RELIGION IN THE

POETRY OF

MIYAZAWA KENJI

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I have used as my reference for Miyazawa Kenji's writing the fourteen volumes of his Complete Works published by Chikuma Shōbō between 1973 and 1977, particularly volumes 2, 3, 4 and 6 which contain his free verse poetry.

The editors of this exhaustive work have often had difficulty deciding on the final version of the poems. Kenji constantly rewrote, revised, rejected and reclaimed poems, even those already published. Versions of the same poem can appear several times in other poems, and the manuscript versions of a poem can often present a truly formidable jumble of different poems. It is safe to say that a great many of his poems never reached what could be called a 'final' form, if indeed any did. All of his poetry should rather be read as a huge 'work in progress'. The editors have conscientiously stuck to the letter of the law in choosing final versions of the poems, taking his revisions and amendments exactly as they stood on his death. This was no doubt the wisest course, although it often produces poems which read rather strangely, with gaps or obvious inconsistencies, and occasionally it relegates to the manuscript versions what have long been considered poems in their own right. For the most part, I have followed the choice of the editors in referring to the poems, but where manuscript versions may contain important passages not included in the final version, I have not hesitated to refer to them in my discussion. In such cases I have indicated that they are manuscript versions.
All quotations from Japanese used in this work are my own translations, except where otherwise indicated. In the case of short quotations, of two lines or less, the Japanese version appears as a footnote. For larger quotations, I have provided the volume and page number of the Complete Works in which the original version can be found, for reference. Where the title of a poem appears for the first time, I have provided its original title in brackets. In the case of small quotations repeated elsewhere in the text, I have given the original Japanese in a footnote only where they first appear.

Proper names are given in the Japanese order, surname first, then personal name. I refer to Miyazawa Kenji as 'Kenji' throughout, a common literary practice in Japan.
It may seem extraordinary that Miyazawa Kenji did not gain public recognition as a writer during his lifetime. At a time when innovation was applauded in writing in Japan, when the influx of translations from Western literature had excited writers to leap the bounds of traditional literary form and content and strive for new ways of synthesizing Japanese and Western modes, Kenji went unnoticed. Yet there is reason enough why this should have been so. One reason is that, apart from occasional publication in magazines and newspapers, Kenji only brought out two books of his work—one of poems (1) and one of stories (2)—of limited edition and poor distribution.

Another strong reason is the nature of the writing profession in Japan: almost totally dominated by 'schools' of writing (派), literary cliques which provided masters or sponsors for the aspiring writer and on whom he depended. All this was anathema to Kenji. He despised literary circles (3), and indeed 'professional' writers in general, and he chose to write in obscurity rather than tailor himself to suit the prejudices and requirements of the literary world.

And this is the most obvious reason for his lack of recognition in the Japan of the '20s and '30s—the nature of his writing itself. For it had little or nothing to do with the literary tastes of the day. True, he wrote free verse

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1. 春と修羅, published in April 1924.
2. 主文の多い料理店, published in December 1924.
3. See 關德彌あて、大正十年八月十一日.
(jiyushi: 自由詩), which was in keeping with the 'modernity' of the more experimental writers. But it was strange, obscure poetry, and had little in common with the attempts of other free verse writers in Japan. And besides, poetry was not popular. Poets were still for the most part writers of the traditional haiku (俳句)\(^1\) or tanka (短歌)\(^2\), modified in theme and language by some, but nevertheless traditional forms. Literary interest was centred on the realistic novel, and Kenji wrote thoroughly 'unrealistic' children's stories. To the reader of the day these were no doubt quaint, somehow disturbing, but not 'literature'. And the Buddhist strain in his writing was unfashionable, and sat oddly with a fascination for modern science and technology. It is understandable that scant notice was paid to him during his life, despite the fact that he is now recognized as an important Japanese writer.

Miyazawa Kenji's work was in fact almost totally outside the mainstream of Japanese writing. Tsurumi Shunsuke\(^3\) has traced certain aspects of his poetry back to the naivety of the earliest Japanese poets of the Manyōshū (万葉集)\(^4\), and considers his writing to be part of the tradition of folk art in Japan. This is indeed the only real literary influence that is apparent in his writing\(^5\), if influence it could be called.

1. Traditional verse form of seventeen syllables.
2. A thirty-one syllable verse form.
3. 鶴見俊輔、限界芸術論、勤草書房、東京
4. The first collection of Japanese poetry, or 'songs' (歌), composed between the fourth and eighth centuries.
5. Science text books and Buddhist scriptures are in fact the primary influences visible in his work.
To the extent that folk art springs directly from the concerns and everyday lives of its authors, Kenji can certainly be placed within this tradition, but in all other respects his peculiar writing stands alone in Japanese, or indeed world, literature.

Although Tsurumi Shunsuke places his writing in the 'naive' folk art tradition, it was far from unselfconscious. Kenji certainly never considered himself to be 'just a poor scribbler'; on the contrary, he placed supreme faith in the power of the message which his writing contains - speaking of the publication of his one book of poems, for instance, he says "I planned to completely transform the positions of history and religion"! And indeed this is one of the many things that his writing does, as I hope to show. His writing is extraordinary in almost every way - on the level of language alone, for instance, it is often striking: flowing colloquial language, sometimes slipping into local dialect (Tohokuben: 東北弁), interspersed with clumps of the complex formal language of science and Buddhism and with foreign words, occasionally in Roman script. The poems and stories are pervaded by an intense awareness of the natural landscape, and vivid visual imagery.

His stories are certainly far easier to read than his poems, and it is these that are most loved by his readers today. The poems are more complex and formidable, and apart from the well-known (and uncharacteristic) Undefeated by rain (雨ニモマケズ), readers and critics alike tend to steer clear of them. Yet the stories themselves present problems - many of them seem to

1. 歴史や宗教の位置を全く変換しようと企画し：一森佐一あて、大正十四年二月九日.
contain certain strange implications which lie just beyond the reader's grasp, and sudden unnerving twists, while at other times the moralism is almost blatant. To understand them fully is a more complex task than it at first appears.

Despite Kenji's statements on the central importance of religion in his writing, few critics have attempted to examine it from this angle. Where necessary, they refer to the fact that he was a Buddhist, and a staunch believer in the Lotus Sutra, and leave it at that; often to return to the struggle of trying to interpret one of the apparently obscure statements in which Kenji's poetry abounds. Yet Kenji's religion is undoubtedly the key to all the major difficulties of meaning that his poems present, and indeed to his writing in general. The fatal pre-conception that most critics bring to his work is that he was simply an unusually devout, orthodox Buddhist. In fact, his Buddhism was so far from being orthodox that it is almost better to ignore the fact that he was nominally a Buddhist if one wishes to gain a real understanding of the religious philosophy which his writing embodies.

This is not to say, of course, that Kenji turned his back on the Buddhist tradition. The great number of references to Buddhist concepts, in his poetry in particular, is enough in itself to disprove this. Yet his religion moved far beyond the confines of traditional Buddhism. It embraced Christianity and

1. See 関徳彌あて、大正十年七月十三日.
2. 妙法蓮華経, (literally The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law). Belief in the power of this sutra is believed by Nichiren followers to be the only means of attaining salvation. A detailed account of Nichiren and the Lotus Sutra will be found in Appendix A.
socialism, science and technology, and more. It aimed, literally, for the stars. Umehara Takeshi\(^1\) has suggested that the meaning of Kenji's work cannot be understood unless we first consider the role of Mahayana Buddhism\(^2\) and the *Lotus Sutra* in his writing. But such a line of enquiry leads only so far. Certainly, it affirms that his ideas are for the most part firmly founded in Buddhist philosophy; but it is the ideas themselves, not their origin, which must be understood in order to understand his work. And those ideas are often a far cry from their Buddhist origins. To trace the elements of traditional Buddhism in Kenji's writing would be only to scratch the surface of what his religion became. In his hands, traditional Buddhism became transformed almost beyond recognition, and it is the outcome of these transformations that constitutes his religion, and the key to the 'meaning' of his work.

What misleads critics into assuming that Kenji's religion was simply 'Buddhism', and the Buddhism of a particular sect at that, is the fact that at the age of nineteen he was converted to the *Lotus Sutra* faith of Nichiren followers.\(^3\) Certainly he never relinquished his faith in the *Lotus Sutra* as such. References to this faith appear from time to time in the poems\(^4\), and in the illness of his final years this faith once again

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2. Mahayana, or 'Great Vehicle' Buddhism (大乗仏教) is the northern form of Buddhism, found in Tibet, China, Korea and Japan.
3. See Appendix A.
4. *Father of the Fields* (野の師父), for example, contains an explicit affirmation of this faith.
came to the fore in his poetry. But the enormous contrast between the overtly Buddhist themes of his last poems and the *jiyūshi* written until then is in itself enough to show that his religion had been essentially of a different order from the strict and simple faith of Nichiren followers, and this is even more evident when one comes to examine the poems themselves.

The *jiyūshi* span the period of 1922 to roughly 1929(1), the period when his major, and most characteristic, work was written. At the end of 1921 he returned to his parents' home in Hanamaki (花巻)(2) from Tokyo, where he had been devoting himself to propagating the Truth of the *Lotus Sutra*. Although until his return he had been an almost fanatical follower of the Nichiren faith, that faith seems to have suddenly ceased to have the overwhelming importance it previously had for him. Yet it was not that his religion changed overnight. Some of his earliest writing(3) in fact expresses the peculiar pre-occupations of his personal religion and, as I have said, the strictly orthodox faith in the *Lotus Sutra* occasionally crops up throughout his later writing. It seems, rather, that what could be called his personal religious vision, as distinct from the impersonal *Lotus Sutra* faith, was present in its essential form from his early years. This personal vision grew out of a private and highly individual perception of the world, which never ceased to be present even during the years when he adhered strictly to the

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1. Most of the later *jiyūshi* are undated, so it is difficult to determine when the last ones were written.

2. A town in central northern Honshū, where he was born and spent most of his life. For biographical details, see Appendix C.

3. c.f. for instance *Before Resurrection* (復活の前), which he wrote in 1918.
narrow beliefs of the Nichiren follower. After he returned from Tokyo he turned away from this fanatic faith, and in its place he brought to the foreground that religion which had been latent in him from the first.

This process is mirrored in the style of his poetry. Until his return to Hanamaki in 1921 his poetry was, on the whole, fairly unadventurous. It was written in the literary or bungo (文語) linguistic style, the accepted style for literary compositions. Within a month of his return he began to write Winter Sketches (冬のスケッチ), a series of poetic 'sketches' ranging from single lines to ten or fifteen line poems. They are obviously experimental exercises - often the same idea or image is approached again and again from different angles, and many of these sketches appear reworked in his later poetry. The linguistic style is still for the most part the bungo style, but interspersed with it for the first time are attempts at the colloquial kōgo (口語) style, which introduces a sense of freshness and directness in comparison with the formal, somehow rhetorical bungo language.

His attempts in Winter Sketches to find a new and more personal form of poetic expression led him straight into the poems of the first volume of Spring and Shura, begun in January 1922, and here there is no hesitating. Kenji had suddenly 'found his voice', and the poem Spring and Shura, written in the Spring of that year, is one of his most powerful and beautiful. From this time until the beginning of his illness in 1929 he never ceased writing poems in the colloquial style, and these poems express, not the dogmatic
faith of his early period but the very different vision and philosophy which constituted his personal religion. And just as his unique poetic style never faltered from the moment he 'discovered' it, so too his personal and highly idiosyncratic form of religion suddenly appeared in its full maturity in the poems written in 1929. There is no real development of his religious ideas to be found in the poetry. The most that can be said is that his religion and his poetry both (for they are virtually inseparable) became less intensely introverted after the first volume, a process paralleled in his own life. The religious vision itself never varied. He had found its central theme in the poem *Spring and Shura*, and this is the title which he applied to collections of all his subsequent *jiyūshi* (1).

The *jiyūshi* were not the only poems he wrote during this period. Along with these, he wrote a much smaller number of poems in the *bungo* style. Many of these are actually reworkings of various *jiyūshi* poems, others are separate poems in themselves. These poems tend to express more strictly Buddhist ideas, and they are in general less adventurous and less 'personal' than the *jiyūshi*. They are, as it were, a sort of undercurrent, being essentially a continuation of his earlier *bungo* poetry, and they rise again to dominate the poetry of his last years, with his return to the fold of orthodox Buddhism. In these years, from 1929 until his death in 1933, his poetic style largely relapsed into the *bungo* style, and although these poems retain traces of the religious imagery of the *jiyūshi*, the

1. See 森佐一応, 大正十四年二月九日。
strict Buddhism and *Lotus Sutra* faith which they predominantly express virtually amount to a repudiation of the religion of the *jiyūshi*.

The changes in linguistic style are therefore a surprisingly accurate measure of the changes which his religion underwent. It is undeniable that he was, in his early years and again in his last years, a strictly devout Buddhist. It is the religion of the intervening years that I will examine in this essay - the years during which most of his stories were written and, more importantly, the *jiyūshi*. These poems are undoubtedly the most direct expression of his personal religion. They are what he calls "records" (記録)\(^1\) of his own experiences and perceptions, and, in the terms of his personal religion, one's own experiences and perceptions form the very basis and touchstone of 'religion'. The key to his religious thinking is essentially that he came to apply the Buddhist interpretation of the world directly to the world in which he lived. He was not content to keep religion in a separate compartment, nor was he content to modify his perception of reality to bring it into line with traditional Buddhist concepts wherever the two might differ. To the extent that his ideas involved such concepts, they did so because those concepts were relevant to the world he saw. What he sought above all was a unification of religion and all other aspects of living - living itself became religion for him. So although his religion sprang from the beliefs and world view of Mahayana Buddhism, it developed into something

\(^{1}\) See the poem *Preface* (序).
which extended far beyond the confines of that tradition, the
tradition itself being transformed into what almost amounted to
a new religion.

Kenji had come to place confidence in his own understanding
and vision of the world - it is this that constituted his
religion, and it is this that the jiūshi gave expression to.
His religious vision is inseparable from his poetic vision.
The 'morality' on which his religion was based at times finds
direct expression, but the nature of his religious vision
itself is nowhere explicitly stated. Rather, it is contained
within his writing, often subtly, in its recurring themes and
images. The task of unravelling it, of taking apart the
complex whole that constitutes his religion, is a difficult
one, and I will find it necessary to refer backwards and
forwards from time to time in the course of this essay. I hope
that what will emerge from this examination will finally be,
not so much a series of isolated points as a sense of an
interlocking whole, for otherwise I will have done a disservice
to the essential unity of Kenji's religion. It is always a
dangerous exercise to analyze poetry, but in this case I
believe the task is worthwhile, for once the underlying vision
that his poems give expression to is understood, most of the
apparent obscurity of his writing disappears.

Although I have chosen to focus my attention on the
jiūshi, I will also be referring to his other writings from
time to time, particularly to the Outline of the Essentials of
Peasant Art (農民藝術概論綱要). This comprises the outline of
ideas for a series of lectures he planned to give to the local farmers in 1926. Besides being an invaluable source for many of his metaphysical ideas, and the clearest statement of them, it is a lyrical work in its own right, and for that reason alone deserves a place in any discussion of Kenji's poetry.
CHAPTER II - SHURA

Virtually every critic who has dealt with his poetry at any length has grappled with the strange title Spring and Shura, and the explanations offered have been various and ingenious. The importance of the title is unquestionable, since it provides the basic theme of all Kenji's poetry, and it is therefore appropriate to begin an examination of religion in the poetry by exploring the more obviously religious half of this title, the concept of 'Shura'. (1)

On the eighth of April 1922, six months after his return from Tokyo and when he was already employed as a teacher at the recently-founded Agricultural School in Hanamaki (2), Miyazawa Kenji wrote the poem entitled Spring and Shura. It is this poem which no doubt provided him with the title of the first volume and all the subsequent poetry, and it is rightly considered to be one of the most important poems he wrote. I shall here quote it in full.

Spring and Shura
(mental sketch modified)

"From the grey steel of mental images
akebi vines twine round the clouds.
Wild rose thicket and humus of swamp land
everywhere everywhere everywhere designs of hypocrisy.
(when amber fragments pour
fiercer than mid-day's pipe music).

1. 'Shura', or 'Ashura' (阿修羅), denotes both one of the six realms of rebirth in Buddhism, and the inhabitants of that realm - warring and jealous titans forever locked in combat with the gods. (See Appendix B).
2. For biographical details see Appendix C.
Anger's bitterness and blueness.
Below the air-strata of April's light
spitting, gnashing, pacing to and fro
I am Shura incarnate.
(the landscape sways with tears)
In the lucid sea of heaven
a sacred crystal wind passes about
on the far edge of the fragmented clouds.

ZYPRESSEN Spring rows of cypress
blackly breathing ether
and though from their dark march
snow glitters on the ridges of Heaven Mountain itself
(heat waves and white polarized light)
the true words are lost.

Clouds fly tattered over the sky.
Ah beneath brilliant April
gnashing, burning, pacing to and fro
I am Shura incarnate.
(Chalcedony clouds flow.
Where do the birds of Spring sing?)

When the sun shimmers blue
Shura symphonizes with the wood
and from the darkening sinking bowl of heaven
a cluster of black trees extends,
their branches sadly luxuriant.

Through all this double landscape
a crow flashes upward
from the wood's trance-like treetops.
(the air layers rarify
and cypresses stand silent in the heavens).

Passing over the gold of the grassfield
the tranquil shape of a man
that farmer clad in cloak watching me -
can he really see me
beneath the blinding sea of atmosphere?
(sadness blue and deep)

ZYPRESSEN gently sway.
A bird slices the blue sky again.
(The true words are not here.

Tears of Shura fall on the earth.)
When I breathe into the sky again
dim white lungs shrink.

(be scattered, my body, in the sky's atoms)
The tip of the ginko tree shines once more.
ZYPRESEN still blacker.
Sparks of the clouds come pouring down." (V.2, p.20)

Aside from the sheer beauty of this poem, it is immediately
obvious that here Kenji is identifying himself with the furious
warriors of Shura - "Spitting, gnashing, pacing to and fro/ I am
Shura incarnate" - and indeed in his description of this state
there is an echo of the Shura depicted in No plays.\(^1\)

"Fire leaps from their swords,
The sparks of their own anger fall upon them like rain.
To wound another he draws his sword,
But it is from his own flesh
That the red waves flow;
Like flames they cover him."\(^2\)

This nightmare vision of a warrior imprisoned in the hell of
battle is a powerful one, and the horror and fascination of this
image appears in some of Kenji's earliest writing -

"A war begins, and the order is issued to go forward
eliminating every sign of life for three miles around.
With a sword I slash and kill old people and women hiding
in swamps or in toilets holding hands, and I run yelling
and crying." (V.11, p.241)

\(^1\) A traditional form of Japanese theatre derived from the
more primitive and popular sarugaku (猿楽) performances,
and given its present form largely by Zeami (世阿弥
1364-1443) and his father Kanami (観阿弥).

\(^2\) "Tsunemasa" - The No Plays of Japan, Arthur Waley. Grove
(The title of this work is Before Resurrection (復活の前), with the interesting implication that such a state is associated with death, and that in some way a miraculous 'rebirth' will occur, which will be a transcendence of this state.)

But although in No plays Shura warriors appear on earth, they are in fact ghosts returned only to relive their battle and disappear again, whereas in the poem Spring and Shura Kenji is a human become Shura on earth. Here, the Shura realm is somehow an aspect of the realm of humans, not the separate and 'unearthly' realm of the Buddhist tradition.

What Kenji seems to be identifying by the term 'Shura' in this poem is a certain state of mind; primarily anger, and the suffering which results from anger ("the landscape sways with tears"), and these are indeed traditional attributes of the Ashura. It is interesting to realize that, in the case of the Ashura, these emotions are directed primarily against the gods, originally as a result of having fallen from the position of favour which the gods still hold. There are echoes of this in the poem - "And though ... / snow glitters on the ridges of Heaven Mountain itself / ... the true words are lost"; but this aspect of Shura appears clearly in another poem, Voiceless Lamentation (無声嘆 ), written seven months later as his sister Toshiko was dying.

1. I am here following what seems to be a tendency in Japanese to distinguish between the realm and its mythological inhabitants by referring to the former as 'Shura' and the latter as 'Ashura'.
"Ah, when I knowingly separate myself from the strength of the Great Faith and lose the number of small and pure virtues to walk in blue-dark Shura, will you go alone and lonely the path you have chosen for yourself? When I, your only fellow-traveller, our faith being unified, am tired and saddened by the bright cold path of devotion and drift in a plain of poisonous grass and fluorescent fungus where will you be going, alone?" (V.2, p.141)

Shura here is explicitly that state of having lost what could be called 'divine power', signified in the poem Spring and Shura by "the true words".

In an earlier poem, Winter Sketches, he says

"... what I yearn for and crave increasingly
... what I wish for are the true words the mantra of Buddha in the midst of the rain."

"The true words" could be taken to indicate the phrase of adoration to the Lotus Sutra, Namu Myōhō Rengekyō (南無妙法蓮華経), but if this were so it seems strange that he should be longing for them, or that he could 'lose' them. Rather, what seems to be implied is the power and strength which these words can give, "the strength of the Great Faith", and it is when he is "tired and saddened by the bright cold path of devotion" to the Great Faith that he falls into what he terms 'Shura', and loses the power of "the true words".

1. 真言: - a phrase which, repeated constantly, is believed to endow the reciter with various powers, often with liberation from the cycle of life and death. The esoteric Shingon Sect (which takes its name from this word), makes great use of mantras, and they appear frequently throughout the Mahayana sutras generally.
The result of being separated from this power, and also no doubt the cause of it, is being cut off from the 'heaven' of the gods. In the poem Silent Lamentation he seems to be not so much lamenting the fact that his sister is dying as the fact that he is unable to be with her in the heaven to which she is going. Intimations of that heaven are already all around her, just as in Spring and Shura "in the lucid sea of heaven / a sacred crystal wind passes about", and "snow glitters on the ridges of Heaven Mountain itself". But he has cut himself off from the possibility of entering this heaven - he is in the world of Shura, "drifting in a plain of poisonous grass and fluorescent fungus".

"'But doesn't my body stink ?'
'No, not at all.'

No, really it doesn't.

For in fact this place is full of the scent of tiny white flowers. (1)

It's just that at the moment I can't tell you this.

(Because I'm walking in Shura)." (2) (V.2, p.142)

The important thing to notice here is that by cutting himself off from heaven, from 'the divine power', he is also cutting himself off from everything around him.

"Passing over the gold of the grassfield
the tranquil shape of a man
that farmer clad in cloak watching me -
can he really see me ?" (3)

1. Heaven is traditionally a place of sweet scents in Buddhism.
2. 無声歎哭。
3. 春と修羅。
A striking image of this appears in another poem, *East Iwate Volcano* (東岩手火山), when he is separated from the group of school children he is with, standing alone in the early dawn.

"My shadow must look like Shura incarnate against a steel-coloured background". (1)

This aspect of Shura is, in Buddhist terms, the hell of the ego - that illusion which separates the individual from his or her surroundings, and from what Kenji calls "that Creature to which all phenomena return, sky and love and apple and wind, the joyous root and source of the energy of everything." (2) Separation, once again, from the 'divine power', but this time it is obvious that it is more than the divine power gained by personal faith, it is the power and strength of what Umehara Takeshi terms "the Great Life" (大生命) (3), or perhaps 'the Great Life-Force'.

And it is here that the concept of 'Shura' moves beyond the expression of simply a personal experience of separation from the power of 'the true words', and from his surroundings. In the tradition of the Ashura, they are not only constantly at war with the gods but also among themselves. The Shura realm is a realm of blood-shed. It is pride and jealousy which caused their original fall from heaven, and pride and jealousy creates endless blood-shed among them. These are characteristics

1. その影は鉄いろの背景の／ひとりの修羅に見える答だ。
2. そらや愛やりんごや風 すべて勢力のたのしい根源／万象同帰の
いみじい生物。
of the ego, the individual isolated from the world around itself, and as in the traditional realm of Shura so in this world Kenji saw that the result is blood-shed and suffering. His stories are filled with this theme, the suffering caused by creatures pitting themselves against each other, and it appears most obviously in his more despairing poems.

"How many times have I heard people say
'I prefer things as they are,
no-one lifting hand or foot to help,
and if someone is dirtier than I am
or suffers more than I
that's the way I like it to be'.
(not 'everyone is as dirty as the next'.
Not 'everyone suffers equally'.)(1) (V.4, p.197)

Umehara(2) puts it succinctly when he says that for Kenji, "the world of all living creatures is the world of mutual slaughter, the world of Shura", and he claims, with some justification, that "this is Kenji's basic intuition of the real world". It is, at least, his perception of one of the basic characteristics of the present world, and the word 'Shura' is his expression for this aspect of the world. The theme of the evil of 'every man for himself' runs strong throughout Kenji's writing, and it is the most obvious equivalent of the traditional Shura realm. But it is important to realize that he saw this as the inevitable outcome of that state in which the individual sees himself as separate from, and therefore pitted against, the world around him.

1. 火祭.
2. Umehara: op.cit. pages 211-212.
This Shura state Kenji ultimately identified as death, and this is most obvious in the horrifying poem called *Flowing* (ながれたり), a hell-like vision of what seems to be the river of death:

"A great raft coming down
and on it a man sits
eyes deep-set, expression proud,
arms folded, gazing about him.
Doesn't he see that the raft
is a pile of water-coloured corpses ?

When a young man, hair wild
catches onto the raft's edge
the raft's master, with red eyes
and rage shining in his cheeks,
uncurls the fingers of the youth, and floats on ...

When, pale, they approach each other
in the flow's centre, hoping to save,
instead they do battle
and flow on, hair wild ...

Ah their heads, their heads
grind their teeth hard
and come cutting through the flow.

Some bite the shoulders of the dead
some bite the backs of the dead
and they are coldly furious". (1) (v.5, p.137)

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1. The poem When I spilled the oat seeds (燕麦の種子をこぼせば) echoes the image of the raft's master in this poem. Here a boat passes, on its way back from selling sake:
   "There are three men in it.
   One crosses his legs,
two stand erect
watching the fields and bushes on the bank
with malicious eyes.
   "... Can the new culture be born
from those malicious eyes ?"
But this is more than a vision of the river of death - it is perhaps the most direct and desolate vision of the Shura aspect of the world that Kenji ever wrote. Here everyone is swept powerlessly along, struggling to keep afloat, consumed by cold rage. Those who succeed in building themselves a raft to keep them afloat have built it on the dead bodies of others, and they sit on it proud and watchful of anyone who should try to save themselves by climbing aboard. But the most despairing image is that of those who try to save each other and instead find themselves battling each other. Here even the best are powerless against the force of the Shura world.

Thankfully, though, this is not his final statement of Shura, though no doubt it is how he saw it in his most despairing moments. For Kenji in fact believed that it is within people's power to transcend the world of Shura in which he saw them everywhere enmeshed, and it is this belief which came to govern his life.

Kenji's 'Shura' was, then, a radical re-interpretation of the Shura of traditional Buddhism, that separate realm inhabited by 'titans', or by the ghosts of dead warriors. It is an aspect of the present world, the world where living things are cut off from each other, attack and devour each other. It is a world whose guiding forces are hatred, jealousy, mutual suspicion and ultimately death. By focussing on this aspect of the world, by naming and defining it as a specific state in which living things exist, and by choosing as that name the Shura of the Buddhist realms of existence, he is putting this aspect of the world into what may at first appear
an exaggerated perspective. But this perspective is a religious one, for it was Kenji's belief that the world is thus because we have cut ourselves off from the heaven of the divine power, and by identifying ourselves with this divine power we can transcend the Shura realm of this world and enter a state or realm in which such things as jealousy, hatred and even death do not exist.
CHAPTER III - THE PHENOMENON CALLED 'I'

To understand how Kenji saw the possibility of transcending Shiora, it is best to begin by returning to the poem Spring and Shura.

Onda Itsuo\(^{(1)}\) has pointed out that the last six lines of the poem constitute a break in the poem's flow, and signify a new resolve. There is an exhalation - "when I breathe into the sky again" - and a relaxation of the intensity of anger. The resolve comes with the third line, "be scattered, my body, in the sky's atoms". This line could be taken to indicate something amounting to a death-wish (although it is interesting to note that it is not a matter of the body crumbling back into the earth, but of it disintegrating in the sky).

But this image is put into a different perspective in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art. Under the heading Synthesis of Peasant Art (農民芸術の総合) he wrote "Ah my friends, let us unite our true strength ... First let us all become shining atoms of the universe and scatter in the directionless sky".\(^{(2)}\) If this is a death-wish, it is phrased in a peculiarly positive way, and in fact it is clear from the context that Kenji understood the act of 'scattering in the sky' as a step towards a unification of 'true strength'.

Umehara Takeshi\(^{(3)}\) proposes that Kenji believed the only

\(^{(1)}\) Onda Itsuo
\(^{(2)}\) Umehara Takeshi: op.cit. page 214:
\(^{(3)}\) Umehara: op.cit. page 214:
way to transcend Shura was "by the altruism of killing oneself". Certainly Kenji's stories often involve the idea of self-sacrifice - a typical example is the story The Life of Gooskorbudoli (ゴスクーブドリの伝記), where the protagonist throws himself into a volcano in order to save the surrounding area from destruction. Nevertheless, it is not wise to leap to the conclusion that Kenji therefore saw the self-sacrifice of death as the only possible answer to the problem of Shura.

The willingness to sacrifice oneself if the need arises is certainly an aspect of Kenji's beliefs concerning the transcending of the Shura state(1), but it is not the final answer, just as on one level Shura is (as Umehara believes) the world of mutual slaughter, but the basis of Shura lies deeper, in the individual's conception of himself within the world. If, as I have proposed, Kenji believed the ego, the individual isolated from his environment, to be the cause of the Shura state, then the solution to this problem will also be found in Kenji's understanding of the true relationship between the individual and the world.

Kenji's basic statement of this relationship comes in the poem Preface (序), which he wrote as an introduction to and explanation of his first volume of poems.

1. This aspect of his beliefs will be dealt with further in the following chapter.
"The phenomenon called 'I' is a single blue illumination of the hypothetical organic alternating-current lamp (a composite body of all forms of transparent spirit) one blue illumination of the karmic alternating-current lamp which yet always continues to burn, rapidly flickering, flickering with the landscape and with everyone. (the light endures, its lamp is lost.)" (V.2, p.5)

What this passage expresses is essentially a Mahayana Buddhist view of the nature of reality; for, in Umehara's words, "Mahayana Buddhism conceives of a Life which penetrates both nature and humankind, calls that Life 'Buddha', and has come to have the worship of that Life at the centre of its teachings."(1) In this poem Kenji is stating that the individual is, in essence, no more than a particular manifestation of the life-force of which all things are composed - what he elsewhere calls "that Creature to which all phenomena return, / sky and love and apple and wind, the joyous root and source of the energy of everything."(2)

This idea, of the fundamental identity of all individual phenomena being the same "root and source", is an important one, and it occurs again and again in his poetry, although the imagery which he uses to identify this underlying life-force differs from poem to poem. In Preface it is a "karmic alternating-current lamp", and in some poems it becomes "the vacuum" (真空).

