

PAINLESS CIVILIZATION 2

Masahiro Morioka



Painless Civilization 2

Painless Stream and the Fate of Love

Masahiro Morioka

Translated by Robert Chapeskie

Tokyo Philosophy Project

Tokyo

Painless Civilization 2: Painless Stream and the Fate of Love
Originally published in Japanese by Transview Ltd., Tokyo, in 2003
(ISBN: 978-4-90-151018-9)
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Published as an open-access PDF in Japan by Tokyo Philosophy
Project, Waseda Institute of Life and Death Studies, Waseda
University, Totsuka-cho 1-10-4, Sinjuku-ku, Tokyo, 1698050 Japan
www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/
ISBN: 978-4-99-086687-7

First edition: January 6, 2023

Cover design and cover photograph: Masahiro Morioka

Foreword to *Painless Civilization 2*

This is the English translation of Chapters Two and Three of *Mutsu Bunmei Ron*, which was published in Japanese in 2003. In this volume, I examine the problems of painless civilization from the perspective of philosophical psychology and ethics. I discuss how the essence of love is transformed in a society moving toward painlessness and how the painless stream penetrates each of us and makes us living corpses.

In order to tackle the problems of painless civilization, we must look inside our inner world because the “desire of the body” that lurks within us is the ultimate cause of our society’s movement toward painlessness. Love and the meaning of life are the central topics of discussion in the following chapters.

Because the original manuscript was written in 1998, the discussion of social issues may seem slightly dated, especially when it comes to reproductive technologies and juvenile delinquency, but I believe my central argument here has not aged at all; on the contrary, I think the times have finally caught up with my theory of painless civilization. I hope readers will join me in thinking deeply about the essence of contemporary civilization.

(*Painless Civilization 1* is available as an open access book: <https://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/painless01.pdf>).

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Afterword – 2023

Chapter Two

The Fate of Love in a Painless Civilization

1. The Emergence of Quality Control of Life

In this chapter, I attempt to dig below the surface of human psychology and consider the relationship between “love” and “civilization.” I take “reproductive technologies” and “relationships of intimate affection” as two topics to be examined to this end. I aim to approach painless civilization from a completely different angle than in Chapter One.

Self-domestication lies at the foundation of painless civilization. The most direct manifestation of self-domestication is eugenics. The eugenics advocated at the end of the 19th century by Francis Galton spread throughout the world in the 20th century. Its claim was that people with serious genetic diseases or mental disabilities should be prevented from having children in order to stop humanity’s quality from degrading.

In the second half of the 20th century, it became possible to determine through techniques such as amniocentesis whether or not a fetus has a congenital disability. In other words, it became possible to check the quality of a human life before it is born, and to give birth to lives that are desirable

and abort those that are not.

I would like to refer to the manner of thinking and acting in which the quality of the lives of fetuses is tested and their lives are selected based on the result as “quality control of life.”

Right now, the eugenics that began at the end of the 19th century is entering a new stage of development as this kind of quality control of life. This technology selects preferable babies, meticulously manages our health through testing and medical treatment, and manages the physical suffering and peace of mind of people in their final stage of life. Modern medicine has begun a transformation into a set of technologies that cleverly manage all processes from birth to death so that they fit within a framework of quality that has been planned and predicted in advance. This is progressing in accordance with the comprehensive management of society and “management of the Earth as a garden” (see Chapter Six).

The problem with quality control of life appears most radically when we selectively determine which children should be born. This is the problem of whether or not to abort a fetus if it is found to have a severe disability (selective abortion). As most people, somewhere in their hearts, harbor a desire for their child to be “of sound mind and body,” once they learn a fetus has severe disabilities they may not want to give birth to it. At the same time, however, they also have doubts about whether it is really permissible to erase the existence of the child growing inside them just because it has a disability. Their desire to have a child “of sound mind and body” and their desire not to erase the existence of a child just because it has a disability collide within them. (How to think about abortion itself, before bringing in the problem of disabilities, is already a difficult question. See Chapters Three

through Five of *Life Studies Approaches to Bioethics* where I examine this issue in detail.¹ Having to get an abortion is “sad and hard,” but ultimately the right to decide whether or not to have an abortion must belong to the woman in question.)

There is no small number of people who think that if their fetus had a disability they would have no other choice but to abort it. And when a severe disability is actually discovered through tests such as amniocentesis, nearly all parents do in fact choose abortion. The reasons given for this choice are, to begin with, “because a child born with a disability would be unhappy,” or, “because I would feel sorry for the child.” On an emotional level, in some respects this kind of response is understandable. People with disabilities themselves, however, have said they are not at all unhappy, and have argued that the real problem lies in a way of thinking that makes judgements about other people’s lives being unhappy or pitiable. If we dispassionately analyze the argument that disabled children will be unhappy, it turns out to be almost entirely unpersuasive (I discuss this in detail in *Life Studies Approaches to Bioethics*). Not only are its claims unconvincing, but there is also a danger that this way of thinking will paper over the egoism of a parent who does not want a disabled child.

What we must consider, on the contrary, is the various burdens that are placed on parents raising children with disabilities. Most people believe that raising a child with a disability in this society would be difficult and exhausting. The care of such children presumably requires “extra” time and

¹ Morioka, Masahiro. *Life Studies Approaches to Bioethics*, Keiso Shobo, 2001 (森岡正博『生命学に何ができるか』勁草書房).

money, and these demands gradually deprive their parents of their own time, or, in other words, of their own lives. People think this would be too much to endure.

But let us think about this for a moment. If this society became a fully equipped welfare state and parents were able to receive adequate support in terms of labor and money, raising a child with a disability would presumably not be so terribly difficult. If such a society were realized, wouldn't there be fewer people who don't want to give birth to a child with a disability because it would be too difficult? This implies that what is needed now is to change this society so that the burden of raising a child with a disability is roughly the same as that of normal childrearing. Both feminists and people with disabilities have called for this to be done, and I too approve of this approach.

But there is a further dimension to this problem. Even if a thoroughgoing welfare state is created, there will surely still be many people who do not want to give birth to a child with a disability. Even if society is transformed such that no excess money or labor is required, there will no doubt still be many people who think, "I don't want to have a child with a disability." This is the case because when such people don't want to have a child with a disability, what provokes this stance at its deepest level is not worry about having to spend money or effort. At its core, their objection comes from being unable to bear the irrational absurdity of the fact that they of all people should have to be the parent of a child with a disability. In other words, they cannot bear having their fundamental identity that undergirds their being — "I am such-and-such kind of person," "I am supposed to have such-and-such kind of life," "I am supposed to build such-and-such

kind of family” — and the life plan based on it destroyed by the birth of a child with a disability.

A desire to avoid choices that lead to greater burdens and a desire to avoid having one’s identity destroyed by a disabled child both lie behind the mindset of seeking to abort an undesirable child. What supports these two desires is the “desire of the body” that aims to live a stable life without destroying the framework of the comfortable state I enjoy right now.

Wishing to have a baby while preserving the framework of my current lifestyle, life plan, and identity is indeed a “desire of the body.” No matter how much I want to have a child, a child that would destroy my framework at its roots will not be welcomed.

2. Selective Abortion and Conditional Love

Of course, there are always the approaches of strengthening social welfare services to drastically lessen the burden on parents or directly questioning our identity that has existed until now. But the path taken by a society that is becoming painless runs in exactly the opposite direction. It is a path of reducing any hardship and suffering that may arise in the future while fundamentally continuing to satisfy the desire of the body. This is not a path of confronting oneself through facing hardship and suffering directly, but a path of removing any hardship or suffering from view and treating it as though it didn’t exist, or even a path of “preventive pain elimination” which preemptively eliminates the possibility of future suffering.

Let us examine this once more.

Why are most people not completely happy to choose selective abortion? To begin with, because we feel guilty about “abortion.” Although it has not yet become an individual human being, we are erasing the existence of the child growing inside a pregnant woman. This child, in the future, would have gone on to build its own life, but I am unilaterally nipping this possibility in the bud. I have painful feelings about this.

Next, I have painful feelings about the fact that I have thought, “The results of the assessment of the quality of the child that will be born do not align with my desires, so I do not want it.” This is the pain of having to look directly at myself as someone who has said, “You didn’t satisfy my conditions, so I don’t want you.” As for why this is painful, it’s because I have never thought of myself as the sort of person who would say such a thing. It’s because I believe that I am not a person who is so shallow and ignorant of love as to impose conditions on the existence of a human being that is to be born.

Choosing selective abortion is supremely agonizing because it tears down the image of myself I have created. Even though I am supposed to be someone who can love unconditionally, I cannot help behaving like someone who can only love another person if they satisfy certain conditions. This reality is shoved directly in my face in no uncertain terms, and it becomes abundantly clear to me that I am not someone who can truly love another person. The suffering this causes is profound.

If I have a child with a disability, my current way of life and identity will be destroyed. If I abort the disabled child, it becomes clear that I am someone who is ignorant of love. This is a structure in which I will suffer whichever path I choose.

The degree of suffering may of course differ depending on the individual, but most people who want to have a child without disabilities are forced to make their decision within this structure of suffering.

In order to eliminate this structure of suffering, however, painless civilization provides another option. Selective abortion is painful because when amniocentesis testing is done the fetus has already been growing for around fifteen weeks. Its mother can feel it moving, has morning sickness, and can see a human form moving around on an ultrasound. If she aborts such a fetus, she cannot easily escape the visceral sense that she is committing murder. If this is the problem, the solution is to have the abortion earlier. For example, if a small amount of fetal cells in a pregnant woman's blood can be tested and any disabilities in the fetus discovered at a very early stage, it is possible to abort the fetus when it is still very small and the pregnant woman barely feels its existence. Alternatively, if in vitro technology is used, fertilized eggs can be tested outside the woman's body to ensure she is only impregnated with those free of any disability, and there is no need for anything as barbarous as abortion. The fertilized egg is not yet a fetus, so she can presumably avoid any sense of having killed a being of this kind. The pregnant woman can get by with little burden or suffering. Fertilized eggs often end up being naturally miscarried without having been implanted in the womb, so she can think of this process as something similar.

This option a painless civilization provides us is clearly a method of "preventive pain elimination," in which a state of affairs that could give rise to suffering is identified in advance and the possibility of it occurring is eliminated ahead of time.

In this way, a painless civilization contrives to meticulously nip any causes of suffering in the bud before we encounter them.

The biggest problem with preventive pain elimination is not the fact that it deprives me of the possibility of suffering itself, but rather that it deprives me of the possibility of life. That is, it deprives me of the possibility of the process by which, confronted by suffering no matter which way I turn, I am forced to desperately question why this kind of suffering stands before me, face up to hidden aspects of myself I had avoided looking at directly, dismantle myself, and by doing so cause a renewed self to emerge. The problem is that it deprives me of the chance to transform into a new self by dismantling the old.

Let us imagine a society in which quality control of life has developed even further and undesired children have been cleverly and completely eliminated. Imagining such a future society should clarify what it is about the current progress in reproductive technologies that makes us fundamentally uneasy. In such a future society, dramatic advances in in vitro fertilization and prenatal testing and the widespread use of these techniques mean that almost all children have had the quality of their life tested before they are born. Safe genetic modification and fetal treatments are also widely employed. There are very few instances of abortion once the fetus has grown to any significant extent. They are eliminated at the stage of a fertilized egg or a very early fetus without placing any physical or emotional burden on their mother. Nearly all pregnant women give birth after having had their fertilized eggs tested and treated, this process being seen as akin to having regular checkups. If a woman gives birth without these

tests, no public assistance will be forthcoming.

Just what kind of society is a society maintained in this way? It is a society in which almost every person undergoes a quality control inspection before they are born, and are only brought into this world if they have met certain conditions imposed by their parents. A society in which almost everyone understands, as an unspoken assumption, that they would not exist in this world if they had not satisfied the conditions laid down by their parents and society. It is because I met these conditions that I was blessed by my parents and society and permitted to exist. And almost everyone I encounter in this society is another person whose existence has been permitted because they satisfied certain conditions. It is a society composed of people who possess this kind of awareness as an unspoken assumption.

These people encounter each other, become friends and become lovers. When they get married and want to have a child, they test their own fertilized eggs just like their parents did. Like everyone else, they will presumably implant a fertilized egg only after making sure it carries no elevated risk of a serious disability, genetic illness, or serious disease that would develop in adulthood. Their child will then be brought into the world having satisfied the conditions imposed by its parents and the common sense understanding of the general public of their era. The moment of birth should be a blessing for parents who have been wanting a child. But this is a blessing given only because the child has met certain conditions. It is a conditional blessing. It is a conditional approval of existence. And the parents do not find this strange; after all, they themselves were permitted to exist in the world in the same way, and their parents had also required

this kind of approval in order to be born.

In a society in which engaging in this kind of testing because everyone else does has become a matter of course, someone who rejects this testing and tries to raise a child with a disability even if it means refusing public assistance will presumably be seen as an oddity. Their choice is permitted, but they are viewed as strange or eccentric.

What do the people living in this kind of society think of this system? They think it is rational for nearly all undesirable children and children who would place an excessive burden on society not to be born. Children with disabilities who are born as the result of an error or mistake receive generous social assistance from society, and people who acquire a disability part way through life are also given ample assistance. As a result, people with a disability who already exist are not given unfavorable treatment. In this society, the argument against selecting babies based on whether or not they have a disability on the grounds that it would lead to discrimination against people with a disability who already exist has no validity.

The biggest problem this future society brings with it, however, is a fundamental sense that “I am conditionally permitted to exist in this society” that builds up at its deepest foundations. I have been given life conditionally; I was blessed because I satisfied certain conditions. This fundamental sense deprives human beings of a particular emotion: the feeling of love. To be loved is to be given the belief that your existence is affirmed by someone even if you do not meet certain criteria. The belief that my existence, simply being here, right now, in whatever state I may find myself, is being affirmed by someone else. To be given this kind of belief is to be loved.

This future society is one that systematically removes this kind of belief in love from the depths of every human heart. It is a society that minimizes suffering and burdens on the basis of the elimination of the possibility of love. It is a society in which everyone lives their everyday lives, forming human relationships and trying to preserve a stable way of life, while carrying deep within their hearts a vague unease: “It may be that I am not actually loved by anyone.” “It may be that I am not actually loved by anyone” is the fundamental feeling that lies submerged at the bottom of this society.

