

Ritual 7

Bacchae, Noh; Genji, Non-Zero

Presented by Roger Weir

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Transcript:

We come today to *Ritual 7* and this is the 20th presentation of this educational cycle. So, you can see how illusory time is. We've already done 20 presentations, which is 30 hours of material. We're almost a quarter through the entire cycle.

One of the qualities which helps us to keep track of reality is to follow rhythm rather than measurable time. And so, the very first quality of texture that occurs in ritual that is realistic is rhythm. You dance your action. And the dance of action is the rhythmic flow. And that that rhythmic flow not only flows as if it were a stream, as if it were a current, but when it encounters anything which exists it flows around rather than colliding with that thing, that object, flows around it. And as it flows around it, these molecules and atoms of the flow will flow around it, and the next ones will flow around it. And the continuous flowing around something is what gives it, is what delivers its apparency as a boundary, as a boundedness. It gives it the definition of something. And were there to be no flow there would be nothing. Because the identity of anything is just simply its boundary. And its boundary is really constituted by the ever ongoing and accrued boundedness, which is the flow that goes around it. And so, if you stopped the flow, everything that exists would vanish. Simply would not be there.

And so, in the High Dharma, the world is called illusion. Not because it's not real, but because its reality has a paired-ness where it also, in addition to existing, it does not exist also. So, a really careful 21st century mathematic that seeks to describe something will keep the description into the laminar boundary flow and leave the center of its content empty. So, it will not be

characterized by content but be characterized by its dynamic structure. Which is a differential conscious way of talking about time and space.

All of this becomes mysterious and elusive. And I can jack the language up at this stage to really just sing lyrically on a levels that maybe I wouldn't even understand.

But we're in an education. We're trying to learn how to learn. We're trying to be prepared to be prepared about this scale of actuality. And the scale has a complement to it. If something like the nucleus of an atom is taken in its own right, its resonance develop what is called, in mathematics, scalar. But if you take the line of development it develops a vector. And scalar and vector are a pair of ways of calibrating. The one is done on a presence like the nucleus of an atom. The other is done on the electron shells in their dynamic form. The one creates space, the other creates time. Time is a momentum. It's a movement. And one of the indexes of time is heat. How hot it is means how fast the molecules are moving. How, how fast the atoms are moving.

And so, there's such a thing as thermodynamics, which is different from mechanics. Mechanics is the old 18th century enlightenment conviction that something is and by God it will stay there unless it's moved. And you can know the causes of this. And give me another pint to explain this to the assembled. Whereas in thermodynamics, it's increasingly apparent that a apparency is not real at all. And at one time, in the salons of enlightenment England, where mechanics was ruling, there were a couple of dissenters named Berkeley and Hume who said, don't be so sure that what you perceive is real. It may not be at all.

And a good old Bishop Berkeley moved to the, the nascent American colonies for a while and became convinced that more than ever that the European stereotype of philosophy had missed something. And so, he wrote his own kind of dialogues about the arcane unravelling through the dialectics, where the dialectical concept vanished into the thermodynamics of the perceptual pursuit, and one ended up with empty hands. And someone like Berkeley was very convinced that this was very much in keeping with the way in which he understood divinity to be real.

Hume, on the other hand, who had looked very closely at history, especially English history, to get it down exactly right. Because as an intellectual Scotsman of an A plus, plus kind of a mind, he wanted to know exactly how this was. And he ground far enough, fine enough, to see that when you take a look at man, at human nature and you really look, all of the elements of apparency are time and space dependent, and they vanish without leaving a trace. And so, Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature* [*A Treatise of Human Nature*], huge tome. Almost nobody wanted to read it because it was very disappointing. It didn't support the opinions that one would hold as a bewigged, be-jugged, be-pinted elder and the British Society. It just didn't work out.

In the American colonies it matured finally, arcanelly in the magical personality of Herman Melville. And when Melville got the bit between his teeth he just tore into the fantastic cosmos that was beyond apparency, and he wrote *Moby Dick*. He wrote it in the western part of Massachusetts in the Berkshire Mountains. And when he would get so full of the magical elan of the ritual of doing something that was so sacred it wasn't even mentioned anymore, he would walk 5 or 6 miles through the Berkshires to go and visit the only man on Earth who could have understood him, and that was Nathaniel Hawthorne. Who was also writing in the Berkshires at the same time. And Melville dedicated *Moby Dick* to Hawthorne. Because he was the only human being that he knew that could listen to him. And thus, high dharma flow of laminar appearance vanishing into the mystery of nature.