2. 青森挽歌。
This latter concept is one which must have particularly intrigued Kenji. The word is used in Buddhist philosophy to mean 'emptiness' (more commonly 空), which is the ultimate nature of all phenomena(1), but it is also a scientific term meaning 'a vacuum'. Such a combination of religious and scientific concepts, also obvious in the image of the "karmic alternating-current lamp", is a peculiar characteristic of Kenji's religious philosophy, and the reasons for it will be examined in detail in a later chapter.(2)

Kenji took great delight in describing religious concepts in scientific terms (and vice versa), in finding areas where scientific discovery corroborated religious intuition. Thus, in the poem February 1929 (一九二九年二月) he expresses the religious notion of the fundamental unity of all things by stating a scientific fact.

"Soon I will die.
Today and again tomorrow
I wonder again what is this thing called 'I'.
Ultimately, I am nothing beyond the Laws.
The body is bone and blood and flesh
and those are in fact various molecules,
a combination of many kinds of atom,
and the atom is in fact one form of the vacuum.
The external world is also thus." (V.6, p.327)

1. c.f. for instance the famous opening words of the Heart Sutra (般若波羅蜜多心経): "Form is emptiness" (色即是空).
2. See Chapter V.
Admittedly Kenji was moving somewhat outside the strict realm of science when he stated that "the atom is in fact one form of the vacuum". However, this statement comes surprisingly close to expressing the implications contained in the quantum field theory, summed up by one physicist as follows: "The field exists always and everywhere; it can never be removed. It is the carrier of all material phenomena. It is the 'void' out of which the proton creates the pi-mesons. Being and fading of particles are merely forms of motion of the field." (1) It is interesting to speculate whether Kenji knew of the quantum field theory, and if he did, how far he grasped its underlying concept - this theory was first formulated in the early 1920's, and it took some time to reach the public in any but the most garbled forms.

Whatever Kenji's knowledge of advanced scientific theory, he did not hesitate to add his own ideas to scientific statements, as the following poem shows.

"Forming every kind of arrangement of black and white cells, the cells are yet aware of the arrangements individually as cells and that is the flow of consciousness. And those cells are in turn made up of many arrangements of electron systems; so that ultimately what is 'I' is a certain arrangement of electron systems which I myself feel as myself." (2) (V.6, p.100)


2. 黒と白との細胞のあらゆる順列をつくり。
Here very clearly the individual is, for Kenji, a microcosm of the universe. The cells are individually conscious as cells, although they are a part of the larger consciousness of the individual called 'I', and at the same time they are made up of electrons (again, presumably, individually conscious). This is essentially Buddhist doctrine, summed up by Christmas Humphreys\(^{(1)}\) as follows:

"All things are One and have no life apart from it; the One is all things and is incomplete without the least of them. Yet the parts are parts within the whole, not merged in it: they are interfused with Reality while retaining the full identity of the part, and the One is no less One for the fact that it is a million-million parts."

This, then, is the basic relationship of the individual and all other phenomena, and for Kenji this is not a matter for merely intellectual belief.

"To live correctly and strongly everyone must individually feel the whole of the galaxy\(^{(2)}\)\(^{(V.3\ p.530)}\)

And again - "to live correctly and strongly is to be conscious within oneself of the galaxy and to act in accordance with that consciousness.\(^{(3)}\)

What Kenji emphasizes is that the basic one-ness of individual and universe must be felt by each individual, not

2. Manuscript version of 産業組合青年会。
3. 正しく強く生きるとは銀河系を自らの中に意識してこれに応じて行くことである — 産業組合青年会。
simply believed as an item of religious dogma. And this, in fact, amounts to what Buddhists term 'enlightenment'.

Anesaki (1) explains it as follows:

"So long as, and so far as, (the individual) regards himself as separate from others, every individual is only a partial, and therefore imperfect, manifestation of his own real nature (dhammatā), while everyone (2) is destined to attain the height, or depth, of his own true self in communion with all others, by virtue of the basic unity of the fundamental Dhammatā. When this ideal is attained, even partially, one has so far realized his real self, which is no longer an ego in the sense that he once cherished . . . . Buddha, in recalling his former lives, designates his former self by the pronoun 'I', but he is at the same time most emphatic in distinguishing his former 'I' . . . . and calls himself 'Tathāgata', in the third person, as the designation of his true personality and high dignity. The same title may be applied to anybody who reaches the same attainment as Buddha . . . . In short, everyone who has found his own real nature in the fundamental Dhammatā of all existences, that is, in communion with the Tathāgatas, is one who has become truth, become insight, and thereby identified himself with the Universe."

It seems that Kenji is making a rather tall order in requiring that everyone achieve this state. The Lotus Sutra, of course, teaches that this is everyone's ultimate destiny, and Kenji seems to echo this when he states with such certainty that "consciousness of self evolves gradually from individual


2. This idea, that everyone is destined to attain enlightenment, is not common to all Buddhists, but is specifically in line with the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.
to group to society to universe" (1), (though the original teaching of the Lotus Sutra was certainly not based on this idea of evolution). But there is perhaps a logical reason for his stating that everyone must attain 'universal consciousness' rather than only certain individuals, and that is "because ... just as everything is the everyone within me / so I am the everything within everyone". (2) In other words, owing to the very nature of reality which is to be realized, it cannot be fully realized by isolated individuals only. "Until the whole world becomes happy, no individual can be happy." (3)

As Anesaki points out, the attainment of this state of identification with the universe involves the loss or disintegration of the ego, and I have said that ego, that which gives the illusion of separation and isolation from the rest of the universe, is what Kenji saw as the basis of the Shura state. It is the disintegration of this ego which Kenji was implying when he admonished the local farmers to "become shining atoms of the universe and scatter in the directionless sky" (4); and it is the disintegration of that which cuts him off from the spring world and from heaven which he is longing for when, at the end of Spring and Shura, he says "be scattered, my body, in the sky's atoms". Rather than being simply a death-wish, it is a desire to transcend the state of Shura by merging himself with the universe, by comprehending with his whole self the truth of his one-ness with all things.

1. 自我の意識は個人から集団社会宇宙と次第に進化する一農民芸術概論
2. 序。
3. 世界がぜんたい幸福にならないうちに個人の幸福はありません一農民芸術
   概論綱要。
4. Ibid.
Kenji's answer to the problem of transcending Shura did not simply consist in a passive merging of oneself with the universe, however. Of necessity, such an act involved a further step, and one which was far from passive. For it is not in order to gain nirvana that "everyone must individually feel / the whole of the galaxy", it is in order to "live correctly and strongly". (1) It is not simply a matter of being passively "conscious within oneself of the galaxy"; the important thing is to "act in accordance with that consciousness". (2) Extinction of the ego as such is not what Kenji was proclaiming as the solution to Shura, although it was a pre-requisite. What this sense of one-ness with the world must lead to, for Kenji, is a commitment to life - not just one's own personal life now but the life of everything. For, as I have pointed out, even if an individual attains universal consciousness, this means nothing until all living creatures have attained it as well - "until the whole world becomes happy, no individual can be happy." (3)

It is commitment to the happiness of the world which Kenji meant when he spoke of "living correctly and strongly", and this theme appears repeatedly in his poems.

1. Manuscript version of 産業組合青年会.
2. 農民芸術概論綱要.
3. Ibid.
"In this strange great universe of mental images from which I cannot divide this little self, if one burns with the correct desire and strives to reach true happiness with people and all the myriad creatures, this can be called a certain religious sentiment." (V.2, p.85)

This passage, which comes at the end of a long poem entitled Koiwai Farm (小岩井農場), clearly shows the relationship between 'universal consciousness' and commitment to the world's happiness. Since the individual is inseparable from the universe, one's desire for happiness must involve a similar desire for the happiness of "people and all the myriad creatures".

"The correct desire" is an ego-less one - implying that to desire only one's own happiness belongs to the Shura state. But Kenji does not stop here, for to desire the happiness of another person while ignoring the rest of the world is, in his view, equally bad: "since everyone has been from ancient times brothers / it is utterly wrong to pray for only one". This conviction led him to condemn human love, and, in particular, sexual love, as manifestations of the weakness and illusion which holds us in Shura. The passage from Koiwai Farm, quoted above, continues:

"If one is broken or tired from this desire and strives to go on perfectly and eternally with just one other soul, this abnormality is called 'love'. And if one forcibly deceives oneself into thinking that one can search for

1. See Chapter 5.
2. みんなむかしからのきょうだいなのだから／けっしてひとりをいのってはいけない：農業採歌。
that essential part of love which never can be searched for in that direction however far you go, I call this tendency sexual desire." (V.2, p.85)

It is interesting to notice that in this passage the desire to dedicate oneself to one person alone is linked with the state of being "broken and tired" from the commitment to the Way of true happiness to all. This is an echo of the poem Voiceless Lamentation\(^1\), where he describes being in Shura as a result of being "tired and saddened by the bright cold path of devotion".

There are other poems where the Shura aspect of love is also evident. In the poem Well, which is greater - ? (まあこのそらの雲の量と) he berates a young man who seems to be in much the same state as his own in the poem Spring and Shura:

"Well, which is greater - your thoughts or the volume of cloud in this sky? Looking at your complex expression even an owl would turn tail and run!" (V.4, p.229)

and he goes on to proclaim the contradiction between love and commitment to higher ideals:

"Good art\(^2\) and success in love don't go together. You have become leader of the Labour Movement\(^3\) and now you want to be with your girl for ever and ever. That's something you just can't do." (V.4, p.230)

1. Quoted on page 16.
2. For the relationship between art and religion, see Chapter 7.
This is still more obvious in the poem \textit{Religious Love} (宗教風の恋). Here, again, he speaks to a young man who is in the same Shura state:

"Why, with the distorted sharpness of your mind's workings, do you seize from the midst of such clear and beautiful air burning, dark, oppressive things? Why do you try to grasp firmly from among people that which can only be had through religion?" (V.2, p.191)

It is interesting that he should call this state "religious love", or, more exactly, a religious type of love, for this again implies that he believed human love to be a misplacement of the true or 'correct' impulse to identify oneself with everyone.

It is not simply because he saw human love as an aspect of Shura that he so roundly condemns it - it is, after all, one of the least unfortunate characteristics of the Shura world. His main reason for focussing attention on it to the extent that he does is that it is an illusion which causes great unhappiness, as he knew only too well himself through the death of his sister Toshiko. It is, in Buddhist terms, the prime instance of the illusion of attachment, for human love involves the desire to be together for ever and ever, and "that", as Kenji says, "is something you just can't do".

This is the Buddhist idea of transiency, which provides the theme of certain other poems as well. The poem \textit{Pleiades} ( боги) deals expressly with this idea.
"Those with strong bodies are hurled down. 
Those with brains are weak-minded. 
All things relied on are unreliable."

(V.2, p.201)

Or again, in the strange dialogue in Sunlight and Dry Grass (陽さしとかれくさ):

"'Will this change?'
'It will change'.
'Will this change?'
'It will change.'
'What about this?'
'It will not change.'
'Well then - hey you! Quick!
Bring the cloud thorns here.'
'No, it will change. It will change.'

(V.2, p.26)

This idea that no security is to be had in dependence on the transient phenomena of this world, is a very familiar theme both in Buddhism and in Japanese literature. It is certainly an element of Kenji's religious thinking(1), and is a basic idea behind his statements on the illusoriness of human love: sexual desire is the longing for "that essential part of love which never can be searched for / in that direction however far you go", and it is foolish to "try to grasp firmly from among people / that which can only be had through religion".

What Kenji means by 'religion' is what he means when he speaks of 'devotion' in Voiceless Lamentation. It is, in essence,

1. Nevertheless, considering the overwhelming importance of this idea both in Buddhism and in Japanese literature, it is at first surprising that it appears only as a minor theme in Kenji's poetry. But there is a reason for this apparent gap in his religious philosophy, which is gone into in Chapter 11.
commitment to the true happiness of everyone, and this commitment appears again and again in the poems. His sister, Toshiko, on her death-bed prays that "next time I'm born / I won't be always worrying / over my own problems"(1), implying that what she desires is the ego-less state of commitment to everyone, not just herself; and after her death Kenji says, speaking to her:

"If we are to search for the true happiness of all we must not even regret being confined right now in this dark sea."(2) (V.2, p.251)

For Kenji, this commitment often involved the idea of suffering and of self-sacrifice. There are many instances of this, the most famous perhaps being the final lines of the poem October 20th (十月廿日). Ill and dying himself, he hears his three year old niece, who is also ill, coughing downstairs, and he prays: "No matter how many wrongs were in her former life / I beg that this illness, that this pain, be transferred to me."(3)

This willingness to suffer for the sake of others, the willingness to be "confined right now in this dark sea" if it be for the cause of the true happiness of all, is no doubt what has led Umehara Takeshi to claim that for Kenji the only way of transcending Shura was "by the altruism of killing oneself."(4) But in fact it is clear that self-sacrifice through death is only one aspect of the commitment to everyone, not just oneself,

1. うまれでくるたて／こんどはたにわりやのごとばかりで／くるしまならよにうまれてくる： 永訳の朝。
2. 宗谷挽歌。
3. 如何なる前世の非にもあれ／ tà ìカの病かの痛苦をは私にうつし時はちんこと
and it is not the inevitable result of such commitment. Kenji's point is rather that to be committed in this way one must be willing to undergo hardship, and to sacrifice oneself if necessary. Perhaps he saw it as the ultimate test of true commitment, but the point was not that this was necessary, rather that if one truly identified oneself with the universe one must be capable of suffering and, if need be, death for the sake of the good of all.

The idea of commitment to the happiness of the whole world, even to the point of suffering and death, has certain Christian overtones. As I will show later, Christianity was accepted within the bounds of Kenji's religion, and the idea of suffering and dying for the sake of others has close parallels with Christ's crucifixion, in Kenji's work. An example of the extent of this Christian influence is the poem *In this pale-blue crystal bowl* (そのうす青き玻璃の呪に), written during his last illness.

"What lies settled and shining softly
in this pale-blue crystal bowl
is that very thing called water
which is in truth the blood
by which the Bodhisattvas redeem and expiate
for my sake."

Although it is the Bodhisattvas who redeem and expiate through their blood, the idea is not Buddhist, but rather, distinctly Christian.

1. See Chapter 5.
Yet if a Christian element is apparent in Kenji's idea of dying for the sake of the true happiness of all, the idea of committing oneself to the world's happiness is certainly intimately related to the Mahayana Buddhist ideal of the Bodhisattva - one who has gained enlightenment but is dedicated to work for the salvation of all sentient beings. It was in fact this commitment which earlier led Kenji to join the Kokuchūkai (国柱会) in Tokyo(1) since, for Nichiren followers, to convert people to the Lotus Sutra faith is to save them.

But apparently he quickly came to doubt that simple faith alone could be the means of all sentient beings attaining happiness - perhaps he saw poor results from his proselytizing in terms of an actual improvement in people's lives, and came to realize that though faith can provide people with comfort in this life and perhaps happiness in the next, it does nothing to actually improve many of the causes of unhappiness in the present world. Whether this was the actual reason for his withdrawal from active proselytizing or not, certainly he came to understand dedication to 'saving' all sentient things in far more complex terms than those of the Kokuchūkai.

The compassion of the Bodhisattva ideal was not an abstract thing for him, it was a very real compassion for the suffering of those around him. It was this that led him, in 1926, to join the farmers of the Hanamaki district, and to try in every possible way to improve their life.(2) Compassion for their

1. See Appendix C.
2. See Appendix C.
suffering fills his poems, particularly of this period, and it was in the face of this real and visible suffering that he chose to work for 'the true happiness of all', always with anguish and often with despair. This despair, and the longing for the end of such suffering, he puts into the mouth of a young peasant, who speaks of the contrast between his own life and that of town dwellers, in the poem To My Students (生徒諸君に寄せる).

"They have all left us.
They have good heredity and environment,
every facility and entertainment -
we have only primitive tutoring
and distorted time between sweat and snow storm.
They have the speed of a hundred
and we cannot gain even ten.
What will save us from this darkness?" (V.6, p.207)

It was the answer to this question that Kenji desperately sought, and for him the answer was, by now, certainly not simply 'faith in the Lotus Sutra'.

That his understanding of the suffering of these people was at once intensely practical and deeply religious is nowhere more evident than in the beautiful poem Dravidian Style (ドラビダ風), which I will here quote in full.

"A tepid wind blows from downstream.
The sandy soil dries and the grass dries.
Veiled Dravidian style
they plow the fields like dancers against the blue paper clouds
breathing hard, piling the cow dung, moving to and fro."
The wheel of karma\(^{(1)}\) turns.
The sun burns.
Willow buds all fade to yellow
and the river flows with silver and the Doctrine of Emptiness.\(^{(2)}\)
From the south the tepid wind blows and blows,
and the cabbages they planted wilt and flutter white.
The laughter of the multitude of Hindu devotees is distant.
Thistles
diadems
green vine of the creeping chrysanthemum.
The wind blows and blows the white sand.
How many tiny dunes of sand
have formed in the fields already!
Sweat and trembling.
Iridescent blue flies from Kashmir
gathered there at the cow dung.
When King Vessantara\(^{(3)}\) bestowed his prince upon the Brahmans
the earth trembled to the blue mountains' summits.
Turn to the right
turn to the left
even our sweat is acid, and the wind blows and blows.
If I could gain the Mani jewel\(^{(4)}\)
first of all I would buy off
two hours of debt work a day
from every farmer and construction worker."

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1. The wheel of re-birth.
2. The Buddhist doctrine that all is emptiness (空). See note 1, page 26.
3. The hero of a story told in the Pali (southern Buddhist) scriptures, who offered his son to be brought up by the Brahmans (holy men).
4. A jewel popularly believed to grant all wishes. The name 'Mani' actually derives from the ancient Manichaean religion, which flourished in Asia Minor from the third to seventh centuries A.D.
Here the farmers are identified with peasants of ancient India: the hopelessness of their life has not changed through all the centuries that separate them, despite the arrival of Buddhism. This is the suffering that Kenji struggled to alleviate, and when he spoke of 'the true happiness of all' it was the cessation of this suffering, not in some future existence but in the present world, that he meant.

The key to what his religion became is that his religious vision was founded on, and directed towards, the actual state of the world. Others, propelled by a similar impulse, have spurned religion and instead devoted themselves to some form of socialism; and indeed socialism played a part in Kenji's concept of 'the true happiness of all'.(1) But rather than turn from religion, Kenji never doubted that in its true form religion held the answer to the vital question of 'what is the true happiness of all?', and was the way to achieving that goal. For this was the one question which lay behind all his thinking, and it was by posing this question anew, and without accepting pre-conceived answers, that he came to radically re-define the boundaries of what he believed 'religion' to be.

1. See Chapter V, page 45.
By rejecting, or at least deeply questioning, ready-made answers to the question of 'what is the true happiness of all?', and of how it is to be attained, Kenji threw out the certainty usually associated with religion, the security of religious dogma. Only one certainty remained, and that was that the individual must be dedicated to the world's happiness. In what this happiness consists remained an open question.

But Kenji was undaunted. The first step in religious commitment was, in that case, to discover how best to help the world attain happiness, and it is this that Kenji saw as the basis of religion. "Let us search for the true happiness of the world. Searching for the Way is in itself the Way."(1)

When Giovanni, in the story Night on the Milky Way Train (銀河鉄道の夜), says "I'll be sure to go straight on. I'll be sure to search for real happiness"(2) he is making what for Kenji was the only real religious vow.

This was what Kenji saw as the essence of religion, and its primary focus.

"If one burns with the correct desire and strives to reach true happiness with people and the myriad creatures this can be called a certain religious sentiment."(3)

(V.2, p.85)

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1. われらは世界のまことの幸福を索ねよう 求道みてに道である： 農民芸術概論編要。
2. 僕はきっとまっすぐに進みます。きっとほんとうの幸福を求めます。
3. 小岩井農場。
And this devotion, not to some god but to making the world a better place, is again identified as religion in the poem Clouds (雲):

"Why don't people comprehend this desire for a better life which can only be thought of as religion?" (V.4, p.246)

Kenji's understanding of what constituted religion, then, moved far beyond the boundaries of structure and ritual which the word 'religion' usually suggests. It was, in fact, emphatically open-ended - any impulse which involved a reaching out for 'a better way of life', for true happiness not just for oneself or those near to one but for everyone, was in his terms religion, or "The Way" (道). Such a definition, involving as it does a refusal to rely on any ready-made answers that dogma might offer, brought to the concept of 'religion' a single focus which transcended the strict and discriminatory teachings of orthodox religions.

"The true Way is not a question of who thought of it or who trod it. There is simply the One Way, which exists of itself."(1)

(V.3, p.531)

This idea is, of course, a thorough reversal of Kenji's earlier position of faith in the Lotus Sutra as the only guarantee of salvation,(2) and in fact it allowed Kenji to admit

1. Manuscript version of 産業組合青年会.
2. c.f. for instance, letters quoted in Appendix C, page 208.
within the boundaries of 'religion' not only seemingly unrelated ideas such as socialism, but also other religions, notably Christianity. The dogma or faith of socialism and Christianity were irrelevant; it was the fact that both involved a dedication to a better way of life.

"And Chinese coolies who grow weary and die, women who give birth in pain from working ... all, in a world half-reality half-dream, hope for these words - 'Do you not know my Name? I am Jesus the only Son of God who promised to appear again to you.' (V.6, p.138)

This poem would read very strangely if Kenji were to be considered as a purely Buddhist poet, but in the broader terms of his religion it is not at all odd that he should write an apparently Christian poem. He is not suggesting that Chinese coolies are or should be Christians, he is saying that "all those who suffer and are heavy-laden" long for just such a liberation as Christ promises, and just such a millenium of 'true happiness for all' as is foretold will accompany Christ's second coming. (2)

1. 基督再臨。
2. c.f. also "a thousand people won't hear / ten thousand people won't hear / the new Christ" (あたらしいクリストは／千人だってきかない／万人だってきかない： 北上川は怒気をながし）
The part which socialism played in his religion is less apparent in the poems. It was not, of course, the dogma of socialism so much as its struggle to end inequality that appealed to Kenji, and even when he spoke of 'revolution' it was not a socialist revolution as such that he had in mind:

"The revolution will finally come, together with the black flower called SakinoHaka.

The day will come when, be they bourgeoisie or proletariat, the basically cowardly and vulgar will spontaneously be shrivelled up and scattered like mushrooms which have come out into sunshine."

What he had in mind was certainly not the proletarian revolution of Marxism! Nevertheless, he was deeply interested in the new Farmers and Labourers Party (労農党), a radical left-wing political party which was brutally suppressed by the government of the day. Its basic aim, to improve the lot of farmers and workers generally, could not but be approved by Kenji, and he urged the local farmers to join it - "my real work will begin / when you have all joined the Farmers and Labourers Party." And in a poem about Tokyo, Overhead Wires (高架線), he lamented its passing - "The Farmers and Labourers Party is dispersed / under the shining glittering blue sky".

1. No such flower exists - possible meaning of "flowering grave" (?)
2. サキノハカという黒い花といっしょに。
3. きみたちがみんな労農党になっから／それからほんとのおれの仕事がはじまるのだ： 黒つちからたつ。
4. ひかりかぶくやく青ぞらのした／労農党は解散される。
But the poem *At the Dahlia Contest* provides the clearest picture of Kenji's true perspective on socialism and Christianity. One of the dahlias in the contest seems to Kenji to symbolize the possibilities of the future happiness of the world:

"And even if we consider those who voted for this flower we find that from the sincere committee member of the Farmers and Labourers Party, and the students of law and from religious universities, to Mr T. the Christian, and Mr N. the head of the Agricultural College, they all saw this flower as a symbol of their hopes concerning the world which should come anew in this decade of the 1920s." (V.6, p.194)

Not only Christians and socialists, but lawyers, learned Buddhists (i.e. those from "religious universities") and agricultural scientists - all are linked by the same basic purpose, the desire for a better world. And all are, therefore, welcomed within the bounds of what Kenji defined as 'religion'.

But if on the one hand Kenji's religion accepted such a wide variety of groups, it was by no means the case that he was tolerant of all forms of religion. What was true religion for Kenji was limited to the dedication to strive for a better way of life, and anything which called itself religion yet did not involve this dedication was for Kenji a false religion. And Kenji is often at his most wrathful when faced with false religion:
"false preachers who amuse themselves to the full, then claim that life is a desert or some such ... beat and thrash them all!" (1) (V.6, p.147)

And in Sakhalin Railway (桜大鉄道) he cries "burn all false Mahayana laymen!" (2)

The poem The Grand Boss of the Secret Nembutsu (秘事念仏の大元締が) is a skilful satire of a man who was, presumably, the leader of the Secret Nembutsu Sect (3) in the area:

"The grand boss of the Secret Nembutsu is out today on the banks of the Kitakami River to plant upland rice with his wife and son.

The tepid south wind comes upstream along the river.
The wife of Secret Nembutsu holds up the dried cow dung to her husband, revering him helplessly as though he were priest and benefactor.

A huge fly the colour of green rust flies round the cow dung.
The grand boss of the Secret Nembutsu wears a straw hat on the crown of his head, black trousers and straw sandals, and he drives away the tottering crows.

The sun ripens in the blue-paper clouds, the river floats lead and silver.

1. サキノハカという黒い花といしっしに。
2. にせものの大乗居士どもをみんな灼け。
3. A sect, originating in the Shingon Sect (真言宗 ), which flourished in the Tōhoku and Hokkaidō regions. Nembutsu is the term for the chanting of the words Namu Amida Butsu (南無阿彌陀仏), 'adoration to Amida Buddha'. The worship of Amida Buddha is believed by the Pure Land sects to ensure rebirth in his Western Paradise.
The grand boss of the Secret Nembutsu, seeing his son stand gawping at the willows with his mouth open, is overcome with shame and hurls a stone with a curse.

The willow flowers disintegrate in yellow, the river turns to fierce needles.

Out of the bushes downstream pops a postman with sham red hair."  

(V.4, p.80)

The hypocrisy of this religious demagogue is obvious in the poem - rather than selfless compassion, it is personal pride which governs his relations to others, leading him to increase rather than alleviate their suffering. In other poems, such as Near Dark (暮れちかい), he contrasts 'false' religion with the suffering which it ignores.

"Near dark
in the shop front beneath the blizzard
a small duckling
its pretty pale-green neck
meekly stretched out, hanging.
.... The slaughterer is unhurried with his spells.
Black shark flesh freezes miserably ...
Beyond the wind's abrasion
the tinkling of bells from a false pilgrimage."

(V.3, p.179)

But Fire Festival (火祭) is the clearest expression of what Kenji saw as 'false religion'. On the day of the yearly Fire Festival the people formed a procession and visited the local shrine to pray for protection from fire for the coming year. In this poem Kenji, diligent as ever, goes to set up his Fertilizer Bureau as on a normal day, and observes the emptiness and air of futility of the procession.
"On a cart they put a big white papier-maché construction not quite a sail boat not quite a bag and they drag that swaying cart past the lonely huts, among the rows of pines where children are not gathered, then come to a halt again discouraged ... Someone shouts desperately 'Come on come on come on!' and that single lonely voice dies in the silvered sky." (V.4, p.196)

It is the apathy involved in such worship that Kenji resents most bitterly, the fact that people have placed the responsibility for their own and others' lives with some deity or authority outside themselves. It is echoed in his distaste for the grand boss of the Secret Nembutsu, who has set himself up as an authority on what is good for others, so that his wife "reveres him helplessly", passively worshipping him rather than accepting responsibility to search for true happiness independently. This was the opposite of the striving, the searching, which was for Kenji the essence of religion.

In another poem, Everyone seems to have finished his meal (みんな食事もすんだらしく), again concerning a shrine festival, Kenji longs to convince the farmers to "advance on a new foe whose shape is still more clearly violently menacing and vengeful," (V.4, p.233) rather than continuing the age-old struggle with themselves. It is not clear what this new foe is, but among other things it is no doubt their own apathy and egotism. In a manuscript version of the poem, he continues:
"If it could be known that this is truly right, that it would truly extinguish the suffering of these people, then they would not bow down here; they would suddenly rise up saying 'where are the gods and bodhisattvas outside our own will and endeavours?'" (V.4, p.634)

Here is perhaps the crux of Kenji's belief concerning religion, that ultimately it must stem from the responsibility of each individual. This throws new light on the passage, previously quoted, from Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art where he says "Ah my friends, let us unite our real strength ... First let us all become shining atoms of the universe and scatter in the directionless sky", and particularly on the words immediately following - "Moreover, we each separately feel. We each live individually and differently". For if "scattering in the directionless sky" is a prerequisite for identifying oneself with the universe, the dedication to the true happiness of all which this must result in is a matter for each individual. It is the responsibility of each individual to "live correctly and strongly" and to "act in accordance with" universal consciousness. Not only is this responsibility essential if one is to dedicate oneself to the true happiness of all, to the search for a better world, it appears that it is only in this way that one can enlist the aid of the gods, for "where are the gods and bodhisattvas / outside our own will and endeavours ?".

1. しかもわれは各々感じ 各別各異に生きてある。
Anything which calls itself religion yet fails to base itself on this position of individual responsibility, fails to work for the true happiness of all and the elimination of the suffering of Shura, is for Kenji a false religion. The strange poem *An Icy Joke* (氷の咒談) is in part a satire of the institutional side of Buddhism. Kenji and his school (presumably a Buddhist school) suddenly find themselves in the middle of a desert, and cut off from the advice of Temple Headquarters.

"If I were your superintendent priest
then now is the time when I would
put all the missionaries on huge camels
and send them out far away
into that weak dim white mist's iridescence,
into the opal smoke.
I would send them alone
or among soldiers or groups of caravans
into the ghost image of the great floating desert,
and order that the leather bags on the back of the hot-breathing camels
be stuffed full of the world's hardships
and sealed up firmly in the polar sea."  (V.3, p.166)

This is the work of missionaries, and people of religion generally - not to convert, but to relieve the world of its hardship.

Kenji's idea of false religion merges with another which frequently appears in his writing(1), that of "cowardice"(卑怯).

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1. c.f. for instance *The black flower called Sakinohaka* (quoted on page 45), and *Love and Hate of Poetry* (quoted on page 73).
For Kenji, cowardice is essentially the same refusal to accept responsibility, and the same passivity which is to be found in the farmers' hopeless worship at the shrine.

"My friends, when the deep blue horizon swells and rises is it your desire to sink into it? ... My friends, do you desire to be compelled and commanded by that age, to submit to it like slaves?" (1) (V.6, p.209)

It is interesting to note, moreover, that cowardice is that same state of isolated egotism which is the cause of Shura. It is the desire for one's own happiness at the expense of the happiness of the world, and this is not only wrong but as hopeless of attainment as the desire to go on forever with "just one other": "Always looking out for number one, / yet with a hopelessly dissatisfied expression". (2) This is what he was bewailing in the poem Fire Festival.

"How many times have I heard people say 'I prefer things as they are, no-one lifting hand or foot to help, and if someone is dirtier than I am or suffers more than I that's the way I like it to be.' (not 'everyone is as dirty as the next'.
Not 'everyone suffers equally'.)" (V.4, p.197)

Those who are "always looking out for number one", who are constantly comparing themselves with others and who prefer others to be unhappy if they think that this improves their own chances of happiness, are in the same category as purveyors of

1. 生徒諸君に寄せる
2. じぶんでけせいせいほうとうをして／それでも不満でしかたないという顔付きだ： 酒買船
false religion. In the poem Together with the black flower called Sakinohaka his hatred of both is particularly evident.

"False preachers who amuse themselves to the full then claim that life is a desert or some such, those who are always glancing sideways to compare themselves with others - beat and thrash them all! Drive out the mean devils among them! Put them all with the fish or the pigs!" (V.6, p.147)

And that such people are ultimately identified with the death-dance which is Shura is obvious in the following visionary passage from the poem Impressions of an Ukiyo-e Exhibition (浮世絵展覧会印象).

