the unnecessary is achieved by Zen in its intuitive grasp of final reality; by the art of tea, in the way of living typified by serving tea in the tearoom. The art of tea is the aestheticism of primitive simplicity. Its ideal, to come closer to Nature, is realized by sheltering oneself under a thatched roof in a room which is hardly ten feet square but which must be artistically constructed and furnished. Zen also aims at stripping off all the artificial wrappings humanity has devised, supposedly for its own solemnization. Zen first of all combats the intellect; for, in spite of its practical usefulness, the intellect goes against our effort to delve into the depths of being. Philosophy may propose all kinds of questions for intellectual solution, but it never claims to give us the spiritual satisfaction which must be accessible to every one of us, however intellectually undeveloped he may be. Philosophy is accessible only to those who are intellectually equipped, and thus it cannot be a discipline of universal appreciation. Zen-or, more broadly speaking, religion-is to cast off all one thinks he possesses, even life, and to get back to the ultimate state of being, the "Original Abode," one's own father or mother. This can be done by every one of us, for we are what we are because of it or him or her, and without it or him or her we are nothing. This is to be called the last stage of simplification, since things cannot be reduced to any simpler terms. The art of tea symbolizes simplification, first of all, by an inconspicuous, solitary, thatched hut erected, perhaps, under an old pine tree, as if the hut were part of nature and not specially constructed by human hands. When form is thus once for all symbolized it allows itself to be artistically treated. It goes without saying that the principle of treatment is to be in perfect conformity with the original idea which prompted it, that is, the elimination of unnecessaries.

Tea was known in Japan even before the Kamakura era (1185-1338), but its first wider propagation is generally ascribed to Eisai (1141-1215), the Zen teacher, who brought tea seeds from China and had them cultivated in his friend's monastery grounds. It is said that his book on tea, together with some of the tea prepared from his plants, was presented to Minamoto Sanetomo (1192-1219), the Shogun of the time, who happened to be ill. Eisai thus came to be known as the father of tea cultivation in Japan. He thought that tea had some medicinal qualities and was good for a variety of diseases. Apparently he did not teach how one conducts the tea ceremony, which he must have observed while at the Zen monasteries in China. The tea ceremony is a way of entertaining visitors to the monastery, or sometimes a way of entertaining its own occupants among themselves. The Zen monk who brought the ritual to Japan was Dai-ō the National Teacher 1 (1236-1308), about half a century later than Eisai. After Dai-ō came several monks who became masters of the art, and finally Ikkyū (1394-1481), the noted abbot of Daitokuji, taught the technique to one of his disciples, Shukō (1422-1502), whose artistic genius developed it and succeeded in adapting it to Japanese taste. Shukō thus became the originator of the art of tea and taught it to Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435-90), Shōgun of the time, who was a great patron of the arts. Later, Jō-ō (1504-55) and especially Rikyū further improved it and gave a finishing touch to what is now known as cha-no-yu, generally translated "tea ceremony" or "tea cult." The original tea ceremony as practiced at Zen monasteries is

carried on independently of the art now in vogue among the general public.

I have often thought of the art of tea in connection with Buddhist life, which seems to partake so much of the characteristics of the art. Tea keeps the mind fresh and vigilant, but it does not intoxicate. It has qualities naturally to be appreciated by scholars and monks. It is in the nature of things that tea came to be extensively used in the Buddhist monasteries and that its first introduction to Japan came through the monks. If tea symbolizes Buddhism, can we not say that wine stands for Christianity? Wine is used extensively by the Christians. It is used in the church as the symbol of Christ's blood, which, according to the Christian tradition, was shed for sinful humanity. Probably for this reason the medieval monks kept wine-cellars in their monasteries. They look jovial and happy, surrounding the cask and holding up the wine cups. Wine first excites and then inebriates. In many ways it contrasts with tea, and this contrast is also that between Buddhism and Christianity.