One of the things that we use to hold the necklace of our Saturdays together is reading either *Moby Dick* or *The Odyssey* in a whole year long scheme. And we are at the 20th week, so this is the 20th reading assignment in *Moby Dick*, and it's called *The Sphinx*. Just a few lines from it. Chapter 70 of *Moby Dick*. "It should not have been omitted that previous to completely stripping the body of the Leviathan." We should imagine this whale next to the Pequod. And Melville is talking about how you deal with this whale. Now that you have him, what do you do with him? And this Leviathan, the body of the Leviathan, he was beheaded. "Now the beheading of the sperm whale is a scientific anatomical feat upon which the experienced whale surgeons very much pride themselves in not without reason. Consider that the whale has nothing that can be properly called a neck." You can see the Zen in Melville right away. "In fact, on the contrary, where his head and body seem to join." Head and body, mind and body. If you're following, if

you're not following, get up to speed. We're talking about the mystery of nature, and that you think that nothing, nothing could be more objective than to be out there on the ocean, out of sight of land for a year or more. I mean, really out there. And the whale? What's more fiercely objective than the tonnage of a whale as big as the ship?

Contrary, where his head and body seemed to join there in that very place is the thickest part of him. Remember also that the surgeon must operate from above, some 8 or 10 feet intervening between him and his subject, and that subject almost hidden in a discolored, rolling, and oftentimes tumultuous and bursting sea.

I skipped down a little bit.

“When first severed the head is dropped astern and held there by a cable till the body is stripped. That done,” all the blubber, all the tissue taken off and boiled down in the tryworks. And Melville says, to make the oil that lights the night of men.

Held by a cable till the body is stripped. That done, if it belonged to a small whale, it is hoisted on deck to be deliberately disposed of. But with a full-grown leviathan this is impossible. For the sperm whale's head embraces nearly a third of his entire bulk. And completely to suspend such a burden as that, even by the immense tackles of a whaler this were as vain a thing as to attempt weighing a Dutch barn in a jeweler's scales.

You can see that Melville's sense of the ridiculous is one of the origins of the sublime humor of Mark Twain. The Western tall tale of Mark Twain has origins here in the incredible, felicitous as comparisons of Herman Melville.

A short space has elapsed, and up into this noiselessness came Ahab alone from his cabin. Taking a few turns on the quarterdeck, he paused to gaze over the side. Then slowly getting into the main chains, he took Stubb's long spade, still remaining there after the whale's decapitation and striking it into the lower part of a half-suspended mass, placed its other end crutch wise under one arm, and so stood leaning with eyes attentively fixed on this head.

Ahab, who is the epitome of the great epic tragedy. For *Moby Dick*, is one of the rarest things in world literature. It is a Greek tragedy put into a Greek epic form. No one ever had done that before.

When Aeschylus created Greek tragedy. And we're talking about Greek tragedy because we're using Euripides *Bacchae* as one of our pairs of books right now. And the maker of Greek tragedy, Aeschylus said of his work, my dramas are slices from the banquet of Homer. Homer's great epics, a pair of epics, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*. *The Iliad* of how you win by killing off all the competition. And too the impossibility of coming back home again, if you've done that. Not only can you not go back home again, but you cannot return to yourself.

And so, one of the epic foundations of classical Greek civilization was the conviction that man will alienate himself from his own person and life if he succeeds at being just man. There is something incredibly titanic about man, and his predatorial condition of winning eventually backfires on himself because he wins even at the expense of killing himself. And so classical Greek civilization had a very odd situation in it. It was the birth of the tragic view of life. There had never been a human population who had had that before. It was new. It was new under the sun.

We'll come back to that in just a moment. But let's finish with Melville. Here is.

It was a black and hooded head. And hanging there in the midst of so intense a calm it seemed the sphinxes in the desert. Speak, thou vast and venerable head muttered Ahab. Which, though ungarnished with a beard yet here and there lookest hoary with mosses. Speak, mighty head, and tell us the secret thing that is in thee.

Ahab who wants to kill Moby Dick. Not just because he took off his leg, but because he has become the grandest demon of the entire planet. And that men like Ahab prided themselves on a seafaring civilization that Melville says these Yankee whalers considered all the oceans of the world their private pond. No one else in history ever sailed the entire planet with the grace and the success of the American whalers. The Pequod's voyage was going to be three years, and it

was a normal voyage to go for a thousand days on all the oceans of the world and come back with all the stuff.

So that Ahab is this prideful archetype of a man whose civilization has arrived, and the entirety of nature are their private playground. We own the seas. But the head mysterious denizen of that watery realm was the whale. And *Moby Dick* was the demonic phantom king of that whole population. And so, Ahab wants to kill that king to erase that competition. To get rid of that mystery of life which cannot be controlled.

And so, he queries this head at the 20th reading of *Moby Dick*, chapter 70, *The Sphinx*. He queries the, the Sphinx and the ocean desert. Who are you? What is inside of you?

Of all divers thou hast dived the deepest. That head upon which the upper sun now gleams has moved amid this world's foundations. Where unrecorded names and navies rust and untold hopes and anchors rot. Wherein her murderous hold this frigid Earth is ballasted with bones of millions of the drowned. There in that awful water land, there was thy familiar home. Thou hast been where bell or diver never went.