"People whose blue-tinted foreheads are distorted, whose hollow eyes are concealed suspiciously as they poke out their tongues on the summit of Mt. Sumeru, (1) stand on the beach of the land of illusion where red flowers bloom their eyes brimming with the blue shadow of death; whose hair is wild and sword cold - dance of death making weird gestures." (V.6, p.244)

Cowardice, and the irresponsibility characteristic of false religion, were in Kenji's eyes attitudes which accept and perpetuate the existence of Shura. To gain release from Shura the opposite is required - strength and single-mindedness, and an acceptance of the responsibility of the search for the Way, not a dependence on what is preached by others.

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1. The mythical central mountain of the world, the summit being the location of Indra's heaven.
One of Kenji's best-known stories, The Night-hawk Star (よだかの星), is a particularly clear statement of these ideas. The story is of an ugly and despised bird, the night-hawk, who is persecuted and threatened with death by the hawk. As a result of this, and of the realization that he himself exists by killing other creatures (insects), the night-hawk makes a desperate effort to transcend this world of Shura. He flies into the sky and begs first the sun and then the stars of the four directions to accept him, but each in turn rejects him and refuses to take him seriously, being self-engrossed and egotistical. Finally the night-hawk flies straight up into the middle of the sky, and he keeps flying until he is transformed into a star.

The significance of this story in terms of Kenji's philosophy is obvious - that it is fruitless to try to find release by worshipping and submitting to something outside oneself. It is only by taking upon oneself the sole responsibility for the search for the Way, and pursuing this search with all one's strength and will, that one will gain transcendence.
When Kenji stated that "searching for the Way is in itself the Way"\(^{(1)}\) he was not only saying that the Way is not a given prescription, "not a question of / who thought of it or who trod it"\(^{(2)}\), but also that it is the individual undertaking of the search which in itself provides the means of transcending Shura. "Searching for the Way" in fact largely sums up the act which was religion for Kenji, and which he himself epitomized. This was not a purely spiritual exercise, as the word 'religion' would seem to imply, but in essence a practical one, just as the aim of "the true happiness of all" was not so much the Mahayana Buddhist ideal of everyone's release from the cycle of rebirth, as "a better way of life".

It is this that provides the basis for Kenji's fascination with science, a fascination which pervades his poetry not only in countless isolated images but often in the themes themselves. This is not simply the fascination of the amateur scientist, nor of the artist in discovering the symbolic potential of scientific imagery, although both these elements are certainly present in Kenji's poetry. For it is basically the relationship between science and religion, not only religion in its traditional form but the religion which Kenji created, that he is struggling with in many of these poems.

Having both scientific training\(^{(3)}\) and a deep religious impulse, he was in a position to be acutely aware of the

1. 觀念藝術概論綱要
2. 産業組合青年會
3. See Appendix C.
apparent dichotomy between the two world views; yet this problem, in the face of which so many have admitted defeat, did not daunt him so much as excite him with the possibilities of a synthesis of these two apparently opposite worlds. For he recognized the validity and importance of both, and even the most superficial reading of his poetry shows that both religious and scientific images and ideas exist side by side in a seeming unity of vision.

Indeed, the synthesis of science and religion which Kenji longed for, he himself managed to achieve in his own world view. This is apparent not only in poems such as *February 1929* (1) and *Forming every kind of arrangement of black and white cells* (2), where he is specifically attempting a unification of scientific and religious concepts, but also more generally throughout his poetry. A particularly apt example is the poem *Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake* (阿橋達池幻想曲). In Buddhist mythology, this lake is situated on Mt. Sumeru (3); from it flow four great rivers, and the Dragon King (竜王), among others, is said to live there.

"I am standing on the white beach of Anokudatchi Lake. The sand is squeaking. I take up a pinch of it and examine it in the sky's faint light - transparent multiple six-sided cone shapes. They look as though they come from quartz andesite or liparite in the human world.

2. See page 27.
3. See note 1 page 53."
I go down to the water's edge
and dip a trembling hand in the water.
...... This is super-cooled water.

The acting head of ice ......
Now the palm of my hand
gives off phosphorescence like a fish
and on the waves red streaks glitter." (V.4, p.134)

Although this poem is specifically describing a mythological
place of the Buddhist tradition, it reads more like science
fiction than a Buddhist poem. Such descriptions are not self-
conscious attempts to unify the two, they spring from a world
view in which the two are in harmony, in which the apparent
dichotomy of science and religion becomes irrelevant. It is
this characteristic which gives Kenji's poetry much of its
strange imaginative force, as for instance in the poem
Aomori Elegy (青森挽歌), a long poem written after the death of
his sister, Toshiko, and an attempt to come to terms with her
death. In the following passage he imagines her first in
heaven and then in hell.

"Perhaps she stands there above the surface of a still
blue lake(1)
and marvels at its utter peacefulness and radiance,
at the unknown method of total reflection
and at how truly it reflects the gleaming swaying
rows of trees,
and at length she realizes that it is the lapis lazuli
ground of heaven,
polished of itself, and her heart trembles.

1. The still water of lakes is associated with heaven
throughout Kenji's writing, as for instance in Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake, and flowing water is often associated
with Shura: c.f. Flowing (quoted on page 20) and Song of
the English Coast (イギリス海岸の歌) - "the waves pale and
the current pours. / This is indeed the beach of Shura."
(なみはあらさぎ支流ほそぞぎ／たしぐ流ことも待潮のかぎさ)
Or perhaps she stands quietly surrounded by
the sky's music flowing out like cords
and great bare-footed creatures,
hung with jewels and strange silk gauze,
who do not shift yet move quietly to and fro,
and the scent of flowers in faint and distant memory.
Or if, after she ceased to hear our voices,
she saw there the dark red deep malignant emptiness,
heard the cry of conscious proteins\(^1\) as they shatter
and smelt the scent of sulphuric acid and nitrous oxide,
she may stand turning pale in the midst of them
half still, half staggering,
stand with her hands to her cheeks like a dream itself."

\(^{(v.2, p.162)}\)

Here traditional images (lapis lazuli, jewels, scent, etc.) of
heaven are mixed with scientific ones - the "unknown method of
total reflection", and in particular the description of hell,
with its poisonous gases.

But it is not only in such images that the impact of science
appears in Kenji's poetry as part of his world-view. For
another striking characteristic of his poems is the style itself,
which often embodies the kind of empirical method, the
collection of data and tentative observations made on their
evidence, that is typical of scientific investigation. Kenji is
a perpetual chronicler of and commenter on events and scenes,
and the finest example of this is his longest poem, Koiwai Farm,
a strangely monotonous and fascinating detailed account of a day
spent at Koiwai Farm, near Morioka. The following passage is
typical.

\(^1\)This is an echo of his idea that cells and electrons are
individually conscious. (See page 27).
"Sky lark! Sky lark!
A sky lark has just climbed
to a sky scattered with silver particles.
He's a black fleet gold colour.
The Brownian Movement\(^1\) he executes in the sky -
and what's more he has four wings
like a beetle.
Yes there are two pairs,
amber ones and hard lacquer ones.
He sings beautifully,
drinking in the sky's light,
drowning from the light waves."  
\((V.2, \text{p.62})\)

But Aomori Elegy gives a still better idea of the extent to
which empiricism permeates his poetry, as well as clearly
showing that its presence in every level of the poetry is a
direct reflection of its importance in his religious thought.

This poem is, as I have said, an attempt to come to terms
with Toshiko's death, one of a series of poems on this theme,
and the longest and most interesting of them. In it he forces
himself to recall and record the actual event of her death, and
then attempts to grasp what happened to her after death ("I can
at least try to trace where she's been."\(^2\)). He does so in a
series of hypotheses, as in the passage quoted previously\(^3\),
attends to formulate possible answers to the question "when she
lost the senses of this world / what new body did she gain? /
What sensations can she have felt?"\(^4\) It is, then, basically
an inquiry into the state of existence after death, though doomed

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1. The random movement of microscopic particles in a liquid
   suspension.
2. わたしはその跡をさへたずねることができる。
4. あいつはこここの感官をうしなったのち／あらたにどんなからだを得／
   どんな感官をかんじただらう。
to failure from the strictly empirical point of view of course, as he recognizes:

"Toshiko passed through that method that everyone calls dying and I don't know where she went after that. We can't measure it from the directions of our space."

(V.2, p.158)

Nevertheless, the fact that despite this admission he does attempt to "trace where she's been" serves to reiterate a very important aspect of Kenji's religious ideas, that of the 'search', the refusal to accept on faith alone. Iiyoshi Mitsuo(1) has pointed out that the series of poems written on the theme of Toshiko's death are in fact basically concerned with a questioning of his religious beliefs. The psychological necessity of coming to terms with her death takes the form of a search for the certainty that his belief was "correct". For his faith was apparently shared by Toshiko, and for him her death held out the possibility of being able to confirm or deny the faith they shared. This is clearly stated in the poem Soya Straits Elegy (宗谷挽歌), written on the same day as Aomori Elegy.

"Toshiko, if you do not now have that happiness that I imagine you have of not having to worry about your own concerns, and if, as this implies, the Way we are trying to follow is not the real Way, then summon up every ounce of your courage and break through each barrier

1. 飯吉光夫、ふたり一「春と修羅」第一集論、宮沢賢治研究叢書4、天沢遊二郎、学芸書林、東京、1975。
which enfolds you in that different space invisible to me and tell me so.
If that Way that we believe in and tread is a wrong one, if it doesn't lead to ultimate happiness, come straight to me now and tell me so. If we are to search for the true happiness of all we must not even regret being confined right now in this dark sea." (V.2, p.251)

In longing to "trace where she's been" Kenji is in fact longing to be able to finally prove that their shared faith leads to 'ultimate happiness': for it was solely on this premise that the faith was based, and if the premise could be proved wrong, if the experiment of his faith did not in fact lead to the result expected, then he was willing to abandon that faith in the face of evidence. In fact, of course, the proof he longed for he could not obtain. Yet the fact that he longed for this proof, and was almost agonizingly willing to question his faith, throws light on his conception of what religion should be. What it should be is the opposite of 'blind faith', the type of faith characterized by the farmers worshipping at the shrine in Fire Festival¹, or Everyone seems to have finished his meal². First and foremost it must be dedicated to 'the true happiness of all', and it must be based on a constant awareness that one's assumptions may yet be proven wrong. Everything is in question until proven, and in the absence of proof religion can only be search and experimentation.

¹. See pages 48-49.
². See page 49.
This is scientific method transposed whole onto the concept of religion. But if Kenji drastically modified the concept of religion by requiring that scientific method should be brought to bear on it, this does not imply that science was the mountain to which the Mohammed of religion must come. The strict boundaries of science also underwent modification at Kenji's hands.

Kenji's attempts to discover Toshiko's state after death, to learn whether she had achieved 'ultimate happiness', were doomed to failure. But in *Aomori Elegy* there seems to have been a failure on a deeper level as well, the level on which Kenji undertook the attempt. By asking the questions he asked in this poem and in *Soya Straits Elegy* Kenji was, as I have said, throwing his religious beliefs open to the possibility of being refuted on evidence, he was recognizing that there can be no certainty without proof, and it is obvious that in this instance there was no proof. Yet, as Iiyoshi Mitsuo points out (1), *Aomori Elegy* concludes with an affirmation of his religious beliefs, and that affirmation is led up to by the following passage, which is the conclusion of all his questioning.

"When she lost the senses of this world
what new body did she gain?
What sensations can she have felt?
How many times have I wondered this?
The *Kusha Sutra* (2) has concluded all this already
from countless experiments from long ago.
I mustn't go over it again."  

(V.2, p.164)

2. Sanskrit: *Abhidharmakosa.* This sutra gives a detailed and systematic description of the Buddhist cosmology, including an account of the events which occur after death.
Thus Kenji dismisses his searchings by falling back on the authority of a Buddhist sutra, and by doing so seems to undermine his own ideas of the search as the basis of religion, of individual responsibility and the emphatic non-reliance on the authority of others. In fact he seems to have succumbed to that state of 'blind faith' which he normally rejects, rather than accept the lack of proof and admit that the validity of his religious beliefs remains uncertain.

However, this apparent failure of nerve is not as drastic as it may appear at first, for it is important to notice that the terms Kenji uses in claiming the Kusha Sutra as an authority are the terms of scientific method. He is regarding the Kusha Sutra as a treatise written stating the conclusions of innumerable experiments on this question, and thus, in the absence of any proof he himself could discover, he defers to it as to a previous scientific investigation. This may seem to be no more than a specious attempt to disguise the failure of nerve, but in fact Kenji held the idea that the conclusions of religious sages were based on evidence, in the same way as are the conclusions of modern science. Thus, for instance, in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art he speaks of "the experiments of Seekers"(1), implying that all those who have sincerely searched for the Way have by definition carried out an independent and open-minded search and therefore, essentially, an 'experiment'.

1. 求道者たちの実験。
It is obvious, then, that when Kenji believed that the empirical method could be applied to religious beliefs he was not making such a tall order as it would appear at first. But his concern with science was based on much more than an interest in the basic idea of empiricism which science contains. His real preoccupation with science lay, as I have said, in his belief that science and religion need not present the dichotomy of world views which they appear to do, that the two worlds could be unified. And in this he was not suggesting only that religion should deal with the physical world, but rather that science can and should concern itself with the world of religious beliefs. Science must try to finally prove or disprove the beliefs of religion.

This is, of course, a logical extension of his position of 'everything is in question until proven', the position which, in Aomori Elegy, led him to search vainly for proof that Toshiko had indeed reached 'ultimate happiness'. This being so, it was indeed courageous of him to require that science undertake the job of proving his beliefs where he had failed to do so. But the strength of his beliefs should not be underestimated, and one of his strongest beliefs was that, if science would only turn its mighty gaze to the realm of religious beliefs, some at least of them could indeed be proven to be based on fact. His position on this is clear in the poem In the bright daytime (あかるいひるま).
"Science has not yet reached
a schema of the ancient ten realms (1)
intuited by the sages.
Will I finally die
before I am able definitely to confirm or deny them?"
(V.4, p.282)

The willingness to accept that the existence of the ten
realms of the Buddhist tradition might well be disproven is
somewhat undermined by the statement that science has not yet
incorporated them into its view of reality. Kenji was in fact
positive that they existed, and this is again evident in a
manuscript version of the poem In the northern star-filled sky
(北いっぱいの星ぞらに).

"This is the sky which ignorantly cynical astronomers
spin their telescopes over,
saying 'where are the heavens and the gods
which those monks talk about,
who shave their heads
and wear grey sack cloth?'
And then scientists with faith
also spin their glasses round
trying to find those heavens
in the space above some star.
That is this very same bright sky.
And the thirty-three heavens (2)
are most certainly there...
without a doubt there are angels and there are gods."
(V.3, p.472)

1. The six realms of existence plus four realms of
2. All the realms of gods and supernatural beings believed
to exist on Mt. Sumeru.
Not only did Kenji believe that the realms and worlds postulated by Buddhism really exist, but further, that they exist in "this very same bright sky" which astronomers gaze at. And here again, impartiality fails him - astronomers who refuse to accept the possibility of the existence of the thirty-three heavens are "ignorantly cynical", and no doubt he identified himself with the "scientists with faith" who search for the thirty-three heavens sincerely, believing that they are there.

His position with regard to science was, then, a startlingly unorthodox one. Though he placed great faith in the possibilities of science, he was far from uncritical of it. In fact he viewed the present position of science, limited as it was (and is) by ignoring anything but the purely physical world, with deep sadness. In *Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art* he says "religion has become tired and been replaced by modern science, and science is cold and dark".\(^{(1)}\), and in the poem *To My Students*: "science is still dark / and only guarantees us suicide and self-abandonment".\(^{(2)}\)

The contrast between science in its present state and science as it should be is one which Kenji seems to have seen in terms of the materialist versus the idealist world views.

Materialism is the philosophic view, typified by Hegel, that all facts, whether internal or external, are causally dependent on physical processes. In its typical form, materialist

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1. 宗教は疲れて近代科学に置換され然も科学は冷たく暗い。
2. 科学はいまだに暗く／われらに自殺と自棄のみをしか保証せぬ。
philosophy denies the existence of God, of mind as distinct from brain, and of free will, and materialism in philosophy is usually associated with an approbation of science. Idealism, on the other hand, is the name given to philosophical theories which directly deny the materialist view, holding that mind is independent of and more fundamental than matter, and often (as in the case of Leibniz) that matter as such does not exist. As materialism is closely associated with science, so idealism is generally concerned with religion, and is often an attempt to lay the foundations for a rational religion, as it was with the philosopher Berkeley. The Japanese word for idealism, yuichin (唯心), is also the name given to the Buddhist doctrine of Mind Only, a doctrine chiefly expounded in the Kegon Sutra (華厳経), which states that Mind (心) is the only thing which exists, all phenomena being no more than manifestations of Mind.

It is easy to see why Kenji should identify himself with the idealists, and he expressly does so in the poem Notes on Landscape Designing (装景手記).

"There are largely two things which determine the hardness of the earth's crust. Firstly, it depends on the divine power of the Buddha, secondly, it depends on the karma of all living things. This is what our own fathers thought and we too believe it. ...

... look at that blue saw(1) ... All these idealists see all landscape as a configuration of the buddhas and the virtues of the people.

1. Apparently a reference to a mountain range - c.f. earlier lines: いまひらめいてあらはれる／東の青い橄欖岩の鋸歯。
Thus Yuima Koji(1) says that people can see this blue saw if they have aspiring hearts. This is not the kind of thing which is superficially explained as being the strangest mixture of external reality and feelings brought into being by the introduction of emotion."

(V.6, p.276)

In this strange passage, Kenji is definitely placing himself among the idealists, apparently those of the Buddhist tradition rather than those of western philosophy(2), and is denying the validity of the reductionist and rationalist view characteristic of modern science. Thus Kenji rejects science in its present materialist form, the science of the "ignorantly cynical astronomers" as opposed to those with faith. And that Kenji placed himself among the idealists is again apparent in the following passage from Aomori Elegy, in which he is describing the events immediately after Toshiko's death.

"When I stood right at her ear and, summoning my voice from far away, called with all my strength the exquisite name of that Creature to which all phenomena return,


2. However, he was of course aware of the idealist theories of western philosophy, as can be seen from his frequent use of the word "monad" (モナド'), a word which Leibniz coined to signify the basic (immaterial) element of which all matter is composed. The theories of Leibniz are in fact similar to Kenji's ideas of the atom being "a form of the vacuum" (see page 26), although it is not clear to what extent Kenji identified philosophic idealism with the Buddhist doctrine.
sky and love and apple and wind, the joyous root and
source of the energy of everything,
she breathed twice as though nodding,
her white pointed chin and her cheeks moved to and fro
and her face seemed to have that chance expression
of the times when she was small and used to joke and play.
But I'm positive she nodded.

((Dr Haeckel!
I am willing to undertake the responsibility
of proving this welcome evidence.))"

Haeckel was a German zoologist of the late nineteenth century,
an extreme evolutionist and materialist who denied the
immortality of the soul. Kenji here goes out of his way to
refute the materialist position represented by Haeckel, for
here he has found what he believes to be proof of the continued
existence of the soul after death. And no doubt he felt that
this evidence for the validity of the idealist view was given
added weight by the fact that what Toshiko was responding to was
"the exquisite name of the Creature to which all phenomena
return".

But though Kenji rejected the materialist position of
present day science, this does not mean, of course, that he
rejected its findings. His only quarrel with the state of
scientific knowledge was that it was still limited by
materialism. He accepted (though with certain qualifications(1))
the truth of all scientific evidence to date, and indeed he

1. See Chapter XI.
rejoiced in it, for he saw that unwittingly much of what science discovered tended to bear out his own religious view of the world. And even where it did not do so, he nevertheless gladly accepted it, for the discovery of 'the truth' was for him the most important thing of all.
CHAPTER VII - ART AND RELIGION

Kenji introduces the Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art with the following intriguing statement: "I wish to discuss the unification of the proofs of modern science, the experiments of Seekers, and our own immediate perceptions."(1) In the previous chapter I have shown the way in which Kenji believed that "the proofs of modern science" could indeed be linked with "the experiments of Seekers". The problem of how "our own immediate perceptions" can merge with these two still remains.

Despite the ground laid in this introductory statement, Kenji does not deal directly with this problem in the remainder of the work. His only other statement on the subject is "religion has become tired and been replaced by modern science, and science is cold and dark" - a fairly accurate summary of the present situation as he saw it, but unhelpful for elucidating the relationship between science, "the experiments of Seekers and our own immediate perceptions." In fact he devotes himself almost exclusively to putting forward his concept of 'Peasant Art', and it is in this that we can discover some of the reasons for his emphasis on "our own immediate perceptions."

There is no doubt that 'Peasant Art' is directly related to what religion was for Kenji - exhortations scattered throughout the work make this clear: "We must guard against wrong and evil roads"(2); "First bring to life a great hope regarding the

1. 近代科学の実証と求道たちの実験とわれらの直観の一致に於て論じたい。
2. 岐路と邪路をわれらは警めねばならぬ。
world. / Live strongly and truly. Go straight onwards without avoiding hardship"(1); "First let us all become shining atoms of the universe and scatter in the directionless sky". No doubt the farmers to whom this was addressed shook their heads in bewilderment. But in this work Kenji was in fact putting forward his concept of what art should be, and it should come as no surprise to find that, just as with religion and science, the concept of art underwent great transformations at his hands. As with religion and science, he rejects present-day art and artists:

"Art has left us and has become sadly degraded. Now believers and artists are people who take complete possession of the true, the good and the beautiful, and destroy them."(2) (V.12 pt.1, p.10)

What Kenji means by "art has left us" is clearly shown in the strange poem Love and Hate of Poetry (詩への愛憎 ). The first scene of the poem is of the modern technology that Kenji loved, that which actually improves people's lives.

"The switchboard makes the electricity of Spring sing early with the pale dark snail turbine, shakes the pathetic sleepiness of night with a coleoptera dynamo, sends out into the fields spasms of thirty thousand volts from six great transformers, constantly supervising the capricious wavering meters of the village." (V.6, p.569)

1. 世界に対する大なる希望をまづ起け／強く正しく生活せよ苦難を避けず直進せよ。
2.  Ibid.
There follows a confrontation between the engineer in charge of this switchboard (and therefore a good scientist dedicated to improving people's lives), and 'Art', here personified as a beautiful woman. Art claims that one must be hard-hearted in order to write plays, to which the engineer indignantly replies:

"What's all this play business!
On account of your fickle education
and your absurd notoriety
those children in the fields
have no little red breeches
and no socks.
At the end of last year the household heads
came into the fish and medicine market,
coming and going,
sighing till evening.
Where is the work of art
that's deserving of such sacrifice?
If this thing called 'Art'
rehashes and deceives
and is for ever
the hideout of rascally cowards,
then that's the very sort of thing which must be crushed."

(V.6, p.570)

At which accusation Art slowly keels over and faints dead away - this described in precise scientific terms:

"It seemed that the centre of gravity
had moved forward from under her feet ...
ah, the increase in inclination
is proportionate to $t^2$.

Here science, in its role as helper of the masses, is contrasted with an Art which is selfish and elitist, and Art cannot withstand the accusation that it is not dedicated to
'a better world' but, rather, exists at the expense of people's happiness (although exactly how it does so is not clear). Art, then, must spring from that religious vow, to dedicate oneself to the search for 'a better world' for everyone. And in the process of doing so, Art must cease to be 'Art' and become simply 'art'. It must become the property of the people.

"Professional artists must first of all perish. Everyone must feel things as artists. Every individual must unceasingly express himself in the area in which he excels. Moreover, everyone at some time is an artist." (1)

'(Peasant Art) is an art in which everyone participates, a spontaneous art which is firmly grounded in people's everyday lives, not one which is irrelevant to them or separated from them as is the art of 'professional artists'.

Tsurumi Shunsuke (2) has pointed out to what a large extent Kenji's own writing, as well as his ideas on art, are based on the immediate environment and everyday experience - "our own immediate perceptions" - and he names this form of art "marginal art" (限界芸術) (roughly identified with folk art). The direct link between everyday life and art is made explicit in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art under the heading Spheres of Peasant Art.

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1. Ibid.
2. Tsurumi: op.cit.
"If the voice has melody and rhythm this constitutes vocal music. If a sound has these things it constitutes instrumental music.

If words have a true ring to them they constitute prose. If they have rhythm it is song.

If action has true expression it constitutes drama. If it has rhythm it is dance ...

Through each different kind of act of will visual images create all the various arts and crafts.

When an act of will is joined with visual productions it gives birth to gardening, forest management and land planning.

When the sense life of smell, taste, sight and touch are expressed with an act of will they give birth to cooking and production.”

(V.12 pt.1, p.11)

The concept of 'art' is broadened to include aspects of everyday life such as clothing, gardening and cooking. And in the poem The Third Art (第三芸術) (whose title has overtones of the idea of 'new art', the art which must replace the present degraded forms) Kenji shows that art and manual labour itself can merge.

"As I was preparing a ridge for turnips a little man with white hair was suddenly standing behind me. He asked what I was planting and I replied that I was going to plant red turnips. A ridge for red turnips? Don't build it like that - and he gently put out his hand and took over the hoe, and raked a part of the ridge diagonally. My head rang and I stood there dazed as though I'd been anaesthetized. The sun shone and the wind was blowing, our two shadows fell on the sand"
and in the distance the river was shining;
yet I was completely entranced, and thought
'What brush stroke of india ink
what flavour of the carver's chisel
could surpass this!'

(V.4, p.166)

This was, indeed, one of his primary reasons for preaching
his concept of art to the local farmers, for he believed (along
with William Morris, whose ideas he apparently admired\(^1\)), that
labour and art should merge, and that the suffering of the
farmer's work could thus be alleviated. In his notes elaborating
the ideas of *Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art* he says:

"Labour is an instinct. Basically, labour is not suffering.
Basically, labour is creation. Basically, creation is
enjoyment. When people are sacrificed and used for
production, it becomes suffering.\(^2\)

(V.12 pt.1, p.19)

This useless sacrifice, the cause of suffering, is the same as
that which the engineer in *Love and Hate of Poetry* accuses Art
of requiring, and there is an interesting passage from Kenji's
journal of the trip he took with his students to Hokkaido\(^3\)
which elaborates on this point.

"Certainly, if their training is not such as this, they will
lose the sense of the light and wind of the fields in the
anguish of too-solid labour - they will become onlookers
of agriculture, it will inevitably become sacred, and be
nothing more than a painful skimmed-milk sort of existence."

(V.12 pt.2, p.134)

1. c.f. references in *The Rise of Peasant Art* (農民芸術の興隆).
2. Ibid.
3. 修学旅行復命書.
It is interesting to see that what is "sacred" here becomes the very antithesis of what is good. What Kenji believed is that to be aware, to "feel things as artists", makes labour a joyful and creative thing, an art in which farmers actually participate, thereby adding depth to their lives - "Set your ashen labours aflame with art. / This is where our brave and joyful creations of everyday life lie."(1)

Kenji was never one to preach what he did not himself try to practise, of course, and all that he believed 'Peasant Art' should be can also be seen in his own writing. For it is a major characteristic of his poetry that it springs from and concerns itself with his everyday life and experiences. Nor did he ever consider himself to be among the class of 'professional poets', and this was not simply because he never gained public recognition as a writer. It is perhaps a sign of his rejection of the 'professional' aspects of writing that he so strongly insisted that what he wrote were not poems but what he called "mental sketches" (心象スケッチ ). This is clearly stated in the following letter.

"The volume Spring and Shura which I published at my own expense, as well as the works which from then until the present I have set down, are not in any way poems. They are nothing more than the merest rough mental sketches, things which I want somehow to perfect, preparations for a certain psychological work - taken down at times when I was prevented from legitimate study, as much as circumstances allowed, with every chance I had, and under various conditions."(2) (V.13, p.220)

1. 芸術をもてあの灰色の労働を燃せ／ここにはわれら不断の深く楽しい創造がある。
2. 森佐一郎で、大正十四年二月九日。
This passage may read as a mere exercise in humility, although certainly the circumstances under which he says (with truth) that he wrote these 'mental sketches' are very similar to those under which Peasant Art is to be created. Yet he is not simply disclaiming the worth of his poems out of conventional politeness. The term 'mental sketch' was an important one for him, even beyond the fact that it brought his poetry down from the pedestal of 'professional' poetry.

Kenji's 'mental sketch', and the related term "mental image" (心象) which he uses, is one which many critics have discussed, and they have usually believed it to be related to the peculiarly fantastical quality of much of Kenji's work. Sakai Chuichi(1) even goes so far as to claim that this element in his writing is a result of a psychological malaise which causes the sufferer to experience hallucinations which he takes for reality! But certainly Kenji had something more significant in mind when he spoke of 'mental sketches' and of 'mental images'.

One of the passages which Sakai Chuichi quotes as the basis for his unusual proposition is part of an advertisement which Kenji wrote for his collection of stories entitled The Restaurant of Many Orders (注文の多い料理店). In it he says:

"Actually, this is a dreamland of Japan's Iwate-ken(2), which really existed as these scenes in the author's mental images ... This collection of stories is in fact

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1. 境忠一, 評伝宮沢賢治、桜楓社、東京、1968, page 126ff.

2. The prefecture to which Hanamaki and the surrounding area belongs.
a part of the author's mental sketches ... These are in no way lies, nor vain and empty, nor theft. After much reflection and analysis, I am convinced that these are what appeared then in my mental images. Therefore, however foolish or incomprehensible they may be, they are undoubtedly common to the innermost part of all people." (V.11, p.388)

It certainly may seem a little odd that Kenji should go out of his way to assert that what are obviously fantasies "are in no way lies, nor vain and empty, nor theft". In fact he goes further, in his introduction to this collection of stories. "All these stories of mine I received from the rainbow and the moonlight, in field and wood and on railway tracks. In fact, when I walk alone through the green evening of the oak forest, or when I stand shivering in the November mountain wind, there's no avoiding the fact that this is how I feel. I have written down, as it is, this conviction that these things really exist." (V.11, p.7)

One might at first dismiss the claim that he 'received' these stories from rainbow and moonlight, as something to tickle the fancies of the children to whom these stories are directed. But when he says he is convinced that these things really exist, then Sakai Chuichi may almost be forgiven for deciding that he suffered from a disordered brain.

But it is better to accept Kenji's statements at their face value, for almost invariably he means just what he says, and what he says should be taken seriously. In fact, when he claims

1. But see Chapter XII for the reasons why even this statement should not be lightly dismissed.
that his 'mental sketches' portray what is "common to the innermost part of all people", and when he implies that what he portrays "really exists" because that is how he feels, he is reiterating statements which he made in all seriousness in the poem Preface. This poem, though baffling at first, deals with some of the basic beliefs and ideas of his religious philosophy, so I will quote it in full.

"The phenomenon called 'I'  
is a single blue illumination  
of the hypothetical organic alternating-current lamp  
(a composite body of all forms of transparent spirit)  
one blue illumination  
of the karmic alternating-current lamp  
which yet always continues to burn,  
rapidly flickering, flickering  
with the landscape and with everyone.  
(the light endures, its lamp is lost.)

From an apparent past  
of twenty-two months  
I have linked mineral ink and paper  
(everything flickering with me  
everyone feeling these things simultaneously)  
to preserve until now  
each chain of light and dark  
in the form of these mental sketches.