This future society is also one that neuters the meaning of loving someone. When a person is born in this society, they are allowed to exist under conditions someone imposes. At the birth of a human being, the most fundamental event for us, this society creates a system in which love does not extend to the person to be born. For people to be able to love each other, the way to unconditionally affirm the existence of another person must be passed down to the next generation as a kind of tacit knowledge, but in such a society this kind of transmission is critically lacking. As a result, people rarely see a person unconditionally loving another person, and rarely have a chance to learn the meaning of love. It is difficult for a person who has not received unconditional love to unconditionally affirm the existence of another person.

The sense that I might not be loved by anyone, put in different terms, is the sense that it might have been just as well if it weren't this “me” who existed here. Wouldn't anyone else have been just as good, providing they met the necessary conditions? There presumably isn't any solid reason that when my parents gave birth to a baby the person brought into this world had to be this “me,” because if I hadn't satisfied the

necessary conditions I wouldn't have been allowed to exist. The reason for my parents' choice was the conditions I met, not the fact that the baby was this "me." My existence would have been erased at that point, and another fertilized egg would have been chosen instead of me.

In other words, there was no one who had a strong desire for this particular me to be born. "The person existing here right now didn't have to be this 'me.' Anyone else would have done just as well if they'd satisfied the conditions" — this is a society in which this kind of idea settles at the bottom of most people's consciousness.

There is something we can come to understand by imagining this kind of future society: the biggest problem with the "quality control of life" currently being developed is that it deprives people of the "belief in love." This is what is hidden at the core of the indescribable sense of discomfort we feel toward selective abortion. This sense exists, to a greater or lesser extent, in the minds of those who support this practice. The critique of cutting-edge medical technology must begin with this point.

Of course, the practice of attaching conditions to those who are to be born has long existed within our society as an ancient, unbroken tradition that has been handed down to us. There are many examples of discarding children and "thinning out the herd." But now quality control of life is skillfully refining these sorts of undertakings, developing micro-technologies, and progressing to the point that it cannot be rolled back. And in doing so it is more thoroughly eradicating the "belief in love," something that has been difficult in every era, from the everyday world in which we live.

In my *Life Studies Approaches to Bioethics*, I describe

this “belief in love” with the expression “fundamental sense of security.” A fundamental sense of security is a social foundation upon which people can live their lives peacefully and meaningfully. It is something like trust or confidence in the world and a society that supports the existence of human beings.

Briefly stated, [a “fundamental sense of security” is] a sense of security that allows me to trust that even if I had been intellectually inferior, ugly, or had had a disability, at least my *existence* itself would have been welcomed by the world just as much as any other, and whether I succeed or fail, and even when I am old and frail, at least my *existence* will continue to be equally welcomed in this way. It is a sense of security that if I am ugly, people who focus on appearance may not like me, but my *existence* itself will never be rejected or erased. A sense of security that no matter what sort of person I am, I will never be looked at as “someone who should never have been born” or “someone who should just disappear” and treated in a corresponding manner. This is the foundation of life that allows people to maintain their sanity in this society.²

Quality control of life systematically erases this fundamental sense of security from society. This is the danger of this practice.

Here I am not claiming that in the past society was overflowing with “unconditional love” but today it has

² *ibid.*, p.344.

disappeared. Nor, of course, am I saying that we should return to a society of the past in which “unconditional love” was abundant. To make “unconditional love” possible, social and economic environments in which I can attain a minimum standard of living for myself even if I love someone without conditions must be put in place. In earlier periods such environments do not seem to have existed in very many cases. It can indeed perhaps be said that the progress of the modernization and movement toward painlessness of modern society has led to an increase in productive capacity and the emergence of a democratic society, and as a result the social and economic environments that would enable unconditional love are gradually being put in place. What I want to focus on is the question of why, in a contemporary society in which such environments should presumably have been realized to a greater extent than in the past, people still cannot escape from the practice of attaching conditions to love as they did in earlier times, and, on the contrary, are desperate to develop technologies that attach such conditions even more broadly. Looking at how we keep trying to add more and more conditions to love in spite of having become materially “affluent,” I cannot help but sense the existence of a force that cannot rest until “belief in love” is completely eliminated from human society at work behind the scenes.

As a result, in a society becoming painless, while the social and economic environments needed to love someone without conditions are gradually put in place, “unconditional love” and “a fundamental sense of security” are systematically eliminated, and “belief in love” is irreversibly snuffed out.

3. What is “Unconditional Love”?

There is no doubt that the problem of “love” lies at the root of contemporary society heading toward painless civilization. However, are we not adopting the attitude that talking directly about the “possibility” of love is somehow embarrassing and not worthy of discussion? By doing so, are we not trying to avoid confronting our own deepest quandary? When I see the strange antipathy of a certain sort of intellectual to people who talk about the possibility of love, I cannot help thinking this is the case. Erich Fromm writes about this kind of antipathy as follows. “There are others who share the opinion of the basic incompatibility between love and normal secular life within our society. They arrive at the result that to speak of love today means only to participate in the general fraud.”³

Of course, the reason for their antipathy is understandable. There is something suspicious about loudly voiced pronouncements of the possibility of love. There is a kind of indecency in attempting to use the word “love,” which no one can directly oppose, to forcibly bring people under our control, deprive them of the opportunity to argue against us, and dominate their inner spirit. It has the oppressiveness of a police force trying to strictly regulate the joy and sense of freedom of choosing a partner based on one’s own desires. I hate these sorts of pronouncements too. But while I am well aware of the oppressive aspect of talking about love, I don’t want to stop talking about its possibility; unless we open up a new way of thinking about love that is completely different

³ Fromm, Erich. *The Art of Loving*, Harper, 1956, p. 121.

from sermons handed down from on high we won't ever be able to escape from painless civilization, and if we cannot escape then we will go on sleeping forever, ensconced in pleasant unease and pleasure-filled repetition, in a "world without freedom" in which everything is permitted.

Moreover, from ancient times love has been preached within religions, but it is only very recently that love between individual people has begun to be spoken of in relation to our social systems. In this sense, painless civilization theory, too, is a product of modernization and the movement toward painlessness. We must look for a way to confront this painless civilization, while always remaining conscious of the fact that we ourselves are being swept along by its powerful current.

What is love? Thinking from the bottom of my heart "I care about you," "I want to cherish this person," or "I want to hold this child" is the first step toward love. But if you stop there, what you are feeling cannot be called love. In order to love someone, you must acknowledge, affirm, and give your blessing to that person's existence as something irreplaceable.

I will leave a comprehensive consideration of love to other books. In this chapter, my aim is to think about "attaching conditions to love" in a contemporary society that is moving toward painlessness. In what I have said so far there has been the implicit assumption that "conditional love" cannot be called love. But now I would like to remove this assumption, slightly expand the concept of love, and think about "conditional love" as a kind of love. I will try to show that there is a narrow path connecting "conditional love" to "unconditional love," and look closely at what it means to walk it.

Various approaches have been taken to discussing

“conditional love” and “unconditional love.” For example, Christian theology refers to unconditional love as *agape*, and takes this to be divine love. In contrast, the love between human beings, *eros*, is a love that places conditions on its object. In Christianity, the goal of human beings is to approach an *agape*-like unconditional love. It is also claimed, however, that one must have faith in Christ in order to do so; only once we have deep faith can we bless and accept other people just as they are, no matter what sort of people they happen to be. There are no doubt some people whose performance of such acts is supported by their faith. But is it really impossible to approach “unconditional love” in the absence of religious belief? In the field of psychology, Fromm asserted that a father’s love is “conditional love” while the love of a mother is “unconditional,” and that these two types of love are combined in a mature individual.⁴ Nowadays the necessity of “unconditional love” is often asserted in the fields of counseling and pedagogy.

“Conditional love” is my affirming your existence only if you meet certain conditions. As long as you do not go against my desires, I will accept you and give you my blessing. Conditional love in this sense is what lies at the root of selective abortion. Cutting-edge medicine is a form of technology that supports this kind of conditional love.

We who reside in a painless civilization try to acknowledge, affirm, and give our blessing to the existence of others as long as doing so does not destroy the identity, lifestyle, and framework of life we currently maintain. So what

⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 38-41.

happens when the existence of another person is such that it seems likely to tear down my framework, or destroy what I have built at its foundations? In this case, the “desire of the body” inside me rejects this other person. I do not welcome someone who seems likely to demolish my framework. What I want is an “other who will not destroy my framework.” Satisfying this condition is a prerequisite for “conditional love.”

The recommended human relationship in a painless civilization is a slightly distant “adult” relationship, built on manners and moderation, in which we accept other people’s existence as long as they do not destroy our own framework. Interacting with other people while maintaining a distance that ensures we will not unilaterally destroy their framework, and acquiring a broad-mindedness that simply endures the loneliness and emptiness this evokes without complaint, is called “maturity.” People who have the temerity to speak of things like “love” or “life” without having attained this kind of maturity are pitied as immature children and politely looked down on.

In a painless civilization, preserving my current comfortable framework is thus given top priority, and I seek to form relationships with another person only to the extent that this framework is not destroyed. When our conditions are not compatible with each other we try to adjust the details of our relationship without touching each other’s comfortable frameworks. When this fails, we dissolve the relationship. This is a relationship of love in which we take care to never tear down our partner’s comfortable framework and selectively provide each other with only pleasant stimulation.

What, then, is “unconditional love”?

It is an emotion that a painless civilization wants to avoid as much as possible, because it is something that carries within itself the destructive power to shatter our comfortable frameworks in a single blow.

When I love someone without conditions, no matter what sort of person that person may be, I acknowledge, affirm, and give my blessing to their existence. Even if they are not the sort of person I would have liked them to be, even if they are the sort of person whose existence shatters my framework, even if they are the sort of person whose existence will tear up my comfortable life and way of being from its foundations, I nevertheless acknowledge, affirm, and give my blessing to their existence. No matter how difficult or painful it may be, no matter how much it may make me cry out in anguish, I will never run away from this person in front of me, nor will I shut them away somewhere or terminate their existence. To “love without conditions” is to thoroughly adopt this kind of attitude toward the people who are important to us. Is it really possible to maintain this kind of attitude in a society that is moving toward painlessness?

Let us consider selective abortion as an example.

Say a disability has been discovered in a baby still in its mother’s belly through the use of prenatal diagnostic techniques. As I have already stated, almost all parents will choose abortion. In many of these cases, the parents lack the financial means to raise a child with a disability. That we cannot ignore the economic circumstances that arise within this society is something we must be careful to bear in mind; there are people who could not give birth to such a child even if they wanted to.

Having acknowledged this, what we must then consider

are the parents who give birth to a child in spite of knowing their fetus has a disability. After grappling with various forms of confusion, they decide to share their lives with their child, even if it has a disability, and with the support of the people around them go through with giving birth. These parents ultimately succeed in doing away with the “not giving birth if the child has a disability” condition. This is one form of “unconditional love.” This is very similar to situations in which there is an elevated chance of a child being born with a disability, such as when a couple has already had a child with a congenital disability or is past a certain age. Even in such cases, however, there are parents who intentionally do not have their fetus undergo prenatal testing. They have decided that whether their child turns out to have a disability or not they will accept either result. This is also a form of “unconditional love.”

These parents arrive at this kind of decision because they believe it is this accepting and cherishing the irreplaceability of a new being that is given from outside their own plans or expectations that leads to the dignity of life, and because this humble resistance to the “control of life” promoted by painless civilization is nothing other than the love of beings who have been given life in this world. Parents who have chosen “unconditional love” face the challenge of whether they can really create this kind of love between themselves and their child. The life they had planned has been thrown off course by the existence of their child with a disability; they have been completely deprived of their own time and mourn their own mental state and lifestyle that are becoming more disordered by the day, but in spite of all of this they still quietly affirm that their child’s having been born was in no way a mistake —

this is the core of “unconditional love.”

So what about the genetic manipulation of fertilized eggs and treatments performed on early stage fetuses? Let us think about this carefully for a moment. At some point it will presumably become possible to manipulate fertilized eggs and early stage fetuses so that children are not born with a congenital disease, or so that they are tall, intelligent, or beautiful (this is referred to as the “new eugenics”). When a fertilized egg or fetus is manipulated in this way, it must be periodically checked while it is inside its mother’s womb to make sure it is developing in line with its parents’ expectations. If it is developing as intended, everything is fine, but if it becomes clear that the child will not develop as desired, a difficult question arises. “Abortion” is of course considered as one option in such cases.

Saying, “We are going to abort this child because it is not developing into the kind of child we want” is the same as saying, “We cannot give this child our blessing because it does not meet our conditions,” so this is clearly an instance of “conditional love.” In contrast to this approach, there is also the option of accepting this child as a gift to be raised and cherished, because the being in question, while it might not be developing in line with its parents’ expectations, is nevertheless a precious, irreplaceable life. This second approach can be seen as an instance of “unconditional love.”

At this point the discussion becomes quite subtle. Even though they do not choose to have an abortion when things don’t go according to plan, it remains true that the parents manipulated the fertilized egg or fetus out of a desire to have this or that sort of child, and doesn’t this therefore mean that at that point they attached “conditions” to their child? Is their

having attached conditions at the starting point cancelled out by their later decision not to have an abortion? This is in fact a very difficult question.

Here I will simply state my conclusion, which is that I do not think choosing not to have an abortion cancels out having attached these sorts of conditions in the first place. Nevertheless, through the process of embracing a child that is not developing as intended with open arms, deciding to look at this child face to face and try to make a new start, loving this child as an irreplaceable being, and actually living one's life with its hardships and occasional joys, there is a possibility that what was originally "conditional love" will approach its direct opposite, "unconditional love." We must not overlook the slender path of possibility that emerges here.

If we look back to the case of normal selective abortion described above, the same argument also applies. To give birth only after finding out through testing that the fetus does not have any disabilities is an instance of "conditional love." Nevertheless, after deciding to give birth, in the process of accepting this child without conditions, resolving to live an irreplaceable life together with this child, and actually living out this life, there is a possibility that what started out as "conditional love" may approach the "unconditional love" that is its opposite.

