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Uchimura Kanzo's Love-Hate Relationship with the Word "Love"

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Abstract: As a Christian, Uchimura undoubtedly thought about, analyzed and discussed the concept of love. However, he recognized the difficulty in translating the word and the concept into Japanese. Uchimura stressed the importance of taking into account the close relationship between language and systems of thought. In this paper, Buddhist and Confucian history and culture surrounding the Japanese character and character complexes for love are introduced. The Buddhist character complex “katsuai「渴愛」” is shown to be fundamentally human-centered whereas Christian love embodies a transcendent element since love is seen as coming from God. The author also demonstrates that Uchimura’s negativity towards “emotional love” shows that he may have been influenced by the negative meaning of the Buddhist character complex “katsuai「渴愛」.” Uchimura uses several different variations on the Japanese character for love “ai「愛」” to try and encompass the nuances in the Christian sense of the word love. In trying to distance himself from “emotional love,” he adopted what he called “rational love” and in the end, this becomes strongly connected to morals but loses some of the transcendent nuance. In conclusion, Uchimura’s treatment of love has both positive and negative aspects but those aspects are the result of an attempt to bring new meaning into an existing Japanese term.

Key Words: Christian love, “jinjutsu「仁術」,” “katsuai「渴愛」,” “ai「愛」,” morals.

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Introduction

“*Love, duty, mind, soul, spirit* are other English words which express very much more than the equivalents we give them at present.”¹ In this statement, Uchimura Kanzo neatly sums up the problem that I would like to address in this paper. Without a doubt, as a Christian, Uchimura thought about and discussed the concept of love. And without a doubt, he ran into the issue of translation of the word “love” and all of its nuances. Obviously from this statement, he recog-

1 Kanzo Uchimura, “Advantages of English Language,” *Uchimura Kanzo Complete Works* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), 4: 208. Hereafter *Uchimura Kanzo Complete Works* will be referred to as *Complete Works*.

nized the difficulty presented for the Japanese equivalent “ai「愛」” to convey all of those nuances.

Uchimura clearly understood the relationship between language and culture and stressed the importance of taking into account the close relationship between language and systems of thought. He wrote, “An European thought can best be expressed only by an European language. To translate it to an Asiatic language is to large extent to Asiatize it; and in too many cases, the thought itself is lost in the medium that tries to convey it.”² In this paper, I would like to explore the historical and cultural background of the Japanese character “ai「愛」.” Then in the light of that background, I would like to uncover what Uchimura thought about the Japanese character “ai「愛」” and how he attempted to define it and use it in a way that related to the word “love” in the Christian sense.

1. Hint of the Problem

I discovered a hint of the problem concerning Uchimura Kanzo’s use of the word “love” during an examination of his work *Japan and the Japanese*. The results of that examination were published in the previous volume of this journal under the title “Uchimura Kanzo’s Use of Japanese Thoughts and Ideas in his Faith.”³ I would like to briefly discuss the problem of the word “love” as discovered in that paper before looking at the history and meaning of the Japanese character for love “ai「愛」.”

In “Uchimura Kanzo’s Use of Japanese Thoughts and Ideas in his Faith,” I investigated how Uchimura used Japanese thoughts in his works. I specifically looked at his English work *Japan and the Japanese*, in which Uchimura discusses the characteristics of five Japanese men whom he respects⁴. In this paper, I uncovered two important points. First, as a basis for human life, Uchimura emphasizes the following characteristics: loyalty, obedience, humility, sincerity, and independence. Second, as a basis for human life, Uchimura thought that these characteristics were common to not only Japanese and Western culture but to Christian culture also.

However, since *Japan and the Japanese* is a work in English, I was left with some doubts as to whether the characteristics Uchimura points out correspond directly in meaning and nuance to the Japanese characters for these qualities. There was one particular place that brought this issue to my attention. In the above-mentioned list of key words, arguably one of the most important Christian characteristics was missing, namely “love.” Of course, in a work about samurai such as Saigo Takamori and a founder of a Buddhist sect, Nichiren, you might think that

2 *ibid.* On the same page in this article, Uchimura also acknowledges that even though English may be great for expressing new ideas or thoughts, it might not be so great for expressing “old” Japanese or Buddhist ideas or thoughts, “Certainly we can think of no exact English equivalents for our *chu* (忠 loyalty) and *ko* (孝 filial piety).”