Man, the galaxy, Shura and sea urchin  
eating cosmic dust, breathing air or salt water  
may each think up its own fresh ontology  
but those too in the end would be one landscape of the mind.  
Yet these scenes which have been duly recorded  
are just as they are recorded  
and if they are nothingness then nothingness itself is thus,  
and to a certain extent they are common to everyone.
(just as everything is the everyone within me
so I am the everything within everyone)

But these words, which naturally should have been copied correctly
from the midst of the accumulation of huge bright time
of the Cainozoic alluvial era,
so quickly change their form and substance
within even the tiniest point in the light and dark
(or in a billion years of Shura).
Nevertheless there is the possibility of a tendency
for both the publisher and me
to feel them as unchanging.
But just as we feel
our sense organs, scenery, people,
and just as they are only what we feel in common
so records and history and what is called the history of
the earth
along with all their various data
(within the time-space restrictions of karma)
are no more than what we feel.
Perhaps two thousand years from now
an appropriately different geology will be applied
and appropriate proofs will turn up from the past.
Everyone will think that two thousand years ago
colourless peacocks filled the sky
and up-and-coming scholars may unearth
wonderful fossils from brilliant frozen nitrogen
in the highest stratum of the atmosphere,
or perhaps they will discover
in layers of Cretaceous sandstone
huge footprints of an invisible race of man.

All these propositions
are asserted within the fourth dimension
owing to the nature of time and mental images themselves."

(V.2, p.5)
I have already pointed out (1) that in this poem he begins by stating that all phenomena are essentially manifestations of a basic life-force (the "alternating-current lamp"). What is being perceived by each of these phenomena is the "flickering" of the life-force of which it itself is part - "everything flickering with me / everyone feeling these things simultaneously". Moreover, each phenomenon contains the world within itself - "just as everything is the everyone within me / so I am the everything within everyone". All things, in fact, are totally interdependent and inseparable, and it is on this basic level ("the innermost part of everyone") that what one perceives is felt simultaneously by everyone, is "common to everyone".

It is on the basis of this religious belief that he could claim that what Kenji experiences the world experiences. But he goes further, for he states the belief that 'reality', everything which everyone experiences, is "no more than what we feel" (2). It is a "landscape of the mind". And it is, of course, not just what we individually feel but "what we feel in common". Therefore, by a logical extension of this belief, if "there's no avoiding the fact that this is how I feel", then not only are these things common to everyone, but they in fact exist as reality.

It is undoubtedly this idea that he had in mind when he coined the term "mental sketches", for what he is doing in his poems (and stories) is literally sketching "mental landscapes", or "mental images", these being what reality consists of. Yet

1. See Chapter III.
2. This is in fact the basic idea of the Buddhist concept of Mind Only (see Chapter VI page 67).
he claims more for his poems than that they are simply sketches of this reality. He claims that they are in fact "records" of it - "Yet these scenes which have been duly recorded / are just as they are recorded". What this implies is that he has endeavoured to describe his experiences exactly as they are, without the 'poetic' frills and conceits which the original experience usually undergoes at the hands of the 'professional' poet. And he is at pains to make sure that this is so, that no 'lies' have crept in - "after much reflection and analysis, I am convinced that these are what appeared then in my mental images."

The standards which he applies to his own poetry are certainly not ones which many poets could identify with, for essentially he is claiming that his poetry meets the standards of scientific, objective observation. (This point is not altered by the fact that the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' take on a vastly different meaning for Kenji). By noting down the reality that he perceives around and within himself (for both are equally real, and "common to all") - his own immediate perceptions - he is making a record of reality which is ultimately as valid as any scientific record. This is certainly a level on which "our own immediate perceptions" merge with science, for Kenji, since everything is only what we feel in common (scientific records included).

Many of the points made in the poem Preface are reiterated in an important passage in the story Night on the Milky Way Train. A mysterious, scholarly gentleman appears to instruct the boy
Giovanni, and this is what he says:

"You're studying chemistry aren't you? You know that water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen. Nobody doubts that now. If you experiment, then you see that it's really true.

But in the old days people said it was made of mercury and salt, or of mercury and sulphur - there were various debates about it. And everyone says their own God is the true God, don't they. But a lot of tears have flowed because of people who believe in different gods. And there's great discussion about whether our soul is good or bad, and the decision hasn't been made yet has it.

But if you study truly and decide through experiment what thinking is true and what is false, and decide on your method of experimentation, then chemistry and belief will become one. But here, take a look at this book. Good, isn't it. This is a dictionary of geography and history. This page here has the history and geography of the year 2,200 B.C.. Take a good look. This isn't about the year 2,200 B.C., it's what people thought about history and geography then.

So this one page is a volume of geography and history, and what's written here can be said to be true for 2,200 B.C. And of course there's a lot of proof here too. But think a moment, and here, look on the next page.

1,000 B.C.. Geography and history have changed quite a lot. This is how it was then. Don't pull a face. Because be it our body, or our thoughts, or the Milky Way or this train or history, it's only what we feel.'"

(V.9, p.141)

Here too, the basic point is that reality is "only what we feel". But this passage raises a problem which is also implicit in the poem Preface. For though Kenji may claim that his 'mental sketches' are as valid as scientific records, in the process he
has destroyed the validity of scientific records themselves. It is all very well to state that the reality that science investigates is only a product of what we feel in common. Whatever the underlying nature of reality may be, that does not alter the fact that that reality can be investigated, and truths concerning it ascertained - "If they are nothingness then nothingness itself is thus." Even the fact that "records and history and what is called the history of the earth / ... are no more than what we feel" does not undermine the role of science.

"But these words, which naturally should have been copied correctly from the midst of the accumulation of huge bright time of the Cainozoic alluvial era so quickly change their form and substance within even the tiniest point in the light and dark."

(V.2, p.6)

And not only 'these words', but the nature of reality itself undergoes vast changes through the ages, as people's perceptions of it and ideas about it change. This is made startlingly clear in the scholar's lecture. If this is the case, if reality itself can change to the extent where even scientific truths are relative, temporary things, then science's attempts to discover 'the truth' are simply a foolish game. Truth itself is relative and changeable. Yet Giovanni is exhorted to "study truly and decide through experiment what thinking is true and what is false". Moreover, if he does so, "chemistry and belief will become one". In the following chapters I hope to show why Kenji's religious philosophy could embrace this apparent contradiction.
CHAPTER VIII - DIFFERENT SPACE

The generally accepted ideas of religion, science and art all appear radically transformed in Kenji's philosophy. A large part of the present concerns and assumptions of all three are rejected by him, and instead he lays out a ground plan of what they must be in the future. This future he called "the new age" (新しい時代; 新たな時代), and it is on the advent of this new age that he placed his hopes. Given his attitude to the present world - the world of Shura - one might assume that it was a matter of psychological necessity that he should fall back on some form of Utopian vision, simply in order to save himself from complete despair. And Kenji's "new age" does indeed appear Utopian - it is a world where all wrongs are righted, where everyone loves each other and everyone is dedicated to the welfare of all.

In this matter Kenji seems to have completely lost sight of the open-minded enquiry, the refusal to accept on faith, which his idea of religion embodies - he seems to be simply lying back and dreaming fantastical dreams. Yet his idea of the 'new age' is actually fundamental to his religious philosophy, and no mere escapist's dream, and for this reason deserves detailed investigation. It is closely related to what could be called the supernatural element in his religion and writing, and in this chapter I will discuss a 'supernatural' concept which frequently appears in his poetry - that of a "different space" (異の空間).
Kenji was as fascinated with the idea of the existence of a different space or dimension as any science fiction writer. In one version of the poem *Five Tiered Pass* (五輪峰), for instance, he plays with the idea of something resembling an anti-world existing "on this side of the vacuum / or on some other side".

"Ube Goyuemon closes his eyes.
There is no consciousness of Ube Goyuemon.
There is no spirit of Ube Goyuemon.
But if, on this side of the vacuum
or on some other side,
some phenomenon, which Ube Goyuemon
had thought until then was himself,
by any chance were to spring up,
then that likeness of him
would think that this was himself.
And if there were a lot of them
each would say 'I am me',
each would say 'that is cloud',
each would say 'that is earth'.
Such a thing is not unknown.
There is a different five tiered pagoda there."

(V.3, p.15)

This passage follows immediately upon a statement of his idea that atoms (in this case electrons) are "a different form of the vacuum". Here the implication seems to be that in some way the electrons of which all things are composed change their form, slipping into the vacuum and out of it again into

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another form, another dimension, and taking with them phenomena they compose.

This idea of slipping in and out of the vacuum is the theme for the long and extraordinary poem called Solvent Vacuum (真空溶媒). Here, as Kenji takes a walk, he finds himself in a world where people and objects unexpectedly disappear and occasionally re-emerge again.

"(The clouds) become clumps of light steam and are suddenly sucked up and disappear into the two thousand degree below zero solvent vacuum. And that's not all. Where on earth has my stick got to! My coat's disappeared too! My vest has just vanished!" (V.2, p.48)

But although the poem may read like humorous fantasy, the solvent vacuum is in fact "frightening and saddening". (1) For people, to dissolve into the vacuum is to die, even though in the poem they often re-appear again, and Kenji himself at one point almost succumbs to the action of the solvent vacuum. In Five Tiered Pass, too, it seems that Ube Goyūemon dies before he re-appears in a different dimension - "Ube Goyūemon closes his eyes. / There is no consciousness of Ube Goyūemon."

Solvent Vacuum deals only with the disappearance of things, their dissolving into the vacuum (death), and only once is there the suggestion that what disappears can re-appear on some other side of the vacuum:

1. 恐るべきかなしむべき真空溶媒。
"The incredible abyss of this sky!
The happy sky lark has long since been swallowed up.
He must be sitting sadly in the space
between the cold planks of that infinitude
trembling his thin shoulders."

But the idea that what dies actually continues its existence in some other space is referred to time and again in Kenji's poems. In 1929, preparing himself for death, he asked "when I die will I return to the vacuum? / Will I feel this self again?" (1). Here he dismisses the question - "In both cases there is only one Law. / That basic Law can be called 'The Sutra of the Lotus Flower of the Wonderful Law'" (2). But before this last illness, when he had largely returned to the fold of traditional Buddhist faith, the question was not so simply resolved. The Toshiko poems in particular deal with the question, which in this case could loosely be termed the problem of life after death. But in these poems, as in Kenji's work in general, there is no question of simply returning to the vacuum, dissolving into nothingness. Kenji relies on the assumption that Toshiko exists in some other space. The question here is where is it, and what is it like?

"Toshiko passed through that method
that everyone calls dying
and I don't know where she went after that.
We can't measure it from the directions of our space." (3)
"Did she walk alone and lonely
in an unknown direction
along a road which enters an unknown kind
of world?" (1)

"Suddenly her breath stopped and her blood ceased
to pulse.
And then when I ran out
those lovely eyes
were moving emptily as though searching for something.
She never saw our space again.
And afterwards, what can she have felt?" (2) (V.2, p.158)

In Soya Straits Elegy he begs her to "summon up every ounce of
your courage / and break through each barrier / which enfolds
you in that different space invisible to me" (3). In the poem
Volcanic Bay (Nocturne) (噴火湾 (ノクターン)) he says:

"In that different space which I do not feel
phenomena which until now were here (are reflected).
This is too lonely a thing.
(That lonely thing is called death).
Even if in that different and splendid space
Toshiko gently smiles
my emotion, cowardly with sadness,
still must think of Toshiko as hidden somewhere forever."
(V.2, p.183)

It is interesting that Kenji should imply in this passage that
it is cowardice not to recognize that Toshiko is happy in that
other space. This seems to be the cowardice of the ego,
lamenting that Toshiko is hidden from him and not considering

1. Ibid.
2. Ibid.
3. あらんかぎり大きな勇気を出し／私の見えないいちがった空間で／
おまへを包むさまざまな障害を衝きやぶって来て。
that she herself may be happy. But in Kenji's religious philosophy it is equally 'cowardly' to care for the happiness of only one other person and not for the happiness of all, and at the end of Aomori Elegy he says:

"((Since everyone has been from ancient times brothers it is utterly wrong to pray for only one.))
Ah, that I certainly never did.
Throughout the days and nights since she died
I believe I never once prayed
that she alone should go to a good place." (V.2, p.166)

If it is indeed the case that he never once prayed for Toshiko alone, then why should he be so concerned throughout the poem to "trace where she's been"? It seems, then, that in this poem he is trying to understand what that different space might be, not to give him peace of mind about her death but as part of the search for the 'true happiness of all'. And when he accuses himself of cowardice, then it seems that it is not for his failure to recognize her happiness in that different space, but for a failure to recognize the existence of 'that different and splendid space' itself, since to recognize its existence is in some way bound up with 'the true happiness of all'. And that this is so is again pointed to in the poem Now pine needles melt in white light (松の針はいま白光に溶ける).

"(Ah pale and sad
waverning in Shura)
On my hands the scent of hay
in my eyes the yellow Milky Way.
Let me cross those yellow quartz pebbles and show you
there is not just one space." (V.6, p.424)
The original title which Kenji gave to this poem is *Shura in Broad Daylight* (修羅白日), and it describes a Shura state very similar to that of the poem *Spring and Shura*. But just as in *Spring and Shura* the transcendence of Shura is pointed to in the final section (1), so here the possibility of transcendence is implied, and in this case it involves the recognition of the fact that 'there is not just one space', the perceiving of a different space.

The examples so far given seem to point to the fact that this different space is the world which phenomena pass into after death - in the case of the Toshiko poems, a form of heaven. But by placing importance on the acknowledgement of the existence of the different space he is not simply saying that we should recognize that there is a life after death, or that we will all go to heaven when we die. That is hardly a novel answer to the problem of 'the true happiness of all', nor is it likely to improve the Shura state of this world. And if he meant heaven, or the after-death world, why confuse the issue by calling it simply a 'different space'?

In fact, of course, Kenji's concept of a 'different space' was a more subtle and complex one than this. For although it may be a 'space' to which the dead go, that is only a secondary characteristic. Kenji's references to the different space frequently make no mention of this fact, as the examples I will give later show. Moreover, and even more importantly, this

1. See Chapter II page 23.
different space is not a world entirely cut off from 'our space', the space of the living. In fact there are numerous examples in his work of what could be called a temporary visit to, or visitation from, the different space. Among the stories, obvious examples are Night on the Milky Way Train, Feet of Light ( 光の素足), and Indra's Net ( インドラの網 ). In these stories someone experiences the different space in sleep, to re-awaken from it as from a dream - a common story teller's ploy. Although in the first two stories mentioned, the different space is one inhabited by the dead, in Indra's Net it is simply a kind of heaven, and no mention is made of the dead.

In the poems, too, fleeting experiences of what is explicitly identified as a 'different space' are described, and here he dispenses with the story teller's artifice and describes his experiences exactly as they occur. The most obvious example of this comes in the poem Five Tiered Pass, and the many versions of this poem testify to its importance for Kenji. The version in which he states the experience most clearly is the poem Arbitrariness of a Fine Sky ( 昼天急 äı ).

"Tired from reading numbers, my eyes saw a huge white image of the Enlightened One there at the edge of the cold splendid blue sky near the top of Five Tiered Pass, and for a moment I marvelled to see it as a noble pagoda of some different space. But after all it is only the dispersion of water and air, high dazzling cumulus clouds, rare in winter. And yet, if I reconsider it, it really is that great stupa
rising to a peak of eight thousand feet,
constructed of radiance awesome and pure."  (V.3, p.22)

The poem Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake (1) describes a more
detailed vision, and here again it is a "different space". But
the strangest of these visions or visitations occurs in
Koiwai Farm.

"Yes, this is the part of the farm
that seems really strange.
Somehow or other I
want to call this place
der heilige Punkt. (2)
In winter when I came on business to the farming section
here in the midst of a sweet-scented snow storm
somehow I sensed a holy state.
For a long time, on the verge of freezing,
I walked endlessly back and forth.
It was the same just now.
Where did the children come from who hung those holy jewels? (3)
((You shouldn't be taken in by such a thing !
In a different space dimension there are many
different creatures.))"  (V.2, p.84)

It is in this "holy place" that Kenji meets two mysterious
people, Julia (ユリヤ) and Pempel (ペムペル).

"Julia, Pempel, my distant friends,
it's been a long time
since I last saw your huge white feet.
How I searched for your ancient footprints
along the old sea coast of cretaceous sandstone ...
Because I have been able to meet you today 
there is a link in the chain of this huge journey 
that I need not run from terror-stricken."  (V.2, p.83)

It is unclear who these two people are, but there is a strong 
suggestion that they are Buddhas. This can be inferred from 
the reference to their "huge white feet"(1), which is a 
characteristic of the Buddha. Furthermore, in the poem Letter 
（手稿）, he says to the dead Toshiko:

"Now I will go out into the corridor. 
Please walk back and forth there with me ten times. 
Please walk with me 
treading those cold boards 
with your huge feet of white light",  (V.2, p.230)

a reference to the common belief that the dead take on a Buddha 
form.

These examples may be no more than momentary visions. 
Nevertheless, "I am convinced that these are what appeared then 
in my mental images", as Kenji would undoubtedly say if questioned; and they clearly indicate that the different space 
is not totally and irremediably cut off from our own - that it 
can be experienced, if only fleetingly, without having to go 
through the process of actually dying. And in fact, in Aomori 
Elegy, the strange phrase "Toshiko passed through that method 
that everyone calls dying" strongly implies that there are, 
indeed, other methods by which we can contact this different 
space.

1. See also ひかりの素足。
Experiences of what Kenji explicitly states to be a "different space", as in the examples given in the last chapter, appear to be a form of religious vision, where Kenji suddenly finds himself in a different world peopled by the dead, or by Buddhas. Yet such apparently supernatural or visionary experiences occur frequently in his poems not in the form of a sudden entry into another world, but rather as fleeting perceptions of another world within the everyday world. The following passage from Part 4 of *Koiwai Farm* is a typical illustration of this.

"A row of transparent creatures follows behind me. Light. Vague presences. They are all bare-foot children throwing out little chests, as though in song, and faintly glittering, laughing. Holy jewels swaying lightly, each a link in a chain of distant song preserving a gold-green flame of stillness - they could be the drummers of heaven, children of Kimnara. (they five transparent cherry trees raise blue-green simmering waves of air). I swing along a white duffel bag like a self-indulgent government forester." (V.2, p.73)

The experience described here is apparently of the same order as that of the poem *Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake*, or of its prose version *Indra's Net*, where Kenji "suddenly strayed from the

1. See page 95 for the religious associations of this image.
2. See note 3 page 94.
space ... of our world into the space of heaven"(1). But this
is not, as in the case of Fantasia of Anokadatchi Lake, an
isolated experience separate from everyday life, for here it
appears as part of a detailed description of a walk Kenji took
on Koiwai Farm, and is just one of a long series of observations
and descriptions of events and scenery, in no way singled out as
a sudden change of worlds. The whole poem Koiwai Farm is in
fact an example par excellence of the manner in which the
everyday world is infused with the presence of another world or
dimension in Kenji's work. In this poem, as in his writing
generally, there is no break between descriptions of everyday
reality and hints or statements of a co-existing reality which
seems almost supernatural -

"On that first day of practical instruction in April
while we carried liquid manure all day
the magic song of the Bodhisattva of Energy sang out."(2)
(V.2, p.74)

Kenji's different space, in this sense, is not a separate
realm which occasionally brushes up against our own world.
Rather, the experience of what Kenji identifies as a 'different
space' merges with a more general consciousness of something
constantly present in our own world, something which sometimes
manifests itself, though for the most part is obscure or
invisible. And one of the characteristics of his writing is
indeed an almost constant sense of the presence of some other,

1. 人の世界・・・の空間から天の空間へふっとまぎれこんだ。

2. 小岩井農場。
larger reality behind what he is describing. His poetry seems to be pervaded by this consciousness, a perpetual striving to perceive that presence which the world contains.

Where this other reality behind the immediate environment appears explicitly in the poems, it is usually in the form of a religious presence, as in the examples previously quoted. In the early poem Winter Sketches, too, this presence is identified in Buddhist terms.

"What I wish for are the True Words, the mantra of Buddha in the midst of the rain. I come through these black clouds which fly tattered by wind and sleet, push open the small door of this railway station in the gorge and approach the hearth where a villager wrapped in a blanket is burning brown coal. But truly what I yearn for and crave increasingly even more than that marble hearth, what I wish for are the True Words, the mantra of Buddha in the midst of the rain."

(V.6, p.18)

This poem is, of course, an expression of a fairly orthodox religious longing and commitment, but the strange phrase "in the midst of the rain" indicates that the Truth he searches for is present in the natural world itself, not in some transcendental state to be attained.

But although what he searches for and senses as present in the world around him is here explicitly Buddhist in nature, it is by no means invariably so. Umehara Takeshi(1) has pointed

out that in Japan the life-affirming qualities of Mahayana Buddhism, particularly its tendencies towards nature-worship evident in the esoteric sects, merge with the pantheism of Shintō (神道)\(^{(1)}\) to produce the natural identification of Buddha and the Shintō kami\(^{(2)}\). Certainly Kenji's Buddhism easily slips into a more general Shintō type of religious impulse. In the poem *Snow on Mount Kurakake* (くらかけの雪), for instance, what Kenji is reaching out for in the natural world is apprehended in terms which are definitely more Shintō than Buddhist.

"The only reliable thing
is the snow around Kurakake.
The plains, the woods
darken and blur
and are in no way trustworthy.
But although it is really a yeasty
hazy snowstorm,
the only thing that answers a faint desire
is the snow on Mount Kurakake.

(This is an old-style faith.)"  

(V.2, p.12)

Poems such as this are explicit references to the presence in the world of a force or dimension not obvious but immanent. Although where they are explicit they tend to be expressed in religious terms, throughout his poetry there is constantly present a less easily definable sense of the natural world as being somehow heavy with meaning, imbued with latent forces. The poem *Spring and Shura*, for instance, is an outstanding example of this.

1. The ancient and original religion of Japan, an animistic faith based on the worship of kami (神), powers which exist in the natural world, often in natural phenomena such as trees or rocks. Shinto was later organized into a more formal and less spontaneous religion, but it is in its original form that I refer to it.

2. See preceding note.
It is clear that Kenji constantly strove to be in touch with this presence which is latent in the natural world, and that the apprehension of it was an important aspect of his religious feeling. He also placed great importance on perceiving this other aspect or dimension of nature as part of his religious convictions. The poem *The eastern clouds flame early honey-coloured* (東の雲ははやくも蜜のいろに燃え) is a particularly clear example of Kenji's religious sense of the forces hidden in nature, and of the importance he placed on perceiving these forces.

"The eastern clouds flame early honey-coloured, dry grass and patchy snow vaguely begin to hover on the hills, and your cold and hazy night is about to leave every valley of this mountain range. As I came through the night, constantly glancing back, you were passing gently through the midst of cirrus clouds, or through smokey blue sky, and somewhere between midnight and dawn you revealed your strange august presence in the slightly dishevelled mid air like an antique golden arc light between the carbon rods of two clouds. Please bestow utterly different thoughts to every person who truly reveres you. In truth your rounded throne reveals many cold craters. I know that the motion of your throne is based on formula and does not vary, and you are a fragrant will, you answer us and are acting upon us, you are a huge and marvellous living creature - that fact now makes my heart leap strangely once again."
Ah the more the pre-dawn clouds freeze, the brighter the sky turns around you, the more you breathe anew and the scent of esters (1) fills the clouds. Ah heavenly ruler now suddenly you darken." (V.3, p.48)

This poem exemplifies what is generally considered to be the pantheist element in Kenji's writing although, characteristically, scientific and religious concepts are fused in his perception of the moon (2) and its powers. But what is important to notice here is that the moon can transform the minds of those who are willing to acknowledge its powers. This is an expression of the idea that by being in touch with the hidden power in the world one can be transformed by it, that there is the possibility of perceiving the world in an utterly different way. It is this different form of perception which Kenji is constantly groping for, that perception which will reveal the world transformed, the powers that it contains made manifest.

It is in fact this, rather than a religious vision as such, that he experiences in the poem Arbitrariness of a Fine Sky(3), for the poem continues:

"There in that blue below heaven's edge
that peneplain armoured glitteringly in ice and snow
holding trees and stone cairns

1. An ethereal salt. The smell is a pleasant one.
2. Manuscript versions of this poem make it clear that it is the moon which he is addressing.
3. See page 93.
and binding tightly
lime, slate, sandstone layers,
granite gabbro and serpentine -
that is none other than the Earth Tier.\(^{(1)}\)
The Water and Wind Tiers are obvious.
Even without the help of Arrhenius\(^{(2)}\)
no one would doubt that the white glittering light and heat,
electricity, magnetism and the other forces
are the Fire Tier,
and if you include the Air Tier
they are all
manifestations of the vacuum.
Thus this structure must tentatively be named
the Five Tiered Pagoda.\(^{(3)}\)  \(\text{(V.3, p.22)}\)

The "noble pagoda of some different space" which he at first
perceives \(^{(3)}\) is in fact the world itself, whose essential
nature is revealed to him. The world thus becomes the
manifestation of the Truth as expressed in this Buddhist
symbol, and the perception of reality is raised to the
dimension of religious understanding. The point here is that,
by perceiving the cumulus cloud as the Buddha himself (as he
does at the beginning of the poem), Kenji has caught a
momentary glimpse of the true underlying nature of the
physical world.

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1. This poem is a version of *Five Tiered Pass*, and refers to the five tiered pagoda, a Buddhist symbol representing the five elements; earth, water, fire, wind and air. It is also frequently a symbol of the Buddha.

2. S.A. Arrhenius (1859-1927) was a Swedish chemist who developed the theory of electrolytic conductivity, which he applied to atmospheric electricity as well as chemical reactions. He was also much interested in general theories of energy.

3. See page 93.
Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake makes it clear that such perceptions as this are always somehow potentially present in nature.

"There's no doubt that in the emptiness a tiny crack has formed.
... It is that emptiness which is the mediator for a different infinitesimal form of perception, a different space ... "  (V.4, p.134)

Here this different perception is equated with the concept of "a different space", and this again points to the fact that for Kenji 'a different space' is not 'something out there', not a different world as such which we can sometimes slip into as in a science fiction story; it is in fact another dimension of the world around us, which we enter when we perceive the world differently, perceive its underlying nature. This different space exists "right beside the world of my sensations"(1), and if somehow one's sensations and perceptions can change, the different space becomes manifest.

It is here that Kenji's idea of a different space merges with another idea which appears in his works - that of "the fourth dimension" (第四次元)(2). Although the term 'the fourth dimension' is now generally accepted as referring to time, in Kenji's day it also retained its previous meaning of another and

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1. 私の感覚のすぐ隣に居る： インドラの網。
2. Also 四次元, or 四次. Although this is literally "the four dimensions" rather than "the fourth dimension", Kenji appears to make no distinction between the two, and the context always implies the meaning "the fourth dimension".
strange dimension outside our normal sensory perceptions - what is now known as 'the fifth dimension'. It is safe to say that this is the sense in which Kenji used the term. In *Night on the Milky Way Train* our everyday world is called "the third dimension" (三次元) or "the three dimensional world", and in this story the strange space or world which Giovanni enters is explicitly stated as being the fourth dimension.

References to the fourth dimension in Kenji's work are surprisingly rare, considering the importance the term had in his religious philosophy. It appears several times in the *Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art*. Here, for instance, he refers to "fourth-dimension sensation" (四次感覚), a parallel with those "clear senses" (さわやかな感官) which Toshiko felt on entering the different space (1), and also to the different space which exists "right beside the world of my sensations". It is, then, that same space which is the world to which the dead go and, more importantly, is immanent in the world around us. It is the true nature of the world, such as was revealed to Kenji in *Arbitrariness of a Fine Sky*; that which is immanent in the world, manifesting itself when we gain the different perceptions, the "fourth-dimension sensations" by which we can apprehend it.

For in fact the world which the dead enter, that 'different space', is not some other realm, some 'heaven' existing outside the bounds of our own world. It is a dimension of our world, its fourth dimension, and its original Buddha nature (2). Thus

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1. 青森挽歌。
2. 仏性: the Buddha nature, according to the *Lotus Sutra*, dwells within each phenomenon, and the realization of one's Buddha nature is the attainment of nirvana.
when Kenji strives to touch the other space which Toshiko has entered, what he is in fact striving to contact is the fourth dimension. The attempt is not as foolish as it appears at first, for the fourth dimension exists as an aspect of this world. When Kenji says that Toshiko is "in that different space which I do not feel" (1), "that different space invisible to me" (2), he is not being redundant, for he believed that it actually is possible to feel that different space, to perceive it. What he is longing for, then, is proof of the existence of the fourth dimension, proof that its nature is what he believes it to be - that it is the world of ultimate happiness. And that ultimate happiness is "that happiness ... of not having to worry about yourself" (3). It is, clearly, the transcendence of the Shura state, the transcendence of the ego.

The different space of the fourth dimension is not only or primarily the realm of after-death. Kenji believed that one could get there by some other "method". Far from believing that ultimate happiness could only be achieved by dying, he was convinced that it is something which can and will be attained while we live, and the way of attaining it is to somehow make manifest the fourth dimension world which is immanent all around us. This fourth dimension world is none other than the 'new age' on which he pinned his hopes, and this will become evident in the following chapters.

1. 噴火湾 (ノクターン).
2. 宗谷控歌。
3. Ibid.
It is interesting here to return to the poem Preface (1), and examine what Kenji meant by the apparently obscure statement at the end of this poem, that "all these propositions are asserted within the fourth dimension".

The basic proposition in the poem is that each single phenomenon in the world is a manifestation of what could be called the basic life-force. This, as I have previously pointed out, is a statement of Kenji's basic understanding of the nature of reality, and this is the truth which constitutes the fourth dimension, that 'different space' where the essential nature of the world is manifest. The other important proposition contained within the poem is that everything is "no more than what we feel", and the unspoken extension of this idea is that by feeling and perceiving the world in a different way, the world itself is different. By attaining "fourth-dimension sensations", the world we live in will become an utterly different place. The propositions which Kenji makes in this poem turn out to be in fact propositions concerning the fourth dimension, propositions which cannot be 'proven' while our perception is limited to the three-dimensional world but which become self-evident truths once we enter the fourth dimension.

1. See page 80f.
Kenji not only believed that the fourth dimension was immanent in the world around us, he also believed that its manifestation, the 'new age', was inevitable.

Among the many instances of his experience of a 'different space' in the poems, a number of them involve experiences of strange beings which in some way provide aid. Julia and Pempel, in Koiwai Farm, are a typical instance of this.

"Because I have been able to meet you today there is a link in the chain of this huge journey that I need not run from terror-stricken." (1) (V.2, P.83)

In the poem Tableland Kenji senses presences very reminiscent of Julia and Pempel, but here they manifest themselves temporarily as Shinto-like gods.

"Those two guides and mentors coming quietly behind me today form the shape of the two pillars of this land's ancient gods." (V.4, p.120)

Similar presences appear also in the poem Exhaustion, and here they are more reminiscent of Buddhas, with jewels in their foreheads.

"The southerly wind is acidic. The eared wheat glitters blue and painful. Despite this, on top of the cliff three huge black statues stand waiting,

1. But see Chapter XIV for the reason why, both here and in the poem Tableland, Kenji is later dubious about these experiences.
some jewel like a ruby set between their eyebrows, having taken the trouble to come out today in spite of such fine weather from the western depths of the mountains. I would reach my hands to touch those clouds and gather electricity from them in order to exert all my strength in dialogue with people like those three, who know no weariness."