We can see now that the art of tea is most intimately connected with Zen not only in its practical development but principally in the observance of the spirit that runs through the ceremony itself. The spirit in terms of feeling consists of "harmony" (wa), "reverence" (kei), "purity" (sei), and "tranquillity" (jaku). These four elements are needed to bring the art to a successful end; they are all the essential constituents of a brotherly and orderly life, which is no other than the life of the Zen monastery. That the monks behaved in perfect orderliness can be inferred from the remark made by Tei Meido (Ch'êng Ming-tao in Chinese), a Confucian scholar of the Sung, who once visited a monastery called Jörinji (Ting-lin Ssŭ): "Here, indeed, we witness the classical form of ritualism as it was practiced in the ancient three dynasties." The ancient three dynasties are the ideal days dreamed of by every Chinese scholar-statesman, when a most desirable state of things prevailed and people enjoyed all the happiness that could be expected of a good government. Even

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Returned from China in 1267.

now, the Zen monks are well trained individually and collectively in conducting ceremonies. The Ogasawara school of etiquette is thought to have its origin in the "Monastery Regulations" compiled by Hyakujō <sup>2</sup> and known as *Hyakujō Shingi*. While Zen teaching consists in grasping the spirit by transcending form, it unfailingly reminds us of the fact that the world in which we live is a world of particular forms and that the spirit expresses itself only by means of form. Zen is, therefore, at once antinomian and disciplinarian.

2

THE CHARACTER for "harmony" also reads "gentleness of spirit" (yawaragi), and to my mind "gentleness of spirit" seems to describe better the spirit governing the whole procedure of the art of tea. Harmony refers more to form, while gentleness is suggestive of an inward feeling. The general atmosphere of the tearoom tends to create this kind of gentleness all around-gentleness of touch, gentleness of odor, gentleness of light, and gentleness of sound. You take up a teacup, handmade and irregularly shaped, the glaze probably not uniformly overlaid, but in spite of this primitiveness the little utensil has a peculiar charm of gentleness, quietness, and unobtrusiveness. The incense burning is never strong and stimulating, but gentle and pervading. The windows and screens are another source of a gentle prevailing charm, for the light admitted into the room is always soft and restful and conducive to a meditative mood. The breeze passing through the needles of the old pine tree harmoniously blends with the sizzling of the iron kettle over the fire. The entire environment thus reflects the personality of the one who has created it.

"What is most valuable is gentleness of spirit; what is most essential is not to contradict others"—these are the first words of <sup>2</sup> Pai-chang Hui-hai (720-814), a great Zen master of the T'ang dynasty.

the so-called "Constitution of Seventeen Articles," compiled by Prince Shōtoku in 604.3 It is a kind of moral and spiritual admonition given by the Prince Regent to his subjects. But it is significant that such an admonition, whatever its political bearings, should begin by placing unusual emphasis on gentleness of spirit. In fact, this is the first precept given to the Japanese consciousness to which the people have responded with varying degrees of success during centuries of civilization. Although Japan has lately come to be known as a warlike nation, this concept is erroneous with respect to the people, whose consciousness of their own character is that they are, on the whole, of gentle nature. And there is good reason to presume this, for the physical atmosphere enveloping the whole island of Japan is characterized by a general mildness, not only climatically but meteorologically. This is mostly due to the presence of much moisture in the air. The mountains, villages, woods, etc., enwrapped in a somewhat vaporous atmosphere, have a soft appearance; flowers are not as a rule too richly colored, but somewhat subdued and delicate; while the spring foliage is vividly fresh. Sensitive minds brought up in an environment like this cannot fail to imbibe much of it, and with it gentleness of spirit. We are, however, apt to deviate from this basic virtue of the Japanese character as we come in contact with various difficulties, social, political, economic, and cultural. We have to guard ourselves against such subversive influences, and Zen has come to help us in this.

When Dogen (1200-1253) came back from China after some years of study of Zen there, he was asked what he had learned. He said, "Not much except soft-heartedness (nyūnan-shin)." "Soft-heartedness" is "tender-mindedness" and in this case means "gentleness of spirit." Generally we are too egotistic, too full of hard, resisting spirit. We are individualistic, unable to accept things as they are or as they come to us. Resistance means friction, friction is the source of all trouble. When there is no self, the heart is soft and offers no resistance to outside influences.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Cf. p. 305 and n. 17.

This does not necessarily mean the absence of all sensitivities or emotionalities. They are controlled in the totality of a spiritual outlook on life. And in this aspect I am sure that Christians and Buddhists alike know how to follow Dōgen in the appreciation of the significance of selflessness or "soft-heartedness." In the art of tea the "gentleness of spirit" is spoken of in the same spirit enjoined by Prince Shōtoku. Indeed, "gentleness of spirit" or "soft-heartedness" is the foundation of our life on earth. If the art of tea purports to establish a Buddha-land in its small group, it has to start with gentleness of spirit. To illustrate this point further, let us quote the Zen Master Takuan (1573–1645).