3 Michelle La Fay, “Uchimura Kanzo’s Use of Japanese Thoughts and Ideas in his Faith,” *Journal of the Graduate School of Letters*, vol. 3, Hokkaido University, March 2008, 77–86. <http://eprints.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/bulletin/let>

4 The five men are: Saigo Takamori, Uesugi Youzan, Ninomiya Kinjirou (Uchimura refers to Ninomiya as Sontok), Nakae Tojuu, Nichiren. In this paper, I will present Japanese names in the Japanese order, last name first.

it is only natural that the word "love," taken in the Christian sense, would not appear. However, in the chapter about Ninomiya Sontoku, Uchimura translates Ninomiya's phrase "jinjutsu「仁術」" as "art of love."⁵

I found this expression to be extremely interesting. "Jinjutsu「仁術」" means literally "the way to do 'jin「仁」" and Uchimura translated "jin「仁」" as "love" and "jutsu" as "art." "Jutsu「術」" is sometimes translated as "art" so this is not unusual⁶ but his translation of "jin" as "love" seems slightly strange. In the Japanese translation of this work, Suzuki Norihisa uses the character complex "jinjutsu「仁術」" for "art (s) of love" but in the one place where the word "love" is used by itself, he does not use the Japanese word "ai「愛」" but instead uses the character complex "jin'ai「仁愛」."⁷ "Jin「仁」" is commonly translated as "benevolence, charity, virtue" so why didn't Uchimura choose one of these words? Unfortunately we may never know why he didn't choose one of these words but we can look at the word he did choose.

2. History of the Japanese Character "ai「愛」"

The Japanese character "ai「愛」" has a complicated past and was not regarded with the same positive meaning as it is in today's society. "Ai「愛」" exists as both a noun and a verb. The verb form can be seen in the Chinese translations of Buddhist scriptures⁸. It is possible to trace the characters "ai「愛」" and "katsuai「渴愛」" back to their origins in Sanskrit (ṛṣṇā) and Pali (taṇhā)⁹. In Buddhism, "ai「愛」" has several different forms: love of self, love felt by being close to another person, romantic love, sexual love, and the blind, impulsive, clinging love that is compared to thirst¹⁰. By this definition, humans begin with self-love and progress in order through the different kinds of love until they reach "katsuai「渴愛」." However, love is not always seen in a positive light as "katsuai is the substance of human love but also the source of human suffering"¹¹ and humans exist in this catch-22 situation. Humans love because it is in their nature to love, and of course, loving involves feelings and emotions. Consequently, love causes humans to suffer by the pain of rejection, lost love, or the death of a loved one. Humans cannot live without love, and as a result they will also necessarily suffer. This is the vicious cycle from which humans cannot escape.

When this Buddhist concept passed through China, however, another dimension was added to the meaning. The character complex "jin'ai「仁愛」" was a translation with a clearly Confucist

5 K. Uchimura, *Japan and the Japanese, Complete Works* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982), 3: 233.

6 For example, "jutsu「術」" is used for art "bijutsu「美術」" or technique/skill "gijutsu「技術」."

7 K. Uchimura, *Daihyouteki Nihonjin*, 『代表的日本人』 trans. Norihisa Suzuki (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1995), 87.

8 Hajime Nakamura, "Ai no Risou to Genjitsu," 「愛の理想と現実」 in *Bukkyuo Shisou 1 Ai* 『仏教思想1愛』 ed. Hajime Nakamura, (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1975) 9-10.

9 *ibid.*, 4.

10 *ibid.*, 7. The character complexes for these forms of love in this passage are as follows: love of self (jiko ai「自己愛」); love felt towards another person (shin'ai「親愛」); romantic love (yokuraku「欲楽」or ren'ai「恋愛」); sexual love (aiyoku「愛欲」); blind thirsting love (katsuai「渴愛」).