And he goes on in this way, characterizing it.

Then some shipmate in the background says, "Sail ho!", cried a triumphant voice from the main masthead. Aye, well, now that's cheering, cried Ahab suddenly erecting himself while whole thunder clouds swept aside from his brow." And he asked where the ship is. And then Melville writes. He says,

Better and better man would now Saint Paul would come along that way. And to my breathlessness bring his breeze. Oh nature, oh soul of man, how far beyond all utterance are your linked analogies? Not the smallest atom stirs or lives in matter but has its cunning duplicate in mind.

So, if you want a Zen Greek tragedy epic, Melville will do.

Now, what's curious is that in the 150 years since it's come out, *Moby Dick* has been used as a text in English courses beyond number. And to use it as a text is a great disservice to Melville,

because it was not written as a text at all. It was written as the world's first Greek tragedy epic. It has nothing to do with textuality. The text, the idea of a text, is a smear from scholastic medieval times. Before there were texts there were books, and the Greek word codex was applied to them. But before they were codexes, there were scrolls. There were no books. There were no codexes. There were scrolls. And before that, there were simply lists that were carved on stone or written on papyrus. And before that there was just little magical signs put on the walls of caves 30 or 40,000 years ago. So that in all the transformations of written language that came to a symbolic focus, came to an integral that expressed itself in the codex, the text buried it in delusion. A text is a delusion that parades itself as real. And is a phantom play that seeks to distract us from the reality of the presentational symbol, which the codex is.

And it's very difficult to appreciate this and how dangerous this is but in the beginning of the 21st century, when computers are going to be terabyte powerful, and men will be able to write their text in such a complex mode that no one will be able to figure it out without at least having a 300 IQ. It's a very moot problem.

When the scholastic medieval schmear was applied to the codex men had forgotten what a codex was. They had become disinterested, disenchanted, with the difficulty of reading so goddamn many fat books. So little selections were taken out of these books that stood for those books. Little aphorisms. Little collections. One of the first such collections was made by a man who had such a harmless name, Peter Lombard. Peter Lombard's *Sentences* was one of the first texts. It was selections from all the great classics that you should read and should be told about in schools that taught people simply to behave. Isidore of Seville in Spain did another little compendia like that.

And these were the first text books and could parade as if they were learning. And after several hundred years, human beings in that part of the world, that whole swath of the world from Ireland to India, forgot what codexes were. Forgot what learning was on the level of Greek tragedy and Homeric epic. And would have not been able to even imagine a *Moby Dick*, much less a Herman Melville.

The teaching from the text in a scholastic mode is to explicate the sequential order for you, and eventually the order does not belong to anything real, but is a ground up pastiche, rearranged and rearranged and rearranged until you get a kind of a phantasmagoria that parades itself then as something. And it is this fractal chimera of the medieval compendia that is the basis for all teaching done out of a text. You, as students, are supposed to follow the teacher as he grinds his way scholastically through the text. You better be able to answer the questions. Yeah, regurgitate. Throw up. The vomit theory of learning.

What we're doing here is that we are constantly using pairs of books as if they were texts, and I never talk about them. So that the text is not there. And I'm all the time talking around as if it were there and that was our focus. And it's not ever there in that way. So, you get the hand stencil. You get the object content removed, but you get the activity as if it were still there. Why would I do this? Because our entire civilization, our entire inculcated educational system, our entire structure of apparent brain use as a mind, is all conditioned to this hypnotic, thousand-year baloney. It is an illusion beyond belief and cannot come unraveled by somebody just telling you that it's illusion. You would never believe it because you would not have the capacity to disbelieve on that level.

Now, the other book that we're using, *The Tale of Genji*, written a thousand years ago, Lady Murasaki, is a Japanese Zen epic that specializes in disclosing a realm that is as complicated as the European world by 2000. And constantly what's not there in *The Tale of Genji* is what really matters, and that is the reader. You are constantly addressed and shown all of this filigree of complexity of the court life. And all the time you are presented as if you were a reader who was a Zen master. And you are shown nuance after nuance and mountainous scale of detail after mountainous scale, as if you knew everything and were familiar and acquainted with all of this. And of course, no reader who ever read *Tale of Genji* really was. So, she's doing then what I'm doing now in this education.

Why, why would we do this? So that the attention veers away from the content and becomes a perceptively aware of the process that one is in. What is it that we're doing? And because the attentiveness goes to the process, goes to the action, the ritual existence blinks into reality.

Because the content is not really there. The object of focus is not really there. There's nothing to see. There's an emptiness where a form should be. But what is not empty is the laminar flow of the energy of discoverable boundedness occurring because there is a flow. It's just that there are no objects there.