## TAKUAN ON THE ART OF TEA (CHA-NO-YU)

THE PRINCIPLE of cha-no-yu is the spirit of harmonious blending of Heaven and Earth and provides the means for establishing universal peace. People of the present time have turned it into a mere occasion for meeting friends, talking of worldly affairs, and indulging in palatable food and drink; besides, they are proud of their elegantly furnished tearooms, where, surrounded by rare objects of art, they would serve tea in a most accomplished manner, and deride those who are not so skillful as themselves. This is, however, far from being the original intention of cha-no-yu.

Let us then construct a small room in a bamboo grove or under trees, arrange streams and rocks and plant trees and bushes, while [inside the room] let us pile up charcoal, set a kettle, arrange flowers, and arrange in order the necessary tea utensils. And let all this be carried out in accordance with the idea that in this room we can enjoy the streams and rocks as we do the rivers and mountains in Nature, and appreciate the various moods and sentiments suggested by the snow, the moon, and the trees and flowers, as they go through the transformation of seasons, ap-

pearing and disappearing, blooming and withering. As visitors are greeted here with due reverence, we listen quietly to the boiling water in the kettle, which sounds like a breeze passing through the pine needles, and become oblivious of all worldly woes and worries; we then pour out a dipperful of water from the kettle, reminding us of the mountain stream, and thereby our mental dust is wiped off. This is truly a world of recluses, saints on earth.

The principle of propriety is reverence, which in practical life functions as harmonious relationship. This is the statement made by Confucius when he defines the use of propriety, and is also the mental attitude one should cultivate as cha-no-yu. For instance, when a man is associated with persons of high social rank his conduct is simple and natural, and there is no cringing self-deprecation on his part. When he sits in the company of people socially below him he retains a respectful attitude toward them, being entirely free from the feeling of self-importance. This is due to the presence of something pervading the entire tearoom, which results in the harmonious relationship of all who come here. However long the association, there is always the persisting sense of reverence. The spirit of the smiling Kāśyapa and the nodding Tsêng-tzǔ must be said to be moving here; this spirit, in words, is the mysterious Suchness that is beyond all comprehension.

For this reason, the principle animating the tearoom, from its first construction down to the choice of the tea utensils, the technique of service, the cooking of food, wearing apparel, etc., is to be sought in the avoidance of complicated ritual and mere ostentation. The implements may be old, but the mind can be invigorated therewith so that it is ever fresh and ready to respond to the changing seasons and the varying views resulting therefrom; it never curries favor, it is never covetous, never inclined to extravagance, but always watchful and considerate for others. The owner of such a mind is naturally gentle-mannered and always sincere—this is cha-no-yu.

The way of cha-no-yu, therefore, is to appreciate the spirit of a naturally harmonious blending of Heaven and Earth, to see the pervading presence of the five elements (wu-hsing) by one's fireside, where the mountains, rivers, rocks, and trees are found as they are in Nature, to draw the refreshing water from the well of Nature, to taste with one's own mouth the flavor supplied by Nature. How grand this enjoyment of the harmonious blending of Heaven and Earth!

[Here ends Takuan]

Had the art of tea and Zen something to contribute to the presence of a certain democratic spirit in the social life of Japan? In spite of the strict social hierarchy established during her feudal days, the idea of equality and fraternity persists among the people. In the tearoom, ten feet square, guests of various social grades are entertained with no discrimination; for, once therein, the commoner's knees touch those of the nobleman, and they talk with due reverence to each other on subjects in which they both are interested. In Zen, of course, no earthly distinctions are allowed, and its monks have free approach to all classes of society and are at home with them all. It is, indeed, deeply ingrained in human nature that it aspires once in a while to throw off all the restraints society has artificially put on us and to have free and natural and heart-to-heart intercourse with fellow beings, including the animals, plants, and inanimate objects so called. We, therefore, always welcome every opportunity for this kind of liberation. No doubt this is what Takuan means when he refers to "the harmonious blending of heaven and earth," where all angels join in the chorus.