(V.4, p.11)

God-like presences such as these, which have the power to aid by giving courage, strength and guidance, are manifestations of what might be called the active aspect of the fourth dimension. In Exhaustion, as in Arbitrariness of a Fine Sky, such beings are perceived in clouds; and in fact examples such as the above deal with explicit and heightened manifestations of an active power which appears more frequently in Kenji's work as inherent in the natural world itself. The poem The eastern clouds flame early honey-coloured, for instance, describes the moon as having a similar active power, and in Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake the sky is a "mediator" for fourth-dimension perceptions.

There is no single concept, equivalent to "the fourth dimension", which Kenji uses to identify this active aspect. Perhaps the concept which best defines it is that which appears in the following letter:

"There is just one problem which I cannot get round. When it comes to the question of whether there is something like a Universal Will which wants to bring about true happiness for every living thing, or whether the world is a blind and

1. The power which Kenji believed nature to contain is investigated in Chapter XII.
random thing; when it comes to the question of whether I should live according to so-called religion or science, then I cannot help but choose the former. It is the sort of thing a school child would think about - that there are a great many levels of consciousness in the world, and those beings of the final consciousness are free of all illusion and try to lead all living things to ultimate happiness.\(^{(1)}\) (V.13, p.453)

"Those beings of the final consciousness", who are dedicated to lead all things to ultimate happiness, are the Bodhisattvas of the Buddhist tradition, but what is implied in this passage is that there is in the world what Kenji calls a "Universal Will" (宇宙意志) which exists as it were independently of the Bodhisattvas, and that to become a Bodhisattva is in fact to merge oneself with the Universal Will. This Universal Will is a kind of consciousness, the highest of the many levels of consciousness existing in the world, and it is in itself a force in the world "which wants to bring about true happiness for every living thing."

This idea of levels of consciousness is echoed in the manuscript version of the poem In the northern star-filled sky, where he says:

"Without a doubt there are angels and there are gods, but at some time those gods are seen as the highest and only and at another time they are understood as just one level." (V.3, p.473)

\(^{(1)}\) Letter fragment, date and addressee unknown.
For Kenji gods are, of course, not absolute, not "the highest and only". They are essentially beings which exist on another plane of consciousness from our own, to be recognized but not worshipped - "Even if they are not worshipped / the gods have their own realms". (1) The realms of the gods are the worlds which are their particular levels of consciousness, just as our present world is our own consciousness ("only what we feel"). Thus it is that by gaining "utterly different thoughts" (2), "different perceptions" (3) - that is, a higher level of consciousness - our world becomes likewise utterly different and "free of all illusion".

But what is important to notice is that the Universal Will is a force which is present in our world: our world is not the "blind and random thing" of the scientific world view, but contains within it the Universal Will, the force striving to bring about ultimate happiness. Thus the moon, for instance, is "a fragrant will / you answer us and are acting upon us" (4) and it is capable of bestowing utterly different thoughts.

Here we see clearly the basis of Kenji's position with regard to present-day science - that it is "still cold and dark / and only guarantees us suicide or self-abandonment" (5). Its investigations are limited to a materialist view of three-

1. 産業組合青年会。
2. 東の雲はやくも蜜のいろに燃え。
3. 阿柄達池幻想曲。
4. 東の雲はやくも蜜のいろに燃え。
5. 生徒諸君に寄せる。
dimensional reality, with the result that it can only perceive the world as a "blind and random thing", a disastrous view, from Kenji's standpoint. If, on the other hand, it were to take into account the existence of the fourth dimension, and to strive as Kenji does for proof of it, then by this very striving it would be merging with religion in the search for the true happiness of all. And this in turn would of course help to bring on the new age of that true happiness.

Nor would the search be hopeless in the matter of proof, for once science accepts the existence of the fourth dimension, it will proceed to discover that nature itself contains that dimension. Isolated examples of it are already known - the power which the moon contains, for instance, and Arrhenius\(^{(1)}\) has proved something of the underlying nature of light, heat, electric and magnetic forces at work in the world. If only the search were directed properly, Kenji is certain that the existence of "something like a Universal Will" would be discovered.

The idea of the Universal Will is nowhere clearly stated in the poems, although it is a concept which forms the basis for many of the ideas that the poems express. The closest Kenji comes to actually stating it is in the phrase "single-minded dedication"\(^{(2)}\), which appears several times in the poetry. In such instances, nature appears to be manifesting the Universal

1. See page 102.
2. 意念: literally the focusing on a single goal and committing oneself to attaining it.
Will's commitment to 'the ultimate happiness of all'. In Sea-Eroded Tableland (海蝕台地) the tableland is "like a boundless sea of single-minded dedication". In Morning of fresh curly clouds (ちぎれてすがすがしい雲の朝) "clouds behind Mount Avatar / reveal a boundless sea of single-minded dedication.". In Overhead Wires the sky is described as "many-layered shining waves of single-minded dedication".

But the implications of this phrase are clearest in the poem The south wind charged with warmth (温く含んだ南の風が).

"But no matter how strong he is
that fellow the devil ...
is a creature of impermanence,
and so of course
and so of course
he is dissolved by the wind.
The stars recover their gentle faces
and the sky again becomes a mandala of ancient single-minded dedication". (V.3, p.93)

Forces of evil in the world are transient phenomena, and when they pass, the original aspect of the world, the Universal Will, reasserts itself. In almost every case this single-minded dedication appears in the poems, by inference, as something vast and timeless - the sea, or the sky. It may be temporarily obscured by other forces at work in the world, but ultimately it will triumph, and lead all creatures into the fourth dimension.

1. はてない意念の海のやう。
2. 権現堂やまのうしろの雲／かぎりない意念の海をあらはす。
3. 幾層ひかる意念の波。
the new age, and ultimate happiness.

The idea that that which hinders and works against the attainment of ultimate happiness is impermanent and will ultimately perish appears repeatedly in Kenji's work:

"The revolution will finally come together with the black flower called Sakinohaka. The day will come when be they bourgeoisie or proletariat the basically cowardly and vulgar will spontaneously shrivel up and scatter, like mushrooms which have come out into sunshine." (V.6, p.147)

And the poem Politicians is another example of this certainty that evil will disappear of its own accord.

"Rushing here and there stirring up trouble - nothing but guys who like to drink big. Fern leaves and cloud. The world so cold and dark. But suddenly one day these fellows will just rot away, will be carried off with the rain. And afterwards only the silent green ferns. And somewhere some transparent geologist will record that this was the Coal Age of humanity". (V.6, p.144)

This is the certainty that the 'new age' will come, naturally and inevitably by a process akin to evolution; for the world itself, through the Universal Will at work in it,

1. サキノハカという黒い花といっしょに。
actively desires that it should come. In *At the Dahlia Contest* Kenji speaks of the one flower on show which particularly embodies this striving towards the new age:

"If you allowed this flower the great explosion that it desires you could not be sure what to expect - the mercury colour which the new huge science allows for a while or the unknown colour of the passion of the new huge faith. Even if we consider those who voted for this flower we find that from the sincere committee member of the Farmers and Labourers Party, and the students of law and from religious universities, to Mr T. the Christian, and Mr N. the head of the Agricultural College, they all saw this flower as a symbol of their hopes concerning the world which should come anew in this decade of the 1920s." (V.6, p.194)

What all these people are recognizing, even if only unconsciously, is the new age, for this flower is an expression of their desire for 'a better world', and it contains within itself the same desire. It is particularly interesting that the new age is described as "the world which must come anew" (新たに来るべき世界) - this phrase indicates that the new age is not just a new age of humanity but of the world itself, which must inevitably come. Like the fourth dimension, it is a world which has already been in existence, is now temporarily obscured but will manifest itself again.

Having understood Kenji's concept of the 'Universal Will', it is easy to see the implications of his idea of 'universal consciousness' as the essence of commitment to the search for
the true happiness of all. Universal consciousness is in effect the perception of the world as it really is, of the truth that "just as everything is the everyone within me / so I am the everything within everyone". To transcend the illusion of the separate ego, which binds us to the world of Shura, is to merge with the Universal Will, the force which strives for the true happiness of all. "What we need is a clear will which envelopes the galaxy. A huge strength and passion."(1) Hence, "to live correctly and strongly is to be conscious within oneself of the galaxy and to act in accordance with that consciousness"(2), for "that consciousness" is the highest consciousness, the universal consciousness which is actively desiring and working towards the true happiness of all.

"Let us search for the true happiness of the world. Searching for the Way is in itself the Way".(3) To search for the true happiness of the world, that single-minded dedication to its realization, is to act in accordance with the will of the universe, to become one with it, and this is in itself 'The Way', the truth and essence of the fourth dimension.

"The true Way
is not a question of
who thought of it or who trod it.
There is simply the One Way, which exists of itself."(4)

(V.3, p.531)

1. われらに要るものは銀河を包む透明な意志 巨きな力と熱である。
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Manuscript version of 産業組合青年会。
This Way exists, independently of any god, and all religions, to the extent that their aim is the true happiness of all, are 'the One Way'.

The Universal Will, then, is in a sense the consciousness and will of the fourth dimension, which strives to manifest itself in order that the world should gain ultimate happiness. It is the world itself, in its true and essential form, striving to break through the illusion which is the individual ego's mis-perception of it. To perceive the world correctly is by definition to join with this universal consciousness, dedicated to manifest itself and thereby bring about true happiness. "The new age lies in the direction of the world becoming a single consciousness and a living thing."(1)
But although the new age will inevitably appear on earth, this is far from implying that all we have to do is sit and wait for it. For the very fact of joining our consciousness with the universal consciousness means, not the passive bliss of Buddhist enlightenment or the Taoist ideal of non-action, but an identification with the Universal Will which requires that we "act in accordance with that consciousness". The emphasis is very much on action, based on that "clear will which envelopes the universe. A huge strength and passion"(1). We must first "bring to life a great hope regarding the world"(2) and then proceed to "live strongly and truly. Go straight onwards without avoiding hardship"(3). The nature of universal consciousness is single-minded dedication to the attainment of the true happiness of all, and constant struggle to achieve it. In this sense, the new age cannot come into being until everyone is struggling to bring it into being.

This is why Kenji is constantly exhorting us to 'create a new age'.

"My friends, do you desire to be compelled and commanded by that age, to submit to it like slaves? Rather, my friends, build again the new true age. Through us the cosmos is ceaselessly changing."(4)

(V.6, p.209)

1. 民衆芸術概論綱要。
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. 生徒諸君に寄せる。
In the Song of Polan Plaza (ポラーノの広場のうた) he cries "let us build a brilliant world together"(1), and in the story The Dragon and the Poet (龍と詩人) there is a poem in praise of a poet, one of these builders of the new world:

"Suldatta, who believes the stars will become thus, who resolves that the land will take this shape, who creates the pattern of beauty and truth which tomorrow's world must be capable of - foreteller, designer, who will ultimately make the world capable." (V.11, p.304)

We must actively create the new age - "we must tread the true Way anew, creating our own beauty"(2) - and by the very act of doing so we will bring about that new age in which the world will be 'capable'.

This is the role he gave to artists, for to be an artist is to perceive the world correctly - "Peasant Art is a concrete expression of universal feeling which has passed through the earth, humans and individuality"(3). And in To My Students he exhorts "new poets" (新たな詩人) to "intimate to humanity and the earth the form which they must take"(4). By perceiving the future shape of the world, that fourth dimension which is immanent all around us, and by helping others to perceive it, we are bringing it into being, we are actually and literally changing the world, since "through us the cosmos is ceaselessly changing". This is,

1. はえある世界をともにつくるん。
2. われらは新たに正しき道を行い われらの美をは創らねばならぬ：農民芸術概論綱要。
3. 農民芸術は宇宙感情の地 人 個性を通ずる具体的なる表現である。
4. 人と地球にとるべき形を暗示せよ。
no doubt, the meaning and importance which Kenji placed on his own poetry, which is itself a constant striving to perceive the world 'correctly', to perceive the nature of the shape which the new age must take.

What Kenji perceived as the potential characteristics of the new age are often startlingly different from the characteristics of the present world, and one of the most startling is that the natural laws governing the world will be different. The poem To My Students contains perhaps the finest example of this vision.

"Copernicus of the new age!
Release this galaxy system
from the too cumbersome law of gravity.

Darwin of the new age!
Sail on the Oriental "Challenger" of serene contemplation,
sail even beyond the space of this galaxy system
and show us a still clearer and deeper true earth history
and an error-free biology.

Take all farm labour
which occurs virtually haphazardly,
and by cold clear analysis
raise it and its indigo shadow
into the sphere of dance ...

Marx of the new age!
change to a wonderful and beautiful structure
the world which works from these blind impulses."

(V.6, p.210)

This quotation suggests above all the relationship between scientific knowledge and reality, as Kenji understood it, and in this context it is useful to recall the passage from Night on
the Milky Way Train, quoted on page 84, which deals with this question. What it says is that the world is the way we perceive it. What people considered to be history and geography in the year 2,200 B.C. "can be said to be true for the year 2,200 B.C." And this is equally true of natural laws - everyone now believes that water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen, and therefore this is the composition of water, and in the old days it was composed of mercury and salt, or sulphur. And this is the case because everything is "only what we feel".

This, as I have pointed out, effectively undermines the purpose of science - to understand the world - since the world changes according to our understanding of it and beliefs concerning it. It also points to what seems to be the easy answer to Kenji's problem of how to reach the fourth dimension: by simply believing that it is there, it will appear. Indeed this is part of the answer, for, as I have shown, Kenji placed great importance on perceiving the fourth dimension. Yet the fourth dimension is not, like our present relative world, only a product of what we feel. All his beliefs concerning it make this obvious. It exists, and has always existed, independent of our perceptions, the "true Way ... which exists of itself."(1) It is the absolute form of the world, always present within the relative phenomena which compose it for us in our three dimensions. It is, in the terms of the poem Preface, the light which is the essence of all things, that light which endures

1. 産業組合青年会。
though the phenomena change and disappear.

Thus when Giovanni is admonished to "study truly and decide through experiment what thinking is true and what is false", 'true' and 'false' are not the meaningless and relative concepts they seem. What is true is what deals with the fourth dimension of the world, which is not a relative but an absolute truth. It is that same truth which religion seeks.

So it is not surprising that there are strong implications in *To My Students* that the truths which scientists of the new age will perceive will be true in the absolute. For these sages are to show us, or reveal to us, "a still clearer and deeper true earth history and an error-free biology". It seems, therefore, that all scientific knowledge has been and still is a result of mis-perceptions or at least only partial perceptions of the true nature of reality - correct perception, which will bring about the new age, will also produce new laws of nature. These laws have been, all along, inherent in nature - they are the 'true' laws, and are therefore absolute. The new age will in fact be an absolute one, not subject to change as is our present world. By perceiving these new and absolute laws scientists, like poets, will be literally creating the new world, and this is clearly stated in the line in *To My Students* which says "my friends, you must work to form a new nature"(1).

And here we return to the letter quoted in the previous chapter, in which Kenji opposes the idea of "whether the world is a blind and random thing" with that of a "Universal Will" at work

1. 諸君は新たな自然を形成するのに努めねばならぬ。
in the world. Although in light of today's scientific perception the world is indeed a blind and random thing, the world in its true aspect, that aspect embodied in the Universal Will, is not - "change to a wonderful and beautiful structure / the world which works from these blind impulses".

In the poem *Impressions of an Ukiyo-e Exhibition* he describes the people depicted in the Ukiyo-e prints as existing in the fourth dimension - the prints are "windows / through which we gaze at the signs of the huge fourth dimension"(1). And the world which these people inhabit is governed by different, benign laws.

"Of course in autumn
people thrash the rice heads
and sound clappers to frighten birds,
but freezing point is ten degrees centigrade,
the snow is just like cotton piled by the wind
and when it piles up on the waves of willows
it can only be obeying a totally different law of gravity.
In summer the rain
falls from a black sky
but rather than wind it is curiosity's intentness
which moves the children's bamboo-leaf boats."

(V.6, p.242)

It is interesting that not only are these delightful new laws of nature a characteristic of the new age as such, they are also a characteristic of that 'different space' which the dead enter. Toshiko, when she entered that different space, "felt new and clear senses", and she entered a world governed by different laws.

1. 巨きな四次の軌をのぞく窓。
"Perhaps she stands there above the surface of a still blue lake and marvels at its utter peacefulness and radiance, at the unknown method of total reflection and at how truly it reflects the gleaming swaying rows of trees, and at length she realizes that it is the lapis lazuli ground of heaven, polished of itself, and her heart trembles. Or perhaps she stands quietly surrounded by the sky's music flowing out like cords and great bare-footed creatures, hung with jewels and strange silk gauze, who do not shift yet move quietly to and fro, and the scent of flowers in faint and distant memory."

(V.2, p.162)

And this is also the 'heaven' of Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake, where this lake in the middle of the heavens of Mount Sumeru is described as follows:

"I go down to the water's edge and dip a trembling hand in the water. "...... This is super-cooled water. The acting head of ice "...... Now the palm of my hand gives off phosphorescence like a fish and on the waves red streaks glitter." (V.4, p.135)

The prose version of this poem, Indra's Net, has other details of the different laws which pertain in this dimension. Kenji sees an angel flying towards him - "He's flying at one hundred yojana (2) a second. But no, look, he's not moving at all.

1. 青森挽歌。
2. An ancient measure of distance, used in Buddhist sutras: equivalent to 64, 120 or 160 kilometers.
Without moving or shifting or changing, he's definitely flying at one hundred yojana a second. And a little later - "Here all desires are purified. The numberless longings are quieted. Gravity cancels itself out, and only the cold scent of quinces floats in the air."

Scenes such as this appear again and again in Kenji's work, and particularly in the stories. Night on the Milky Way Train, for instance, is full of similar descriptions, and here the world so described is identified as the fourth dimension. One of the most interesting descriptions appears in the story Feet of Light. Here a host of dead children are tormented by demons, forced to run across ground which is thick with knives. Suddenly a Buddha-like person appears, and shows them that fearful world transformed into heaven. He says:

"This ground is made of knives. You wound your feet and your body on them. Or this is what you think - but the ground here is perfectly flat. Look."

He leant forward a little and drew a circle on the ground with his white hand. Everyone rubbed their eyes! And they doubted their ears! That sad ground which until now had been composed of thorns of red agate and had spurted dark flames was now changed to the completely flat surface of a bright blue lake with not a single wave on it."

(V.7, p.289)

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1. This is reminiscent of the strange creatures which Toshiko is surrounded by in Aomori Elegy, "who do not shift yet move quietly to and fro".

2. 一瞬百由旬を飛んであるぞ。けれども見ろ、少しも動いてない。少しも動きかけて移らずに変わらずにたしかに一瞬百由旬づつ翔けてある。

3. ここではあらゆる望みがみんな浄められてある。願ひの数はみな寂められてある。重力は互に打ち消され冷たひまるめの匂ひが浮動するばかりだ。
What this Buddha-like person is revealing to the children is the same truth that Kenji understood at the end of *Aomori Elep*.

"Everything is as it is ... Your weapons and all things - to you they are dark and fearful yet in truth are happy and bright." (V.2, p.166)

What is "dark and fearful" in the world, the weapons and the knives of Shura, exist as a result of a mis-perception of the world 'as it is', the world which is happiness and light.

But what is of primary importance here is that the characteristics of the 'fourth dimension' world are the same as the characteristics of heaven. Not only is this apparent from tracing the characteristics of the two in Kenji's writing; it is in fact clearly stated in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art, where Kenji says "The millions of different geniuses(1) must stand together and thus the earth too will become heaven." He meant it literally. In Chapter II, I showed that what Kenji calls 'Shura' is basically the state of being separated from the divine power, the Universal Will.

"Ah, when I knowingly separate myself from the strength of the Great Faith and lose the number of small and pure virtues to walk in blue-dark Shura". (2) (V.2, p.141)

1. Kenji had a weakness for the idea of genius - c.f. To My Students: "According to statistics / there must be at least a hundred geniuses among you". (おほよそ統計に従はば／諸君のなかには少なくとも百人の天才がなければならぬ。)

2. 無聲懺哭。
I also pointed out that in the Buddhist tradition the Ashura are believed to be fallen gods, whose original realm is heaven. (1)

This is a precise analogy for Kenji's understanding of the position which the present world is in, for there are indications (2) that Kenji believed that there was a time when the world existed in its original, blissful fourth-dimension form, but we are now separated from that truth and instead have created for ourselves a world composed of the knives of Shura. But the Shura realm can be transcended, and we can regain the heaven which is rightfully ours.

In the poem *Spring and Shura*, indeed, those brief glimpses of the fourth dimension world which appear throughout the poetry are clearly manifestations of 'heaven'.

"In the lucid sea of heaven
a sacred crystal wind passes about
on the far edge of the fragmented clouds.
ZYPPRESSHEN Spring rows of cypress
blackly breathing ether
and though from their dark march
snow glitters on the ridges of Heaven Mountain itself
(heat waves and white polarized light)
the true words are lost." (v.2, p.20)

These perceptions of the fourth dimension in terms of heaven appear elsewhere in his poetry as well. In *Koiwai Farm* his momentary experience of the 'different space' of the fourth dimension takes the form of a vision of the heavenly children of

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1. See Appendix B page 198.
2. See page 114.
Kimnara\(^{(1)}\). Another instance is the final lines of the poem Father of the Field (野の師父) where, having reaffirmed his religious faith, the world becomes transformed into its heavenly aspect - "How the heavenly drums roll! What purification of light!"\(^{(2)}\)

There are also several references in the poems to the transformation of Shura into heaven. The poem \(\text{TTTTT} \)\(^{(3)}\), written during his illness, contains such a transformation dramatically portrayed. The first section of the poem is a fierce battle with some unidentified enemy, but the scene suddenly changes:

"And the sea brightens pale.  
In the thickly rising steam  
a gigantic bud  
floating fragrantly sighing."  \(\text{(V.6, p.314)}\)

And it is safe to assume here that the gigantic bud is a lotus. The lotus also appears in Impressions of an Ukiyo-e Exhibition, at the end of the description of the fourth dimension world previously quoted\(^{(4)}\).

"Water lilies are all of the Lotus genus  
and when they open they make the air of nightfall vibrate like a drum".  \(\text{(V.6, p.242)}\)

1. See page 96. These children also appear in the story Indra's Net.
2. 何たる天鼓の轟きてせら／何たる光の浄化てせら。
3. I can find no satisfactory translation for this title. The character means 'knife' and in the poem its use seems to signify the clash of swords.
4. See page 122.
But it is above all in the poem *Morning of fresh curly clouds* that the transformation of the world from its Shura form to that of heaven is clearly described. The world's appearance, symbolized by Mount Avatar, changes according to what is in his mind. When he considers the harshness of the earth, it appears as Shura.

"The plain around here is so acid that only grey moss will grow. This time Mount Avatar carves out an acid terrain of Shura."  

(V.6, p.119)

But at the end of the poem he glimpses the fourth dimension, revealed in clouds, and the transformation to 'heaven' is immediate and final.

"More and more the eastern clouds grow virginal like white gold... now Mt. Avatar presents a picture of Mount Sumeru complete. Smoke and fire-prevention line. ... Clouds behind Mount Avatar reveal a boundless sea of single-minded dedication. All the pure heavens sing high. Those white morning clouds."

(V.6, p.121)

'Heaven', then, is a synonym for the fourth dimension, the new age. It is difficult to judge how closely Kenji's 'heaven' of the fourth dimension is related to the 'heaven' of Buddhism, for the Buddhist conception of heaven is complex and diffuse, and differs according to the various Buddhist sects. But it is
generally accepted that there are a great number of heavens, each with their own special characteristics and inhabitants, and these heavens are usually depicted as being located in various areas of Mount Sumeru. They are often referred to as 'the thirty-three heavens' (三十三天), although according to some interpretations (1) each of these heavens contain countless others within them. There is, also, the idea of a specific heaven found in the Pure Land sects - this heaven is known as 'the Pure Land' (净土), or 'the land of ultimate happiness' (极乐国) and has much in common with the Christian idea of paradise. Kenji's conception of 'heaven' seems similar to this, though of course it is far from being identified as 'the pure land' as such. Certainly, however, it is linked strongly with the Buddhist conception of heaven in general - apart from the appearance of specifically Buddhist beings such as the children of Kimnara, it has many other characteristics in common, for instance heavenly jewels or necklaces (項鍊) frequently appear, the ground is composed of precious stones, and the air is filled with sweet scent.

Perhaps the Buddhist term which best describes this 'heaven' is the term 'Buddha-world' (2). That this is Kenji's basic understanding of the fourth dimension in Buddhist terms is hinted at in the poem In the northern star-filled sky.

1. i.e. the Chinese Buddhist scholar Chih-i (智顗), founder of the Tendai Sect (天台宗). See Appendix B page 202.
2. 仏界: The world as manifestation of the Buddha.
"Oh eastern Bodhisattva Universal-Virtue (1),
in this clear pre-dawn
when even grass heads each cast a shadow
please softly reveal your divine power.
Please point in this starry sky
what has been told in the Kegon Sutra (2) -
that Buddha worlds are shaped round
or shaped like lotuses,
that they depend on the will of the enlightened
and on the karma of all living things." (V.3, p.109)

The idea of the shape and form of these worlds being
dependent on "the will of the enlightened / and on the karma of
all living things" is repeated in the poem Notes on Landscape
Designing. Here he is speaking of something as apparently
immutable as the hardness of the earth's crust.

"There are largely two things
which determine the hardness of the earth's crust.
Firstly, it depends on the divine power of the Buddha,
secondly, it depends on the karma of all living things." (V.6, p.276)

"The will of the enlightened" and "the divine power of the
Buddha" are easily identifiable as the Universal Will, stated in
Buddhist terms. Through the power of the Universal Will, the
earth can be transformed right down to something as basic as the
earth's crust, which can become "like gelatine, forming dents /
with each footstep" (3). What Kenji means by "the karma of all
living things" in this context is less clear. One possible
interpretation is that karma is a force in the world which acts

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1. 菩賢菩薩: the Bodhisattva who reveals the virtues of the
   Buddha.
2. 華厳経:
3. 踏みして従って・・・ゼラチンの／歪みをつくる。
in opposition to "the will of the enlightened" (and hence keeps the earth's crust hard). But a more likely meaning of the phrase is that the world changes not simply because the Buddha or Universal Will wishes it to, but also necessarily through our own efforts to change it, our own efforts to perceive the Buddha world. (In this case the word go (業) would be better translated as "actions"). And this idea is in fact strongly implied in the passage of Notes on Landscape Designing which follows the above quotation.

"All these idealists see all landscape as a configuration of the buddhas and the virtues of the people. Thus Yuima Koji says that people can see this blue saw if they have aspiring hearts." (V.6, p.276)

"This blue saw" is a vision of a mountain range on the horizon, and to see it as a "blue saw" apparently represents for Kenji a vision of the world transformed by faith, a 'correct perception'. Kenji is in fact reiterating the essential ideas outlined previously - that the world literally depends on the way one perceives it, that there is another transformed reality inherent in present reality, and that to perceive this reality is 'The Way'. The Universal Will is striving to bring into

1. See page 67.
2. This is apparently in reference to the passage in the Vimalakirti Nirdesa Sutra (see page 68) which says "the man whose mind is pure sees this world in its majestic purity".
manifest being this Buddha world, and it is equally through our own "virtues" and "aspiring hearts" that the age of heaven will appear on earth. (1)

'Heaven' is, in a sense, the Buddha world, but Kenji's concept of this 'Buddha world', although it contains obvious elements of the Buddhist tradition, is vastly different from Buddhist descriptions of heaven. It is, as it were, down to earth. It obeys laws of nature, albeit these laws are utterly transformed, and is essentially a perfected and eternal version of our present world, replete with scientists, social philosophers, farmers et al. It is the 'heaven' of Buddhism, but transformed often beyond recognition. And it is, in fact, better than the traditional heaven which religions portray. This is obvious in Night on the Milky Way Train: the train arrives at the Southern Cross, and the Christians present rise to leave, for this is the departure point for heaven. Giovanni says to them, "who wants to go to heaven! My teacher said we have to build a better world even than heaven." (2) (The teacher is, unmistakably, Kenji).

The new age will be a better world than heaven because it will be the world we build on earth.

1. In this context, it is interesting to note that Kenji's revelation of the true nature of the world at the end of Aomori Elegy is linked with the reaffirmation of his dedication to the happiness of all:
"Your weapons and all things - to you they are dark and fearful yet in truth are happy and bright.
((Since everyone has been from ancient times brother it is utterly wrong to pray for only one))."

2. 天上へなんか行かなくていいじゃないか。ぼくたちこそ天上よりももっといいところをこさえあいけないって僕の先生が言ったよ。
'Heaven', 'the fourth dimension' and 'the new age' are virtually synonymous terms, but on the whole we can say that when he speaks of 'the fourth dimension' Kenji is indicating the original and true nature of the world which is immanent but not yet manifest; 'the new age' refers to the fourth dimension made manifest; and the nature of the fourth dimension is 'heaven'. Moreover, he does not use the term 'heaven' merely as an analogy for what the fourth dimension is like. The essential nature of the world is heaven - the fourth dimension is literally heaven on earth. Kenji in fact restructured and reinterpreted the six realms of the Buddhist tradition, for he saw what is traditionally the realm of humans (人間界) as being the Shura realm (which is below the human realm), and he believed that it can and will become transformed into the realm of heaven (天界). And his conception of the Shura and Heaven realms are a far cry from their Buddhist origins!

1. In descending order; heaven, humans, Shura, Beasts (畜生), Hungry Ghosts (餓鬼) and hell (地獄). See Appendix B page 199.
CHAPTER XII - THE STRENGTH OF NATURE

Although the fourth dimension is the world of 'ultimate happiness', Kenji never portrayed the Way which leads to it as being so. The commitment necessary to bring about the new age involves the kind of suffering which he himself experienced, and he makes this point many times in the poems. This theme appears as early as the Winter Sketches.

"The true road is indeed glittering and fierce and difficult to travel. Since it is difficult to travel, I must not halt. Ah you blue shining heavens, cold, with breath hard and gleaming. While my body is torn by sadness and my heart breaks with anguish, yet I love the heavens."

(V.6, p.51)

This sketch has some of the rhetorical quality of his early work, but the idea appears often in his later work in only slightly less exaggerated form. Voiceless Lamentation describes his Shura state in these terms: "When I ... / am tired and saddened by the bright cold path of devotion / and drift in a plain of poisonous grass and fluorescent fungus", and in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art he warns that "our future road is glittering but steep". (1)

The poem See that field over there (あすこの田はね ) contains much the same advice to a young farmer whom he sees as working towards the new age.

1. われらの前途は輝きながら厳険である。
"The sort of learning you do which carves itself into your body while you cry in those few moments between snow-storm and labour ... that is the beginning of the new scholastic study". (V.4, p.103)

And in Leave-taking (告別) he foretells to a young musician that he "will do the bitter and shining work of heaven"(1), and goes on to say:

"You will make music out of the loneliness of cutting grass in a stony place when everyone lives in towns and is idle all day. You will swallow much insult and poverty and sing." (V.3, p.246)

Such suffering is very much what Kenji himself bore in his work with the farmers, but his own experiences simply reaffirmed what he already knew - that the "work of heaven" is indeed bitter, and requires great courage.