To reiterate, while conditions were attached at the start, there is a possibility that, through the subsequent interactions with the child in question, the parents' love will approach "unconditional love." In other words, the fate of this human relationship as one of "conditional love" is not necessarily determined the instant a "condition" is attached.

Because most of us living in a society that is moving

toward painlessness have already had our way of thinking about things made painless to a significant extent, we are inclined to attach more and more “conditions” to children, and if we know that a child will be born with a disability we abort it, fearing that this will destroy our current comfortable way of life and identity. Parents who do not choose selective abortion are extremely rare, exceptional cases. What I want to emphasize very clearly here, however, is that even the vast majority of parents who choose selective abortion still have a chance to escape this kind of movement toward painlessness.

At the same time, it must also be noted that however close they get to “unconditional love,” the fact that they attached conditions at the start never goes away. Its weight is never nullified. The instant someone calculatingly thinks, “Since I believe I can accept the child even if it all goes wrong, I’m going to try to add as many conditions as I can right now,” they block off, here and now, a possible path that might otherwise have opened up to them in the future. There is a world of difference between “welcoming a child with open arms however it turns out after having first attached conditions” and “thinking that I am allowed to try to attach as many conditions as possible because I believe I can accept the child at some point later on however it turns out.” What is required here is indeed an awareness of this critical difference that painless civilization tries to obscure. I would like to call this critical difference the “paradox of attaching conditions.” It is a point that must be discussed more deeply going forward.

We who are living in this society are bound by a powerful “desire of the body.” We are inevitably caught up in its current. What everything turns on, however, is what kind of life we consciously begin to live after having been swept away by this

current. We are inevitably pulled in the direction of what feels good, the direction of less suffering, and the direction of what everyone else is doing. Philosophy must emerge from this plane on which most people, myself included, have been placed. Philosophy must begin from this point at which we think, “I want a healthy, normal child,” or, “A cute child would be better than an ugly child.” And I must ask myself what it means to attach such “conditions” to a child. I must deeply examine whether my current attitude, way of thinking, and way of feeling are truly going to make me and the people around me happy in the future. In my book *How to Live in a Post-Religious Age*,⁵ I called this a “philosophy of worldly desires.” Starting from the dimension of the “desire of the body,” we must think about how to escape from a life lived at its whim. Starting from a self who attaches “conditions” to another person, we must try to find a way out of this state of being.

This is an important point, because it is easy for the topic of “unconditional love” to fall into a “sermonizing ethics”⁶ that simply imposes norms from above. This kind of voice from on high does not reach us, people with many worldly desires, and when it comes to our own actions it may conversely lead to our blindfolding (see Chapter Ten, “The ‘Abandoning the Elderly’ Phenomenon” in my *An Invitation to the Study of Life*).⁷ This is not the route I want to take. I am currently living a life of wallowing in the desire for sexual love, egoism, attaching of

⁵ Morioka, Masahiro. *How to Live in a Post-Religious Age*, Hozokan, 1996 (森岡正博『宗教なき時代を生きるために』法蔵館).

⁶ “正論の倫理.”

⁷ Morioka, Masahiro. *An Invitation to the Study of Life*, Keiso Shobo, 1988 (森岡正博『生命学への招待』勁草書房).

conditions, and pleasure. I know all too well the kind of pleasure, freedom, immorality, sleep, and oblivion that this swampy, muddy life creates in me. I also know that as long as I stay stuck in this kind of life I will never be able to break free of this endless game of blindfolded pleasure for which I continue to sacrifice other people. I want to break free. I am desperate to find a way out. While still holding onto my worldly desires, and with no connection to any belief in a god or gods, I want to be released from this world of sleep. What I want is neither “God’s love” nor “Buddha’s compassion.” What I want is a “human love” that I believe must be possible to create together with other people who are wallowing in the same mire of this muddy world with me, searching for a way out.

There is another case I must discuss concerning children with disabilities. This is the case in which it is discovered that a child has a disability after they are born. The parents are hit with all kinds of intense emotions they had not been expecting: anxiety about whether they are really capable of raising a child with a disability, worries about time and money, grief that makes them wish it were a dream, destruction of their identity as people who would become parents of a splendid, healthy child and create a happy family, and anger and despair at the absurdity of such a thing having happened to them. But the child has already been born and begun to exist. The child thrusts the question “What are you going to do with with me?” on their parents with their whole being. If there is no support around them and “conditional love” is given free rein, the result will be infanticide or abandonment. Or in some cases parents may conversely pour an inordinate fervor into rehabilitating or developing the capabilities of

their disabled child. Even if they do not go this far, most parents are driven to the point of having to continue raising their child while holding onto an “it shouldn’t have been like this” sense of regret. Nevertheless, the possibility also arises that they will receive support from those around them, and, while fighting against this great absurdity, have their existing identities broken down, their view of the world and life gradually altered, and the “conditional love” inside them transformed a little at a time. There is indeed a path of nurturing this slender possibility that emerges in the midst of a life of suffering and regret (it goes without saying that to this end existing social support systems must be further improved).

This point is also brought sharply into focus in the sexual and romantic relationships between adults.

Of course, there is a big difference between sexual, romantic love between adults and the relationship between parents and children discussed above. It is quite difficult for “unconditional love” to arise between adults. When I choose the person I love, I presumably attach some conditions to that person. I may have fallen in love with them because of their pretty face, or because of their kind disposition. Apart from cases such as a marriage arranged by your parents, cases in which you end up in a romantic relationship with your close friend, and cases in which you have sexual relationships indiscriminately, sexual and romantic love between adults normally begins as “conditional love.”

The fact that there are “conditions” at the start, however, does not mean that love between adults will never go beyond the dimension of “conditional love.” Even though “conditions” may have been applied at the beginning, as history between

the two parties accumulates over time, the intensity of these “conditions” may fade, and ultimately the relationship may approach a dimension in which each cherishes the other’s existence itself, whatever changes aging, illness, and other circumstances may bring.

At the start there are “conditions” and “calculations” between the two parties. The contradictions this can create become clear when their interests directly collide, or an incident occurs that shakes one or both parties’ faith that their partner truly cares about them. When this happens, a fissure opens up in their relationship. Small misunderstandings they had been able to brush aside suddenly loom much larger, they begin to have doubts about each other, and their emotions become explosive and uncontrollable. They reproach, berate, and hurl insults at each other. Sometimes they drown each other in silent criticisms without uttering any words. As these sorts of exchanges are repeated over and over again, with their words they begin to strike at the points where each feels the most psychological pain. This kind of criticism thrusts things I didn’t want to see in front of my face, leaving me confused and upset. In order to hide how shaken up I am, I counterattack with even harsher language. In this way each of us is unconsciously working to destroy the framework the other is trying to maintain.

This, in fact, is an opportunity. It is an opportunity to destroy a self that, while desperately defending its own framework, always attempts to maintain consistency by having the other party give in when a problem arises. Or to destroy a self who on the contrary always gives in to my partner and steals a secret, masochistic pleasure in exchange for reluctantly conforming to their wishes. It is an opportunity

I am given when my selfishness that had forced my preferred form or set of behaviors on my partner is exposed, and I am pushed into a position in which I must dismantle this selfishness in order to be able to go on living face to face with them. Or my selfishness that has cleverly manipulated my partner in order to maintain my current comfortable life and my selfishness that has been standing in the way of my partner's self-realization for that purpose are exposed, and here too I am pushed into a position in which I must dismantle this selfishness.

As we repeat these head-on collisions with the person we love and this dismantling of our own framework, little by little we progress down a long, circuitous route approaching the world of "unconditional love." Through the "history" of self-dismantling and self-transformation that could not have been experienced with any other person that builds up between partners, their relationship becomes something "irreplaceable" for which there can be no substitute. Here we find the key to escaping from "conditions."

I meet you. We become involved with each other in this only life we will ever live, and from the same perspective we try to know and savor each other, come to love each other, curse each other, confront each other with questions, and through this kind of process, while crashing into each other and tearing each other down without ever running away, both you and I are forced to dismantle and transform our former selves. This partner who has shared with me this irreplaceable space and time in this only life I will ever live is here in front of me. This space and time, this history in which I have descended to a greater depth than with any other person, questioning and reexamining my own existence and that of

my partner, fully exploring and enjoying each other, can never be exchanged for something experienced with another person, and is indeed truly irreplaceable. I say to this partner standing in front of me, "I love you." As the inevitable result of the ongoing processes running throughout our relationship, you and I are here in this space and time. Whatever sort of human being you are now, I acknowledge, affirm, and give my blessing to your current existence as the result of all the historical processes that have unfolded between us. There is no longer any trace of my original thought that it can be anyone as long as they meet certain conditions. It has to be you, the person who has shared space, time and history with me in this way. It has to be you, the person who has irreversibly intervened in my life, collided with my existence and destroyed it, and in turn had your own existence destroyed by me. Out of fighting with ourselves, fighting with our partner, being torn to shreds, being broken down, wanting to quit but stubbornly pressing on through this struggle to smash our way through the walls we confront in this relationship that can never be repeated, we come to be filled with a certain confidence or conviction. In this fight in which I put my existence on the line, I encounter both the axis at the core of your being and a new self. Now I affirm the existence of you, the being with whom I have shared this struggle, without conditions.

Only through sharing this irreplaceable history can I get infinitely close to "unconditional love." To affirm your existence without conditions is to resolve to build a life together without leaving you, ignoring you, trying to overpower you, or threatening you with violence, to behave in accordance with this resolution in practice, and to act on the

basis of thinking that is focused on you when dealing with matters that involve you. I cherish the entirety of your being as something irreplaceable, and make your existence itself and my being able to share the same space and time with you my own happiness. My mind is filled with thoughts of you, the person with whom I have shared this long process along with much anger and sorrow, being here in front of me, or being far away, or no longer being anywhere at all. This is the fundamental meaning of “unconditional love.” Your existence is thoroughly separate and independent of mine. This division itself is something I cherish. It is precisely because we are divided that we try so hard to connect with each other. It is precisely because we are divided that I want to affirm and give my blessing to you just as you are.

On top of this, I also tell you when I think you are doing something wrong or when I wish you would do something differently. If I want you to stop doing something, I tell you clearly, “I wish you’d stop doing that.” But this is not attaching conditions. Even if you don’t stop doing the thing in question, I won’t abandon you. I won’t just leave. I’ll have a conversation with you about it, and try to explain why I want you to stop doing it as best I can. These discussions may open up another fissure between us, but this does not mean our relationship is over. As long as the feeling that the other is important remains in each of us, the time for dialogue will come. It is of course possible, however, that our journey toward “unconditional love” will come to an end. When this happens, while affirming, respecting, and cherishing the irreplaceable history that has been created between us, our relationship in the world will unravel of its own accord. The fact that romantic relationships come to an end is not in itself a bad thing. Wanting children

or a partner but not being able to have them, too, is not necessarily cause for despair when viewed from a wide enough perspective.

This process I have just described is the narrow road that leads from “conditional love” to “unconditional love.” It is a process by which the “conditions” we impose on each other at the start of our relationship are stripped away one by one. I call this process “condition shedding.” Just as an insect sheds layer after layer of its old skin, from my own side but in the midst of interacting with my partner I peel away layer after layer of the skin of “conditions” that covers our relationship.

Let us go over this again from the start. When I have a child, raise a child, form a romantic relationship with another adult, or care for a parent, I attach conditions and attempt to create a relationship that is convenient and pleasant for me. Since I carry within myself the “desire of the body,” and this desire seeks to keep my life within a pre-conceived domain, it is indeed quite natural for relationships to be like this at the start.

If I continue to adopt this stance of attaching conditions, however, at some point I will run into a counter-attack. My partner will corner me with the question, “Do you really think I am precious and irreplaceable?” This is how the fight will begin. If I use violence or power or tactics to overcome my partner, the price for this superficial victory will be that I am swallowed up even more thoroughly by painless civilization and will most likely never have another chance to escape from a state of living death in its ocean of pleasure. But if I shift the direction of the fight, a new opportunity will arise. I am fighting with my partner who has launched a counterattack against me, but when this happens I may confront the fact that

they are hitting me where it hurts, and begin to wonder why I find this so painful. When I do so, I realize that this counterattack is trying to destroy my mentality that tries to attach conditions to my partner. While fighting against my partner, at the same time I must also fight against this “mentality that tries to attach conditions to my partner.” Through my fighting with myself, my relationship with my partner changes, and one by one I become able to shed the “conditions” I have imposed on them. By going through this process, an “irreplaceable history” is built up between my partner and me. Every time a condition is shed, this history is shared. In this way I am able to turn from “conditional love” toward “unconditional love,” and move forward in this direction one step at a time. In the case of a relationship between two adults, through the accumulated acts of feeling my breath from very close by, expressing their own feelings directly to me, and taking my feelings seriously, my partner is also able to advance down the same road.

The path described above is not an easy one to take, because to fight against the mentality that tries to attach conditions to your partner is to fight against your own “desire of the body,” and against a powerful current flowing through a society moving toward painlessness. In other words, trying to escape from “conditional love” in a society becoming painless is like facing into a storm and trying to walk alone against powerful headwinds.

There are several things that follow from this. To begin with, it is impossible to seal ourselves off in a world of two people and set out toward “unconditional love” while leaving society’s movement toward painlessness untouched. This is the case because human beings are not agile enough to

manage a strict division in which they do not attach any conditions when dealing with their partner but then turn around and apply the principles of pain elimination whenever they interact with the society around them. The painless body being cultivated by society will inevitably have an effect on your relationship with your partner. As a result, in order to continue getting closer to “unconditional love” you must also fight against painless civilization. This is why “love” is a topic to be addressed when it comes to painless civilization theory; to escape from painless civilization you must approach unconditional love, and to approach unconditional love you must fight against painless civilization.

This is where the distinctive character of the way of thinking about “love” in painless civilization theory is to be found. From the perspective of this theory, love is something that can be approached by shedding conditions through a process of conflict. A love that blossoms when you fight with your partner, fight with yourself, dismantle your own framework, and peel away the mentality that seeks to impose conditions on your partner one layer at a time — this is the kind of love envisioned by painless civilization theory. Here we must be careful to note, however, that this fight itself is not love. When love and this fight become confused, there is a risk of falling into a simple worshiping of destruction that is the opposite of love. This fight is something that is necessary in order to approach love, but fighting itself is not the goal.