11 *ibid.* Translation by La Fay.

bent. “Jin'ai 「仁愛」” represented “jin「仁」” the essence of love and “ai「愛」” represented the emotion. In this case, “jin「仁」” was seen in a positive light but “ai「愛」” was still not seen as positive¹². Consequently, the character and word “ai「愛」” was introduced into Japan with this negative meaning. However, in 17th century Japan, a more favorable opinion was formed by Ito Jinsai (1627–1705), a central figure in the merchant culture of that time. He rejected a division of the essence and the emotion and simply stated “Everything, from love comes.”¹³ Confucian scholar Kimura Kiyotaka also states, “The Confucian love is jin. [Love is] the concrete expression of jin.”¹⁴ With this very basic background knowledge about the characters of “ai「愛」” and “jin「仁」,”¹⁵ I would like to relate these concepts to Uchimura’s use of the word “love.”

3. Uchimura’s Use of the Word “Love”

When reading Uchimura, it is necessary to take into account his English and Japanese proficiency levels, and his extensive English education and foreign study experience in the States¹⁶. Ota Yuzo points out the following, “ (a) Uchimura’s English ability was at one time, equal to or possibly exceeded his native language ability and so simply even looking at this in a linguistic way, it was easier for him to write in English, (b) especially, when expressing certain matters, it was more convenient and more natural for him.”¹⁷ So when looking at Uchimura’s translation “art (s) of love,” the first thing that comes to mind is that he meant to write “act” but instead wrote “art.” However, due to the above observations and Uchimura’s languages skills, I believe this mistake can be ruled out very quickly.

Uchimura learned Confucian thought from his father, and at school learned Chinese characters so it is safe to state that he would have been familiar with terms such as “jin'ai 「仁愛」” and “katsuai「渴愛」.” As shown in the above section, both of these terms are loaded with specific Buddhist meanings which are not necessarily positive. So when trying to find an appropriate translation for “love” in the Christian sense, in neither Japanese nor in English is there an equivalent than can be separated from the standard word “ai「愛」” or “love.” This is in contrast to Greek, where there was an option for the authors of the Septuagint to choose the relatively neutral and unused “agape” over “eros” when describing “love” in the Christian sense. So Uchimura had no choice but to use the Japanese word “ai「愛」” and the English word “love.” Consequently he did and he seems to show no reluctance in using these words but in the context

12 Yoshiro Tamura, “Nihonshisou ni okeru Ai no Kannen,” 「日本思想における愛の観念」 in *Bukkyou Shisou 1 Ai* 『仏教思想 1 愛』 ed. Hajime Nakamura (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1975), 335.

13 *ibid.* Translation by La Fay.

14 Kiyotaka Kimura, “Jukyou ni okeru Ai no Taihi to Koushou,” 「儒教における愛の対比と交渉」 in *Bukkyou Shisou 1 Ai* 『仏教思想 1 愛』 ed. Hajime Nakamura, (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1975), 253. Translation and brackets by La Fay.

15 The actual path that these Buddhist concepts took and the changes that they underwent in Chinese and Japanese culture is far more complicated than the explanation undertaken in this main text of this paper.

16 Uchimura spent approximately three and a half years in studying in the United States at Amherst College and Hartford Theological Seminary.

17 Yuzo Ota, *Uchimura Kanzo — Sono Sekai Shugi to Nihon Shugi wo Megutte*, 『内村鑑三 — その世界主義と日本主義をめぐって』 (Tokyo: Kenkyuusha Shuppan Kabushikigaisha, 1977), 118. Translation by La Fay.

of his writings, there are indications that he did not like some of the cultural nuances that were attached to these words. Even though Uchimura did add some qualifiers to the Japanese "ai「愛」" he did not propose any complete alternatives as he did when he proposed that the name "Christianity" should be changed to "Crucifixianity" in order to purify the name of the religion¹⁸.

In Uchimura's writings, the word "love" appears in a large number of short articles. Although most of these were published in newspapers or his religious journals, they could probably be identified as "affirmations of faith." In other words, short statements of faith often made by church members in the course of worship, for example, "God is love" or "Christ is love." Uchimura's article titled "Waves of Love「愛の波動」" could be considered an example of an affirmation of faith.