Now, after Lady Murasaki Japanese Zen became infinitely subtle. As the Japanese will always do and always have done. They refine every aspect, every iota. And the entirety of the process of *Tale of Genji* was put into ten illustrations by a Zen master named Kakuan. It's called *The Ten Bulls*. I love this edition. It's printed in Riverside Printers on Columbia Street in Portland, Oregon, and it doesn't have any of the illustrations. I love it. God save me.

What's interesting is that Kakuan's *Ten Bulls* are a sequence of ten pictures. The first one is seeing the bull. And it goes through the phases of catching the bull, of taming the bull, of riding, the bull of identifying with the bull. And then in the ninth illustration, the page is blank. And the 10th picture is the rider, and the bull is going back into the village to, as the saying used to be in one of Jack Kerouac's poems. He went back to drink with the butchers. He went back just to living life again in the regular old way. But it was punctuated by the zero emptiness of a realization that punctured through the textuality of disbelief. So that nature's mystery was real again, and existence emerged quite real out of that mysteriousness. So that the oneness of ritual and the zero-ness of nature again made a binary that generated this whole horizon of experience, where we live humanly in our character.

It's what is pointedly not there that becomes of great interest in a ritual comportment that respects the mystery of nature. All good ritual does this. Just because. Kakuan's *Ten Bulls* does this in a Japanese sophisticated ten picture only set is just like the ultimate refinement of that. But all ritual does this. All men and women who have achieved a real life have understood that existence emerges whole out of the mysteriousness of nature, which is not there objectively.

And because it's not there objectively, what emerges can be there objectively. That if there were no difference between the form and the background, the form would never be able to emerge and be distinct. So, it's important for the background to really not be there. It's not being there as the

other side of a form being there. And when forms are able to be taken away. We talked last week about the Buddha calling himself the Tathagata. The ones who's tathata, who's suchness, was gone. That stenciled hand instead of the hand that's given an image. The no image hand is the one that writes in a differentially conscious way.

But the roots of that, the roots of it being able to do so, is that on the physical level, on the ritual level of action, that our cycle of action is able to make a laminar boundedness that comes back to exactly where it began. If it began with a point in existence, its definition would come back all the way to that point in existence again, and you would have the perfect boundary. The perfect definition. That's the source of illusion and the taproot of delusion. Because in fact, no point ever sustains itself stably independent of every other point. That's relativity. Nor does it sustain its presented-ness or represented-ness outside of the context of a background which is not there, specifically not there. So that the true beginning is an emergent threshold out of openness. So that good ritual, a good cycle, a good science cycle, returns you back to that threshold of emergence.

So that when you look at the primordial world that all human groups have used for creation, their words have something to do with emergence. That origin myths are emergence myths. That are originating rituals have something to do with emergence. They have to do with birthing or rebirthing. Not establishing something concrete and static. That's, that's rather puerile, it turns out. But the emergence. So that the emergence threshold, the way in which existence occurs out of not nonexistence, it doesn't occur out of its polarity. It occurs out of a phase which had its own way of being before the occurrence. So, at the Tao allows Tae to come out whole and doesn't charge at anything. Doesn't take any commission at all. And that the Tae, the one, has within its capacity the ability to expand its existentiality in terms of hidden orders of the zero. So that one can become ten. Otherwise, it would be impossible for it to do so. And ten can be 100. One can become a billion. And that expansion is a resonance of the laminar boundedness of it, which makes it not just apparent but quite real.

So that when you compute mathematically in terms of that you can actually apply that to the world of reality. And you can not only weigh oranges, but you can weigh photons. And you can

come up with exact figures. In nuclear physics, this is called quanta. As the particles that emerge out of a field. That field is an energy. And the quanta, the particles that emerge out of that, are like the rain of actuality. And it's in the nourishing fractality of that nourishment that man learns that his rituals must be real. They must reach out with hands that are shaped to respect the openness of the mystery of nature, and to receive. To receive what? To receive the ordinal powers of the unknown into what he can do. That's how we grow.

Let's take a break.

This is the last classical Japanese print. And it's by Yoshida, Hiroshi Yoshida. And it's called *Farm House*. And it's just an interior of a classic Japanese farmhouse, unchanged from the times of *The Tale of Genji*. This print was made three months after Hiroshima. 1945. The artist Hiroshi Yoshida had understood that there was a interchange going on between Europe and Japan. All of the Impressionists had collections of Japanese prints. Cezanne, Monet, all of them. So that the Impressionists learned from the Japanese prints. But the Japanese printmakers had learned from the Europeans. Hokusai learned a lot from the Dutch artists.

And when it came time for Hiroshi Yoshida in the 1920's, when he was trying to rediscover the classic ukiyo-e Japanese print that had stopped being made around 1858 because Japan became industrialized at that time. The Meiji Restoration. And they didn't want to have these provincial kinds of illustrations of a life that was no longer interesting to them. They wanted to be European again.