The other reason painless civilization theory emphasizes this “fight” is that many people think of “love” only as gentleness or a tender heart. Tsukasa Kobayashi, for example, writes, “Love is having concern for the happiness and growth of others, either a single individual or multiple people,

understanding them sympathetically, treating them gently, feeling a sense of intimacy and attachment toward them, accepting and forgiving everything [about them] just as it is, giving yourself without conditions, and growing together [with them].”⁸ In a society that is becoming painless, surely we cannot rip the “mentality of trying to attach conditions to my partner” out of ourselves simply by repeating pretty words like these. A theory of love that does not take issue with my own “desire of the body” and our society’s movement toward painlessness at their roots is a waste of time.

So by fighting with myself and repeatedly peeling away my own conditions, will my “mentality of trying to attach conditions to my partner” eventually go away? The answer is no. Because it is intimately connected to my internal “desire of the body,” it will never completely disappear. Even if my relationship to my partner gradually moves away from “conditional love,” the mentality that seeks to attach conditions to my partner will never stop rearing its head. What I have to do is constantly move this persistently recurring mentality to the fringes of my relationship with my partner. As long as it is located at the edge of our relationship, it is something that can be enjoyed between us as the functioning of eros accompanied by stimulation and a little bit of pain. And while ensuring that the effort of pushing this mentality to the fringe is never neglected, I should fully savor my partner’s qualities, words and actions that happen to coincide with my conditions as blessings from heaven, because tomorrow they may not be the same person they are

⁸ Kobayashi, Tsukasa. *What Is Love?*, NHK Books, 1997, pp. 192-130 (小林 司『愛とは何か』NHK ブックス).

today and our relationship, too, may no longer exist. This work of condition shedding must be undertaken in every corner of society. Countless transparent jellyfish float silently upward from the bottom of the sea. While shedding their old skins, they try to get closer to the surface. As the jellyfish carry out this shedding here and there in the deep-sea currents, their transparent bodies glow whitely, sending signals back down to the seafloor from which they themselves have escaped. “An ‘attachment of conditions’ has just been relinquished,” these signals say. Some will make further progress toward the surface, but others, their energy exhausted, will be swept away by the current.

To relinquish our “attaching of conditions” is to free each other from our bonds. Making the “trust” we have come to share in the process of shedding our conditions our foundation, we set each other free. Not by grabbing onto each other, but by pushing each other away. A relationship of unconditional love has to be one that is transparent and lets the breeze blow through it.

Isn’t “unconditional love” something that liberates both the person who loves and the person who is loved from their bonds and sets them free? Through setting the person who is loved free, I who love that person am also freed — isn’t that what love is? Isn’t love an endless process in which we head in such a direction, getting up and pressing on even when we fall down or get discouraged? By engaging in this process, I myself am freed from the “bonds” of “I love this person because they meet some set of conditions.” In my relationship with this person, I continue to break whatever such bonds still remain inside me. I “free” my partner, and I too become “free.” Isn’t love in fact an attempt to take this kind of path?

The “freedom” I am talking about here is not a freedom that can be obtained by expanding the area of my control in a painless civilization; it is not, in other words, the freedom to do whatever I want. Nor is it the freedom of the mind found in some religions that is obtained through shaking off the desire to do whatever I want. It is the freedom of dismantling my self and thereby at the same time dismantling the devices that constrain my self, and as a result being fundamentally liberated from the devices that constrain me on a deeper level. This is the only way to escape from the bonds of painless civilization.

4. Love in a Painless Civilization

It is “conditional love,” however, that most brightly colors a contemporary society moving toward painlessness. People involuntarily become caught up in a game of “I’ll satisfy your conditions, so I want you to satisfy mine.” A painless civilization cleverly closes off the path of accepting a new life without conditions and the path of slowly peeling away the conditions you had initially imposed.

A painless civilization loathes unconditional love, because such love carries within it the potential to destroy the “desire of the body” that exists at this civilization’s core, and because for me to love someone without conditions is to directly accept the risk that my partner will tear down my current framework. To love in this way is to truly acknowledge, affirm, and give my blessing to the existence of this kind of dangerous partner. This kind of love is inconvenient for the desire of the body. It runs counter to the desire to maintain and expand one’s current framework that forms the core of

painless civilization. If this kind of love is given free rein it will only get in the way of the development of this civilization, and may even stir the hearts of those dissatisfied with painless civilization and provoke a revolt against it.

What is normally seen in a contemporary society that is becoming painless is therefore a form of love in which “I will love you as long as you don’t destroy my fundamental framework, but if you start to tear me down I will abandon you,” or in which “I will love you as long as you try to satisfy my desires, but if you renounce satisfying my desires I will abandon you.” Of course, such forms of love have been around for a long time; it isn’t as though they appeared for the first time in contemporary society. We cannot help but observe, however, that in a society in which the degree of self-domestication is increasing, management of life and nature is expanding, and technology for preventive pain elimination and the manipulation of information is rapidly being developed, “conditional love” carries a different weight than it did in the past, and has come to dominate our lives and society like never before.

“Conditional love” takes three forms.

First there is “domination love.” I touched on this kind of love earlier in this chapter, and it has already been identified by many others so I won’t say much about it here. As long as you satisfy my desires, I affirm you, treat you kindly, and support you. By attaching these sorts of conditions, I control both your behavior and how you think and feel. If you reject my desires, I force you to do as I say by showing you my anger, intimidating you, threatening you, and sometimes by using violence. If you still don’t fall into line, I pathetically fall apart in front of you, staring deeply into your eyes as my tears flow.

“Please don’t say things like that. If you leave I’ll be all alone. No one will be on my side. I’m begging you, so please don’t leave me.” With these pleas I prostrate myself on the floor, but after you stop resisting I fall back into the same controlling behavior once again.

The second form of love is “kindness love.” Kindness love is a love that accepts all your hopes just as they are and embraces them. If you tell me you have suffered, I agree and say it must have been very hard for you, and if you say you want to hear consoling words, I say whatever I can think of to comfort you. It is a love that immediately responds with whatever acts of kindness you are looking for.

It may be quite natural for us to seek kindness love in the midst of a contemporary society that is becoming painless. I want you to embrace me, but when I am made painfully aware of the fact that you will only do so if I meet whatever conditions you impose, I will presumably wish there were someone, it wouldn’t matter who, who would accept my existence just as it is. There is indeed nothing wrong with this as a starting point when interacting with someone who has been hurt.

The big problem with kindness love, however, is standing still in a position of accepting your partner’s entire existence and doing whatever they want. People who receive kindness want to keep savoring the pleasure they obtain from kind words and responses over and over again, give up on going any further, and enter a state of addiction to kindness love. The person providing this love, too, can remain submerged indefinitely in the sweet delusion that “I am a person who can heal other people, and give my love away generously.” In this way a complicit relationship develops between a person who

wants to enjoy the pleasure of receiving kindness forever and their partner who wants to maintain their self-image as a person who gives love.

Because kindness love acknowledges, affirms, and gives its blessing to me just as I am, at first glance it may seem to be “unconditional love.” In fact, however, insofar as it avoids collision and confrontation and does not make any demands that would destroy either partner’s framework, it is located at the point farthest away from “unconditional love.”

So while “domination love” abounds in a contemporary society that is becoming painless, at the same time “kindness love” also flourishes. Kindness love doesn’t take us anywhere. What it aims at is “repetition.” A world in which the same kind of comforting and giving of pleasure is endlessly repeated. A world of complicity and pre-established harmony. A world of pleasure inundated with unease in which sleep and resignation dominate and from which there is no exit. A world of soft and gentle living death.

The third form of love is “identity protecting love.” This is a form of love in which I care for the people around me in order to protect an identity that says I should be such-and-such kind of person, I should have such-and-such kind of relationship with you, and my family should be such-and-such kind of family. (The concept of “identity” is not merely factual consistency regarding myself, but also includes internal norms that say I should be this or that sort of being.)

This is the form of love seen, for example, when I defend my family and fight against whatever comes at us from the outside in order to protect my identity as a father who would do anything to keep his wife and children from danger. It is a form of love in which even if someone in my family tells me I

don't have to keep doing this and asks me to stop fighting against the outside world, instead of hearing them out I say, "I don't remember raising you to be so self-centered," give them a slap, and remain absorbed in a game of love that exists only to protect my own identity. Or a form of love in which I swallow any demand you might make just to prove to myself my identity as someone who cares about you from the bottom of my heart and to wallow in this self-perception.

These are also forms of love that protect "delusions" I want to maintain. For example, I use love to protect and confirm to myself various aspects of my self-image or identity, such as "this is how much I love you," "this is how selfless I can be," "this is how far I can go in throwing everything away," "this is how deeply I can fall in love," "this is how noble I am," and "this is how wonderful I am." What is being protected here is not my partner's existence but rather my own identity. This sort of lover only requires another person as raw material for the protection of their own identity, and if this other person is no longer useful as such they are discarded as a traitor. The relationship between this identity and painless civilization is extremely important. I will discuss this in greater detail in Chapter Four.

In a painless civilization, "domination love," "kindness love," and "identity protecting love" form a kind of unified trinity, and extend their reach to every corner of human relationships. When these three forms of love combine, "conditional love" begins to shine most brightly. This society is so thoroughly made painless that doubts about whether "attaching conditions" might be problematic do not even arise. Those who speak earnestly of "unconditional love" are met with cynical sneers. While imposing conditions upon each

other, people negotiate various bargains in order to find middle ground that allows them to go forward without destroying each other's basic framework.

Now let us consider the situation of those who are loved.

Recall that in a future society in which quality control of life has been perfected, people live their lives with a fundamental sense that "I'm not really loved by anyone." In a contemporary society that is becoming painless, too, this is the source of people's deep-seated insecurity. "If I weren't able to fulfill these conditions, I wouldn't be loved." "The reason I can't obtain love is that I don't satisfy some set of conditions." "If I satisfied some other set of conditions, I would be loved in a different way." Haunted by thoughts of this kind, grappling with conditions set by someone else becomes the meaning of life and provides a sense of fulfillment in living.

Nevertheless, doubt constantly makes its way into the minds of those who are loved. Isn't it merely that I am receiving love because I satisfy certain requirements? Surely this can't be the kind of love I wanted. Wasn't what I wanted a love that would affirm, acknowledge, and give its blessing to me just as I am? Mustn't I start by admitting to myself that the love I have now is not the kind of love I wanted? Isn't it impossible for me to escape from this state of pleasant unease as long as I am blindfolding myself to this fact? My mind bounces back and forth between the thought that conditional love is no good and the desire to hold onto it because it is better than nothing.

At some point, out of the blue, I try to sound my partner out. "What would you do if I didn't satisfy your conditions?" My partner sends me a message: "If you're going to say things like that, I'll walk away right now." Receiving this message, a

shiver runs through my body. I am consumed by the fear of losing this person. I repeat inside my own head without thinking, "I'm sorry, I won't do it again. I'm sorry, I won't say that kind of thing again. I'm sorry, I was bad." In my mind I prostrate myself at my partner's feet. Seeing me in this state, they will speak kindly. "That's enough. I see you've learned your lesson." Then they'll take me tenderly in their arms. Feeling this warmth flowing through my entire body, I'll realize what I did was a mistake, wonder how I could have been so stupid, and resolve to stay with this person for the rest of my life no matter what. My partner's tears will flow, my tears will flow, and as we cry together we will find comfort in them. In this way I shutter myself away forever in a world of repetition without exit.

Alternatively, in cases in which my partner has pasted some kind of "illusion" over top of me, terrified of losing their love I will become desperate to make myself conform to it. I believe that by making myself conform to my partner's illusion, I will be able to win my partner's favor, meet the conditions they impose, and keep a tight grip on their love. But consider what happens if I keep doing this. After a while, a gap will inevitably open up between the self playing the part required by my partner's illusion and the self that suits me best. But since losing my partner's love is what I fear most, I commit myself to being the person who acts out their illusion. In doing so I kill the self that suites me best.

What happens then? I gradually lose the reality of being myself. I then lose the sense of fulfillment of living my own life, and become something like a robot. I'm myself, but I'm not myself. I begin to live a life of lies. If I have a child, I become jealous when I see them beginning to live their own life. Even

though I myself am not living my own life, this child is trying to start living their own life outside of their parents' sphere of influence. When I see this, a powerful sense that this cannot be allowed wells up within me. I stand in the way of what my child is doing, and then go even further and begin to abuse them. But this isn't my fault. It's all because of that wicked person who doesn't try to see me as I really am. I'm not bad. I'm a victim. I just wanted love. It didn't matter if it came with conditions attached, I just wanted the smallest scrap of a love that would last forever.

5. Sex and Self-Injury

In a painless civilization, only conditional love is selected for survival. Unconditional love is destined to be driven out of a painless civilization. While seeking conditional love from each other, people who have chosen to live in a painless civilization try to somehow work out a compromise and build a life within this framework. When it comes to things on which they cannot compromise, they try to settle these conflicts through various perverse behaviors or escape into imaginary worlds.

For people who have not yet become completely painless, however, living in a world of conditional love is not such an easy thing to do. It isn't easy because the "power of life" that remains inside them is wriggling desperately in an attempt to break free of the desire of the body. "I can only stand and move forward on my own once my existence has been affirmed without conditions" – inside every human being there is such a mechanism. I believe that what supports this mechanism is the "power of life."

Painless civilization, however, disregards this kind of “power of life” that exists deep down in every human being. Instead of acknowledging this power, we, the residents of a painless civilization, choose to protect our current comfort and security, preserve our own fundamental framework, and expand this framework whenever the opportunity arises. This is what it means for the desire of the body to win out. Efforts to expand the self without destroying the current “me” penetrate every corner of society, and so too does brainwashing that makes people believe this is normal and natural.

But we who have not become completely painless cannot completely throw away our yearning for this “unconditional affirmation of existence.” What will this yearning grasp at in its death throes?