A person feels the love of God, and he is inspired by this and loves himself, and he then feels love for another person, and that person is inspired by that love and again that person loves himself and again loves another person, love radiates out and stretches to the far reaches of the land, to the end of the world, and at once I too come into contact with God and I take that love into my heart and radiate that love across the land¹⁹.

It is clear in this case, that Uchimura is reaffirming his faith in God's love and is not making an effort to analyze the meaning of love.

In Uchimura's writings, however, there are also many examples of him explaining or analyzing God's love, Christ's love and human love. In "Misuji no Kinsen「三条の金線」," Uchimura explains the intimate relationship between faith, hope and love, what he calls "the three virtuous sisters." In this short work, he defines love in the following way:

The love in the Bible is not the love that people in this world think of, that is to say it is not the love that people have for other people, nor is it the love that people have for God, *the love in the Bible is the love that God shows towards people*²⁰.

From this definition, it is obvious that for Uchimura, love is not centered around human love. The concepts included in the terms "ai「愛」," "katsuai「渴愛」" and "jinjutsu「仁術」" are clearly human-centered. These concepts do not carry a transcendent element but instead deal with love among humans in a lateral sense. The Buddhist "katsuai「渴愛」" is something that is included in the lifelong human experience, but it is the kind of love that, ideally, humans should try to distance themselves from if possible. On the other hand, Christian love is understood as coming from God, so the ideal is for humans to accept this love into their hearts, and conversely if humans try to distance themselves from this love, then it could possibly become a sin.

18 K. Uchimura, "Crucifixianity 十字架教," *Complete Works*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982), 26: 3.

19 K. Uchimura, "Ai no Hadou," 「愛の波動」 *Complete Works*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), 13: 203. Translation by La Fay.

20 K. Uchimura, "Misuji no Kinsen," 「三条の金線」 *Complete Works*, (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), 11: 239. Emphasis Uchimura. Translation by La Fay.

Transcendent love that comes from God, as opposed to lateral love among humans, is an obvious fundamental difference between the Christian sense of the word “love” and the Japanese word “ai「愛」.”

In Uchimura’s discussion of the life of Jesus, a work called *Kirisutoden Kenkyu (Gariraya no Michi)*, he comments on various Bible verses from the synoptic gospels. Concerning Matthew 10: 37 which states, “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me,”²¹ Uchimura discusses what kind of love Jesus means. In this passage, Uchimura writes,

Here, Jesus is saying that if you can’t be obedient to me because of the *love* you have for your father, your mother and for children and women, then you will not be able to serve my will²².

At this point Uchimura clarifies the kind of love in this passage. He writes that the love of father, mother, children and women is “phileo, not agape. The former is emotional love, the latter rational love.”²³ The character complex Uchimura uses here for “rational love” is “douri no ai「道理の愛」.” Even though the character complex “douri「道理」” existed in the Japanese language previous to Uchimura’s use of it, when it is put in conjunction with “ai「愛」,” it is nearly impossible to interpret exactly what he means by this phrase²⁴. Although the precise meaning of the phrase remains unknown, the context is made clear in the next few sentences from this passage.

Uchimura states that this kind of “rational love” is superior to “emotional love” and uses the Japanese equivalent of underlining to emphasize the statement that Christians should be people of “rational love” rather than people of “emotional love.”²⁵ In an article called “Kirisutokyou Doutoku no Ketten,” there is a different passage in which Uchimura criticizes Christian love and goes so far as to say that Christian love makes people sissies²⁶. In fact, the title of this article translates to “The Faults of Christian Morals” and he asserts that the main fault of Christian morals is love. However, I would like speculate that in this statement, he is probably thinking

21 Michael D. Coogan, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*, New Revised Standard Version, Third Edition, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc., 2001), 22 New Testament.

22 K. Uchimura, *Kirisutoden Kenkyu (Gariraya no Michi)* 『キリスト伝研究 (ガリラヤの道)』 *Complete Works* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983), 27: 430. Emphasis Uchimura. Translation by La Fay.