"If we are to search for the true happiness of all we must not even regret being confined right now in this dark sea."(2) (V.2, p.251)

It is for this reason that Kenji is so wrathful on the subject of cowards - or rather, why he gives the word 'cowards' the meaning he does. For by 'coward' he does not mean simply one who lacks courage and avoids danger or pain in general. As I have pointed out, Kenji uses the word to denote those who

1. おまへは辛くてそしてからやく天の仕事もする。
2. 宗谷探歌。
place their own happiness before that of others, who compare themselves with others, who dislike work - all those who are identified with the ego of the Shura state, and make no attempt to transcend it. The word hikyo (卑怯) carries the additional sense of 'meanness', and this sense is strongly present in Kenji's use of the word. Such people lack the courage necessary to undertake the search for a better world, and the strength needed to work for it. They hinder the advent of the new age, and there is no place for them in it.

The strange poem Mount Hiei (auditory hallucination) can be understood with this in mind.

"I stand on the flat of the mountain
with six sturdy monks
who wear black hemp robes.
It is Mount Hiei
and everyone's face burns with excitement.
Clouds close steeply in
and the lake is brimming.
'Conceited fools! Good-for-nothings ... !'
one of them bellows, sounding bored." (V.3, p.81)

Mount Hiei, the headquarters of the Tendai Sect, is virtually a by-word for the religious commitment embodied in monks. In this vision, Kenji is among those who have gained the summit of the struggle involved in that commitment. Before them lies Lake Biwa (琵琶湖), a brimming lake, which is a symbol of heaven throughout Kenji's poetry(1). But the monk's cry warns that those who are what Kenji calls 'cowards' have no place in the world they are about to enter.

1. See note (1) page 57.
"Look at the expression of those who grow their hair long and drink coffee, waiting mindlessly. Burn all anguish as firewood!" (1), he admonishes the farmers in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art. It was not, presumably, the coffee and long hair as such that he most objected to, it was the mindless waiting instead of the active work needed to build the new age. The idea of burning one's sufferings appears several times in Kenji's work. The same phrase appears again in Song of Polan Plaza. In To My Students he says "set aflame all weariness and anguish" (2); elsewhere in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art, "set your ashen labours aflame with art"; and in Koiwai Farm, "people progress along an invisible path / kindling all loneliness and misery" (3). The idea that such phrases suggest is not simply that we must rid ourselves of anguish and loneliness, for such things are inevitable in the struggle to reach the new age. Rather, it is that we must bring the ashes of them to life, and consume them in the flame of the "strength and passion" of dedication to the new age. All our weariness and anguish must be the product of that struggle, and our suffering will burn with the passion of it.

Kenji's unnerving statement in Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art that "poets enjoy suffering" (4), repeated more forcefully in a letter where he says "one who can enjoy suffering is a true poet" (5), should also be understood in this

1. 髪を長くしコーヒーを呑み空虚に待てる顔つきを見よ／なあての悩みをたきと燃やし。
2. あらゆる労れと悩みを燃やせ。
3. すべてさびしさと悲傷とを焚いて／ひとは透明な軌道をする。
4. 詩人は苦痛をも享楽する。
5. 苦痛を享楽できる人はほんたるの詩人です；宮沢清六あて、大正十四年九月二十一日。
light. A 'true poet', one who strives to perceive the fourth dimension, cannot afford to dislike or avoid the suffering involved in this struggle.

But if the struggle to bring about the new age involves such suffering, and requires such strength and courage, it is nevertheless not beyond us. For by committing oneself to that work, one can draw on reserves of courage and strength outside oneself. The mysterious 'helpers' who appear in poems such as Koiwai Farm and Tableland(1) are embodiments of a power which is present in nature itself.

The poem See that field over there ends with the following invocation:

"May a clear strength
be given to that child
from cloud and from wind." (V.4, p.103)

Kenji is seldom metaphorical in his statements, and here as elsewhere he means literally what he says. The idea is repeated in other poems. In Okhotsk Elegy (オホーツク挽歌), for instance, when he lies down exhausted on the beach, he says:

"I must recover my clear energy
from the sound of these waves,
the damp sweet-scented wind,
and the light of the clouds." (V.2, p.169)

And in Exhaustion, where he sees the nimbus clouds above the mountain as three Buddha-like statues:

1. See page 107.
"I would reach my hands to touch those clouds
and gather electricity from them
in order to exert all my strength in dialogue
with people like those three, who know no weariness."

(v.4, p.11)

Here, no doubt, he is referring to the lightning which the storm
clouds contain, but for Kenji this is essentially the
manifestation of a more general energy contained in nature, the
energy of the Universal Will. This energy becomes part of one's
own reserve of energy when one is identified with the Universal
Will in the search for ultimate happiness, and in the fourth
dimension it will be available to the world. Thus in To My
Students he says:

"You must work to form a new nature,
taking a step forward by using to their limits
the strength of tide and wind, and every strength of
nature."

(v.6, p.210)

Nor is he here simply anticipating the proponents of modern
alternative sources of energy\(^1\), for the strength contained in
nature is, of course, able to be harnessed spiritually as well
as physically.

"New poets!
Gain from cloud and light and storm
a new clear energy
and intimate to man and earth the form which they must
take."\(^2\)

(v.6, p.211)

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1. Unfortunately, it is likely that he would have applauded
the advent of atomic power as perhaps the ultimate
verification of his belief that nature, right down to its
most basic structure, contains reserves of energy which
can be harnessed.

2. 佐倉勘治に寄せる。
This idea is clearly stated in the story *The Dragon and the Poet*. The poet Suldatta has gained first place in the poetry competition for a song which, he afterwards learns, he had actually heard the dragon sing, and he comes to the dragon to apologize and beg forgiveness for the sin of plagiarism.

"When I think about it I realize that, without knowing you were here, I came every day and sat on the promontary right above your cave, thinking and singing until I grew tired and slept. And I feel as though I heard that song as I dozed one cloudy windy day."

But the dragon replies in the following words:

"Suldatta, that song is as equally yours as it is mine. Was the song something I sang in this cave, or something I thought? Was it something you heard above this cave, or something you thought?

Ah Suldatta, at that time I was cloud, I was wind, and you too were cloud, were wind. If the poet Alta had meditated then, he probably would have sung the same song... Who is to forgive and who is to be forgiven? Aren't we equally wind, and cloud, and water?" (V.11, p.304)

This song, which Suldatta had voiced on behalf of the natural world, provoked from the poet Alta the following poem:

"Suldatta who sings directly
the song the wind sings,
the song the clouds answer with,
the song the waves play.
Suldatta who believes the stars will become thus,
who resolves the land will take this shape,
who creates the pattern of beauty and truth
which tomorrow's world must be capable of—
foreteller, designer,
who will ultimately make the world capable." (V.11, p.304)
Wind, wave and cloud are actually speaking the will of the Universe, and if our consciousness merges with the universal consciousness, then inevitably we speak it too. "If one stops a work it will rise again in the earth." The Universal Will is not simply present in nature as the fourth dimension, of which we gain occasional glimpses, it can actually express itself for us through nature. Thus at the end of *Leave-taking* Kenji says to the young musician:

"If you have no instrument ... then you should play the pipe organ of that light which is flooding the sky."

All these physical phenomena contain within them a power which can be tapped, the energy of the striving of the Universal Will. And Kenji expressly states that it is for this reason that his poetry is full of references to such things as clouds and wind, that he focusses his attention on them so constantly.

"I concern myself with clouds and with the wind not simply as ideas, but because they are the source of boundless strength, that strength for the new people." But although it is primarily in cloud and wind that he identifies this strength and power, he feels its potential in every natural object. Thus, for instance, the apparently

1. This is undoubtedly the idea that lies behind his statement that he received his stories "From the rainbow and the moonlight" - See page 79.
2. 創作止めば彼はふたたび土に起つ：農民芸術概論編要。
3. わが雲に関心し。
fanciful idea of an "electricity-generating willow" should in fact be taken literally, as also should "Orion's ... blue electric light", for in the poem Together with the black flower called Sakinohaka he exhorts people of the new age to "use the galaxy to make electric power plants". In this context it is interesting to recall Kenji's image of the life force in Preface.

"The phenomenon called 'I'
is a single blue illumination
of the hypothetical organic alternating-current lamp
(a composite body of all transparent spirits)
one blue illumination
of the karmic alternating-current lamp
which yet always continues to burn,
rapidly flickering, flickering
with the landscape and with everyone.
(the light endures, its lamp is lost)." (V.2, p.5)

Kenji perceives the essential nature of life itself in terms of an electric current, which flows through every phenomenon, and this image can now be taken more literally than one would take it on first reading.

If all things contain the energy force of the Universal Will, it is above all the phenomenon of Spring which manifests this energy force for Kenji. In the poem Electric Generating Plant (発電所), the switchboard "makes the electricity of Spring sing early / with the black snail turbine" - here "early" suggests

1. エレキづくりのかはやなぎ：青い桜の葉。
2. オリオンの・・・青い電燈： 星
3. 銀河をつかって発電所もつくれ。
4. くろい蝸牛水車で／早くも春の雷気を鳴らし。
not only that the electric generator is generating the power that Spring contains 'out of season', but also that it is a harbinger of the new age itself, when Spring's energy will be universally available - this is undoubtedly Kenji's view of such technological achievements. It is harnessing the fourth dimension energy of nature, and that energy is "the electricity of Spring". (1)

Spring is in fact the clearest manifestation of the Universal Will, the fourth dimension, that our present world affords us. It, above all, reveals the energy of the "organic alternating-current lamp", and the will of the universe towards perfection and happiness.

"It is happy Spring in the solar system. Everyone should run and laugh and leap up." (2) (V.2, p.73)

And again, recalling April - "The magic song of the sun, Bodhisattva of Energy, sang out." (3)

The strange poem Peach-coloured ( 桃色 ) also indicates that Spring embodies the strength of the new age.

1. It is interesting that Kenji actually uses the character 雷 (thunder) instead of 電 (electricity) here, giving the suggestion of Spring thunderstorms. This points up the way in which he saw such manifestations of energy in nature as the embodiment of the Universal Will, and thus a source of spiritual and physical energy for humanity.

2. 小岩井農場

3. Ibid: 光炎菩薩太陽マチックの歌が鳴った。
"A little later than
the peach-coloured agarsinath(1) Spring
came a huge, palely yellow bird.
It scattered shining dots of pepper
in that still-cold space
and stole and gathered up the violent strength of people,
and just when golden thorns, ripened in the sun, appear
it flew off eastward.
And that year
everyone lost the strength
to feel art in labour". (V.6, p.134)

It is unclear what the yellow bird is, but perhaps it might
signify summer (scattering heat in the cold atmosphere).
Whatever it may be, it takes with it the strength which Spring
had imparted to people - "the strength to feel art in labour",
which is of course the fourth dimension art(2).

The Spring wind is the breath of life itself in the poem
Now on the green snow-cabbage (いま青い雪葉に ) - "from the river /
the warm breath of Brahma(3) advances"(4). (These words are
repeated in another poem (5), but the word "Anima" (アニマ)
replaces "Brahma", making the meaning still clearer).

It seems, then, that if the Shura world is the world of
death, the world of the fourth dimension is the world of life,

1. アガーチナス : I am unable to discover the meaning of this word.
2. See Chapter VII page 76.
3. Brahma is the Hindu god of life, who also appears in Buddhism.
4. 川からは／あたたかな梵天の呼吸が襲ってくる。
5. レアカーを引きナイフをもって。
one in which death no longer exists. In terms of the poem Preface, once one is identified with the electric light force, one 'endures' as does the light. This idea of eternal life is never directly stated in Kenji's poetry, but it is certainly implied - for if it is impossible to "go on perfectly and eternally / with just one other soul" (1), to strive for this being a distortion of 'correct' striving, then when one gains the ultimate happiness of all things, the fourth dimension, by implication one will be able to "go on perfectly and eternally" with everything.

In Night on the Milky Way Train this is actually stated to be the case. Giovanni has lost his friend Campanella, and the scholar says to him "you must search for the greatest happiness of all people, and go there quickly with everyone. It is only there that you and Campanella can go on together forever." (2) And the story The Blind Grape and the Rainbow (めくらぶだうと虹) puts the case even more plainly.

"In fact there is not one thing which doesn't change ... the beautiful hills and plains before my eyes are worn down and destroyed moment by moment. But if, in the midst of these things, True Strength becomes manifest, all decaying and ageing things, mutable and transient things, all are boundless life." (V.7, p.113)

"True strength is correct desire" (3), it is the desire of the

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1. 小岩井農場。
2. あらゆるひとのいちばんの幸福をさがしみんなと一しょに早くそこに行くがいし、そこでばかりおまえはほんとうにカムフラネラといつまでもいっしょに行けるのだ。
3. 正しいねがいはまことのちから： 心授歌。
Universal Will, and by our joining ourselves with it - "uniting our true strength" (1) - the new age of eternal life will arrive. And what Spring manifests is the life which will be eternal in the new age. In a manuscript version of the poem Meeting of the Young Men's Industry Association (産業組合青年会), his love goes out to "that which will create eternal Spring / from the fierce white light of hardship" (2).

In the poem Night (夜), written during his last illness, Spring takes on traditional Buddhist dimensions which are equivalent to the basic perception of Spring seen in the rest of his work.

"Now it's two hours since the blood began flowing from my throat. No one is walking outside any more. Spring night of trees and plants breathing quietly and budding. This place is Spring's throne of enlightenment where the Bodhisattvas cast off their myriad bodies, and here the Buddhas reside in nirvana." (V.6, p.323)

This image is in fact a reference to a passage in the Lotus Sutra in which the Buddha explains that wherever his law is practised on earth "that place is the throne of Enlightenment ... In that place the Buddhas attain perfect enlightenment." (3) But although this poem is, like the majority of poems written during his last illness, an expression of a strictly Buddhist sentiment, Kenji has not ceased to regard Spring as the manifestation of heaven,

1. 農民芸術概論編要。
2. はげしい辛酸の白いひかりから／永久の春をつくり出すもの。
3. *Lotus Sutra* Chapter 21, "The Divine Power of the Buddha" (如来神力品)：是の処は即も是道場なり。諸仏此に於いて阿耨多羅三三菩提を得・・・諸仏此に於いて般涅槃したもう。
of the Buddha world. And in another poem from this period, Speaking with the Eyes (趴ij}, he expresses the same idea as the above poem, but in more characteristic terms.

"It must be hopeless.
It doesn't stop, does it.
See how it's bubbling up.
I haven't slept since last night, and the blood keeps coming.
It's blue and silent around me,
and it looks like I'll die any moment now.
But what lovely wind!
It's because the clear brightness of Spring is at hand that that beautiful wind comes
as though it were bubbling up out of the blue sky ...
From your point of view this must be a horrible scene, but all I can see
is that beautiful blue sky
and the clear wind." (V.6, p.290)

Here, as he is dying, he feels the immanence of heaven not as the world he will soon enter but as the actual world around him, as the clear bright world of the Spring wind. (1) The Spring that he is gazing at is the "eternal Spring" of the new age.

1. That wind, the warm breath of eternal life which bubbles up from the sky, is paralleled by his life blood which bubbles up from his body - he is in fact identifying himself with the world, as he does in other poems, particularly those written during illness. Delirious Words (Delirious Words), for instance contains the same idea:

"Sin has changed to illness now
and I sleep helpless
in the river valley's sky.
At least allow this -
that this year's green spear shoots of rice
may come to life in the heat of my body's fever,
that rain may be born
from my body's warm dampness
to moisten the drought-stricken earth".
CHAPTER XIII - SPRING AND SHURA

When Kenji applied the title Spring and Shura to all the volumes of his poems\(^1\), this is the Spring to which he was referring. 'Spring' and 'Shura' are of course the two realms of humanity - one the potential, the other the actual. They are the "two hearts"\(^2\) that he is gazing at in Voiceless Lamentation, the "double landscape" of the poem Spring and Shura, the "two spaces"\(^3\) of Religious Love. It is not surprising that the two are linked in many of his poems, but the relation in which they stand to each other appears at first to be a strange one. One would imagine that with the advent of Spring, the torments of Shura should give way to the joy of the fourth dimension manifesting itself in the world. Yet in the face of Spring, the suffering of Shura appears to be increased rather than diminished. This is obvious above all in the poem Spring and Shura itself.

"Ah beneath brilliant April
gnashing burning pacing
I am Shura incarnate."

(V.2, p.20)

The same state is depicted in another poem, called Spring (春)

"Through the waves of violent air-shimmer
a broad-shouldered youth dressed in dark blue hemp
passes, slowly grinding his teeth at something."

(V.3, p.192)

1. See note 1 page 8.
2. ふたつのこころ。
3. 二重の風景。
The poem *Now pine needles melt in white light* reads almost like another version of *Spring* and *Shura*.

"Now pine needles melt in white light. 
(Precious gold flows slant-wise ... )
Why do I play tennis
although my forehead has grown so high?

When the orb of day deigns to sink into the clouds
those clouds are definitely rings of white gold.
The pine cones and pine branches
are black and sharply outlined.

When the cloud melts the sun is quicksilver
and the plate of heaven shatters and sways.
Why oh why do you cry
though the green needles are ruffled like waves?

A bank of clouds comes over and the clouds burn.
What fools they are.
The bank of clouds moves on and the sun glitters.
The roof of the district office is close.

(Ah pale and sad
wavering within Shura.)

On my hands the scent of hay
in my eyes the yellow Milky Way.
Let me cross those yellow quartz pebbles and show you
there is not just one space.

Out of the clarity of Spring
as now the sun falls
lighting up the cypresses in the wind
distant words torture me.
Morning's yellow mantle flutters
on the embankment of dry grass.
In the afternoon the head clerk
comes laughing down the row of willows."  (V.6, p.423)

In the very midst of Spring, Kenji is caught up in Shura, and his anger is directed towards Spring itself in poems like Cursing Spring Scenery (春光呵禍).

"What sort of a state is that!
Do you know what it is?
Hair black and long
mouth clamped shut
that's all.

Spring is dazed with grass heads.
Beauty will disappear!

(This is a pale and empty place.)
Cheeks pale red eyes brown
that's all.

(Ah this bitterness blueness coldness.)"

(V.2, p.23)

Here the reason for his anger is apparent - "beauty will disappear!". In Spring and Shura he says "everywhere designs of hypocrisy", and here again this is the focus of his anger. His meaning is obvious - that Spring in the present world is in fact a transient phenomenon. It is, in a sense, a false promise. "Spring comes, and my sad and pitiful hopes rise again". (1) The poem Ambiguous Discussion Concerning Spring Clouds (春の雲に関するあいまいな議論) makes this clear.

1. 春が来ます、私の気の毒かなないねがひかまたもやおこること：復活の前。
"If those black clouds
gave you the shivers
it's due to mass psychology.
Fifty miles along this river course
thousands of people just like us
who are plowing wheat fields
and clipping mulberry trees
now replace the passion of their winter battle
with sorrowful yearning
and vague hope,
and all cast their anxious eyes
to those clouds.
And not only that,
but those leaden dark creatures
that catenary of tepid water
that very thing is love itself.
The interchange of carbon dioxide,
deceptive Spring sensation,
that very thing is love itself."

(V.4, p.59)

Here Kenji calls Spring a "deceptive sensation" - it taunts us by promising a happiness which has not yet arrived on earth, by tempting us to believe that that happiness is here at last and that we need no longer struggle. And as far as Kenji is concerned, this is fatal. The last thing we must do is relinquish that "huge strength and passion"(1) which is needed to bring about the new age, and instead slip into the "sorrowful yearning" which Spring engenders. This yearning is also contained in the opening lines of the poem Spring and Shura - "from the grey steel of mental images / akebi vines twine round the clouds" - and such clinging and yearning after the insubstantial is, as Kenji saw it, something which can only lead

1. 農民芸術概論綱要。
to further suffering. It is the illusion of love, as he names it in the above poem.

For Kenji was adamant that the new age will only arrive through our own efforts. It is only by battling the forces of Shura in the world and vanquishing them that Spring will arrive in its eternal form, and the manifestations of the fourth dimension must never tempt us to relax our vigilance. We must recognize that they are, at present, only transient, and that Shura will inevitably reassert itself again until we ourselves transcend it.

This is expressed clearly in the poem Tableland.

"Those two guides who quietly follow behind me today form the shape of two pillars of this land's ancient gods. For today they are for a while elegant gods. Tomorrow they will be blue goats and when the August rice falls they will show the face of distorted Shura. And yet now when pine trees sough in the wind and their needles stir in the sunlight what could there be to prevent me worshipping these people with all my heart at the crossroad where our roads part?" (V.4, p.120)

Needless to say, this poem was written in Spring. Here, he reminds himself of the transient nature of such manifestations of the fourth dimension in the present world. Although in the
Spring nature manifests for a moment its true face, the Shura face of the world will return when the rain falls to flatten the rice crop. We must battle to free the world from the "acid terrain of Shura"(1), and not simply rely on the promises of the Universal Will embodied in transient Spring or gods.

In a version of Everyone seems to have finished his meal he proposes two alternative attitudes to nature:

"Accord with nature and give thanks to nature, fight with oneself spontaneously and give thanks to others ... Fight against nature and win against nature, offer yourself and attack wrongness." (V.4, p.635)

It is evident that he believed the second of the alternatives to be the correct one. It is interesting that fighting with oneself is not the answer to the problem of Shura, presumably because it reinforces the ego rather than helping to transcend it. Rather, one should forget one's own problems - "forget oneself in wind and light"(2) - and offer oneself to the cause of the true happiness of all.

And this poem also emphasizes that worshipping and submitting to something beyond ourselves, Spring or the gods of nature, will not help to bring about the new age of that happiness. It is we ourselves who must create it.

1. 酸っぱい修羅の地形：ちくれてすがすがしい雲の朝。
2. 風や光のなかに自分を忘れ：宮沢青六あて、大正十四年九月二十一日。
"If it could be known that this was truly right, that it would truly extinguish the suffering of these people, then they would not bow down here. They would suddenly rise up saying 'where are the gods and bodhisattvas outside our own will and endeavours!" (1) (V.4, p.634)

It is for this reason that Kenji is so often dubious about his experiences of that 'other space'. In Tableland he must remind himself that the appearance of the gods is a transient phenomenon, and it is with a certain guilt that he indulges in briefly worshipping them. And in Koiwai Farm he chides himself for his joy at the appearance of Julia and Pempel as follows:

"I've made up my mind. Don't go there! None of these thoughts are right. They are the dregs of an acid light irradiated from that faith whose shape you have just changed through weariness."

(V.2, p.85)

In this poem, as in Ambiguous Discussion Concerning Spring Clouds, he has momentarily relinquished the struggle and passion of 'the search' to be with these two transient creatures from that different space. It is, in a sense, all too easy to close one's eyes and give oneself up to the different space, to "go there". But to do so in this way, instead of struggling to reach there with everyone, can only be death. Such a death is not the answer to the search for the true happiness of all - that answer can only be found through living and struggling for the sake of everyone. To give oneself up to the world of that 'different

1. Manuscript version of みんな食事もすんだらしく。
space' is to give oneself up to the attainment of one's own happiness, leaving others behind in Shura.

In this sense, manifestations of the fourth dimension such as Spring are illusions which we must not cling to; it is only by battling our present Shura reality that the fourth dimension will become our truth. Thus in Religious Love he advises the young man who is longing and reaching for heaven to devote himself instead to the suffering of those around him, for

"that is where the two spaces overlap and it is certainly no place where beginners like us can be." (V.2, p.192)

It seems that Kenji would often prefer it if the different space were not so visible in the world, for the temptation to abandon oneself to the illusion of Spring is great. This is why he can curse Spring, and why he sometimes seems almost to fear those signs of the fourth dimension which he otherwise seeks out with delight.

"Oh friends, distant friends, do you know this frightening other side of the shining vault of the heavens, transparent wind, field and wood?" (V.6, p.312)

1. その恐しい黒雲が。
CHAPTER XIV - OUR PLACE IN THE UNIVERSE

The earth itself is still in the grip of Shura, where manifestations of the fourth dimension, like all phenomena, are fleeting and not to be relied on. But above the transient world, the sky remains eternal and unchanging, and when Kenji looked towards the fourth dimension future, he looked upwards. The sky is a constant presence in his poetry, and his landscapes present a world seen against vast skies. The beautiful poem Sea-Eroded Tableland (海蝕台地) provides a fine example.

"After the sun has entered the sixth and final zone the whole sky dims, the tableland hazy like a boundless sea of single-minded dedication.

... Sea's colour setting thoughts astray, sadly, nostalgically, gnawing at Spring's repletion ...

There the snow lies in a pattern of wave crests and the many larch forests and valleys, continuing their soft rise and fall, trail into the sky's feeble smoke.

... That is a sea-eroded tableland, monument of an ancient kalpa(1) ... Clambering up that indistinct path a band of beleaguered highland hermits, who could be taken for haggard penitential ascetics, leading a line of shadowy horses disappears into the smoke of cold space." (V.3, p.35)

1. A word used in Buddhist sutras to denote a vast length of time. A single kalpa is generally equivalent to the time taken for a world to be born, rise and finally be extinguished.
Landscape and people move out of time in the dusk to merge with the eternal space of the sky. Here the tableland is "a boundless sea of single-minded dedication", merging with the hazy sky. In Chapter X, I pointed out that this 'single-minded dedication' of the Universal Will is epitomized by what is eternal and vast in the world, the sea and, above all, the sky. In *The south wind charged with warmth*, the devil is described as a presence in the world which temporarily obscures the sky like a cloud, but like a cloud will be dissolved, and "the stars recover their gentle faces and the sky again becomes a mandala of ancient single-minded dedication". This image of clouds casting a temporary shadow over the world, coming between the earth and the sky, appears elsewhere in the poetry as well. In the poem *Infant* (兒童), for instance, clouds produce the 'blue sadness' of Shura.

"In a part of that great wide sky of incomprehensible colour dazzling-edged black clouds are blown to bits one after another ... Each one passes through the sun's smouldering rays and each one makes you bluely sad." (V.3, p.38)

It is typical that the Shura sadness is a result of being cut off from something, in this case the light of the sun which shines beyond the clouds. In *Spring and Shura*, too, the sky beyond the clouds embodies the heavenly realm.

"In the lucid sea of heaven a sacred crystal wind passes about on the far edge of the fragmented clouds." (V.2, p.20)
In Okhotsk Elegy:

"My heart is pierced deep
by the blue of a single patch of sky
between the joints of many-layered clouds." (V.2, p.170)

And in Solvent Vacuum: "Here and there the shining clouds are split / and that eternal sea blue peeps through". Shura is, as it were, a temporary shadow cast on the earth, cutting off the sky's light. The eternal fourth dimension world of heaven is always present above the earth, behind the clouds which temporarily hide it.

As in English so in Japanese the idea of 'heaven' is closely linked with the sky. The word 'heaven' (天) is frequently used to indicate the sky, 'the heavens'. This is, of course, a metaphorical usage of the word, but in Kenji's case it needs to be taken more literally. Throughout his writing he constantly identifies the sky with that eternal heavenly realm of the fourth dimension. The sky in some way contains the 'different space', which lies within or beyond it. This is made clear in Fantasia of Anokudatchi Lake, where a small crack in the sky provides a glimpse of the world beyond.

"There's no doubt that in the emptiness a tiny fissure has formed.
... It is that emptiness
which is the mediator for
a different infinitesimal form of perception,
a different space." (V.4, p.134)

1. 白い輝雲のあちこちが切れて／あの永久の海蒼がのぞきててある。
And so too in the poem Setting out on a Strange Path (異途への出発) his decision to set out on the path (presumably to join the farmers and try to help them) comes "after a single white fissure / in the vaguely-lit quartz heavens." (1)

This different space, the fourth dimension, is repeatedly located there far above us - the different space which Toshiko enters after death is "above" (上方)(2), and in Now pine needles melt in white light Kenji points the way out of Shura in the same terms:

"In my eyes the yellow Milky Way.
Let me cross those yellow quartz pebbles and show you there is not just one space." (V.6, p.424)

As is so often the case, what appears to be a fanciful image is in fact to be taken literally - the sky in fact does contain the eternal heavenly world of the fourth dimension. Overhead Wires has the following apparently extraordinary lines:

"Brick roofs of houses shatter
the brimming blue of that glittering sea(3)
and blue upper atmosphere and landscape seeps out."
(V.6, p.252)

The landscape that seeps out of the sky's wound is the landscape of the new age. This poem is a description of Tokyo, sad city of Shura.

1. 底びかりする水晶天の／一ひら白い裂けのあと。
2. 青森挽歌。
3. i.e. the sky.
From the layers of glittering blue frozen nitrogen
a goddess comes falling
and in the depths of that ephemera
is a forest of steel towers.
There, like the trees of heaven,
is a group of whitely ripened insulators.
The goddess comes and plucks them —
they are oleasters of Shura.
Sulphur wavering yellow,
and the wind is filled with cries of grief." (V.6, p.252)

But everything in this city, longing to transcend Shura, reaches
towards the heaven of the sky, the new age.

"All the creatures of this great city
transcend the carbon particles, fine strands of cotton wool,
fragments of loam,
hot painful carbonic acid gas
and layers of middays' stuffiness,
and turning towards this glittering frozen nitrogen
reach out their hands
reach out their hands
reach out their hands." (V.6, p.250)

That the sky is heaven is indicated in other poems as well —
for instance in the fragment In the bright daytime, "the blue sky
is pure and sacred"(1), and in Haratai Sword-dancers (原体劍舞連 )
"the quince-scented sky"(2) suggests heaven, for 'quince-scented'
is a frequent epithet of heaven in Kenji's work.(3) It is

1. 藍ぞらも聖く。
2. まるめろの匂のそら。
3. c.f. for instance Indra's Net: "A scent like that cold
   quince scent of heaven" (あの天盤のつめたいまるめろに似たかはり)
significant, also, that in *Arbitrariness of a Fine Sky* Kenji should see the image of the Buddha "at the edge of the cold splendid blue sky". This is also where he locates the different space where Toshiko has gone.

"As I walk alone or sleep exhausted on this unpeopled beach of Sakhalin, Toshiko is at the edge of that blue place." (1) (v.2, p.170)

And it is there that he places a group of creatures who appear to be the eternal inhabitants of the new age.

"On the far far edge of the blue sky above the atmosphere where even hydrogen is too sparse lives a group of eternal and transparent creatures who cannot even be weighed down by such heavy thoughts as 'I am the whole world. The world is the shadow of a shifting green dream'." (2) (v.6, p.177)

In the poem *Spring and Shura*, while the sky is the eternal heaven which he cannot reach, the Shura world that he is in is repeatedly described as being far below that sky.

"Below the air-strata of April's light spitting, gnashing, pacing to and fro I am Shura incarnate ... Ah beneath brilliant April gnashing, burning, pacing to and fro I am Shura incarnate ... That farmer clad in cloak watching me - can he really see me beneath the blinding sea of atmosphere?" (V.2, p.20)
In *Overhead Wires* too this same idea of the Shura world being below the sky appears: "The Farmers and Labourers Party is dispersed / under the shining glittering blue sky". (Kenji considered the Farmers and Labourers Party to be a step towards the new age.\(^{(1)}\)).

This is in obvious contrast to the eternal, fourth dimension creatures who live "above the atmosphere", and to his vision of the fourth dimension in the poem *Preface*:

"Perhaps two thousand years from now
an appropriately different geology will be applied
and appropriate proofs will turn up from the past.
Everyone will think that two thousand years ago
colourless peacocks filled the sky
and up-and-coming scholars may unearth
wonderful fossils from brilliant frozen nitrogen
in the highest stratum of the atmosphere."  \(^{(V.2, p.7)}\)

Here again there is definitely a sense that the new age will actually be located at the top of the atmosphere, an idea also found in stories such as *Night on the Milky Way Train*, *Indra's Net*, *Feet of Light* and *The Night-hawk's Star*. It is suggested, too, in *Overhead Wires*.