And so, in the 20's, when Hiroshi Yoshida wanted to bring back the classic Japanese print, especially the landscape. He didn't go to Europe, but he went to the United States. He came here. Because the great artist who had learned from the Japanese print in a new way was Frank Lloyd Wright. And Frank Lloyd Wright had a collection of 5000 Japanese prints at the turn of the century. And learned that there is in the magic of the Japanese print something called edibility. That the colors and the texture of the Japanese print were tasty. In the sense that one could almost have this as food. There was a magic involved, and Wright had learned to do that. And

Wright's renderings are very much like ukiyo-e prints. That floating world, which does not float on fantasy so much, but floats in the mystery of nature.

And so, Hiroshi Yoshida came to the United States not to come to the industrial United States, but he made Japanese prints of things like Mount Rainier and the Grand Canyon and El Capitan. He took the great American landscapes and put them into Japanese ukiyo-e prints.

So, it was especially difficult for him towards the end of his life when in the Second World War, Japan and the United States became bitter, polarized enemies. And the final Greek tragedy of that whole situation was Hiroshima and a few days later, Nagasaki. And in a way, Hiroshi Yoshida's farmhouse is a Japanese ritual compartment to go back at the time when the hospitals in southern Japan were full of hundreds of thousands of radiation burn victims. And the entire Japanese psyche was seared. Seared to such an extent that some nine years later, a film like *Godzilla* was the only way in which they could express the rage and dismemberment of what had happened to them as the first casualties of nuclear warfare.

Yoshida's print is the Japanese ritual way of accepting even that nuclear nightmare and reinstating by a repetition of something like *Farm House*. And one of the esoteric little bits in the composition of *Farm House* because this is after Cézanne, after Frank Lloyd Wright, is that the open door is one panel of the farmhouse wall, so that the outside world is just a panel of this infinite ritual Japanese. And the shape of this panel is the shape of the great capital floor plan of the Imperial City in Kyoto, which was copied from the imperial city in Chang'an. And if you turn it upside down the gate forms exactly the size and proportion and location of the Forbidden Palace in the sacred grounds of the capital Kyoto as the Tang and Han palace in Chang'an had formed. So that the open gateway is the way out of that kind of Hiroshima scarring of the psyche. Very sophisticated.

And we have to expect that cosmic persons are delicately nuanced into infinity, that one is presented with incredible delicacies of truth and actuality. And it's not at all clumsy.

There is in our education this kind of filigree. This kind of delicacy with strength. We're pairing *The Tale of Genji* and Euripides *Bacchae* not in any textual way at all. And we're doing a double mutation because we're not using a text, but we're not even using a codex. We're using pairs of codexes, which is a double mutation. We're using the non-image, and we're using a new flow. A new energy flow. So that the non-image is luminally bounded by a new kind of complexity, a paired-ness called, in our time since Niels Bohr put it into nuclear physics, called complementarity.

What is in complementarity? Reality. And what is in complementarity in reality is that there is an integration and a differentiation that occur in a rhythm, and that the most primordial fact of that rhythm is breathing. You breathe in and you breathe out. And that rhythm is a time-honored classic of yoga. Prana. And the balance of breath in the rhythm of prana allows one to give a presence enunciation that takes sound into language. Makes words out of what only would be cries.

So that there was a great puzzle anatomically in paleontology. A while back. A couple of decades back. Where the skeletal remains of early forms of us. Early forms of man before Homo Sapiens. Before Homo Neanderthal. Back to Homo Erectus and beyond, into australopithecines and all of their phases. And what was a peculiar and noticeable is that the skeletal structure of our kind of being is essentially unchanged for several million years.

The great complete skeleton of young hunter boy from Africa found by Richard Leakey some while back. The Nariokotome skeleton showed a hunter who was about six feet tall, 17 years of age, and lived 2 million years ago and was a fantastic runner. Had a skeleton very much like ours. But that there was a noticeable subtle difference that in the thoracic area of the spinal column, our spinal columns are thicker in that thoracic range by quite a bit. The rest of the skeleton, the legs, the arms, everything else is roughly the same.

So, the question came up what goes on in us that would require a thicker spinal column in that area. And it was a woman who finally teased it out and realized that what happens in that area of the spinal column is the control of breathing, and the extra neural capacity there is to radically

alter the pace and speed of the rhythm of breathing, so that it can be altered 60 to 100 times a second. And that you need that kind of control and capacity to speak as we do. Otherwise, you couldn't modulate breath and sound in the right intervals to read out rapidly as language. So that what has evolved is our ability to talk. But that ability to talk has come very recently. Whereas the deep wisdom of our species was originally and for millions of years not in what we said, but in what we did, and that we became wise out of what we did. And only later learned to speak and say it in that way.