23 *ibid.* Translation by La Fay.

24 The translation of this term is my own. Again, this term presents a translation problem so consequently, I must admit that this translation “rational love” may be insufficient for the meaning that Uchimura wished it to have. “Douri「道理」” in and of itself has various meanings such as logic, sense, reasonable, and rational. However, in this case I wanted to convey a kind of love that was in contrast to “emotional love” so I chose “rational love” for that purpose.

25 K. Uchimura, *Kirisutoden Kenkyu (Gariraya no Michi)* 『キリスト伝研究 (ガリラヤの道)』 *Complete Works* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1983), 27: 431. In Japanese books, often small circles or small triangles are used over the words to emphasize them, as can be seen in this example of the indicated passage. 「クリスチヤンは情の人であるより道理の人である。」

26 K. Uchimura, “Kirisutokyou Doutoku no Ketten,” 「基督教道德の欠点」 *Complete Works* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1981), 15: 303. See also Michelle La Fay, “Uchimura Kanzo’s Use of Japanese Thoughts and Ideas in his Faith,” *Journal of the Graduate School of Letters*, vol. 3, Hokkaido University, March 2008, 85. <http://eprints.lib.hokudai.ac.jp/bulletin/let>

of "emotional love" instead of his "rational love." From these two examples, I think that it is safe to say that Uchimura attempts to distance himself from the emotional aspect of love, at least when he is writing or speaking about it. This may be indirect proof that Uchimura was to some extent affected by the negative Buddhist meaning for the concept of love, namely "katsuai「渴愛」."²⁷

4. Connecting Love to Morality

As Uchimura strove to distance himself from the emotional aspect of love, ultimately he connected love to morality in a very concrete way. This is where the discussion of love comes full circle back to "jinjutsu「仁術」." Even though he states that the fault of Christian morals is love, as I stated above, I would like to propose that his translation of "jinjutsu「仁術」" as "art (s) of love" is his attempt to tie his "rational love" to morals, effectively negating this "fault" of Christian morals.

In section 2, I introduced a statement from Ito Jinsai, namely "Everything, from love comes." Ito sees "jin「仁」" summed up in the single word "ai「愛」." So in conjunction with this statement, he also states that "all moral deeds rise from love."²⁸ Returning to *Japan and the Japanese* and looking at the discussion of concrete examples of Ninomiya's "jinjutsu「仁術」," Uchimura uses the words "peasant-moralist," "moral-physician" and "moral diagnosis" to describe Ninomiya²⁹. It becomes clear that Uchimura is more concerned with Ninomiya's attitude rather than the deeds themselves. That attitude is undeniably moralistic, "morality first, then work."³⁰ Uchimura speaks of applying "jinjutsu「仁術」," these "art (s) of love," to a demoralized population. In this example, applying "art (s) of love," means of taking care of widows and orphans and through these "art (s) of love" Uchimura implies that the population will be *remoralized*. From these examples, it is not a far reach to say that the "love" in "art (s) of love" is not an "emotional love" but instead Uchimura's kind of "rational love." In fact, Uchimura praises one of Ninomiya's "art (s) of love" as "Bold, *reasonable*, inexpensive plan!"³¹ And perhaps this kind of moralistic reasonable attitude is precisely the kind of love that Uchimura would like to use to define Christian love instead of the faulty emotional Christian love he criticized.

There are two problems with this idea, though. The first is a discrepancy between Uchimura's and Ito's understanding of "jin「仁」." Ito saw "jin「仁」" the essence, and "ai「愛」" the emotion, as being a set. However, Uchimura seemed to take the older Confucist thought of a

27 This is not to say that Uchimura was deficient in any manner when it came to loving his family or friends. Although he does not come outright and state that he loves his daughter, Rutsuko, it is obvious from the way that he writes about her and from the accounts of his grieving at her death. His daughter, Rutsuko (named after the biblical figure Ruth) died of tuberculosis at the age of 18.