"Reverence" is fundamentally and originally a religious feeling—feeling for a being supposed to be higher than ourselves who are, after all, poor human mortals. The feeling is later transferred to social relationships and then degenerates into mere formalism. In modern days of democracy so called, everybody is just as good as everybody else, at least from the social point of view, and there is nobody specially deserving reverence. But when the feeling is analyzed back to its original sense, it is a reflection on one's own unworthiness, that is, the realization of one's limitations, physical and intellectual, moral and spiritual. This realization evokes in us the desire for transcending ourselves and also for coming into touch with a being who stands to us in every possible form of opposition. The desire frequently directs our spiritual movements toward an object outside us; but when it is directed within ourselves, it becomes self-abnegation and a feeling of sin. These are all negative virtues, while positively they lead us to reverence, the wish not to slight others. We are beings full of contradictions: in one respect we feel that we are just as good as anybody else, but at the same time we have an innate suspicion that everybody else is better than ourselves—a kind of inferiority complex.

There is a Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism 4 known as Sadāparibhūta (Jōfukyō Bosatsu), "one who never slights others." Perhaps when we are quite sincere with ourselvesthat is, when we are all alone with ourselves in the innermost chamber of our being-there is a feeling there which makes us move toward others with a sense of humiliation. Whatever this may be, there is a deeply religious attitude of mind in reverence. Zen may burn all the holy statues in the temple to warm itself on a cold wintry night; Zen may destroy all the literature containing its precious legacies in order to save its very existence as the truth shorn of all its external trappings, however glamorous they appear to outsiders; but it never forgets to worship a stormbroken and mud-soiled humble blade of grass; it never neglects to offer all the wild flowers of the field, just as they are, to all the Buddhas in the three thousand chiliacosms. Zen knows how to revere because it knows how to slight. What is needed in Zen

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The Saddharmapundarika Sūtra, tr. H. Kern, p. 356.

as in anything else is sincerity of heart, and not mere conceptualism.

ZEN AND JAPANESE CULTURE

Toyotomi Hideyoshi was the great patron of the art of tea in his day and an admirer of Sen no Rikyū (1521-91), who was virtually the founder of the art. Although he was always after something sensational, grandiose, and ostentatious, he seems to have understood finally something of the spirit of the art as advocated by Rikyū and his followers, when he gave this verse to Rikyū at one of the latter's "tea parties":

When tea is made with water drawn from the depths of Mind

Whose bottom is beyond measure, We really have what is called cha-no-yu.

Hideyoshi was a crude and cruel despot in many ways, but in his liking for the art of tea we are inclined to find something genuine beyond just "using" the art for his political purposes. His verse touches the spirit of reverence when he can refer to the water deeply drawn from the well of the mind.

Rikyū teaches that "the art of cha-no-yu consists in nothing else but in boiling water, making tea, and sipping it." This is simple enough as far as it goes. Human life, we can say, consists in being born, eating and drinking, working and sleeping, marrying and giving birth to children, and finally in passing awaywhither, no one knows. Nothing seems to be simpler than living this life, when it is so stated. But how many of us are there who can live this kind of matter-of-fact or rather God-intoxicated life. cherishing no desires, leaving no regrets, but absolutely trustful of God? While living we think of death; while dying we long for life; while one thing is being accomplished, so many other things, not necessarily cognate and usually irrelevant, crowd into our brains, and divert and dissipate the energy which is to be concentrated on the matter in hand. When water is poured into the bowl, it is not the water alone that is poured into it—a variety of things go into it, good and bad, pure and impure, things about

which one has to blush, things which can never be poured out anywhere except into one's own deep unconscious. The tea water when analyzed contains all the filth disturbing and contaminating the stream of our consciousness. An art is perfected only when it ceases to be art: when there is the perfection of artlessness, when the innermost sincerity of our being asserts itself, and this is the meaning of reverence in the art of tea. Reverence is, therefore, sincerity or simplicity of heart.

"Purity," estimated as constituting the spirit of the art of tea, may be said to be the contribution of Japanese mentality. Purity is cleanliness or sometimes orderliness, which is observable in everything everywhere concerned with the art. Fresh water is liberally used in the garden, called roji (courtyard); in case natural running water is not available, there is a stone basin filled with water as one approaches the tearoom, which is naturally kept clean and free from dust and dirt.

Purity in the art of tea may remind us of the Taoistic teaching of Purity. There is something common to both, for the object of discipline in both is to free one's mind from the defilements of the senses.