"Oh raise the fluid air
which now fills this tired city ...
Send anew a clear upper atmosphere."  \(^{(V.6, p.253)}\)

And in *Impressions of an Ukiyo-e Exhibition* the fourth dimension

\(^{1}\) See Chapter V, page 45.
people of the Ukiyo-e prints are "designers of ... a different atmosphere."(1)

Certainly the air and the atmosphere and the sky appear constantly in Kenji's poetry, and were as significant for him as cloud and wind. Objects are continually described as being in the sky or the atmosphere. In Spring and Shura, for instance, "the air layers rarify / and cypresses stand silent in the heavens", and in The Five Great Cedars of the Jizo Hall (地蔵堂の五本の巨杉が):

"The five great cedars of the Jizo Hall rise and swell and seethe
in the brilliant Spring sea of air ...
two trees side by side
navigate the cirrus clouds of mid air ...
the trees pass calmly through
the cirrus clouds in heaven's zenith." (V.3, p.193)

In the fine Spring poem The Green Spear Leaves (青い槍の葉) occurs the phrase "atmosphere Japan", one which Kenji also uses elsewhere(2).

" (Sway sway willow sway)
Clouds keep coming from the southern horizon bringing with them the sky's electricity.
Birds keep singing on the green tree tops.
Cloud and every bird on the willow.
(Sway sway willow sway)
Golden magic lanterns, rice's green when clouds crumble and sunlight pours down.

1. ひとつちがった atmosphere・・・の設計者。
2.  See for instance 銅線。
Rows of rice lined up in the mud
beneath the daylight of Atmosphere Japan." (V.2, p.93)

Here again the focus is somehow above the earth. Japan is
seen as consisting of the whole atmosphere, the actual earth's
surface being at the bottom of the atmosphere.

Another concept frequent in Kenji's poems is that of "air
layers" or "air strata" \(^{(1)}\), and it seems in fact that
Kenji visualised the air layers of the atmosphere in much the
same terms as the 'levels of consciousness' that he believed to
be present in the world \(^{(2)}\): the "highest stratum of the
atmosphere" is equivalent to the highest level of consciousness,
that level of ultimate happiness whose inhabitants are committed
to raising all creatures to this level, the fourth dimension.
And there are also indications that Kenji saw those atmospheric
layers as the equivalent of, and indeed the extension of,
geological layers, as for instance in Preface, where scholars
unearth fossils from the highest layer of the atmosphere. \(^{(3)}\)
Indeed the present world is portrayed as an ancient geological
age in several poems. In Koiwai Farm:

"Within the dark forests of jura \(^{(4)}\) and chalk
reptiles fiercely grind their teeth and fly.
They have climbed up through the steam of the floods."
(V.2, p.72)

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1. For instance in Spring and Shura, "beneath the air-strata
of April's light", and "the air layers rarify".
3. This scene is repeated in Night on the Milky Way Train.
4. There is no such substance. Presumably, Kenji is indicating
that the forests belong to the Jurassic Era.
And in Solvent Vacuum: "someone like me is no more than a single ant / under lepidodendrons of the Coal Age". (1)

But it is the poem Politicians which most clearly places our present world in its geological perspective. Politicians and all such people will rot away of their own accord, and later "some transparent geologist will record / that this was the Coal Age of humanity." This is, of course, very reminiscent of the geologists at the top of the atmosphere in Preface. Preface also contains another relevant passage, the extraordinary image of time as consisting of geological layers of light.

"But these words, which naturally should have been copied correctly from the midst of the accumulation of huge bright time of the Cainozoic alluvial era, so quickly change their form and substance within even the tiniest point in the light and dark (or in a billion years of Shura)." (V.2, p.6)

This geological era, the Cainozoic alluvial era, is an accumulation of time which forms a layer of light (just as our present earth is, in a sense, the bottom layer of the atmosphere), upon which future layers of light will form, presumably building up to 'the highest stratum of the atmosphere'. The perspective in which Kenji places his poems ("these words") is enormous, but he is here speaking from the point of view of the fourth dimension - "all these propositions / are asserted within the fourth dimension". From a fourth dimensional perspective, each

1. おれなどは石炭紀の鱗木のしたの／ただいっぺきの 蟻でしかない。
age becomes a tiny point in the "light and dark" (明暗). This light and dark is the flickering of the life force, the alternating-current lamp, and when we perceive ourselves as a 'single blue illumination' of this current (i.e. perceive ourselves correctly, 'fourth dimensionally'), each great age of the earth becomes a single flicker of light. Thus Giovanni, in the fourth dimension world of the Milky Way, is able to perceive history in these terms.

"And suddenly Giovanni felt himself, his thoughts, the train, the scholar, the Milky Way and everything flash with light, then disappear completely, then burn and disappear again; and with every flash a great world opened up, a great history was revealed, and with every blank he understood it as just one which was gone". (1) (V.9, p.142)

But if this is the true, fourth dimensional perspective of time, the Shura perspective is of an age, "a single point in the light and dark", as a billion years - in other words, it is our present concept of time. (2)

Our world is, then, building upwards through the atmosphere, our future is literally above us, but the fourth dimension can actually be reached in a matter of moments. Shura is a world "beneath the air layers", and to see our world in the perspective of the whole atmosphere is somehow a fourth dimension perspective.

1. 銀河鉄道の夜
2. c.f. "the great human theatre creates indestructible fourth dimension art by shifting the axis of time" (巨きな人生劇場は時間の軸を移動して不滅の四次の芸術をなす： 農民芸術概論綱要)
Thus, for instance, Kenji can speak of himself as "an actor in the opera of the atmosphere".\(^{(1)}\)

The fourth dimension perspective in Kenji's writing is not only of the world as being within the atmosphere, but often of it being within the solar system, the galaxy and even the whole universe - all are variations on the same theme, and often apparently interchangeable. Thus in *Koiwai Farm*, for instance, "it is happy Spring in the solar system", and a little later "it is happy Spring in the globe's atmosphere".\(^{(2)}\) And in *Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art*, 'atmosphere Japan' becomes "the sun Japan in galactic space, the plain of Töhoku".\(^{(3)}\) In this instance, the area of Töhoku in fact becomes a sun, one of the stars of the galaxy. This is the ultimate perspective, and one which appears throughout Kenji's work.

When Kenji spoke of 'universal consciousness' he was speaking not only metaphysically but literally. We are in fact a part of the universe, and that is our rightful dimension. By entering on the new age we take our place among the stars of the galaxy. Indeed, Kenji sees the heavens of Buddhism as existing among the stars\(^{(4)}\), and it is for this reason that he longs for science to prove the actual existence of those heavens, for by proving that they exist we will become part of them - "the earth too will become heaven."

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1. 気圏オペラの役者 東岩手火山。
2. たのしい地球の気圏の春だ。
3. 銀河の空間の太陽日本 陸中国の野原である。
The fourth dimension world is the galaxy itself in Night on the Milky Way Train. When the new age comes, the earth will appear at last among the stars - "like a fresh nebula / the clear and joyful tomorrow will come". (1) The night-hawk in the story The Night-hawk Star transcends the world of Shura and soars upwards to become an eternal star in the sky, and the sword-dancers of Haratai village "blaze a new nebula / in the quince-scented sky." (2)

In the story Indra's Net Kenji finds himself in the fourth dimension world "walking ... above the atmosphere" (3). He looks up into the night sky.

"And in that cold dark violet plate of heaven there were pointed grains of blue gems, splinters of gold, or even slivers of citrine as tiny as the seeds of smoke grass, all selected exactly with delicate pincers, set beautifully, and each breathing individually, trembling individually.

I looked down to the sand at my feet again, and amongst the grains of sand little fires of yellow and blue were flickering. Perhaps that super-cooled lake of Tsueru Plateau could be thought of as a part of heaven's Milky Way." (V.8, p.274)

Each star in the sky is an individually living thing, and even the grains of sand at his feet are stars. He is standing in the

1. 爽やかな星雲のやうに透明に愉快な明日は来る： 生徒諸君に寄せる。
2. まるめろの句のそらに／あたらしい星雲を燃ぜ： 原体剣舞連。
3. 気圏の上・・・をあるいてある。
midst of the Milky Way. Nor is this some strange other world, but our own world in its true perspective. When we have built the new age we will be "laughing together on the far edge of the galaxy."(1)

Perhaps the most unusual of these images is the idea of "transparency" (アツイ). The basic meaning of this word, in Japanese as in English, is 'having the property of being seen through, of allowing light to pass through'. An associated, and more general, meaning is 'blank', and I have preferred this word in some of the translations quoted previously. Here, however, I will translate the word in its basic meaning of 'transparent' throughout. Generally speaking, the word has purely visual connotations, although in certain contexts (i.e., when used to describe a person's character) it suggests sincerity or honesty.

Given the accepted meaning of the word, the sonatas in which it appears in Kenji's poems are unusual. The word is in fact firmly associated with the fourth dimension throughout the poems—it is used, for instance, four times in the poem "The Transparent" (1942, "The Transparent and Simple Sunson"), on an attribute of the new man:

1. 銀河のかなたにともにわらび：ボラーノ広場のうた。
There are several images of which Kenji is unusually fond, and which appear repeatedly in his work. The most important of these are closely associated with his concept of the fourth dimension, and they deserve investigation, for by being aware of the peculiar resonance of association that Kenji imparts to such images we can sense the presence of his religious sensibility in many of the poems which have no apparent religious content.

Perhaps the most unusual of these images is the idea of 'transparency' (透明、透き通る). The basic meaning of this word, in Japanese as in English, is 'having the property of being seen through, of allowing light to pass through'. An associated, and more general, meaning is 'clear', and I have preferred this word in some of the translations quoted previously. Here, however, I will translate the word in its basic meaning of 'transparent' throughout. Generally speaking, the word has purely visual connotations, although in certain contexts (i.e. when used to describe a person's character) it suggests sincerity or honesty.

Given the accepted meaning of the word, the contexts in which it appears in Kenji's poems are unusual. The word is in fact firmly associated with the fourth dimension throughout the poems – it is used, for instance, four times in the poem To My Students as an attribute of the new age:

"Like a new wind like a fresh nebula
the transparent and joyful tomorrow will come ..."

(V.6, p.208)
Show us a still deeper and more transparent true earth history ...
Take all farm labour
which occurs virtually haphazardly
and by cold transparent analysis
raise it and its indigo shadow
into the sphere of dance ...  
Gain from cloud and light and storm
a new transparent energy."

(V.6, p.210)

(V.6, p.211)

There are other contexts where its association with the fourth dimension is obvious. In Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art, for instance, "what we need is a transparent will which envelopes the galaxy", and his description of the fourth dimension world in Preface includes the discovery of the remains of "a transparent race of humans". Other contexts are less explicit in their reference to the fourth dimension, although by being aware of Kenji's concept of the fourth dimension, the association is obvious. Thus Kenji describes "a group of eternal and transparent creatures" living at the far edge of the sky(1), and from a knowledge of other attributes of the fourth dimension it is apparent that once again the adjective 'transparent' is linked with the fourth dimension.

Indeed, in many cases, the word 'transparent' is used to describe precisely those phenomena which I have shown to play a major role in Kenji's idea of the fourth dimension. He speaks continually of "transparent energy"(2), "transparent wind"(3),

1. 青そらのはてのはて。
2. i.e. オホック採歌； 生徒諸君に寄せる。
3. i.e. 高架線； 眼にて云ふ。
"transparent strength"(1), "the transparency of Spring"(2) and "transparent air layers"(3). And the word is also applied to heavenly beings, as for instance when he refers to the children of Kimnara as "transparent beings" in Koiwai Farm.

It is obvious, then, that 'transparent' is overwhelmingly what could be termed a 'fourth dimension word', that transparency is a specific attribute of the fourth dimension, or of the phenomena which indicate its presence. And once this is understood, more apparently obscure contexts in which the word appears can be understood in this light. In the strange passage of dialogue in Aomori Elegy for instance, apparently a discussion by children of the death of their friend Little Gil, a child says "Little Gil looked like she was blue and transparent"(4), and this can be understood as implying that she had entered the different space of the fourth dimension. Hence also the dying Toshiko is described as "burning with a transparent rose fire"(5), already taking on the characteristics of the world she was about to enter. And at the end of Koiwai Farm, where Kenji states that "people progress along a transparent path", he is speaking of 'the one Way which exists of itself', the path to the fourth dimension, along which the Universal Will draws all things.

The word can be understood as always referring in some way to the fourth dimension, but the qualities which the word suggests

1. i.e. あすこの田はね。
2. i.e. 松の針はいま白光に浴ける。
3. i.e. 宗教風の恋。
4. ギルちゃん音くてすきとほるやうだったよ。
5. 透明な薔薇の火に燃される。
are more complex. It gives the feeling of the utter clarity of the fourth dimension world, of a glass-like purity, and this in turn is related to certain other images which Kenji frequently uses in the same contexts, such as "cold" (つめたい) and "glittering" (かがやく). (The glass-like quality is perhaps best exemplified by the sentence in Winter Sketches, "Ah you blue-shining heavens, cold, with breath hard and glittering.").

Certainly Kenji invested the fourth dimension with these qualities, yet the word 'transparent' as Kenji uses it suggests something else as well. It suggests the invisible, something present but unseen, and in this sense denotes the presence of the fourth dimension within the phenomenal world.

Hence when Kenji speaks of the "transparent wind" he is not, of course, making the unnecessary statement that the wind is invisible, but rather, describing it as an invisible fourth dimension force. Nor does he always apply the word to phenomena which are normally invisible - in Koiwai Farm, for instance, he speaks of "transparent nightingales" and "transparent cherry trees". But rather than the literal meaning of 'invisible', what the word in these contexts suggests is that Kenji is sensing the fourth dimension quality of these phenomena, and it is that intangible presence which he is somehow 'seeing through' them.

1. For instance つめたい (海蝕台地); 冷たく透明な解析 (生徒諸君に寄せる).
2. For instance かがやくそら (晴天悠意); かがやきの四月 (春と修羅).
3. 透明ならぐいす。
4. すきとはるさくら。
Yet another reason why Kenji may have chosen this word as a particularly apt epithet for the fourth dimension is that it is somehow unimaginable. The substance of the 'transparent tomorrow' is an utterly different one, one not able to be grasped through any of our present concepts. And in fact he repeatedly refers to features of the fourth dimension as "unknown" (未知) (or more literally 'not yet known'). In *At the Dahlia Contest*, the fourth dimension flower is of an un-nameable colour, and it has the potential of exploding into "the colour of the unknown passion of the new huge faith". And in *Aomori Elegy* of course he is constantly aware of and preoccupied with the fact that the nature of the space which Toshiko has entered is ungraspable, and in his attempts to visualise it he speaks of "the unknown method of total reflection" of the lake that she sees there. He also describes the sky, the essence of the fourth dimension, as "the wide sky of incomprehensible colour" (1), and in *Overhead Wires* everything reaches longingly towards "the unknown blue sky" (2).

Transparency is that clear, invisible, unimaginable quality of the fourth dimension, that which is sensed rather than seen in our present world.

Another characteristic of Kenji's poems, and of his writing in general, is the abundance of words associated with light, the most common being "shining" (明るい) and "glittering"; and in contrast to the images of light are those of darkness (くらい、

1. なにいろをしてあるともわからないひろ*いそら：幽兎
2. 未知な青ぞら。
Kenji's poetry, in fact, gives the impression of a world whose primary characteristic is light or the absence of it - the poems flicker light and dark, precisely as he describes them in Preface.

"I have linked mineral ink and paper
(everything flickering with me
everyone feeling these things simultaneously)
to preserve until now
each chain of light and dark
in the form of these mental sketches." (V.2, p.5)

And of the two, the light and the dark, the final impression from his poems is overwhelmingly of light.

It is noteworthy that, with remarkably few exceptions, every poem involves a description of the natural world, of the landscape, either as the primary focus of the poem or as a background for the events it describes, and his descriptions of the natural world, in the vast majority of cases, include references to the quality of light. With references to light, or the absence of it, so prolific in his writing, it is of course foolish to attempt a simple and categorical statement of its 'meaning', by which all such references are to be interpreted. Nevertheless, as the above quotation from Preface suggests, the concept of light and dark is related to his religious ideas - in Preface light is equated with the life force which flows through all things, and though individual phenomena die "the light endures". Indeed the concept of light is seldom absent from his images of the life force, the Universal Will and fourth
dimension world. It is "the bright world"\(^{(1)}\); to reach it we must "live more brightly and vigorously"\(^{(2)}\). It is the age which will come "together with crumbling particles of light"\(^{(3)}\) - this last is reminiscent of Kenji's statement that to reach the fourth dimension we must "first become shining atoms of the universe"\(^{(4)}\) - and of course, when that age arrives, we will "blaze a new nebula in the quince-scented sky"\(^{(5)}\), the whole world will become a blaze of light.

These examples by no means exhaust the instances of light being an attribute of the fourth dimension. It is also, explicitly, a sign of the presence of the fourth dimension world, heaven. In _Father of the Field_, for instance, "what heavenly drums roll! / What purification of light!", and in _Leave-taking:_

"You should play with all your strength
the pipe organ of that light
which is flooding the sky." \(^{(V.3, p.246)}\)

'Shining' or 'glittering' are standard epithets for the sky throughout Kenji's poetry, and where they appear they generally carry an implication, more or less obvious, of Kenji's perception of the sky as an embodiment of the fourth dimension.

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1. 明るい世界：業の花びら。
2. もっと明るく生き生きと生活をする：農民芸術概論綱要。
3. 崩れる光の夢といっしょに：労働を嫌忌するこの人たちが。
4. 農民芸術概論綱要。
5. 原体劍舞連。
In *Overhead Wires* everything reaches towards "the shining glittering blue sky", and in *Winter Sketches* he focusses his love on "the blue-shining heavens".

But though light is a specific and recurring attribute of the sky, and an expression of its embodiment of the fourth dimension, it is not only the sky but the natural world in general which glitters and shines in Kenji's writing, and when Kenji describes the world thus he is perceiving its fourth dimension or 'true' nature. In *Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art* he sums up fourth dimension perceptions as follows:

"Words are poetry. Motion is dance. Sound is heavenly music. The whole earth is a glittering landscape painting"(1). This is the perception of the world that he is reaching for in his poetry, that perception of the true nature of the world which he reached at the end of *Aomori Elegy*:

"Everything is as it is ... Your weapons and all things - to you they are dark and fearful but in truth are happy and bright." (V.2, p.166)

Here the contrast between the nature of dark and light is clear; while brightness is the quality of the true fourth dimension nature of the world, darkness is the characteristic of the state of Shura.(2) This is equally obvious in *Religious Love*,

1. 詞は詩であり 動作は舞踊 音は天楽 四方はかがやく風景画。

2. Associated words are 'blue-black' (青黒い) and 'blue-dark' or 'pale dark' (青ぐらい) - for example "here is a blue-black empty place" (ここは青ぐらくてからんとしたもんだ; 春光ロ譲); "I walk in pale dark Shura" (わたたくしだが青ぐらいや修羅をあらいてある無声慟哭)。
where the person addressed 'creates' a dark Shura from that which is transparent and bright.

"Why with the distorted sharpness of your mind's workings do you seize from such transparent and beautiful air layers burning, dark, oppressive things? ... Why do you deliberately take from the bright sky this sorrow which should need no cure?" (V.2, p.191)

It is the force of Shura in the world that he speaks of when he bewails that "Whatever I do I just can't move / that huge dark thing"(1) And in To My Students he says "science is still dark / and only guarantees us suicide and self-abandonment," indicating that science has so far failed to uncover the design of the Universal Will in the world.

Certainly, even if concepts of light and dark in Kenji's poetry could be proved to have a consistent significance, it must be a more complex one than simply 'light equals fourth dimension, dark equals Shura'; for in certain instances the use of light and dark imagery is a more ambiguous one, not easily relateable to the concepts of the fourth dimension and Shura. Yet it is safe to say that in many cases references to light and dark in the poems carry this underlying significance - the poem Spring and Shura, for instance, can be interpreted simply by reference to these two images, and such an interpretation tends to reaffirm on the level of light-dark imagery what the poem expresses in other ways. For Shura and the fourth dimension are ultimately

1. そのまま黒い巨きなものを／おれはどうも動かせない：みんな食事もすんだらしく。
not so much abstract concepts as direct perceptions, and as such are subtly present throughout Kenji’s poetry.

If one were to attempt to place Kenji’s religion in the context of Western religious thought, it may be seen that his position is very close to that of extreme Fundamentalism. In the sense that in the very essence of the truth, for one of the doctrines of Christian Fundamentalism is that the Bible is the sole repository of the truth, the sole and absolute authority of position which cannot hardly be applied to Kenji’s religion, with its emphasis on everything being in question until proven true, and opposition to reliance on details of authority. But if “Fundamentalism” has been taken to mean a literal interpretation of the Scriptures, then there is perhaps some validity in applying the term to Kenji’s relationship with Buddhism, and especially the Tantric section.

Kenji see more than literal. He may deny some things exist, but he does in fact exist. Literally all the elements of existence are actually “somehow above mind and speech.” When the Indian Buddha proclaimed that everyone will attain enlightenment, it is not to mean in sense experience that Kenji accepts that only will happen. He is that life and sense

The Tantric sect of the Buddha, responsible for explicit the sect’s teaching, is not some mysterious or unknown form, but that is not to assign a name to it.
CHAPTER XVI - CONCLUSION

If one were to attempt to place Kenji's religion in perspective against its background of the Buddhist tradition, the clearest statement of his position is perhaps that he was an extreme fundamentalist. In one sense this is the very opposite of the truth, for one of the doctrines of Christian Fundamentalism is that the Bible is the sole repository of the truth, the sole and absolute authority - a position which could hardly be applied to Kenji's religion, with its emphasis on everything being in question until proven true, and emphatic non-reliance on outside authority. But if 'fundamentalism' is taken to mean a literal interpretation of the scriptures, then there is perhaps some validity in applying the term to Kenji's relationship with Buddhism, and especially the Lotus Sutra.

Kenji was more than literal. Not only does the Shura realm actually exist, but we are in fact in it. Likewise all the other realms of existence are actually there "somewhere above some star"\(^1\). When the Lotus Sutra proclaims that everyone will attain enlightenment\(^2\), it is not in some future existence that Kenji accepts that this will happen, it is in this life and even "in this decade of the 1920s"\(^3\). In the primary revelation of the Lotus Sutra the Buddha proclaims that "I exist in the world forever"\(^4\), and to this can be traced Kenji's belief in the

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1. Manuscript version of 北いっぱいの星ぞらに。
2. For an account of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, see Appendix A.
3. ダリヤ品評会席上。
4. 常に此に在りて滅せず： 如来寿量品第十六。
existence in the world of "something like a Universal Will which
wants to bring about true happiness for every living thing."(1)
The realm of enlightenment and eternal life which the Buddha
promises is no less than the fourth dimension of this world.
Abstraction and symbolism play no part in Kenji's understanding
of the Buddhist truth. It is either literally true or it is not
true at all. And if it is literally true then it can be proven to
be true by scientific method.

But this is where the parallel with fundamentalism ends. It
is interesting that in the history of Japanese Buddhism the
Nichiren Sect comes closest to being the equivalent of Christian
Fundamentalism.(2) Nichiren took at its word the Lotus Sutra's
statement that it is the sole repository of the truth, and took it
at its word when it proclaimed that in order to attain salvation
one need only adore this sutra. But this is exactly the kind of
blind faith that Kenji rejected. If what the Lotus Sutra preaches
is the truth, then it is so not because it is the Lotus Sutra
that preaches it but because it actually is the truth. And there
is as yet no proof of this.

"Science has not yet reached
a schema of the ancient ten realms
intuited by sages.
Will I finally die
before I am able to definitely confirm or deny them ?"(3)
(V.4, p.282)

1. Letter quoted in Chapter X page 108.
2. For an account of Nichiren's beliefs, see Appendix A.
3. あかるいひるま。
This is his ideal position, the difficult and courageous attitude of suspended faith. And, paradoxically, it was only because his faith was so strong that he was able to take up this position. For he firmly believed that science will be able to prove these things true, and once they are proved true they will be manifestly true.

But it is on the question of faith in and reverence to the Lotus Sutra as the one and only means to salvation that Kenji differed most completely from Nichiren. The truth, the means to 'salvation', can only be found through one's own efforts.

"If it could only be known that this is truly right, that it would truly extinguish the suffering of these people, then they would not bow down here; they would suddenly rise up saying 'where are the gods and bodhisattvas outside our own will and endeavour ?"(1) (V.4, p.634)

Japanese Buddhism is broadly divided into two types - tariki (他力), those sects which believe in the attainment of salvation from without, and jiriki (自力), those which believe that one attains salvation through one's own efforts. The Zen Sect (禅宗) typifies the jiriki school, with its rigorous meditation practice, and the Amida (阿弥陀) and Nichiren Sects belong to the tariki school of Buddhism, believing that faith, in Amida Buddha or in the Lotus Sutra respectively, is the only means of attaining salvation. If Kenji's religion were to be considered

1. Manuscript version of みんな食事もすんだらしく。
a form of Buddhism, it is with the jiriki school that it would be placed. Dependence on the 'other' (他) was something he firmly rejected. It is only by our own efforts, "our own will and endeavour", that salvation will be attained for everyone. We must create the new age ourselves, and rely on no outside help in our efforts. At the end of Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art Kenji says: "When we have understood, we will discard this treatise too. / Ultimately, these are only the thoughts of Miyazawa Kenji in the year 1926". Though he points the way, the Way consists in everyone finding it for himself. It is only through summoning our own energy that we can summon the energy of the Universal Will. The 'other' does not exist - it is ourselves.

When we realize this we transcend our own limitations. We must each individually become part of the universe, become stars - "first let us all become shining atoms of the universe and scatter in the directionless sky. / Moreover, we each separately feel. We each live individually and differently." We transcend Shura by extending ourselves until we are the universe, not by extinguishing ourselves to merge with it.

The extraordinary poem Haratai Sword-dancers more than any other single poem depicts the struggle, the energy and the power that is involved in transcending Shura.

1. 理解を了へばわれわれは斯る論をも棄つる／畢竟こそは宮沢賢治一九二六年のその考があるのみである。
2. 農民芸術概論綱要。
O dancers of Haratai village
tonight under the strange-clad crescent moon,
hooded with black tail feathers
flashing long single-edged swords!

0 my friends, warriors of the atmosphere
wrapped in rope and the boddhi tree's bark
hurling Spring's magenta sap
into the hardship of alpine farming
offering to the plateau's wind and light
fire the colour of living morning glories!

Fathers of pious years,
deepening the blue stretch of the upper atmosphere
gathering in the grief of oak and beech
hanging lanterns on the Serpentine Mountains
lashing the hair of the cypress
blazing a new nebula
in the quince-scented sky
dah-dah-sko-dah-dah
grinding skin into humus and soil
coarsening sinew and bone into cold carbonic acid
eager each month for sunlight and wind.

Tonight, festival of galaxy and forest,
sounding your drums still more strongly
to the level plain's horizons
reverberating the dim moon's clouds

Ho! Ho! Ho!

Once the evil king Akuro of Tatta
lived in a hat-black two mile cave.
Dreams and black night-demons passed there.
His head was cut off and pickled.

Andromeda too sways in the lanterns.

This blue mask this dazzling show
gasping breath as the long sword bathes
spider dance beneath the night wind
stomach spewed and gurgling...
Crossing your swords exactly anew
dropping the blue fire of thunderbolts
beckoning the night demons of the four quarters,
o men of this night when even sap shakes!
Fluttering your red robes on the earth
celebrating hail clouds and wind.

dah-dah-dah-dahh

The night wind roars the cypress tosses
the moon pours down rows of silver arrows.
Whether striking or perishing, the life of a spark
before the clash of swords has faded.

dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-sko-dah-dah

Swords are lightning, rustle of reed heads,
Milky Way where Leo's rain of fire
has vanished and left no trace.
Whether striking or perishing, one life.

dah-dah-dah-dah-dah-sko-dah-dah."  (V.2, p.105)
APPENDIX A: RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

At the age of nineteen, while still at High School in
Moritsuka, Minoru Sanji was converted to the Nichiren faith
of the Nichiren Sect (日蓮宗). He had been brought up in the
New Pure Land Sect (净土宗), but although his father in
particular was a religious man, and sometimes took Sanji with
him to the local sect meetings, religion played but a minor role in
his life before his conversion. Conversion is not a common event in the case of Japanese Buddhists,
(nor indeed in Buddhism in general), for it is by the whole of
Buddhism a tolerant religion, and although the various sects may differ with
one another in interpretations and expositions they generally co-exist
quite amicably. There is on the whole no systematicity of the
missionary zeal and dogmatism found in the history of Christianity,
but the faith of the Nichiren Sect to which Sanji was converted is
the exception to this general rule.

The sect is named after its founder Nichiren (日蓮),
whose strange career sets the tone of the sect's peculiar brand
of Buddhist faith. Nichiren was the son of a Nogi, and at
an early age he entered a monastery of the Tendai Sect (山岳宗).
The Tendai Sect was the major Buddhist sect in this period and
had been so for several centuries, its gigantic temples stood
on Mount Hiei playing an important role in the political history
APPENDIX A - RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND

At the age of nineteen, while still at Middle School in Morioka, Miyazawa Kenji was converted to the *Lotus Sutra* faith of the Nichiren Sect (日蓮宗). He had been brought up in the New Pure Land Sect (净土真宗), and although his father in particular was a religious man, and sometimes took Kenji with him to the local sect meetings, religion seems not to have played any significant part in Kenji's life before his conversion.\(^1\)

Conversion is not a usual thing in the case of Japanese Buddhism, (nor indeed in Buddhism in general), for it is on the whole a tolerant religion, and although the various sects may differ with each other in interpretations and emphases they generally co-exist quite amicably; there is on the whole no equivalent of the missionary zeal and dogmatism found in the history of Christianity. But the faith of the Nichiren Sect to which Kenji was converted is the exception to this general rule.

The sect is named after its founder Nichiren (1222-1282), whose strange career sets the tone of the sect's peculiar brand of Buddhist faith. Nichiren was the son of a fisherman, and at an early age he entered a monastery of the Tendai Sect (天台宗). The Tendai Sect was the major Buddhist sect in this period and had been so for several centuries, its gigantic monastic complex on Mount Hiei playing an important role in the political history

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1. See Sakai Chuichi's discussion of religion in his early poetry: 境忠一・訳伝・宮沢賢治・桜楓社・東京・1965。
of the country. But it had become in many ways a decadent religious sect by the time of Nichiren, with a proliferation of tenets and practices, the emphasis being most often on form rather than content. Nichiren quickly grew discontented with this form of religion, briefly sampled others such as the popular Amidist faith, and at the age of seventeen "committed myself to a vow that I would study all the branches of Buddhism known in Japan and learn fully what their diverse teachings were". (1) (2) This he proceeded to do, in the monastery of Mount Hiei, for the next ten years. What he concluded was that "the truth of Buddhism must be one in essence" (3), and that the book which contained and in fact was this essence was the Lotus Sutra.