To begin with, this yearning may look to religion for a way out. My existence is completely affirmed by a god or transcendent figure – religion is a device that makes this promise. Through an absolute existence or great vital power my life is affirmed absolutely. The sense of fulfillment and comfort when this is perceived is doubtless something that can sustain the power of life for the moment. However, in many religions, this affirmation of existence comes as part of a set that includes the belief in a god or gods, belief in eternal life, and belief in the world after death the religion teaches. In other words, it is assumed I will try to accept these beliefs. As a result, those who cannot adhere to these articles of faith are excluded from this kind of religious affirmation of existence.

Alternatively, it may seem that romantic love can deal with this yearning. When the person I love stares into my eyes and says, “You’re good enough just the way you are,” I feel

happiness. I think I have at last gotten my hands on unconditional love. I work hard, become jealous, and try to impose a monopoly in order to avoid losing it. When I am abandoned, I start looking for my next love, and my wandering continues. As I have already noted, however, in most cases romantic love in a society moving toward painlessness does not adopt a process in which each partner destroys the other's fundamental framework and digs downward while engaged in an internal struggle. In the end, therefore, there isn't much difference between this approach and the game of conditional love.

Sex then emerges as an option that may lead to the satisfaction of this yearning. Two people, both conscious of their own sexual desire, cast off their shells and devour each others' bodies. This is sex in which both parties are devoted to their own lust and sensuality and use each other as tools for obtaining pleasure. Each is acknowledged as simply a sexual being by their partner, whose demand for their body knows no bounds. Sex in which social roles, the views of acquaintances, and even one's own personality are discarded will surely grant unsurpassed pleasure and healing. In the dimension in which there is only sex, we feel as though we are encountering an affirmation of existence without conditions for the first time. But this feeling is an illusion; after the sex is over, we return to the real world, and there is no guarantee our partner will accept us without conditions. In the real world we must endure having conditions imposed on us by our sexual partners. We therefore fall into the trap of addiction, moving from one sexual encounter to the next in search of a new affirmation of our existence.

The power of life can also turn toward violence. This is

violence that is directed at other people close to me who are supposed to love me and care about my happiness. For example, I want to be loved by my parents. I want them to love me without attaching conditions such as that I be a good child or get good grades. But they do not give me this form of love. They say, "I only push you to study harder because I love you." This is a lie. Where is the love in this? If you really love me, you should love me even if I'm not a good child. Look at me, I'm being violent. I'm such a bad child that I'm even violent to the parents who raised me. Can you still love me? Answer me! Can you really love me, a child who is behaving so violently? Can you love me even if I don't satisfy the condition of being a good child?

When it cannot turn to violence, there are cases in which this yearning turns toward "self-injury." If you truly love me, then you should still love me even if I am no longer the person you imagined me to be. Isn't that right? So I'm going to damage my body, the body of the person you care about more than anything. I'm going to take this body, which you tell me is beautiful and cherish more than any other, and carve it with a knife, reshape it by eating too much or too little, and defile it with the penises of dirty men. Will you still say you love me? Will you say that you love me without conditions? Will you put your entire being on the line and say these words? Will you transmit to me now this message you have never once sent in my direction?

Violence and self-destructive behavior are often directed toward a child's parents. But even if the parents are taken aback, and, reacting in the moment, reply, "We love you without conditions, no matter what you do and no matter what sort of person you become," the child's wounds are too

deep for this to satisfy them and put them at ease. The child might say, "That's a lie. You're just saying whatever comes easiest like you always do. You say this now, but later it will be the same thing all over again. That's not what I want to ask. What I want to ask is whether you are really just in love with the image of yourself as a person who says, 'We love you without conditions, no matter what you do and no matter what sort of person you become' to your child. Whether in the end you don't actually love me at all, only love an illusion you've pasted onto yourselves."

Ultimately the child's questioning of their parents arrives at this point. "If what you love is not your own self-image as 'someone who loves their child unconditionally,' show me some proof of this in a way I can see with my own eyes. For my sake, right here in front of me, tear down this illusion, this self-image you have pasted over yourselves with your own hands, and completely destroy this foundation on which you stand and which you value more than anything. That's right. If you really love me, let me see you tear yourself down all the way to the ground. *For the sake of the child standing in front of you, let go of the most precious thing you cling to and destroy it here and now.* Try taking even a single step outside the framework you've been defending." This is the last question. If the parents then take action of their own accord without making excuses, for the first time they will begin a dialogue with their child. This dialogue will take a long time. If instead they try to protect themselves with a seemingly rational argument, in that instant the possibility of dialogue is extinguished. This is not just the case with parents and children; the same sort of thing can occur between two adults. This is a question that is opened up whenever two people

encounter each other. Unconditional love demands something on a dimension this profound. And it is the path that opens up here that gives us a last, slender hope of escaping from painless civilization.

In a contemporary society that is becoming painless, our “life” takes the form of things like religion, romantic love, sex, violence, and self-injury and attempts to break out of its shackles. The potential of life resides in these behaviors that are often thought of as “pathologies” or “addictions.” Attempts to escape by such routes, however, cannot help but fail. They cannot succeed because these routes are traps constructed by painless civilization, and have been designed to ensure that as long as you are heading down them you will never find a way out.

If so, all that is left for us to do is foster the “power of life” within ourselves, dismantle our own framework, and pursue self-transformation without going down any of the paths created by painless civilization — to unravel, one string at a time, the intricate mesh of conditions that has been woven between ourselves and the people closest to us. What is required of us here is that we never turn our eyes away from the fact that our own existence is groundless. I could just as well never have existed in this world, but right now, purely by chance, I happen to be here. And at some point in the future I will disappear from this world just as absurdly. In this sense my existence is thoroughly lonely. I must live out my life alone, and I must die alone. I exist in absolute solitude. Here it is important to have the conviction that I am not the only one trying to question myself, dismantle my own framework, transform myself, and be reborn in the midst of this absolute solitude. Even if you cannot find anyone nearby, somewhere,

in a distant time or place, many other such people must certainly exist. If it weren't for their efforts, how could I be writing this kind of book now? And how could I communicate this kind of message to you, dear reader? When you are beset by fundamental insecurity at the thought that you might be the only person in the entire world trying to take the first step on this path, the end of which you cannot see and which may well lead to perdition, and you find yourself frozen in your tracks, wanting to give up and go back to living a blindfolded life like everyone else, please remember there have been people who, putting their entire being on the line, sent out the following message: "No, you are not the only one taking this first step. Dismantling myself, I too took the first step down a road whose end I could not see."

6. Two Strategies of Painless Civilization

Painless civilization implements two strategies to eliminate unconditional love from society. As its first strategy, it eggs us on. "Just look at the world around you — when you get right down to it, everyone acts according to their own ego. In the end, doesn't everyone discard people who become a burden and get on with their lives? There's no need to shoulder the burden of other people and endure the hardship this entails. If you're in a relationship with someone, in the end it is because you benefit from it. Whether we call it love or friendship, fundamentally we maintain relationships for our own sake. Take a hard look at this and see it for what it is. This is everyone's true nature. People say all kinds of things. But when we take a level-headed look at how they end up acting, we see how they truly are. Whether you call it love or

friendship, you only want it because you enjoy it or it makes you feel good, and if it only brought you hardship or suffering you'd come up with some reason to run away from the other person. That's how human beings are. Everyone cherishes themselves. Accept this fact. Forgive yourself for being this kind of person. Stop putting on airs. You'll be more comfortable. Take that load off your shoulders. All the hard work you've been doing for such a tiny bit of self-esteem will seem silly. Grow up. Become an adult who knows their place."

In this way, painless civilization tells us it is fine to attach conditions to love, and it is natural for human beings to protect their own current framework. Borrowing the mouths of the people you know, your parents, and your teachers and bosses, it repeats this sermon day in and day out. That's what it means to be a human being. That's what it means to be an adult. "If you accept this, you'll be comfortable, you won't have to suffer anymore, and you won't be the only one making a fool of yourself," it whispers. "Come on, accept it, renounce your fervid faith in unconditional love, which everyone is bound to give up sooner or later."

While offering this inducement, at the same time painless civilization also employs a second strategy. Popular media are inundated with florid depictions of how wonderful "unconditional love" can be. In novels, movies, and music the wonders of "unconditional love" are presented, praised, and admired. Everyone sees and hears this message and finds it enchanting. How wonderful. I wish I could experience the world of love too. I wish I could enter that dreamland where I could love and be loved.

A painless civilization whispers, "Isn't it wonderful? That world of unconditional love. You want to experience it too,

don't you? But this is a story. It's a dream world. You're an adult, so surely you don't think such a thing actually exists in our society. In reality it almost never happens, so we see it in movies and TV shows. It almost never happens, so everyone aspires to it. They are all dreams. Enjoy these fantasies, these fictional worlds as much as you like. If they bring you pleasure, we'll give you as many such stories as you desire."

What a painless civilization disseminates through popular media are stories in which unconditional love is presented as something that cannot occur in reality. Most people then consume these stories as childish tales of something that could never actually happen. Unconditional love is addressed and accepted not as something we should actually take part in ourselves, but rather something to be consumed in the form of stories we watch, listen to, and shed tears over from afar. As a result, the chance of people actually choosing "unconditional love," the chance of people actually setting foot down the narrow path from "conditional love" to "unconditional love," is drastically reduced. This chance is reduced every time an exceptional individual who does actually choose this path is lauded like some kind of rare and wondrous animal birthed by marvelous nature.

This strategy employed by a painless civilization does an excellent job of brainwashing us. "While in our heart of hearts we don't really want to experience unconditional love, we do enjoy consuming it as fiction that moves us. But a story is just a story. We mustn't be like a child who mistakes an illusion for the real thing." In this way we come to think, "Unconditional love? I know all about it. It makes for a moving story, doesn't it? But reality isn't like that." "Unconditional love is fine for scholars, because all they do is talk. Reality is different." This

kind of understanding spreads from person to person. These ideas form a sediment at the bottom of society, and are passed down from one generation to the next. Rather than practice unconditional love, parents give fairy tales and novels about it to their children. These stories come with an implicit message: these beautiful things are very moving, but they can only happen in the imaginary world of a book. In other contexts, the sermon that love for no reward and without any conditions attached is needed now more than ever is widely disseminated under the rubric of religion. Those who listen to this message, while believing its words are correct, carefully separate themselves from situations in which these words would have meaning in their own lives, leap to their feet, applaud, and, embracing each other, praise God's love.

There is also a procession of people who, while moved by the stories of "unconditional love" painless civilization disseminates, come up against the fact that in reality they cannot realize this kind of love themselves and are distressed by this gap between the real world and their ideals. Unable to resolve this internal contradiction on their own, they attempt to adapt to painless civilization by covering their eyes and leading a blindfolded life, or by turning to counseling or other forms of therapy. They too are swallowed up by painless civilization, albeit by a different route.

In this way, the discourse of unconditional love being carefully dispersed throughout popular media forms the fundamental landscape of painless civilization. A painless civilization is a civilization that on the one hand makes unconditional love impossible, while on the other hand aggressively promoting discourse on this kind of love. The argument concerning unconditional love that has been made

in this chapter itself, therefore, has a strong “painless civilizational” aspect, and it would not be at all strange if it too were picked up by painless civilization and used for its own ends. In fact, in all likelihood a society that is becoming painless will indeed convert the argument I have been trying to drive home in this chapter into the beautiful, fanciful, idealistic story of an eggheaded professor, fervently promote it, and by doing so seek to neuter and annihilate the core message of my argument.

What I must fight against is this force that will superficially attempt to actively disseminate my words. It is this force, which presents itself as being in agreement with my argument while allowing painless civilization to reside in its belly, that is my true enemy. People who say that they agree with my painless civilization theory, that it has moved them, and that they want more people to hear about it, and who actually make devoted contributions to its development, may end up indefinitely postponing the most important task of examining their own lives by focusing their energies on “spreading the word” rather than putting it into practice. Becoming absorbed in admiring painless civilization theory is a blindfold. Becoming absorbed in writing *Painless Civilization* or studying painless civilization theory is a blindfold. “Ending up supporting the development of painless civilization by spreading painless civilization theory” is a trap that is always lurking underfoot, waiting with yawning mouth for me to fall in.

In this way, the two-pronged attack of “true intentions” and “stories” is continuously implemented throughout a society that is becoming painless. People gradually become “adults” as they are brainwashed by it over and over again, and

little by little the idea that unconditional love might be possible, that attempting to walk down this road might be worthwhile, is obliterated.

What painless civilization ultimately destroys is our sense of resolve, the awareness that we can actually get started here and now. "I understand what has been said, and all I need to do now is decide to act on it." Painless civilization anesthetizes this awareness, tears it apart, and totally paralyzes it. This is in fact the cruelest treatment we receive at the hands of painless civilization. The moment we lose this sense of resolve, the making painless of our bodies also becomes complete. From that point on, the repetitive existence of a living death within painless civilization continues in a straight, unbroken line stretching beyond the distant horizon.

Each of us living in this society is what supports the painless civilization that nullifies this kind of resolve at its roots. It is because each of us supports it deep in our hearts and minds that it continues its relentless advance.

I have used the expression "painless civilization lays traps for us," but here let me rephrase this more precisely. What lays traps for us is our own painless civilization that exists deep inside the mind and body of each and every one of us. The desire of the body, the seed of painless civilization planted deep inside each of us, tries to catch us in its traps. We ensnare ourselves and make the existence of these traps invisible to ourselves; when someone points them out to us we accuse that person of being traitorous or inhuman and try to thoroughly destroy them. A civilization in which this kind of scheme is systematically built into the society as a whole is the civilization that we are secretly hoping for somewhere in our

hearts, that is, painless civilization.

The only way to escape from this is to dismantle the structure of self-entrapment from the inside. In order to do this, to begin with I must reexamine how I am ensnaring myself, bring this structure out into the light of day, and look directly at it without covering my eyes even if it makes me feel like throwing up. Then I must confront the question of how to dismantle it as my own problem, illuminate this path with the aid of reason, and actually take the actions necessary to bring about this dismantling.

For we whose bodies have already begun to become painless, however, this is an extremely difficult undertaking. Our life has already become anesthetized to the point that we cannot clearly see why we have to take on something so difficult and painful right at this moment.