And so, in our ritual section of our education, we're trying to shy away from ideas. We don't need them. We're trying to shy away, even from the meanings which language can put on it. And we're concentrating as much as is possible on disengaging all of these identifications, even to the point of disengaging identity itself as a trustworthy calibration upon which to measure our shaped-ness.

One of the deep convictions of high Dharma is that all sentient beings can be saved. Saved from what? Saved from their ignorance. Saved from themselves. Saved from the ignorance of identifying themselves with themselves. The map is not the territory said a man named Korzybski a long time ago. In the development of before Neurolinguistics, there was already that kind of an awareness.

When it came to understanding what was really going on with Greek tragedy the first penetrating intellect in European history to get it on a ritual level was Friedrich Nietzsche. And his first book on Greek tragedy came out in Europe 1872, *The Birth of Tragedy*. It was his first book. It was his PhD thesis, as it were. And he was deeply involved at the time with Richard Wagner.

Wagner, who was already a mature artist in taking all of the forms of art and putting it together into some master form. Wagnerian operas like a master form, archetypal form. Singing, dancing, costume, ballet, the whole thing, everything together. And Wagner wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* to sort of exemplify himself, especially to his friend, that he understood on this great level. He says in *The Birth of Tragedy*, talks about how this is a very peculiar achievement. That Greek tragedy was. And it came out about the same time. The Greek tragedy dialogue, dramatic form, came out

very much just preceding to the development of the philosophic dialogue in Plato. And he says, Nietzsche says, that something radically crucial happened to language. That poetry crashed. He says,

The platonic dialogue may be described as the lifeboat in which the shipwrecked older poetry and all its children escaped. Crammed together in a narrow space. Fearfully obeying a single pilot, Socrates. They now entered a new world that could never tire of looking at this fantastic spectacle.

And he talks about how Plato gave posterity the model for a new art form, the novel.

Which might be described as an infinitely enhanced Aesopian fable in which poetry is subordinated to dialectical philosophy, just as philosophy had been for centuries subordinated to theology a mere ancilla.

So, Lady Murasaki's great novel *The Tale of Genji* had precursors in the post Plato classical world. There were romances, as they were called, romantic novels at that time. And the most esoteric of all the romantic novels of the classical world was a novel by a man named Apuleius, *The Metamorphoses, The Transformations of Apuleius* [*The Golden Ass, Being the Metamorphoses of Lucius Apuleius*]. In *The Transformations of Apuleius*, the protagonist becomes a donkey and has to go through a whole segment of life being a donkey with a human intelligence. One of the world's first science fiction novels. And discovers by being a literal ass in a world of asses the peculiar quality of man lies in not what he is, but in the fact that he can transform. That he is never what he is. Is always potentially and possibly something other than what he currently today is. And therefore, man is a magical being is not a natural thing. Does not achieve reality in nature, achieves reality in the range of transformations which one undergoes. And so that a true spiritual life is enjoying a wide range of expansion, of resonances, of possibilities. We are possible spectrums of adventures without end.

Nietzsche goes on to say that in the development of Greek tragedy, there was a paradox because he's the first one to talk about Apollonian forms and Dionysian breaking of forms. And of course, you recognize in the, the Dionysian energy that in Nietzsche breaks forms, you recognize the differential. The integral and the differential. You would sometimes see in ancient

iconography, if you were to look at a magus from the Paleolithic era, they would hold like this that which comes together and that which goes out. That together in a ribbon of continuity, is the ribbon of breathing. This air comes in and becomes a part of me, and it goes out and carries something of me. And if I learn to speak, if I learn to modify the air going out from me into a language flow, that language flow carries part of me with part of the air in its exhalation cycle. And if I balance myself in an equilibrium.

It's a part of physics that is being explored just at the beginning of the 21st century, *Quantum Phase Transitions*. If you have this research came out of superconductor research. If you have a temperature which is as close to possible as absolute zero, so that you have a temperature, but it is so minute that it almost doesn't register, and yet one can call it a non-zero temperature. The threshold, the liminality, between absolute zero and the lowest nonzero produces an exotic magical realm of transformation. You have there something called metallic hydrogen. You have there a liquid helium that will crawl out of any beaker that you put it into. You have a magical world that Apuleius was at home in 1900 years ago. Those magic carpet transformations actually happen. Not only in that rare condition which can be reproduced in a physics research laboratory today, but 2000 years ago, could be reproduced in the meditative interiority of a mind held so completely in equanimity that it became a crucible for alchemical transformations, where consciousness noted the slightest difference of non-zero, non-zero temperature. Non-zero temperature, which is the beginning of movement because movement is only gauged by how hot atoms or molecules are, so that something happens. so that there's an action, a pragmatist, otherwise there's no movement, there's no time. It is a very peculiar realm.