A teamaster says: "The spirit of cha-no-yu is to cleanse the six senses from contamination. By seeing the kakemono in the tokonoma (alcove) and the flower in the vase, one's sense of smell is cleansed; by listening to the boiling of water in the iron kettle and to the dripping of water from the bamboo pipe, one's ears are cleansed; by tasting tea one's mouth is cleansed; and by handling the tea utensils one's sense of touch is cleansed. When thus all the sense organs are cleansed, the mind itself is cleansed of defilements. The art of tea is after all a spiritual discipline, and my aspiration for every hour of the day is not to depart from the spirit of the tea, which is by no means a matter of mere entertainment." <sup>5</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> By Nakano Kazuma in the *Hagakure*. *Hagakure* literally means "hidden under the leaves," that is, "to be unostentatious in practicing a life of goodness," or "not to be 'as the hypocrites [who] love to pray standing in the

In one of Rikyū's poems we have this:

While the roji is meant to be a passageway Altogether outside this earthly life, How is it that people only contrive To be prinkle it with dust of mind?

Here as in the following poems he refers to his own state of mind while looking out quietly from his tearoom:

The court is left covered With the fallen leaves
Of the pine tree;
No dust is stirred,
And calm is my mind!

The moonlight

Far up in the sky,

Looking through the eaves,

Shines on a mind

Undisturbed with remorse.

It is, indeed, a mind pure, serene, and free from disturbing emotions that can enjoy the aloneness of the Absolute:

The snow-covered mountain path Winding through the rocks
Has come to its end;
Here stands a hut,
The master is all alone;
No visitors he has,
Nor are any expected.

synagogues and in the corners of the streets'" (Matt. 6:5). It contains wise sayings given by Yamamoto Jōchō, a recluse Zen philosopher, to his disciple, Tashiro Matazaemon, both of whom lived on the feudal estate of Lord Nabeshima. It consists of eleven fascicles, compiled between 1710 and 1716. The book is also known as the "Nabeshima Rongo" in imitation of the Confucian Analects (Rongo).

In a book called Nanbō-roku, which is one of the most important, almost sacred, textbooks of the art of tea, we have the following passage, showing that the ideal of the art is to realize a Buddha-land of Purity on earth, however small in scale, and to see an ideal community gathered here, however temporary the gathering and however few its members:

"The spirit of wabi is to give an expression to the Buddhaland of Purity altogether free from defilements, and, therefore, in this roji (courtyard) and in this thatched hut there ought not to be a speck of dust of any kind; both master and visitors are expected to be on terms of absolute sincerity; no ordinary measures of proportion or etiquette or conventionalism are to be followed. A fire is made, water is boiled, and tea is served: this is all that is needed here, no other worldly considerations are to intrude. For what we want here is to give full expression to the Buddha-mind. When ceremony, etiquette, and other such things are insisted on, worldly considerations of various kinds creep in, and master and visitors alike feel inclined to find fault with each other. It becomes thus more and more difficult to find such ones as fully comprehend the meaning of the art. If we were to have Joshu 6 for master and Bodhidharma, the first Zen patriarch, for a guest, and Rikyū and myself picked up the dust in the roji, would not such a gathering be a happy one indeed?"

We see how thoroughly imbued with the spirit of Zen is this statement of one of the chief disciples of Rikyū.

The next section will be devoted to the elucidation of sabi or wabi, the concept constituting the fourth principle of the art of tea, "tranquillity." In fact, this is the most essential factor in the tea art, and without it there can be no cha-no-yu whatever. It is in this connection, indeed, that Zen enters deeply into the art of tea.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> An old Chinese Zen master reputed for his saying, "Have a cup of tea." See my *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, p. 80, and also pp. 34 f. of the present book.

3

I HAVE used the term "tranquillity" for the fourth element making up the spirit of the art of tea, but it may not be a good term for all that is implied in the Chinese character chi, or jaku in Japanese. Jaku is sabi, but sabi contains much more than "tranquillity." Its Sanskrit equivalent, śānta or śānti, it is true, means "tranquillity," "peace," "serenity," and jaku has been frequently used in Buddhist literature to denote "death" or "nirvāṇa." But as the term is used in the tea, its implication is "poverty," "simplification," "aloneness," and here sabi becomes synonymous with wabi. To appreciate poverty, to accept whatever is given, a tranquil, passive mind is needed, but in both sabi and wabi there is a suggestion of objectivity. Just to be tranquil or passive is not sabi nor is it wabi. There is always something objective that evokes in one a mood to be called wabi. And wabi is not merely a psychological reaction to a certain pattern of environment. There is an active principle of aestheticism in it; when this is lacking poverty becomes indigence, aloneness becomes ostracism or misanthropy or inhuman unsociability. Wabi or sabi, therefore, may be defined as an active aesthetical appreciation of poverty; when it is used as a constituent of the tea, it is the creating or remodeling of an environment in such a way as to awaken the feeling of wabi or sabi. Nowadays, as these terms are used, we may say that sabi applies more to the individual objects and environment generally, and wabi to the living of a life ordinarily associated with poverty or insufficiency or imperfection. Sabi is thus more objective, whereas wabi is more subjective and personal. We speak of a wabi-zumai, "the wabi way of living," but when a vessel such as a tea caddy or a bowl or a flower vase comes in for appraisal, it is often characterized as having a "sabi taste," or kan-mi. Kan and sabi are synonymous, while mi is "taste." The tea utensils are, as far as I know, never qualified as being of "wabi taste."