There are people whose degree of painlessness has progressed so far that when presented with the assertion, "We have the potential to acknowledge, affirm, and give our blessings to another being who may completely destroy the framework in which we stand, and to continue conversing with them even though at times we find it very upsetting," they understand this only as a mere "argument." After closing this book, they may praise it as "a good read" or "an interesting bit of philosophy" while pouring a cup of tea, but the thought of actually setting foot down this path themselves never crosses their mind. You, dear reader, may be one of them.

End of Chapter Two

Chapter Three

Painless Stream

1. In a Gigantic Whirlpool

Many people are swimming and playing in a pool. The surface of the water ripples, reflecting the afternoon sunlight. As they play, some of the children in the pool begin to slowly walk in a circle. As they wade through the water, they move in a clockwise direction. Lured along by them, other children begin circling in the same direction. The water in the pool begins to whirl slowly in accordance with their motion. Nudged along by the whirling water, people standing in the pool also begin walking in the same direction. In this way all of the people in the water either give themselves over to the current and float in the whirlpool or walk in the same direction themselves, trying to make the water flow faster.

The swirling of the water that had begun as a gentle current eventually forms a giant, clearly visible whirlpool. The children shriek with joy as they are carried in circles, and the adults also smile to themselves as they enjoy the pleasant sensation of letting their bodies be pulled around by the current. There are also people clinging to handrails on the edges of the pool, watching the scene unfold.

As all of this is happening, the swirling of the whirlpool becomes more and more intense. People can no longer swim

against it. The children's voices change from cries of joy to screams of fear. The whirlpool's current strengthens, and by the time those caught in it realize what is happening they can no longer escape. Some people try to get out by swimming to the edge, but they are pulled back by the current and are once again sucked into the whirlpool. The expression on the faces of those trying to escape changes from joy to terror, and then to despair. Now there is no way out for them. Why? Why have they ended up like this?

As they are being sucked into the whirlpool, they look at the people around them. There are people struggling desperately to escape. There are children who seem about to drown, their faces distorted by fear. There are people flailing their arms and legs haphazardly. But these people are in the minority. Almost everyone is letting themselves go in the current and floating in the whirlpool just as before, seeming to enjoying themselves even if the person right next to them is about to drown. Bobbing up and down in the whirlpool's current, they close their eyes in apparent bliss, the expression on their faces something close to a smile as they drift on the surface of the water. People swaying in the current, their eyes closed in enchantment — are they unaware of what is happening around them? They don't lift a finger to help those who are drowning.

There are people who are struggling and being swallowed up by the immense power of the whirlpool. They continue their futile efforts to escape. Surrounded by waves and on the verge of sinking, again and again they stretch out their hands and grasp desperately at the empty air. Some of them are flung violently against the wall of the pool by the strength of the current and knocked unconscious by the impact, while others

are sucked down into the water never to emerge again. The people at the edge of the pool cling to the handrails with all of their strength, fighting to maintain their position and avoid being carried away by the power of the stream.

I am struggling in the whirlpool, trying to get out. Both of my arms flailing, I lean forward and attempt to make my way toward the outside of the pool. No matter how hard I try, however, I am hauled back by the power of the swirling water, and once again find myself sucked into the center of the vortex. I try to reach the outside and am dragged back. I try to get out and once again I am hauled back in. As I continue these futile efforts, the strength leaves my body. How easy it would be to just lie back and give myself over to the flowing water. How good it would feel to close my eyes and float on the surface, keeping my balance without fighting against the current. I open my eyes and look around. Many people seem to be floating happily in the whirlpool. They won't drown, or expose their bodies to danger. Surrendering their bodies to the current, they smile in what appears to be happiness. Then it hits me. Instead of fighting against the current, I should just let it carry me. It is because of trying to go against the flow that people drown, smash into the wall, and suffer. I should just let myself go, keep my balance, and float on my back. Why didn't I realize this sooner? Why have I been struggling all this time?

I let myself go limp, stretch my body out in the water, and am carried along by the current. My struggles until now seem like a lie. How easy it is. How comfortable. I lie on my back and close my eyes. There is only the sound of the flowing water, and I pay no heed to what is going on around me. My sense of gravity disappears, and I feel like an astronaut on a spacewalk. Maybe this is what peace of mind feels like. Maybe this is what

enlightenment is. Maybe this is healing. I realize that such a world exists. What have I been doing until now? What exactly was I trying to pursue in all my struggling? Where was I trying to go, seeking a road with no exit? Moving forward and seeking suffering, going against the cries coming from my body, what was it I had hoped to attain? There is something I only realize once I discard my stubbornness and let my body go with the current — I can only go on existing once I am supported by this flowing water. Comfort and healing only come when I stop trying to move against it. I am only able to float above the stream when I stop struggling and suffering.

As I float, giving my body over to the current, I reflect. I should have done this from the start. There was no need to struggle against the current and suffer for the sake of appearances and my own petty pride. I should have been honest about my feelings and realized that what I wanted was comfort and healing. This is what they mean when they say, “The true path will appear once you have thrown everything away.” There is nothing to be gained from swimming against the current. After all, wasn’t the whirlpool created by each and every one of us? Suffering and despair are born out of trying to go against what every one of us wants. Give yourself over to the current. Be honest and acknowledge that what you really want is to be swallowed up by the flowing water. Stop propping up your tiresome façade and try taking a look at your real intentions. Then close your eyes and feel your body being liberated in the current. Be honest with yourself. Because this is what you’ve really been seeking.

The movement of people creates a painless current before you know it. Eventually this current pulls in a large number of people and grows into a gigantic whirlpool driving

civilization forward, and it then begins to move beyond the intentions of individual people. In order to keep standing in one place, you have to make a constant, conscious effort to go against this flow. It is hard to keep fighting it. So first one person and then another drops out and is swept away.

The surging tide of painlessness makes people's bodies painless, brainwashes them with the thought patterns of painless civilization, and creates one system after another that promotes the painless current. The tide of painlessness is constantly producing from within itself the means of its own maintenance, such as sets of values, patterns of behavior, and social systems, and swallowing people up. As these people are collected inside this tide of painlessness, they writhe in a pleasure filled with unease and fall into an endless slumber dubbed "security" and "healing." The pleasure and healing you feel when you stop resisting and give your body over to the current. The feeling of relief like falling asleep when you close your eyes and accept and affirm yourself as you are. In exchange for being taken away by the current, you obtain fruit that is as sweet as honey. An enormous closed-off world, a world of established harmony that noise doesn't reach. A world in which you look only at the here and now, without doubt or questioning. A world in which you need only affirm your own being that exists here in this moment and savor the indescribable sense of satisfaction and security this affirmation brings. The kind of world in which even the thought that there could be a better world than this one has been stripped away.

I fall into this world. As I fall, I forget that I am falling. Once I have forgotten that I am falling, what remains is a world of weightlessness. A world of pleasure, death, and sleep

with no resistance, friction, or pain of gravity pulling at me. The sap that oozes from a body becoming painless tastes of pleasure, sleep, and death.

2. Into Whom is the Knife Stuck?

Attempting to move against the tide of painlessness is called “illness,” “deviance,” “an act of stupidity,” or “childish behavior.” When you reject giving yourself over to the tide of painlessness, believe there must be something important to be found by escaping from it, and insist on the importance of something that does not exist in a civilization moving toward painlessness, you are told this undertaking is an illness or deviant behavior and expelled from society. Or instead this effort is largely neutered and rendered impotent by being excessively idealized and put on a pedestal.

In a painless civilization, a “cure” is not the hope of something better. A “cure” is adapting oneself to the flow of this civilization. By doing so you render the “power of life” inside you so impotent it will never rise again. In a painless civilization, it is “illness” that contains hope. It is within a solitary struggle against the painless current and a relentless search for a way out while shouldering the burden of illness that true hope lies. To be ill is not to despair; despairing is attempting to treat the illness and obtain a cure.

True hope must in fact reside in you who, while exposing yourself to uncomprehending stares and being doused in the ridicule and pity of others, brandish your blade in their direction, groan quietly, “That’s wrong,” turn the blade toward yourself over and over again, and by doing so continue standing in solitude in a barren landscape. True hope lies in

the despair you feel when you come to realize with your entire being that it is the people close to you, the people upon whom you rely, who are most unable to understand your spirit. The “power of life” unmistakably resides deep within the being of you who, even though time and time again you have tried to heal yourself, to become a good person, and to make sure you won’t cause anyone any trouble, are always betrayed by yourself and fall into the despair of thinking that you are a bad person and there is nothing to be done about it. The reason you cannot fully become the kind of “good person” painless civilization demands is that the “power of life” inside you resists becoming the slave of painless civilization at the last juncture. Hope dwells in this “power of life” that exists inside you and has not yet been anesthetized. Do not “cure” it in the way painless civilization demands. You must follow through on your “illness” in a way that is totally incomprehensible from the perspective of painless civilization. This is the only way to open the door to hope.

What I want to say is not that this potential exists wherever there is illness or insanity. My claim is that the hope of dismantling painless civilization only emerges when you thoroughly embrace the “power of life” at the foundation of your being, continue fighting against the painless current, and follow through on your own illness or insanity in a way that opens up the door of possibility to a new horizon. I am not simply declaring an affirmation of illness or insanity. Simply affirming illness and insanity is the easiest method of coping, because they are then given their proper place within the framework of painless civilization. To simply define yourself as ill or insane means putting yourself in the hands of a painless civilization that tries to assign a fixed position to

these conditions. There is no potential in illness or insanity that has been defined and assigned a fixed position by painless civilization. Potential lies in the “incomprehensible” thoughts, words, and actions that threaten painless civilization at its core precisely because they cannot be judged to be either “normal” or “insane” when viewed from painless civilization’s perspective.

These incomprehensible thoughts, words and actions are not only incomprehensible when viewed from the perspective of painless civilization, but are often incomprehensible even to the person engaged in them. This is because this person’s way of thinking is still constrained by painless civilization-based thought. In order to understand them, it is necessary to maintain a position that relativizes painless civilization while standing right in the middle of it.

Take, for example, the bullying and violent behavior of children. It has been said in Japan that in the 1990s a “new impulse to violence” appeared among children. Children had previously acted out for a reason, such as opposition to their school or teacher, but with this “new impulse to violence” it wasn’t clear against whom their violence was directed. They often use the words “irritated” or “pissed off,” but even they are not sure what it is they are irritated with or pissed off at. In this state of incomprehension, their anger is directed toward their friends, their teachers, and their families. Adults do not understand why they are so angry either. Of course, there are presumably many cases in which they are taking revenge on a particular person or picking on the weak simply to relieve frustration. But there are an increasing number of cases in which such reasons alone cannot explain their violent impulses.

Sumio Hamada writes about this issue.

There's nothing the least bit strange about most children in these circumstances being seized by irritation and frustration without knowing where these feelings should be directed. This is not anger. Anger occurs through stimulation from some particular external thing (or person), and is resolved by attacking the source. This frustration, on the other hand, like bile building up in the chest, wells up inside you before you know it and suddenly spews out at the slightest trigger. And unless the root of this frustration can be dug out, the bile will keep pouring out again and again inexhaustibly.⁹

Hamada looks for the cause of this frustration in the fact that children do not feel like they are really learning at school, and are repeatedly scarred by the evaluations carried out at educational institutions. I think his analysis is largely correct. But I believe there is a deeper reason for this incomprehensible irritation.

As Hamada says, this irritation is something that is uncontrollably expelled from inside these children, and is not directed toward a particular external enemy. In other words, the reason their irritation becomes "incomprehensible" is that its target is undefined, and the reason its target is undefined is that this target includes the children themselves.

⁹ Hamada, Sumio. "To Break the Cycle of Bullying," Yutaka Saeki et al. (eds.), *Bullying and School Absenteeism*, Iwanami Koza Gendai No Kyoiku 4, 1998, p.139 (浜田寿美男「いじめの回路を断つために」佐伯胖ほか編『いじめと不登校』岩波講座・現代の教育4).

I think this is best expressed in the frustration of children in the early years of puberty. These young people in the period of transitioning from children to adults can feel the sprouting of an “adult” within their own changing bodies. They then face some difficult questions. What does it mean to become an adult? What sort of state is my body developing toward? What is the meaning of life? With inadequate words and clumsy approaches, they ask their parents and teachers, “What sort of life have you led?,” “What is the meaning of your life?,” “What is most important to you?,” and “What is my existence to you?” The adults who are asked do not answer these questions directly. Instead, they start lecturing the young person, saying things like, “Stop talking like this and get back to studying,” or “Life isn’t meant to be easy,” or give a vague and non-committal answer.

Even if an adult gives their own opinion, to children it smells of deception; children can easily see the contradiction between what adults say and how they behave. “What you say isn’t the same as what you do.” That is how children see adults. For example, the fact that there are men who tell teenage girls to take good care of their bodies, including their middle school and high school teachers, but engage in paying for sex with such girls is readily apparent to them because it is sometimes reported in news media. And they are first-hand witnesses when a principal says, “There has been no bullying at this school” after a bullied child has committed suicide.

And that is not all. The adults around them do not live their lives for themselves. Their fathers serve their companies for the sake of their families and work themselves nearly to death, and their mothers swallow their dissatisfaction and endure their daily drudgery for the sake of their children.

Adults appear to be revolving through their daily lives as though on a conveyer belt, all the while feeling the dissatisfaction of “not living as I would like to live, because of someone else.” They have given up thinking about the meaning of their own lives. Because once they start thinking about it, they will be forced to face the fact that their way of life may be fundamentally wrong. They don’t want to address this kind of question and make themselves feel even worse than they already do. That’s why adults stop thinking about the meaning of life; it is by ceasing to think about it that a person becomes an adult.

When a child turns to an adult and asks, “What is the meaning of your life?” or “Isn’t there something wrong with your deceitful way of living?” the adult tries to suppress the question itself. “Do your homework before saying such things.” “You should ask about that once you are a grownup.” “You can’t possibly understand life.” “Isn’t it because you ask this sort of thing that you are getting bullied at school?” With retorts like these, adults attempt to suppress or deflect the questions children ask.

Children are hitting them with the questions they most want to avoid facing, so adults try to punish them out of a feeling similar to fear. Over and over again they lecture, threaten, and apply corporal punishment. Teachers push the “correct view” in the name of education, while trying to thoroughly conceal their own lives that are not lived in accordance with it. Taking a completely opposite approach, they may say, “I’m so sorry that you have to worry about such things” and hug the child with tears in their eyes. In this way adults cleverly evade these questions.