28 Y. Tamura, "Nihon Shisou ni okeru Ai no Kannen," 「日本思想における愛の観念」 in *Bukkyou Shisou 1 Ai* 『仏教思想 1 愛』 ed. Hajime Nakamura, (Kyoto: Heirakuji Shoten, 1975), 335.

29 K. Uchimura, *Japan and the Japanese, Complete Works* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1982), 3: 234, 241.

30 *ibid.*, 247.

31 *ibid.*, 234. Emphasis La Fay.

separate definition where “jin「仁」” the essence, is superior to “ai「愛」” the emotion. And it may have been on such a point as this, that Uchimura’s thinking was classified as being “old.” Ienaga Saburo criticized Uchimura,

If you look at it objectively, the only thing he did was to attempt to transplant into Japan something that had not existed before, a Western moral rigorism. He didn’t merely submit that rigor to the new morals that should have been constructed for the future, instead he borrowed past Confucist and Bushido concepts to explain, but this caused a confusion of important concepts, and that confusion became the basis for coloring what should have been his fresh rigorism with conservatism.”³²

However, Ienaga had the advantage of thinking about these concepts after thinkers of the Meiji era (1867–1912) had already struggled to adopt and define these ideas. It goes without saying that Uchimura did use Confucist and Bushido concepts to explain but I would propose that he did not stay just within that framework but worked to move beyond them. And as Uchimura tried to move beyond the typical or traditional meanings of words and concepts, his attempts were not always clear or helpful, as in the case of “douri no ai「道理の愛」.”

The second problem has to do precisely with Uchimura’s “douri no ai「道理の愛」,” “rational love.” If Uchimura was truly trying to integrate a transcendent element into the Japanese concept for love, then his translation of “jinjitsu「仁術」” as “art (s) of love” seems to lack that element since Uchimura is discussing a lateral connection between humans and the moralistic attitude that is needed for that connection. Hence Uchimura is left with a non-transcendent love which may have not been his intention.

5. Conclusion

The problem with translations and adoptions of words, characters, and concepts is extremely complicated and not always resolvable. As I have shown in this paper, Uchimura clearly has a love-hate relationship with the word “love” and the expressions of this conflict have produced some confusion as to his meaning. But that is not to say that a conclusion cannot be reached.

First, it is clear that Uchimura saw love as having a transcendent element, since love comes from God. This distinguished it from the traditional Japanese concept of love embodied in the character “ai「愛」.” However, with no possible alternatives to the character “ai「愛」” he attempts to bring that element into “ai「愛」.” Although it is difficult to prove this conclusively, I believe that his incorporation of that element into the Japanese concept was hindered by the negative Buddhist image of “ai「愛」” in the character complex “katsuai「渴愛」.”

Second, regardless of the cause, it is clear that Uchimura regarded “emotional love” in a negative light. This negative attitude does not seem to have been his attitude towards his family and friends, but instead appeared when he analyzed love in a public setting. Dissatisfied with

³² Saburo Ienaga, *Kindai Seishin to Sono Genkai*, 『近代精神とその限界』 Kadokawa Shinsho 8 (Tokyo: Kadokawa Shoten, 1950), 149. Translation by La Fay.

“emotional love,” he settles on a qualifier, namely “rational love.”

Third, this “rational love” can in turn be connected to his translation of “jinjutsu「仁術」” as “art (s) of love” by a moralistic attitude. In his discussion of “jin「仁」,” Ito Jinsai states that moral deeds come from love and it may be this kind of idea that Uchimura tapped into when he used the word “love” for “jinjutsu「仁術」.” The moral deeds that Uchimura attributes to Ninomiya are not unemotional but they are not of the emotional love that Uchimura regards as negative. Therefore I inferred that moral deeds would be more in line with Uchimura’s definition of “rational love.” Unfortunately in this situation, Uchimura loses any kind of transcendent tone that he may have tried to add to the word love.

As can be seen from the above discussion, Uchimura does not regard the English “love,” the Japanese “ai「愛」,” or the Japanese “jinjutsu「仁術」” as completely positive or completely negative. Instead his vacillation on the concept and meaning of love is not from indecision but from an attempt to bring new meaning into an existing Japanese term.

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