Of the following two verses the first is considered expressive of the idea of wabi, while the second gives the idea of sabi:

Among the weeds growing along the wall The crickets are hiding, as if forsaken, From the garden wet with autumnal showers.

The yomogi herbs in the garden
Are beginning to wither from below;
Autumn is deepening,
Its colors are fading;
Not knowing why, my heart is filled with melancholy.

The idea of sabi is said to come primarily from renga masters, who show great aesthetic appreciation for things suggestive of age, desiccation, numbness, chilliness, obscurity—all of which are negative feelings opposed to warmth, the spring, expansiveness, transparency, etc. They are, in fact, feelings growing out of poverty and deficiency; but they have also a certain quality lending themselves to highly cultivated aesthetic ecstasy. The teamen will say that this is "objectively negated but subjectively affirmed," whereby external emptiness is filled with inner richness. In some ways, wabi is sabi and sabi is wabi; they are interchangeable terms.

Shukō (d. 1502), a disciple of Ikkyū (1394-1481) and teamaster to Ashikaga Yoshimasa (1435-90), used to teach his pupils about the spirit of the tea with this story. A Chinese poet happened to compose this couplet:

In the woods over there deeply buried in snow,

Last night a few branches of the plum tree burst out in bloom.

He showed it to his friend, who suggested that he alter "a few branches" into "one branch." The author followed the friend's advice, praising him as his "teacher of one character." A solitary branch of the plum tree in bloom among the snow-covered woods—here is the idea of wabi.

On another occasion, Shukō is reported to have said: "It is good to see a fine steed tied in the straw-roofed shed. This being so, it also is specially fine to find a rare object of art in an ordinarily furnished room." This reminds one of the Zen phrase, "To fill a monk's tattered robe with a cool refreshing breeze." Outwardly there is not a sign of distinction, appearances all go against the contents, which are in every way priceless. A life of wabi can then be defined: an inexpressible quiet joy deeply hidden beneath sheer poverty; and it is the art of tea that tries to express this idea artistically.

But if there is anything betraying a trace of insincerity, the whole thing is utterly ruined. The priceless contents must be there most genuinely, they must be there as if they were never there, they must be rather accidentally discovered. In the beginning there is no suspicion of the presence of anything extraordinary, yet something attracts—a closer approach, a tentative examination, and, behold, a mine of solid gold glitters from among the unexpected. But the gold itself remains ever the same, discovered or not. It retains its reality, that is, its sincerity to itself, regardless of accidents. Wabi means to be true to itself. A master lives quietly in his unpretentious hut, a friend comes in unexpectedly, tea is served, a fresh spray of flowers is arranged, and the visitor enjoys a peaceful afternoon charmed with his conversation and entertainment. Is this not the tea rite in its reality?

Parenthetically, some may ask: "In these modern times how many of us are situated like the teamaster? It is nonsense to talk about leisurely entertainment. Let us have bread first, and fewer working hours." Yes, it is true that we have to eat bread in the sweat of our face and to work a number of hours as the slave of machinery. Our creative impulses have thus been miserably downtrodden. It is not, however, just for this reason, I believe, that we moderns have lost the taste for leisureliness, that we find no room in our worrying hearts for enjoying life in any other

way than running after excitement for excitement's sake. The question is: How have we come to give ourselves up to such a life as to try to keep the inner worries only temporarily suppressed? How is it that we no longer reflect on life more deeply, more seriously, so that we can have a realization of its inmost meaning? When this question is settled, let us if necessary negate the entire machinery of modern life and start anew. I hope our destination is not the continual enslaving of ourselves to material wants and comforts.