The message children hear from behind these adults’

words is as follows.

“Don’t pull my blindfold down any further. We’ve given up on living our own lives, so please give up on living yours as well. We’ve chosen to blindfold ourselves to the meaning of life and the contradiction between what we say and what we do, and to adapt ourselves to our companies, families, and society, so we want you to do the same. We want you to fall in line and live a comfortable, stable life. We are trying to give up and say, “That’s life,” so please don’t poke holes in what we have convinced ourselves is the case. We want you to quickly adapt to society as well, and just like us lead a double-standard life, full of deception and resignation but comfortable and stable.”

The feeling that wells up in the hearts of children during puberty is “anger” at adults living in a society full of deceit and papered over with lies. They have a violent urge to force adults to confess, “The truth is we are living a life full of lies.” For these children who must become adults, the existence of adults who lead deceitful lives and avert their eyes from this fact is unbearable. “Come on, admit it. Everything you’ve said is a lie. You’re all living lives that are the opposite of what you say.” Young people want to confront these adults with knives in their hands and make them confess to their faces. By presenting their young bodies to men, teenage girls want to declare, “In the end, isn’t my body the only thing you’re after? You say noble things, but in the end you aren’t thinking about children’s happiness at all. You only think about satisfying your own desires. Everything else is a lie.”

I think this is one motive behind things like teenage boys committing acts of violence against their parents or teachers and teenage girls engaging in sexual delinquency in Japanese

society. But these violent urges are clearly directed at adults who are living a false life and are by no means “incomprehensible.” There is one other element that must be added to turn them into “incomprehensible” violent impulses.

What are children who are going through puberty while being confronted by the image of adults living false or deceitful lives thinking about deep down inside? They will become a member of adult society. But adults are full of lies. They don’t want to become that kind of adult. Eventually, however, it occurs to these children that these adults, too, were once young people like themselves. When they were young, they too must have been opposed to grownup society. But before they knew it they had become members of this sordid adult world. This means that even though right now they find adult society repulsive and enraging, sooner or later they too will probably become one of its members. “When I grow up and become an adult, can I be a completely different kind of adult from those I see in front of me living lives full of lies?”

Having thought things through this far, these children suddenly come to a realization. “In the end, won’t I too transform into the kind of dirty adult I see in front of me? Won’t I too become an adult who puts on a blindfold and lives a false life, and whose words and actions contradict each other? If it is a law of history that even young people who resist will eventually adapt to society, then isn’t it inevitable that one day I too will become a dirty grownup?”

They look inside themselves. “I too have inclinations to seek comfort and security. There is a me who bottles up what is troublesome and chooses to live while averting my eyes from my own contradictions. There is a me who gives in and

lives by compromising myself. There is clearly a me for whom maintaining consistency is truly hard and painful, and who thinks what is most important is finding a comfortable way to get by. Yes, the kind of lying adult I hate so much also exists within myself. A dirty adult lies submerged inside me. Somewhere inside myself I harbor the same dirtiness, contradiction, and deception as the adults I see in front of me.”

Don’t children sharply intuit this, even if they cannot put it into words? They point the knives they have picked up at the adults in front of them. They become aware, however, that the tips of their blades are pointed not only at these adults but also at themselves. They cannot express this very well in words, but they notice that they themselves are included among the targets of their own attacks. As soon as they realize this, they become confused on a fundamental level about the true targets of the blades they are brandishing. In reality, who is it I am trying to stab?

The blade that has been brandished floats in space. I don’t know at whom my anger should be directed. But I don’t know how to get rid of my rage. This anger without a clear target flows into my knife and slashes at the air. If a teacher happens to be in front of my blade, it may well run him or her through. If my parents get in its way, it may stab them. If there are friends I don’t get along with, it may cut them down. And if there is no one else around, my blade may penetrate my own body deeply.

This is what “incomprehensible” violent urges are. Have these young people not indeed been placed in a situation in which they do not know at whom their violent urges should be directed? And is this not a state in which “incomprehensible” violent urges that have lost sight of their proper target spurt

out and shake their entire being, or in which “incomprehensible” frustrations well up from the core of their bodies? Of course, this kind of situation has also existed to a greater or lesser extent in the past. But in contemporary society, in which parents and teachers have lost their authority and the behavior of adults has been revealed to children through increased access to information, children have been confronted with this kind of problem in a way that is more serious than ever before.

They don't know who their true enemy is. They don't know what opponent to take down. They themselves may well be the enemy. Adults rarely face such difficult problems, because it was by blindfolding themselves to such questions that they adapted to society and became “adults.” By averting their eyes from such questions as how to live a life that is not a lie, adults support painless civilization and lead a false life or living death within it.

Those who instead face these questions directly are adolescents who cannot help undergoing the transformation from child to adult. Having no choice but to address what it means to become an “adult” as a pressing question in their own lives, it is these young people who are most sensitive to the duplicity of “adult” society.

And it is through their eyes that the image of a contemporary society that is becoming painless emerges most vividly. An image of adults as represented by their teachers and parents. An image of adults who carry out their duties at work or at home, day after day, with an air of boredom while the expression on their faces resembles that of the dead, who work themselves to exhaustion to maintain their comfort and stability, whose bodies have lost their vitality, and who,

seeking a moment of stimulation when they are away from home or their workplace, engage in behavior that goes directly against what they normally say is right or correct. An image of adults who, in order to desperately defend what they have acquired and protect their own framework, impose various conditions on children and always try to handle matters obliquely without ever making an attempt to change their own way of being. An image of these sorts of adults who gather together in gangs, and who, if a problem arises, loudly lay the blame outside themselves without ever doubting their own stance, and by doing so desperately defend their own identity and the preservation of the status quo.

There are adults whose bodies have been made so painless they cannot even ask themselves whether there might be something wrong with this kind of blindfolded life. Children can clearly see the anesthetized bodies of these adults. The painless state of these adult bodies is so vividly apparent to these children that they have doubts about becoming an “adult” and attempt to reject this transformation. Their “incomprehensible” violent urges are directed toward these painless adult bodies. They stab these numb bodies all over in the hope that they will once again feel the sensation of pain. They wield their blades while somewhere in their minds desperately hoping that by cutting into the bodies of these “adults” and letting their blood flow, the pain of this bloodletting will somehow awaken them. Children thus stab the painless bodies of adults, and with each thrust the tips of their blades turn inward to pierce the painless bodies that exist within themselves.

In other words, while harming themselves they are stabbing at the painless bodies of adults. They are stabbing at

the painless bodies they have in common with adults. I believe this is the structure at the root of the “incomprehensible” violent urges of adolescents.

The driving force that stabs at painless bodies is the “power of life” that still draws breath inside them. While being crushed by the desire of the body and numbed in a painless stream, the “power of life” just barely survives, and, taking the form of “incomprehensible” violent urges, tries to pierce our painless bodies. I do not, of course, condone violence itself, but within these “incomprehensible” urges there must be a possibility of which the young people driven to these violent impulses are not aware.

Rather than stabbing, attacking, and destroying people with a painless body and leaving them curled up on the ground in front of you covered in blood, isn't there another approach that involves dismantling the core of these people, and while gradually dissolving the structure of their body and my own gives the energy of rebirth to the power of life? Is there not a path of untangling and releasing rather than binding and stabbing? Does the true possibility of dismantling painless civilization not indeed dwell in the “incomprehensible” urges seen in the violence of children? The possibility of opening the door to a different path by looking directly at the irresistible desires that lie deep inside us, and, without averting our eyes from them, engaging in self-transformation. Is there not some method by which this possibility that is no longer possessed by people who have fully become “adults” can be realized?

3. Painless Civilization's Various Methods of Attack

Contemporary society marching toward painlessness, however, gives no thought to encouraging this possibility. Instead, it tries to get these children to stop their “incomprehensible” violent and self-injuring behavior by force, and attacks them through internal domination in the name of “psychological care” to make them re-adapt to the rules of painless civilization.

I have taken the violence of children as an example, but it is not only children who are subjected to these attacks from painless civilization. Everyone who tries to oppose painless civilization is a target. Painless civilization also unrelentingly launches attacks against adults who have doubts about their own way of living and have begun attempting to escape the trap of becoming painless. It tries to strike at the weakest point inside their minds to make them lose the will to fight back, remove all doubts about painless civilization, and bring them back to its side.

Sometimes these attacks come through the mouths of the people closest to them, and other times they are delivered through the deluge of messages emanating from the environment of large cities. People who try to resist painless civilization must fight an opponent that is like a creature whose true form cannot be grasped but is secretly at work behind the people closest to them and their entire city. They must grapple with an enormous monster that lurks behind those who admonish them to “stop resisting.”

To begin with, a painless civilization targets the “desire of the body” of those who would stand against it. In response to the criticism, “What residents of a painless civilization do is

very different from what they say. They go through life wearing a blindfold,” painless civilization asks, “Well then, what about you yourself? Is what you do consistent with what you say? Do you spend your life looking directly at things you’d rather not see? Doesn’t painless civilization exist inside you, too? How can you just put this aside and criticize others? If you’re going to criticize painless civilization, you should start by overcoming the painless civilization inside yourself. Nobody in this world, not a single person, is untainted. What you need to do right now is take a hard look at yourself as you really are. Then affirm yourself just as you are. When you do, you will surely notice that those you had thought of as your sworn enemies were in fact your comrades. Then you will be able to truly forgive both them and yourself.”

Once it has you off balance, a painless civilization keeps pressing its advantage. “What do you have to gain by holding out on your own like this? Nothing good will come of it. By continuing to resist you’ll only become more and more worn out, unhappy, and in pain. And you’ll increasingly wonder why you are doing something so wearying. It’s fine to keep it up as long as it’s something you want to do, but before long it will become unpleasant. Even if it becomes unpleasant and you want to stop, your pride will make it impossible for you to say that you want to quit. You will have reached a point at which you cannot admit that you want to give up and come back to this world. Wouldn’t that be awful? If it happens, I’ll call out to you, ‘Stop being so stubborn and come over here!’ Then you’ll have an excuse to come back to this side.”

Painless civilization also launches its attacks through the mouth of the person you want to be loved by the most. The person you most want to love you. Your mother, for example.

Your mother, who is living deep within a painless civilization, entreats you, “I love you, so please, I’m begging you, stop saying these selfish things and come back to this side. I am making this request because I care about you from the bottom of my heart. Not for anyone’s sake but your own. Stop being so pigheaded and come back from where it is cold and lonely to a warm, sweet, and familiar place. If you still don’t want to, think of it as being for your mother’s sake and honor my request. Remember how we all used to laugh together at family gatherings. Remember those happy days. I’m not angry anymore. I’ve forgiven you for everything. Please forgive me for what I’ve done as well. I want you to come back. I want you to go back to being a good child who listens to me like you did in the past. I want you to make me happy.”

Invitations to unconditionally surrender and “give up fighting back against painless civilization” may come not only from your mother but also from other intimate people in your life. These pleas make skillful use of nostalgia that makes you recall familiar faces and memories, and the warm human relationships that are vividly brought back to life in these recollections. They make you think you must be a very cold and foolish person indeed to reject the affection and goodwill of such kindhearted people. They make you want to kneel down in front of them and say, “I’m so sorry. I’m sorry I resisted.” They make you want to vow, “It was all my fault. I’ll never do it again.” They make you feel like you are going to cry. “I won’t say selfish things anymore. Please forgive me.”

There are also cases in which you are issued an invitation to return to painless civilization through the mouths of teachers and older friends you used to respect. In such cases the language of morality is likely to be used. For example,

“Your opposition is by no means a bad thing. But while it’s fine to fight back, you mustn’t cause problems for those around you. There are limits to opposition. It’s important to know the line between what it is allowed and what is bad. Question, oppose, and learn the line between what is allowed and what is wrong — that’s how everyone becomes an adult. Growing up means fighting back against adults while at the same time learning from them and becoming a respectable member of society. Make no mistake, to just keep fighting back is the same as being a thug. Even while fighting back, you must learn from what adults say, elevate yourself, and in this way make yourself grow. I know better than anyone that you will make the wise choice.”

Or they may say something like this. “It’s up to you how to live your life, and how hard to push your own principles and ideas. But have you thought about how much your decisions may hurt and worry those around you? You may be satisfied, but can you even imagine the pain of the people around you? If you want to live ethically, isn’t this what you should be focused on? Aren’t you, in fact, the true egoist who doesn’t think about the suffering of others?”

What’s more, through various media painless civilization inundates you with the idea that the stimulation, pleasure and satisfaction of your desires you so desperately want does indeed exist in this painless world. If you just remain inside painless civilization you’ll be able to live your life surrounded by this enjoyable stimulation. What is hard and painful will be glossed over, pushed to the back of your mind, thoroughly hidden from sight, and never again appear in front of you. Don’t you want to return to this kind of pleasant, comfortable world?

Your existence is painful and your life is hard because you are struggling against the current of painless civilization. If, in spite of having enough money and everything you need in everyday life, you are tormented by intractable suffering, it is because you are not earnestly following your own true desire to “forget everything and be healed.” Stop struggling to build up tiny acts of resistance, and instead accept that you are suffering, acknowledge that this suffering comes from your own intransigence, and, discarding this stubborn opposition, give your body over fully to the current of a painless civilization. If you do this you will be freed from suffering and finally obtain peace of mind.

As they constantly receive these multiple attacks from a monster whose form cannot be precisely discerned, the people fighting back get worn out by the struggle against their own desires. They are on the verge of being defeated by these desires. They start to think that this kind of struggle doesn’t matter at all, that this kind of opposition is utterly meaningless. Then at some point they abandon themselves and give their bodies over to painless civilization.

Those who fight are subjected to relentless attacks on the weakest parts of their minds, and eventually they are once again gathered up in painless civilization’s whirlpool. One by one, painless civilization thus defeats all of those who try to escape from it.

At the foundation of painless civilization lies the “desire of the body.”