And it's in that realm that we need to look when Nietzsche writes in *The Birth of Greek Tragedy*, “Here philosophical thought overgrows art and forces it to cling tightly to the bow of the dialectic.” He's saying all that's left is the process of discussion in the form of the dialectic. “The Apollonian tendency is cocooned within its logical schematism. Just as we found something similar in the work of Euripides, along with the translation of the Dionysiac into naturalistic emotions.”

Because you cannot notice this development if you look at Aeschylus or if you look at Sophocles. Aeschylus was generating the art form, and his artistry is impeccable. Sophocles is so equanimous that he handles the entire range without giving any indication whatsoever for analysis. Finally, the only thing you can do with Sophocles equanimity is appreciate its magisterial-ness.

But with Euripides for the first time, what comes into play are the little squiggles that are intentionally put there because he doesn't want to show Sophoclean equanimity or Aeschylean Artistry. He wants to disclose the fact that this bell doesn't quite sound right because it's fractured. And that that bell is the mind of the classical Greek pride. And that what was fractured in that mind was a conviction that it was perfectly real when it was identified in itself that A equals A. And that this is a terrible, terrible delusion.

And Euripides is the first Greek dramatist to use a structure that includes a pair of encapsulating, set making techniques that you do not find in Aeschylus or Sophocles or any other tragedian. He wrote a prologue and an epilogue. Euripidean drama, his Greek tragedy is specifically one of a context within a set that's parenthetical by design, that what you are seeing is not what you're participating in mystically as a ritual that really works in nature, but that this is an art form that has already suffered an abstract flaw and does not happen in nature at all. It happens in a mind which is already crazy in the view of an Apollonian appreciation, free in the appreciation of a Dionysiac perspective.

And the tragedy, the Greek tragedy, the Euripidean tragedy that does this is *The Bacchae*. Euripides takes the form of Aeschylean art Greek tragedy, and the beautiful refinement of Sophocles equanimity and he tears it. And he says here. Is the flaw in my play that's on this stage. What's the name of the stage? Is the Theater of Dionysus. Here's the classic study by A.W. Pickard-Cambridge, Oxford *The Theater of Dionysus in Athens*. Is there a design flaw in the theater? Is there a design flaw in the form of the Greek tragedy? Is it, where is the, where is this flaw as it occurs? I put it into this Greek tragedy, *The Bacchae* but the content of the Greek tragedy, *The Bacchae* is all about this flaw being in man in an archetypal way whenever he gets to the pride of thinking that he really is something which is identifiable. And the protagonist.

Notice even the terms protagonist, antagonist. There's a pro and a con. There's a protagonist who does the action. There's an antagonist that is against that action. It's like the pro and con of a platonic dialogue. The Socratic magus showed that it does not make any difference whether you take pro or con of any issue. As long as you follow it down the labyrinthine ways in a true discussion, you will find a quantum critical point beyond which only Aletheia, only truth, occurs. Truth, which is undividable.

So that Plato's dialogues are not so much a dialectic game as they are a source of ordinal division, reaching a point where paired-ness becomes singularity. That quantum critical point is the point where existence emerges out of the mystery of zero-ness. The place where the Parmenidean way reveals the harmony of Pythagoras. It's a very arcane. And if one wishes to follow it, you can do much worse than to follow the way of *The Birth of Tragedy* by Nietzsche.

What concerns us here is the way in which ritual by the slovenly way in which it has been considered for millennia, forms a baffle forever learning about learning. One never has a chance to, to learn by disclosure and by discovery. Only by identification, and by begging memory to serve as a wash maid. Because memory, then, is supposed to be something which you recall in the mind as if it were engraved on some kind of wax tablet. And all this, that classical art of memory from Cicero is a very misleading kind of Roman gulping of the true origins of memory. And we will find that next year that memory only operates differentially. It only uses ratioed reals. It never uses whole. And this is why memory has a mathematic to it. Whereas there is an arithmetic to imagery.

In the day of Lady Murasaki's *Tale of Genji*, at the founding of the great ability in Lady Murasaki to make a huge novel of the way in which the Japanese court reality, dynastic reality, was dissolvable almost instantly into a blizzard of moments that vanish in upon themselves. Creating the very real kinesthetic sense that what one was seeing was not real, but a floating world. A true ukiyo-e. That this human drama of the great authority of military dynasties and court life and pecking orders that made of the slightest infraction of the proper etiquette, it made one a barbarian who would be exiled to overgrown weed places. Whoops. This is an overgrown weed place to someone like that. We're just, we're just ghosts among skeletons.

Basho has a beautiful haiku in the *Oku no Hosomichi, The Narrow Road to The Deep North*, where he comes across this ancient battlefield. And he notices that in this rusted old warrior's helmet, some grasses, very tender, have come up through the eyes and are flowering there.