The Lotus Sutra was the most important scripture of the Tendai Sect, and to this extent the new sect which Nichiren founded was an off-shoot of Tendai Buddhism. The Lotus Sutra purports to be the sermons delivered by the Buddha in the last days before his death, and as such is revered by most Mahayana Buddhists. In many ways it epitomizes certain aspects of Mahayana Buddhism, in its emphasis on the Bodhisattva ideal, in its supernatural presentation of the Buddha, and above all in its doctrine of universal salvation. Seen from the Theravadists' (4)

1. All quotations from the writings of Nichiren are taken from Masaharu Anesaki, Nichiren the Buddhist Prophet, Harvard University Press, London, 1916.
2. Ibid., p.13.
4. Theravada, or Hinayana ('Small Vehicle') Buddhism, is the southern school of Buddhism found in India and southern Asia. It adheres more strictly to the original Buddhism propounded in the Pali texts, and rejects the innovations of northern Mahayana Buddhism (see note 2 page 5).
viewpoint, the *Lotus Sutra* preaches a doctrine which diverges in the extreme from the orthodox and 'original' Buddhism as taught by the Buddha himself, and the author of the *Lotus Sutra* seems to have been almost uncomfortably aware of this. In Chapter Two the Buddha reveals that all his teachings until now have been only partial truths, 'tactful means'.(1) He now intends to proclaim the Ultimate Truth, but hesitates to do so because "My Law is subtle and inscrutable; / those who are haughty / on hearing would not believe it respectfully".(2)(3) At this some five thousand members of the audience leave, and the Buddha proceeds to explain his Truth to those remaining, saying "now in this congregation I am free from (useless) twigs and leaves, and have nothing but all that are purely the true and real".(4) Those who leave are generally identified as the Theravadists, whose ignorance precludes their being able to hear the Buddha's Ultimate Truth, and the idea of 'tactful means' is constantly referred to and defended throughout the book, to justify the extent of the doctrinal divergence preached there.

The primary revelation in the *Lotus Sutra* is that of the eternal existence of the Buddha Sakyamuni (the historical Buddha),

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1.  方略：also translated as 'skillful means'. The idea is essentially that of gradations of truth, only partial truths being revealed to those who are still relatively ignorant.
3.  Ibid.: p.41.
4.  Ibid.: p.43.
and many of the events described in the book are concerned with demonstrating this startling new truth. This revelation is commonly acknowledged to be the chief aim of the Lotus Sutra, and is the basis of its doctrine. It is in a certain sense reminiscent of Christ's identity as the Son of God, since the historical Sakyamuni, who appeared among mankind for their salvation, is revealed as a manifestation of the Eternal Buddha. (1)

This revelation leads on to the other important doctrine of the Lotus Sutra, that the Buddha-nature (佛心) is in fact inherent in all living beings. As Anesaki explains it:

"So long as the Buddhists regard their master as a man who achieved Buddhahood at a certain time, they fail to recognize the true person of Buddha, who in reality from eternity has been Buddha, the lord of the world. So long as the vision of Buddhists is thus limited, they are unaware of their own true being, which is as eternal as Buddha's own primeval nature and achievement. The Truth is eternal, therefore the person who reveals it is also eternal, and the relation between master and disciples is nothing but an original and primeval kinship." (2)

The chapter which above all embodies this doctrine is chapter sixteen, The Revelation of the Eternal Life of the Tathāgata (如来寿量品), and it is thus the most revered chapter in the Lotus Sutra. In this chapter the Buddha proclaims:

1. Another similarity with Christian belief unusual in Buddhism is the description of Sakyamuni as our father and master, as seen in the parable of the burning house (Ch.13) and the parable of the prodigal son (Ch.14).

"... I exist forever in this (world),
By the power of tactful methods
Revealing (Myself) extinct and not extinct.
(If) in other regions there are beings,
Reverent and with faith aspiring,
Again I am in their midst
To preach the supreme Law.
You not hearing of this
Only say I am extinct.
I behold all living creatures
Sunk in the sea of suffering,
Hence I do not reveal Myself
But set them all aspiring,
Till, when their hearts are longing,
I appear to preach the Law."(1)

This is the essential message of the Lotus Sutra, but a
great part of the sutra is taken up with extolling the virtues
of the sutra itself - extolling its power to save, and predicting
fearful torments for its detractors, since "essentially speaking,
all the laws belonging to the Tathāgata, all the sovereign,
divine powers of the Tathāgata, all the mysterious, essential
treasuries of the Tathāgata, and the very profound conditions of
the Tathāgata, all are proclaimed, displayed, revealed and
expounded in this Sutra".(2) It is common for Buddhist sutras
to proclaim the saving powers of the particular sutra, but the
Lotus Sutra does so particularly vehemently, and just as
vehemently damns unbelievers.

2. Ibid.: p.373.
"If any people do not believe in
And vilify this Sutra,
Then they cut (themselves) off (from) all
The buddha-seeds in the worlds ...  
They will degrade into animals ...
Constantly suffering hunger and thirst,
Bones and flesh withered up.
During life beaten with thorns
And after death, with potsherds and stones ...
Because of slandering the Sutra
Such is their punishment."(1)

Such passages sit ill with the Buddha's claim to compassion as his motive for preaching this sutra, his many statements that "all these living creatures are My sons to whom I will equally give the Great-vehicle, so that ... all gain Nirvana by the same Nirvana as the Tathagata"(2), or "the original vow of the Buddhas: / 'by the Buddha-way in which I walk, / I desire universally to cause all creatures / to attain the same Way along with me".(3)

This inconsistency, between the rhetoric and the message, was also typical of Nichiren. In chapters thirteen and fourteen respectively of the Lotus Sutra the Buddha proclaims to the attendant Bodhisattvas the ways in which they must preach the sutra. Chapter thirteen is entitled "Exhortation to Firmness" (勤持品), and in it the Bodhisattvas vow to preach the sutra in the face of all abuse and incomprehension. Chapter fourteen is

2. Ibid.: p.90.
entitled "Peaceful Training"(1) (安楽行品)，and here the Buddha counsels that anyone who would preach this sutra

" ... should disparage none,
and never for diversion discuss the Law,
Nor cause others doubt or regret,
Saying: 'You will never become buddhas'.
This Buddha-son in preaching the Law
Will ever be gentle, patient
And compassionate to all."(2)

Of these two injunctions, Nichiren seems to have vastly preferred the former. Gentleness and patience with the unconverted were never characteristics of his, perseverance in the face of abuse certainly was. In fact he came to identify himself with the Bodhisattva Never-Despise (常不輕菩薩) whose story is told in the twentieth chapter. This Bodhisattva (in fact a previous incarnation of the Buddha) suffered endless abuse because he saluted everyone he met with the words "I dare not slight you. You are all to become buddhas". (3) This belief in the Buddha-nature and ultimate salvation of everyone is the message of the Lotus Sutra, but for Nichiren this chapter's true significance lay in the abuse suffered by the Bodhisattva. For Nichiren suffered just such abuse and maltreatment at the hands of the Japanese nation, and in fact one could say that he went out of his way to provoke it. The story of his life after he left the monastery to preach his new faith involved repeated banishment from the

1. This is Anesaki's translation of the title, which seems to me closer to the original meaning than Katō's "A Happy Life".
2. Lotus Sutra: op.cit.ps.280-1.
capital, for his primary aim was to convert the leaders of the nation in order to save it from destruction, and the vehemence and lack of tolerance with which he went about this task enraged those in power. He himself claimed that he was "perhaps the most intractable man in Japan" (1), and those he denounced no doubt agreed.

Nichiren believed that the Lotus Sutra was the sole repository of the Truth, and was in fact the Truth itself. He took literally the passage in chapter three where the Buddha proclaims

"This vehicle is wonderful,  
Pure and supreme;  
In all the worlds  
There is nothing more exalted;  
It is that which the Buddha rejoices in  
And which all living creatures  
Should praise,  
Worship and adore". (2)

This, along with the numerous discourses on the salvation to be attained from believing this sutra, led Nichiren to the belief that all that was necessary to attain Buddhahood was to constantly chant the words Namu Myōhō Renge Kyō ("Adoration to the Lotus of the Perfect Truth"). "If you desire to attain Buddhahood immediately, ... trust yourself to the unique Truth. ... Devote yourself whole-heartedly to the 'Adoration to the Lotus of the


Perfect Truth', and utter it yourself as well as admonish others to do the same. Such is your task in this human life."(1)

To embody more concretely the great Truth worshipped in the worship of the *Lotus Sutra*, Nichiren in his later years devised a mandala consisting basically of an arrangement of the names of all the notable beings mentioned in the sutra. The worship of this mandala, along with the Sacred Title, and the injunction to promulgate the Truth to the four quarters, was essentially all that Nichiren required of his followers. Proselytizing was an important, if not essential, part of Nichiren's faith, for he believed that in these Latter Days of the Buddhist Law it was his faith alone which could save the people and the nation from destruction. He desired the suppression of all other forms of Buddhism, and saw as his primary task the conversion of the nation, whose guardian he conceived himself to be. "I will be the Pillar of Japan; I will be the Eyes of Japan; I will be the Great Vessel of Japan. Inviolable shall remain these oaths!"(2)

It was with this conviction that he constantly prophesied doom to the nation's leaders if they did not heed him, and the most famous example of this was his prophesy of a foreign invasion (foreshadowed in a passage of the *Lotus Sutra*), which in 1281 very nearly happened, in the form of the Mongol invasion. The fact that the invasion did not in fact take place, that the Mongol fleet was at the last moment destroyed by the 'divine wind', did not at all shake his faith, and he continued to cry

1. Anesaki; *op.cit.* ps.46-7.
2. *Ibid.*; p.73.
doom to the heedless nation. These vehement attempts to convert the nation were based not only on his belief that it would be destroyed if it did not acknowledge the Sacred Name, but also on his vision of the need to unify church and state:

"When, at a certain future time, the union of the state law and the Buddhist Truth shall be established, and the harmony between the two completed, both sovereign and subjects will faithfully adhere to the Great Mysteries. Then the golden age, such as were the ages under the reign of the sage kings of old, will be realized in these days of degeneration and corruption, in the time of the Latter Law". (1)

Although, especially in his latter years of exile, Nichiren set forth in letters and essays ideas about the nature of the Great Truth which show him to have been a profound and interesting thinker, his followers took their lead from his injunctions simply to worship the Lotus Sutra and to commit themselves to spreading the Truth. This simple faith which characterizes most members of the Nichiren Sect is summed up in the statement that the Lotus Sutra "is simply to be believed in and not understood at all". (2) As with Nichiren, so his followers too are extremely nationalistic, and much of their time is spent in attempting to convert others to the Faith. The sect was, at one stage of its history, one of the major sects of Japan, but internecine struggles and intolerance have meant on the whole that their numbers remain moderately small. Since the Meiji Restoration, however, a number of 'new religions' based on the

1. Ibid.: p.110.
worship of the *Lotus Sutra* have sprung from the Nichiren Sect, the largest of these being the Sōka-gakkai (創価学会). As with these later developments, the Nichiren Sect is essentially a 'popular' religion, based on simple faith, and its converts on the whole are from the lower economic groups, and from country areas, where much of their campaign work is concentrated. In the decades following the 1890s, with the resurgence of nationalism, the number of conversions increased dramatically, and Miyazawa Kenji was part of this wave of conversions to the Faith.
The idea of the Asura is a very ancient one, part of the complex Hindu mythology which Buddhism incorporated, and the ambiguities and complexities of the concept are typical of Hindu mythology. Historically, its origin has been traced back to Persia, where the principal god of the Zoroastrian religion was Ahura Mazda. 'Ahura' here denotes 'god', and in the early Vedic literature of India the word 'asura' was also synonymous with 'deva' (god). But here an interesting transformation occurs, for in the later sections of the Rg Veda the term gradually took on a directly opposite meaning, and came to indicate a kind of demon, an enemy of the gods. There are portions of the Rg Veda where the word was apparently used to mean either god or demon, depending on the context, but in post-Vedic literature it came to be fixed as 'enemy of the gods', and etymologically it was explained, perhaps in retrospect, as a combination of 'a-' (negative) and 'sura', the word which by then had come to mean 'god', as distinct from the 'anti-god' of Asura.

It is perhaps these complex and ambiguous origins of the word which gave the mythological Asura their strange position in Hindu mythology. For, as T.O. Ling points out, they were different in kind from the host of demons that inhabit Hindu mythology, far more intimately related to the gods and concerned

1. Pronunciation of the word varies with time and language. In Sanskrit texts it is 'Asura', as distinct from 'sura' meaning 'god'. In Japanese it became 'Ashura' which, by a convention of the language, was often shortened to 'Shura', the word which Kenji uses.

almost solely with the activity of the gods. In English the word Asura is usually translated as 'titan', but in the case of Hindu mythology at least, the term 'anti-god' describes them more exactly. Moreover, many myths in Pali literature refer to the fact that they were once among the number of the gods, but had 'fallen' to become "devas in opposition, or in revolt, or disgrace"(1). As T.O. Ling says, in discussing the mythologic history of the Asura: "It is not a case here that the word had changed its meaning and for that reason had to be applied to a different group of spirits; the popular idea was that the asuras themselves had undergone a kind of moral or metaphysical fall."(2)

The reason for this fall is variously explained but generally it is ascribed to their jealousy of the gods. Jealousy and arrogance are their main characteristics, and they are constantly and eternally at war with the gods, such battles being described again and again in the mythologies.

Buddhism inherited the Asura from Hindu mythology, and they kept their characteristic warring and jealous nature, and also often their close relationship with the gods. But Buddhism gave them further significance by making the realm of the Asura one of the six possible destinations of rebirth, along with the realms of the gods, men, beasts, hungry ghosts and hell. This is certainly a recognition of the symbolic significance of the Asura characteristics, but their position in the hierarchy of the realms is an ambiguous one. In the Mahayana Buddhism of Tibet

1. Ibid.: p.22.
2. Ibid.: p.22.
their realm is placed between the god realm (sura-loka) and the human realm (nara-loka), these three being considered the happier states of rebirth. This position in the hierarchy, just below the gods, is a natural continuation of their close relationship with the gods, but on the face of it it seems a somewhat odd position for the realm of rebirth caused by jealousy.

It is perhaps for this reason that in the six realms of Chinese Buddhism there was an increasing tendency to place the Asura realm below the human realm rather than above it, as the emphasis on their historical relationship with the gods was gradually lost. In the Buddhism of Japan the hierarchy of the six realms is always gods, humans, Asura, beasts, hungry ghosts, and hell, and there is sometimes doubt that the Asura realm should really be included at all. Its importance is minor compared with that of other realms, notably those of hell and the hungry ghosts. Even Chih-i (智顗 (J. Chigi; 538-97)), the founder of the Tendai Sect, who wrote profusely of the characteristics of the various realms of rebirth, gave the Asura realm short shrift in his writings. In general it could be said that the importance of the Asura declined the farther they evolved from their historical and mythological origins.

The characteristics of the Asura, however, did not undergo much change. From the arrogant and jealous anti-gods of Hindu and Pali mythology, at constant war with the gods, their realm

1. 天上・人間・阿修羅・畜生・餓鬼・地獄。
came to be characterized in Mahayana Buddhist mythology as the realms of jealousy and anger, and of incessant warfare. The Bardo Thodol, or Tibetan Book of the Dead, describes the Asura-loka as the realm of intense jealousy, and warns that those who fall into it "have to engage in unbearable miseries of quarrelling and warfare,"(1) and this description is true of the idea of the Asura realm in Mahayana Buddhism generally.

In Japan, which inherited its Buddhism from China, the position and significance of the Ashura was essentially the same, but the significance of the Ashura realm increased in the popular imagination from the late Heian period onward, as a consequence of the bitter warfare going on at that time. Several times, diarists and chroniclers(2) of the period refer to the shouts of battles with the gods in the Ashura realm being heard in the human world. 'Ashura' became a frequent epithet for a bloody battle at the time of the prolonged civil wars. The statement of Kenreimon-in (建礼門院) in the Tale of Heike (平家物語), in describing the battle between the Heike and the Genji clans, is typical. "The din of battle was heard day and night; our men looked like Ashura in a constant fight against Taishaku(3) (帝釈)."(4) 'Battle' and 'Ashura' became almost synonymous after this time, in the popular imagination at least, and among the earliest records of No performances is a temple play

2. For instance 明徳記.
3. Indra.
performed in the early fourteenth century, of a battle between the Asuras and Taishaku. Plays depicting the Ashura seem to have been common in early Nō, for ancient Shura masks have been found, and Zeami refers to Shura Nō as being in its current form an uninteresting type of performance.\(^1\)

But Zeami saw the dramatic and symbolic possibilities of the theme. He raised Shura Nō to one of the five basic types of Nō play, and wrote a number of beautiful plays of this category himself. He chose to ignore the earlier theme of the Ashuras' battles with the gods, and concentrated instead on the popular idea that those who met an untimely death in battle suffered the agonies of eternal warfare in the Ashura realm. In Zeami's Shura Nō such a warrior returns as a ghost to tell of his sufferings in the Shura realm, forced endlessly to repeat the battle in which he died. A Buddhist priest who witnesses his suffering prays for him, and the warrior thereby attains Buddhahood. Shura Nō is also known as 'warrior Nō' (軍体), and the importance of Zeami's treatment of Shura lay in his focussing on the human element of the suffering of the warrior in Shura, rather than on the wild and superhuman battles of the Ashura themselves, as the original plays had done. In Nō plays the warring nature of the inhabitants of the Shura realm is emphasized, and rebirth there is ascribed to untimely death in battle. Rather than the strictly Buddhist, Shura as it appears in Nō reflects the popular conception of it at the time, but Zeami used this popular mythology to bring the Shura

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1. これまた一体の物なり。よくすれども面白き所稀なり。さのみにはすまし
きなり：
風姿花伝第二物学条々。
realm into a closer relationship with human experience than it had ever had before.

It was of course realized, at least in the more thoughtful Buddhist sects, that the six realms are essentially aspects or tendencies of our own psychology. The Tibetan Book of the Dead, in the introductory instructions to the dead concerning the visions of the realms that they will hereafter encounter, makes understanding of this fact essential for liberation. "It is quite sufficient for thee to know that these apparitions are thine own thought-forms ... If thou dost not now recognize thine own thought-forms ... the lights will daunt thee, the sounds will awe thee, and the rays will terrify thee. Shouldst thou not know this all-important key to the teachings ... thou wilt have to wander in the Sangsara". But perhaps the most highly developed, and certainly the most interesting expression of this idea, is to be found in the Tendai theory of the realms of reincarnation, developed by the sect's founder Chih-i in the sixth century. He created a form of meditation (Ichinen Sanzen: 一念三千) which recognised all the realms of rebirth as aspects of the mind, and he emphasized the interchangeability of their various natures and the interdependence of their existence. His theory was that there were not simply ten realms (the traditional six realms plus four realms of enlightenment in this case), but that within each of these realms all ten are present. The whole span from hell to

Buddha is found within any given realm, all creatures are equal through their possession of all the potentialities from Buddha to hell, and all these are within us at any one moment.

This, on the contemplative Buddhist level, allows the Ashura realm (among others) its place in the human world, as did Zeami’s No on the level of popular belief. Yet Shura still remained essentially a minor aspect of Buddhist mythology and it was Miyazawa Kenji who lifted the concept to its most intimate and profound relationship with the human world, applying it to human experience on a level even more immediate and fundamental than Zeami had done, and adding new dimensions to its significance within the Buddhist hierarchy.
The town of Hanamaki where Kenji was born in 1896 was a small, rather insular town which served the surrounding farming land, and to a large extent derived its economic existence from this land and the people who farmed it. The land was poor, the climate bitter in winter (being in the northern part of Honshū, and an inland area), and the weather unpredictable. The life of farmers throughout the country was, and always had been, one of poverty and hardship, not so much because of problems of land and climate as because of the severe taxation they were subject to throughout Japanese history, and because of social inequalities. The Meiji government was no exception, for though it dramatically restructured most of the economic and social traditions of feudal Japan, it failed to alleviate the plight of farmers in any real way. And in the area where Kenji was born and spent his life, this economic hardship was accentuated by a poverty of soil and harshness of climate that made the situation of the local farmers often particularly desperate.

Given this situation, Kenji was lucky to have been born the son of a town-dweller rather than a farmer, for, although far from rich, the townspeople lived a life of relative comfort. And in fact the Miyazawa family was one of the more well-to-do in the town. Kenji's father was a pawn-broker, and in that poverty-stricken area such a profession paid quite well. But Kenji later felt a deep sense of guilt for his father's profession, since he

1. This account is largely based on the outline of his life found in 宮澤賢治全集第十三巻, 筆摩書房, 東京, 昭和十六年, page 285f.f.
understood that the family in fact made its living as a parasite on the poor, exploiting their poverty and increasing their suffering.

Kenji was the eldest son of the family, and after him came two girls, a boy and then another girl. It was the eldest daughter, Toshiko, who was his closest companion. After attending primary school in Hanamaki for six years, he entered secondary school at the age of fourteen. Hanamaki did not, at that stage, cater for more than primary education, so Kenji was forced to board in Morioka, a larger town to the north, and attend secondary school there. Apart from being expelled from the school dormitory for some misdemeanour, his life continued to be unremarkable. He spent much of his spare time wandering in the mountains, cultivating an interest in plants and rocks, and began to write tanka (1) at the age of sixteen. (They were, on the whole, of rather poor quality).

In 1914, at the age of eighteen, he graduated from secondary school, and it was a few months later, when he was barely nineteen, that he first read the copy of the Lotus Sutra in his father's library, and trembled with joy as he read. Not much direct evidence of his conversion appears in the tanka of the period. In the following year he entered Agricultural College in Morioka. Accounts of him here (2) show him to have been a dedicated follower of the Nichiren Sect.

1. See note 2 page 2.
2. See accounts of -- and others, quoted in Chapter II
After three years of hard study at the Agricultural College, Kenji graduated in 1918, but chose to stay on there as a research student. He studied geology, soil and fertilizers, and these subjects (and indeed science in general) fascinated him. This work culminated in a soil survey of the surrounding district, and when this was completed he bowed to the fate of eldest son, and returned to live at home and work in his father's shop. Here he remained for the next two and a half years, unhappy and frustrated both in his work and in his relationship with his family, for he was committed to the Lotus Sutra faith of Nichiren, and therefore to the task of converting those around him. Nichiren had always claimed that one's primary duty was to convert one's parents, and Kenji concentrated his polemics on his parents. His mother appears to have agreed to his demands, no doubt in order to maintain the family peace rather than from any real conviction on her own part, but the quarrels with his father were long and bitter. For his father staunchly maintained his long commitment to the New Pure Land Sect (净土真宗), a faith based on the worship of Amida Buddha, and he countered Kenji's arguments with arguments of his own, until the family was in despair.

Kenji never succeeded in converting his father, and he regretted this deeply. But despite his father's animosity, his commitment to the Lotus Sutra faith steadily deepened during the years he spent at home. In 1920 he joined the religious group called Kokuchukai (1). This was one of the new groups which

1. 国柱会 : 'Society of the Pillar of the Nation'. 
developed in the late nineteenth century from the Nichiren Sect. Essentially its faith did not differ from its parent sect, but it concentrated its efforts even more single-mindedly on conversion, and was, as can be seen from its name, fervently nationalistic. This fresh commitment made his home life even more frustrating for him, and in January 1921 he suddenly left home and went to Tokyo, where he presented himself at the headquarters of the Kokuchūkai and put himself at the service of the Great Cause.

It seems clear that this act signified for Kenji the commitment of his life to the Faith, and the rejection of his parents' wishes, which this decision forced on him, was very painful for him. Thus it must have been something of an anticlimax for him to realize, once in Tokyo, that he was simply one among many young converts down from the country. He stayed in Tokyo for nine months, working at a printer's shop cutting galley proofs, attending meetings of the Kokuchūkai at night and sometimes campaigning in the street with them, and spending all his free time in libraries. Four years earlier he had begun to write stories, 'children's stories' (童話) as they are called, and now he wrote feverishly, so that during his stay in Tokyo he accumulated a suitcase full of manuscripts.

But the struggle with his parents still continued. He was dependent on his father for money, and was constantly besieged with requests to return home to Hanamaki. In April his father came to Tokyo, and together they visited Kyoto. Although the
meeting was apparently amicable, Kenji remained in Tokyo. When he finally went home in September 1921 it was because of the illness of his sister Toshiko.

But somewhere during the course of his time in Tokyo he had apparently become disenchanted with the Kokuchūkai, for he left it soon afterwards. It has been suggested (1) that the reason was the group's ultranationalism, but in fact Kenji's break with the Kokuchūkai seems to have accompanied a significant change in his idea of what constitutes religious commitment. (2) Essentially he had until this time been a typical follower of Nichiren. In a letter to a friend, written from Tokyo, he says:

"Please believe in this sutra. All the Enlightened Ones (Buddhas) gained their enlightenment by means of this sutra. All morals, philosophies and religions come before it to worship and praise it. Only adore the name of this sutra, I beg you.

If you do not do so, then I cannot take a single step by your side. But if you do so, then even if you sinned and were sentenced to death I would still worship and praise you. (3) Please believe." (4) (V.13, p.217)

Another letter, also from Tokyo, contains this statement:

"It is absolutely not the case that every religion finally leads to the same place. Those who rely on mistaken

1. i.e. 島尾青史, referred to in 華徳宮沢賢治, op.cit.
2. See Chapter IV page 38.
3. This idea is based on the Lotus Sutra teaching that the Buddha nature is inherent in everyone. This passage and the one following contain the contradiction to be seen in both the Lotus Sutra and the teachings of Nichiren, between the positive doctrine of the Buddha nature and the negative attitude of intolerance.
4. 保阪嘉内安て, 大正十年七月下句。
faith will progressively become beasts, then join the ranks of demons, and fall into hell." (1) (V.13, p.210)

These two statements, characteristic of the tone of Kenji's letters of the time, make it clear that his faith in the Lotus Sutra was typical of Nichiren followers in its intolerance and belief verging on fanaticism. Yet it was only a few months after his return from Tokyo that he began to write the jiyūshi, which give expression to the very different religion investigated in the present work.

In December 1921 he began to teach at the recently-established Hanamaki Agricultural School, and here he continued to work for four years. His sister Toshiko died in November 1922, after a long illness, and Kenji's anguish at her death is expressed in the series of long poems he wrote about it (2); her death was the impetus for the agonized reappraisal of his religious ideas to be found in these poems.

While he taught at the local Agricultural School he continued to write both poems and stories, and in April 1924 he published at his own expense a thousand copies of the first volume of Spring and Shura. This publication made virtually no impact on the literary circles of the day - the only poet to acknowledge its worth was Kusano Shimpei (草野心平), though even he later pawned his copy of Spring and Shura! Kenji continued to

1. 宮本友一和, 大正十年三月十日。
2. 永訳の朝；続の針；無声懇乞；風林；白い鳥；青森棚歌；オホーツク挽歌；樺太鉄道；銅谷平原；噴火湾（ノクターン）；宗谷挽歌。
publish occasional poems in newspapers and magazines, but although he certainly intended to publish the second volume of *Spring and Shura* he was too poor to do so. In December 1924 he published (again at his own expense) a volume of stories entitled *The Restaurant of Many Orders*, and this was his only other publication in book form during his life. Needless to say, this publication also passed unnoticed.

It was in March 1926 that he resigned his teaching position, set up house on the outskirts of the town, reclaimed some unused land nearby and began working his own fields alongside the farmers. This decision was one which he had obviously been considering for some time - it is hinted at in poems written the previous year, (1) and from these poems we can gather that he fully understood the suffering which this decision would entail. The poem *Shadow from the Zone of the Future* (未来圏からの影), written in February 1925, is no doubt an expression of this.

"The snow storm is wild
and today another dreadful cave-in.
... Why do they blow the frozen whistles
so incessantly? ...
Out from the shadows and frightening smoke
a pale figure appears, staggering -
the ghastly shadow of myself
thrown from the icy zone of the future."  (V.3, p.178)

Kenji never clearly stated the reasons behind this difficult decision, but in the context of his religious beliefs they are

1. For instance, 南のはてが；異途への出発；はつれて転る手袋と。
obvious, for such a step was the final realization in his life of his dedication to the happiness of others, and he had long felt an obligation to atone in some way for his family's parasitic relationship with the local farmers.

Given the religious impulse behind his decision to join the farmers and share their life, it is not surprising that he brought high hopes to the task, despite his understanding of the struggles that it involved. Those hopes are nowhere more evident than in the series of lectures that he sketched out as Outline of the Essentials of Peasant Art and The Rise of Peasant Art (this being a more detailed series of notes.) Some of these lectures at least he actually gave to gatherings of the local farmers, but their stubborn indifference and often hostility soon brought an end to the enterprise. Instead, he concentrated his energies on the task of improving their lives in less rhetorical ways. He gave lectures on advanced methods of rice cultivation, on fertilizers, soil conservation and land management, and he set up the Rasu Farmers' Co-operative(1) in his home. Here he gave his lectures, at night after work in the fields, as well as advising the farmers on specific farming problems, and during the day he devoted as much time as possible to doing the rounds of their fields and advising them on the spot. The co-operative soon disintegrated, and he later set up a Fertilizer Bureau in Hanamaki.

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1. 羅須地人協会. His reason for choosing the name 'Rasu' is unknown, although, interestingly, its pronunciation is more or less the reverse of 'Shura'. It may have been taken from 'Rasukin', a favourite author. (Ruskin).
There is no doubt that his work brought some improvement to farming techniques in the area, which had as yet hardly been touched by modern agricultural methods. But he was fighting a losing battle in attempting to bring any real or lasting improvement to the quality of their lives. His main difficulty was their hostility and deep suspicion of him. They were for the most part uncomprehending and deeply distrustful of his motives, and hostile to his attempt to identify with them. The gulf between farmers and townspeople was of long standing, and their bitterness towards townspeople was directed at him. Kenji could hardly avoid being aware of this, and the sadness it caused him is one of the themes of his poetry of this period.

"If it's a vague antipathy and suspicion of all of us who have been to school, been brought up in town, have received a salary, then that's a hard thing to dispel."(1) (V.4, p.73)

It was certainly the strain and despair he felt from this animosity, as much as the hard physical work of farming itself, which broke his health. His poems from these years are increasingly full of the anguish of his relationship with the farmers - indeed, they could sometimes be said to verge on paranoia, if it were not that the situations they describe were quite probably real. (2) Struggle as he might, he never overcame this enmity.

1. 同心町の夜のあけがた。
2. For instance 皆むべき 「限」 辺当を食ふ。
"Yes, you people are you
and we are we ...
I bow my head again
beneath every despair and illness." (1)

By the third year his strength was failing. In the summer of 1928, when heavy rain was falling which threatened to flatten the crops, he developed pleurisy by rushing out into the storm to view the damage. He was forced to return to his parents' home to be nursed, but his illness showed little sign of improvement, and his active work with the farmers was at an end. The remaining five years of his life were spent, for the most part, in his bed or near it. At one stage (2) he revived sufficiently to try working as an engineer at a rock crushing factory which had begun in the district and for which he saw great hopes, and he even managed to travel to Tokyo on business in September 1931, but here he fell ill again and had to return home.

During this long period of illness he was far from idle. Farmers still visited him to ask his advice, and he devoted much of his time to going over his copious manuscripts and rewriting them. He had never, even when his work was utterly exhausting him, ceased to write poems and stories. Indeed, he carried a notebook with him wherever he went, and was constantly writing in it. His output was tremendous, and in the years of his final illness he re-worked much of his earlier writing as well as

1. 土も掘るだろう。
2. 1931.
continuing to add to the vast collection. What he wrote now was for the most part poems in the bungo\(^1\) style. With an awareness of his coming death, he had largely returned to orthodox Buddhism, as his last poems indicate, and no doubt he rejected many of the more unorthodox ideas expressed in his earlier work.

In September 1933, despite bad health, he attended a local shrine festival. The next day his illness became acute, and a day later, on 21st September, he died.

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1. See page 7.
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