Another teamaster writes: "From Amaterasu Ōmikami starts the spirit of wabi. Being the great ruler of this country, he was free to erect the finest palaces, inlaid with gold and silver and precious stones, and nobody would dare to speak ill of him, and yet he dwelt in a reed-thatched house and ate unpolished rice. In every possible way, besides, he was self-sufficient, modest, and ever-striving. He was truly a most excellent teamaster, living a life of wabi."

It is interesting to see that this writer regards Amaterasu Ōmikami as the representative teaman, who lived a life of wabi. This, however, shows that the tea is the aesthetic appreciation of primitive simplicity; in other words, that the tea is an aesthetic expression of the longing which most of us seem to feel in the depths of our hearts to go as far back to Nature as our human existence will permit and to be at one with her.

Through these statements, the concept of wabi is, I think, becoming clearer. We can say that, in a way, with Sōtan, a grandson of Rikyū, real wabi life starts. He explains that wabi is the essence of the tea, corresponding to the moral life of the Buddhists:

"It is a great mistake, indeed, to make an ostentatious show of wabi while inwardly nothing is consonant with it. Such people construct a tearoom as far as appearances go with all that is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup>The Omikami is really the sun-goddess in Japanese mythology, but the writer seems to understand her to be a male deity and, anachronistically, associates her with the art of tea.

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needed for wabi; much gold and silver is wasted on the work; rare objects of art are purchased with the money realized by the sale of their farms—and this just to make a display before visitors. They think a life of wabi is here. But far from it. Wabi means insufficiency of things, inability to fulfill every desire one may cherish, generally a life of poverty and dejection. To halt despondently in one's course of life because of his inability to push himself forward—this is wabi. But he does not brood over the situation. He has learned to be self-sufficient with insufficiency of things. He does not seek beyond his means. He has ceased to be cognizant of the fact that he is in tight circumstances. If, however, he should still abide with the idea of the poverty, insufficiency, or general wretchedness of his condition, he would no more be a man of wabi but a poverty-stricken person. Those who really know what wabi is are free from greed, violence, anger, indolence, uneasiness, and folly. Thus wabi corresponds to the Pāramitā of Morality as observed by the Buddhists."

In wabi, aestheticism is fused with morality or spirituality, and it is for this reason that the teamasters declare the tea to be life itself and not merely a thing for pleasure, however refined this may be. Zen is thus directly connected with the tea; indeed, most ancient teamasters studied Zen in real earnest and applied their attainment in Zen to the art of their profession.

Religion can sometimes be defined as a way of escape from the humdrum of this worldly life. Scholars may object to this, saying that religion aspires not to escape but to transcend life in order to reach the Absolute or the Infinite. But, practically stated, it is an escape where one finds a little time to breathe and recuperate. Zen as a spiritual discipline does this, too, but as it is too transcendental, as it were, too inaccessible for ordinary minds, the teamasters who have studied Zen have devised the way to put their understanding into practice in the form of the art of tea. Probably in this, to a great extent, their aesthetic aspirations asserted themselves.

When wabi is explained as above, readers may think that it is more or less a negative quality, and that its enjoyment is meant for people who have been a failure in life. This is true in some sense, perhaps. But how many of us are really so healthy as not to need medicine or a tonic of one kind or another at some time in their lives? And then every one of us is destined to pass away. Modern psychology gives us many cases of active businessmen, strong physically and mentally, who will suddenly collapse when they retire. Why? Because they have not learned to keep their energy in reserve; that is to say, they have never become aware of a plan to retreat while still working. The Japanese fighting man in those old days of strife and unrest, when he was most strenuously engaged in the business of war, realized that he could not go on always with nerves at the highest pitch of vigilance and that he ought to have a way of escape sometime and somewhere. The tea must have given him exactly this. He retreated for a while into a quiet corner of his Unconscious, symbolized by the tearoom no more than ten feet square. And when he came out of it, not only did he feel refreshed in mind and body, but very likely his memory was renewed of things of more permanent value than mere fighting.

Thus we see that "tranquillity," which is the fourth and chief factor making up the spirit of the tea, ultimately means a kind of aesthetic contemplation of poverty in the Eckhartian sense, which the teamen call wabi or sabi according to the objects to which they apply the term.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> In Part II, I touch on the same subjects, but from a somewhat different approach. It is an elaboration of a lecture given in 1954 to a group of the foreign residents of Yokohama. It will help, I hope, make clearer the points I have treated of in Part I.