In order to not become huffy about who we are, of what we are. It's not just having a little pleasant sentimental reminder to be humble. Greek tragedy and *The Tale of Genji*, Euripides and Lady Murasaki, are paired because they remind us that there is a bowtie to the entire universe, not to become proud of appearance in place of the real. That the real includes always an equal capacity to dissolve whatever is made. Sheva not only makes but unmakes. Has a titanic capacity to dissolve, what do they say in the film *Alien*? I haven't seen an acid like this since Nucleic acid. Molecular acid.

We live in a time where all of the forms of civilization have already dissolved, and they are simply not there. We cannot count on them because they are not there anymore. But we have every capacity to remake from scratch whatever kind of forms that we need. But we need to remember, as Euripides and Lady Murasaki in their days, that this takes an actual activity. The beginning is the actual ritual activity. Not the thought of doing it. Not the personal prayer that it will happen, needs to happen. But the ritual activity of setting in motion. Setting in motion the interplay between mystery and emergence. And as long as that interplay is operative in a paired set, the binary encoding of actuality can be expressed. It is expressible. That's a promise.

So that when one looks back to see what was the, what was the prototype in Lady Murasaki's time that was very similar in Euripides time. What was the prototype of educational learning wisdom? It was always that one's own endeavor to study towards disclosure rather than to memorize towards rote, was the key threshold beyond which one got into the flow that made the very laminar boundaries of things real. Whereas the other eventually percolated down to into a pachinko game of polarities that increasingly become stupid. And there's a real box canyon in that.

Two things. One of the Japanese who went to Tang China and brought back, we talked about the Esoteric Nestorian Christianity, which was really a Hellenistic Judaism. That's why Nestorius

and his people had to leave the Byzantine Empire because they were heretics. They didn't believe the kind of state Christianity that had become de rigueur in the 400's A.D. They said, well, this has nothing to do with it at all. And in order to save their lives they fled into Central Asia. And in fleeing into Central Asia, by the time of the founding of the Tang dynasty, this great Nestorian monument, raised in Chang'an and carried to Japan and raised there in Kyoto.

And the man who did that is known in Japanese history as Kobo-Daishi is also known as Kūkai. This is a Columbia University Press translation of Kūkai's major works. Kūkai in this one *The Meanings of Sound, Word and Reality* written about 1300 years ago.

The Tathagata reveals his teachings by means of expressive symbols. These expressive symbols have their constituent elements in the six kinds of objects. These objects have their origin in the three mysteries of the Dharmakaya Buddha. The universal three mysteries pervade the world of Dharma and are perpetual. The existence with the fivefold wisdom and four norms comprises the ten worlds and misses nothing.

And this kind of language was there at the founding of Kyoto. Heian Kyo was the original name of the capital, and it was Lady Genji's clan, the Fujiwaras. Fuji means wisteria in Japanese. Mount Fuji is Mount Wisteria. Something beautiful is a, it is a beautiful form. And the Fujiwara clan were the ones who established the cultural high-water mark, so that when Lady Murasaki wrote, she was the creme de la creme of the spiritual aristocracy of Japan. Which is why her work had refinement within refinement and set a tone out of the style of appreciation.

Not religion, but appreciation for the mysteries of learning. In her time, there was the development of the great Tendai sect of Buddhism, which we talked about last week, of, of taking the Shinto shrines of nature and putting them into a Buddhist temple complex in such a way that the temple dissolved itself at the center and revealed only an openness of a shrine to a nature beyond the natural. And in this development of Tendai, the Buddha no longer became what had been the ritual Buddha or the mental Buddha of Asian tradition for more than 12 or 1300 years at that time. But became, Tendai sometimes is called the sect that deals with the Amitabha Buddha, the Western pure land. And [inaudible] you can find even these little

Buddhist catechisms now. Why are there Buddhist catechisms? Because in the center of Tendai, of Amida Buddha, Western pure land, there is a Hellenistic Jewish core. Which is in Christianity just as well. Which is in Islam just as well.

If you look at the great scroll that was done at the apex of Tang China, you see the Western Pure Land, and you see all of the figures, thousands of them are facing forward in little miniatures, and they are all studying. They are all reading. They are reciting. They are choral singing together. There's talking together. They all face out one figure and one figure only faces in. And the place where that figure sits in meditation...Quick huh? Facing in. If you stand back from the scroll, all the figures that face out make a meta outline of a face of a cosmic Buddha. And right where the mouth would be to speak in that cosmic Buddha is where the meditator is sitting in front of a gate, a threshold. Much like Hiroshi Yoshida's *Farm House* right after Hiroshima. That the way out is to go through this kind of threshold, which dissolves the difference between in and out. So that what happens, happens on a scalar level of harmony and doesn't need a time vector at all. And turns out not to need anything other than conscious space.

We're going to talk next week about how music, best of all, rhythmically brings us about.

Thanks.

END OF RECORDING