The “desire of the body,” which includes such desires as to live without effort, to lead a stable life, to live without tasting true suffering, to not give up what we have acquired, and to continue to expand ourselves without changing our

own framework, is strengthened within interactions between people, their thoughts, and social systems, becomes interwoven with them, and eventually, having become first a stream and then a tide and built up a force too strong for any individual to control, begins to move people around, dig channels through society, flow into and out of people's bodies, and penetrate their thoughts and actions. This current is invisible to our eyes, and cannot be touched. But it is nevertheless a fluid with the power to shape our actions, and skillfully bind our hearts and minds. This is the monster, whose form cannot be clearly discerned, with whom those who fight back against painless civilization must do battle. We cannot measure it as substance or matter. If we hone our senses, however, we can feel it right there on our skin. And we really are swallowed up by it, have our actions bound by it, and fight against it. Just like an irresistible maelstrom that has formed in a pool, we struggle, fight, are swept away, and are dragged along by this current.

Social psychology has hypothesized that this kind of force lies behind crowd behavior. I believe this kind of current of consciousness also exists within digital media.¹⁰ It is impossible to grasp the nature of a civilization without looking at this dimension; a civilization is not made of only material substances and social systems. In order to accurately understand the nature of modern civilization that is moving toward painlessness, a profound examination must be conducted of not only material and social systems but also systems in the dimension of collective consciousness and the

¹⁰ See my book *Consciousness Communication*, Chikuma Gakugei Bunko, 1993 (森岡正博『意識通信』ちくま学芸文庫).

dynamism they introduce to the group behavior of human beings.

Let us call this fluid that flows ceaselessly through painless civilization, dominates the thoughts and actions of the people who live in it, keeps people stuck inside it, and when there is someone who tries to escape concentrates all its power on bringing them back inside again, the “painless stream.” The painless stream is always drawing people into the center of a painless civilization and placing them at its most stable center. The “painless stream” is one of the core concepts of painless civilization theory.

What is the difference between the “desire of the body” and the “painless stream”? The desire of the body is composed of individual desires, such as wanting to avoid pain or to obtain comfort, that arise inside individual people. The painless stream, on the other hand, is a current that drains people’s desire of the body into society; it is a developed form of the “desire of the body” that has grown into a current that tries to continue evading pain and suffering systematically by cleverly employing various systems such as preventive pain elimination, blindfolding structures, and double management structures (see Chapter Six).

Through the flow of the painless stream, painless civilization creates a kind of gravitational field that can be described as “painless gravity.” Just as people who are too exhausted to support the weight of their own bodies fall to the ground, people who have been worn out fighting against painless civilization eventually collapse along the vector of painless gravity, are swallowed up by the painless stream, and are automatically gathered into the center of painless civilization.

What those who would fight against painless civilization are thus facing is a painless stream that seeks to sweep them away and launches wave after wave of attacks against them, and a painless gravity that seeks to cast a net over their desire of the body and drag them back to the side of painless civilization. The painless stream tries to sap the strength of those who would fight back and wash away their footing. Painless gravity clings to their desire of the body and tries to compel them to destroy themselves. In this way painless civilization relentlessly launches attack after attack against the internal areas of those who would question it from its foundations and attempt to find a way out of it.

To fight against painless civilization is not to fight against each individual person living in it. It is instead to fight against the “painless stream” and “painless gravity” that exist deep inside every human being, including the person fighting themselves. In this sense, the fight against painless civilization is a fight in a new dimension we have never experienced. How are we to win this fight in a new dimension? Is there even such a thing as “winning” when it comes to this kind of battle? Is it necessary to fight these things to begin with? And what exactly is “fighting”?

4. The Fight between the “Desire of the Body” and the “Power of Life”

If there is a fight, then it is a fight between the “desire of the body,” which attempts to expand and reproduce painless civilization, and the “power of life” that is being put to sleep and anesthetized by it.

The “desire of the body” – wanting ease, comfort,

pleasure, and stability, wanting to expand ourselves while preserving our framework as it is, not wanting to lose what we have acquired, wanting to do whatever we want as much as possible, and wanting to live as long as possible – is organized at the level of society, encompasses systems such as blindfolding structures and preventive pain elimination, and spreads the tide of a painless civilization to every corner of society and every corner of the hearts and minds of the people living in it.

What stands in the way of this strategy of the “desire of the body” is the “power of life.” The “power of life” makes our lives proceed in an unforeseeable direction, a direction where the other exists, a direction where the self is constantly being transformed, and operates as a driving force that encourages us to live our lives to the fullest and without regrets.

But the “desire of the body,” the driving force behind the progress of painless civilization, tries by various means to put to sleep and anesthetize this “power of life” that exists within us. The “desire of the body” seeks to make “the power of life” impotent, renders our bodies painless, and brings us completely within the fold of painless civilization.

The “power of life” deep inside us resists these efforts. The power of life is something that exists in every one of us, so even if it is put to sleep in one place by the attacks of a painless civilization it will awaken somewhere else. And even if this flame too is snuffed out it will ignite in a different location.

The fight that occurs in a painless civilization therefore takes the form of attacks by the “desire of the body,” which lays various traps in an effort to put to sleep or anesthetize the “power of life,” and counterattacks from the “power of life”

that seeks to realize a life without regrets while resisting the attacks of the “desire of the body” with all of its strength. On the one hand painless management expands to every corner of society and every corner of the hearts and minds of human beings, while on the other hand “incomprehensible” opposition and destruction erupts independently here and there, and the assault troops of painless civilization, armed with powerful extinguishers, race around putting out the flames of “incomprehensible” opposition as soon as they find them.

In this fight, the “desire of the body” has an overwhelming advantage, both because the structure of contemporary society as a whole has been organized to support the desire of the body, and because the wave of painlessness has already swept through every corner of society. What’s more, the tide of painlessness inundating society has already reached the inner core of the people who would fight back against it. Those who try to fight back against the tide of painlessness must not only fight against the painless stream outside themselves, the painless stream that attacks them, but also against their own internal “desire of the body” that rises up inside them resonating with the tide of painlessness.

The painless stream outside me and the desire of the body within me are inseparably bound together; the painless stream is constantly flowing into me from the outside, passing through me and activating the “desire of the body” within me, and then flowing out of me again. The painless civilization inside me and the painless civilization outside me are bound tightly together by a single, strong current. I must take up the fight with this powerful current that penetrates me from both

the inside and the outside.

The tide of a painless civilization becomes a single powerful current and penetrates the “desire of the body” that exists within me. This current flows into my body, activates the “desire of the body” inside me, numbs the “power of life,” and flows out of me again, returning to the various pain elimination devices in society just as a thick rope unravels into many tiny threads, only to then enter the bodies of others, merge with other currents, and seek a new target.

This is the structure of the fight in which those who would resist painless civilization must engage. This is where the fundamental problems of a contemporary civilization that is becoming painless become apparent. These are the fundamental circumstances that those who would address and attempt to solve the various problems caused by a society that is becoming painless inevitably face. For example, in the 1970s and 1980s some people with disabilities who were engaged in activism criticized the egoism of able-bodied people who say, “It would be better if there were no disabled people.” But when these disabled people themselves were put in the position of having a child, there were some who said, “I hope my child doesn’t have a disability.” People with disabilities themselves had to face the problem of so-called “internal eugenic thought.” The problem of how to deal with the “internal eugenic thought” found in those who engage in this activism themselves is a concrete example of the fight against the painless stream.

5. Three Dimensions of Self-Entrapment

Before thinking more about the fight against the “desire of the body,” we must first take a look at the particular situation into which we are being driven by both the “desire of the body” and the “power of life.” As I have already mentioned, in a society that is becoming painless the “desire of the body” deprives us of the “joy of life.” The “power of life,” deprived of its joy, is slowly lulled to sleep and anesthetized inside us. The ultimate result of this process is a state of “joy frigidity.”

“Joy frigidity” is a marked decline in sensitivity to the unexpected joy that comes when we experience the destruction and rebirth of the self in the midst of suffering. People with joy frigidity do not imagine that such a thing could happen in their lives. They do not even look for a joy that could be brought about by passively and unwillingly going beyond a framework of prediction. Instead, they pursue only the pleasant stimulation that has been set out for us, and the pleasure and satisfaction of passing each waypoint on a course we had foreseen from the start.

Painless civilization is a world from which all “joy” has disappeared. If somehow “joy” were to arise there, the residents of painless civilization who have become frigid to it would presumably experience this sensation as a powerful “anxiety” they had never felt before.

In a contemporary civilization that is becoming painless, the “desire of the body” attempts to put to sleep and anesthetize the “power of life” and drive us to a state of joy frigidity. When a rope is tightened around a person’s neck, they gradually lose consciousness, lose the ability to fight back, become numb throughout their entire body, and fall into a

sleep-like state, and the “desire of the body” does something very similar to the “power of life.” In other words, the “desire of the body” sits on top of the “power of life,” and, as though swaddling an infant in a blanket, envelopes it and binds it gently so that it cannot move. It ties it up, immobilizes it, suffocates it, anesthetizes it, and invites it to sleep. This is something carried out by the “desire of the body.” And when the “desire of the body” binds and suffocates the “power of life,” it offers us a sweet nectar in exchange. Maybe it’s fine to go along with this invitation; maybe if it feels that good we should throw away the “power of life;” maybe if it is that comfortable, we should choose this life. The “desire of the body” puts the “power of life” to sleep while secreting a nectar so strong and sweet it leads us to such thoughts.

To begin with, the drama of the “desire of the body” putting the “power of life” to sleep unfolds within me as an individual. “My” body binds “my” life. That is to say, I bind myself. The basic state of a body that is becoming painless is one of “self-entrapment.”

The simplest example of this is the case in which I could take on a new challenge if I wanted to but don’t because it’s too much bother. The “power of life” is attempting to break through some kind of barrier and take a step toward something I have never attempted before, but the “desire of the body” that seeks comfort and avoids what is bothersome binds it and stops my feet from moving forward. As a result of this I lose something important, and in exchange obtain comfort, pleasure, and stability.

It is not that some person other than me will take something from me. Nor that some other person will bind my arms and legs and render me immobile. It is instead I myself

who will bind my own body, and put to sleep, anesthetize, and bury within myself something very important that exists inside me.

The drama of the “desire of the body” putting the “power of life” to sleep arises secondarily in our intimate human relationships.

For example, the relationship between a salaryman and a housewife often becomes a complicit relationship. The salaryman works at a company and earns money. By taking on the responsibility of looking after him, the housewife is permitted to use his money. The man is loath to lose his labor power to things like housework and laundry, so he wants this relationship in which the woman takes care of him to continue. The woman enjoys being able to live without the aggravation of working outside the home to earn money, so she does not want to lose this relationship either.

Say these two people in a dependent relationship begin to harbor doubts about each other’s way of life. The man comes to feel resentment because the woman can laze around the house without doing any work while he has to keep going to a company where he is miserable in order to earn money. The woman resents the fact that since the man cannot look after himself she has to keep doing the work of a maid or valet day in and day out. In this way they come to harbor resentment toward each other, and these dissatisfactions eventually collide. Each asserts to the other that they have been driven into a miserable state by their partner. Each says that if only the other would change their attitude, this situation would surely change and their relationship would improve.

But while they make these sorts of assertions, this couple

does not make any attempt to actually put them into action. This is because in truth neither of them wants to change the current situation. While the man says he wants the woman to be independent, deep down he wants to keep giving her the money he earns and have her remain at home. The woman, too, while she says she wants the man to take care of himself, in fact derives great satisfaction from telling herself, "He couldn't cope with daily life if I weren't around." So even though they voice these sorts of complaints to each other, in reality neither one of them has any desire to change their state of mutual dependence. I call this state of affairs a "complicit relationship." The crime they are trying to commit through their complicity is the crime of conspiring to kill each other's "power of life." In the context of painless civilization theory, the term "complicit relationship" is perfectly apt.

When a complicit relationship is established, we are able to get by without addressing things we must overcome or things at which we must take a hard look. The existence of our partner in front of us does an excellent job of covering up the painful problems we would have to face if we were alone.

To a greater or lesser extent, all human relationships do indeed contain aspects of mutual dependence. A complicit relationship, however, differs completely from the kind of relationship of mutual assistance that arises between two independent people; only in the former do I use my partner as a sheet to cover up what I don't want to look at, and seek to maintain the relationship in order to avoid changing myself. Independent people are constantly changing the nature of their relationship itself out of a kind of necessity, and both parties are constantly changing themselves to adapt to this new relationship. This kind of dynamism is not present in a

complicit relationship. What is found in a complicit relationship is not “transformation” that arises out of necessity, but rather “repetition” that is perpetuated by mutual deception.

It is this kind of complicit relationship that forms the foundation of intimate human relationships in a painless civilization. Painless civilization is constantly expanding complicit relationships as a mechanism well suited to distancing people from the suffering in front of their eyes and rendering them painless in a simple manner. This deprives people of the possibility of self-transformation, forces them to endlessly repeat the same state of affairs, and secures for them a comfortable, pleasurable, and stable life with little pain.

Complicit relationships are relationships in which each side’s “desire of the body” binds their partner’s “power of life.” I bind your “power of life,” and I want you to bind my “power of life.” Complicit relationships, insofar as they involve both parties roping each other in, can be thought of as a kind of self-entrapment. The two people come together as a self-entrapping set. They were not tied up by any third party. They tied each other up on the basis of a kind of mutual consent. This is the reason they are unpersuasive no matter how much they try to pin their dissatisfaction on their partner. (I discuss complicit relationship-type domination based on asymmetrical power relationships between men and women in detail in Chapter Four).

The third pattern in which the “desire of the body” seeks to constrain the “power of life” takes shape when the painless stream coursing through society as a whole flows into me and attempts to put to sleep or anesthetize my “power of life.” When we look to its source, the tide of a painless civilization

that takes the form of a painless stream or painless gravity and robs us of the joy of life also turns out to be the result of the “desire of the body” that exists in each of us having been organized on the scale of a society and become a powerful torrent.

The “desire of the body” emitted from each one of us is externalized and joins the great tide of the “painless stream,” and then returns to bind each of us once again. Tracing its origins, we find that the painless stream that comes to bind my “power of life” flows at least in part out of the “desire of the body” inside me, and insofar as I myself have taken part in the maintenance and development of painless civilization, I can be said to have been caught by a line I myself have cast. If we consider this at the level of society, the countless lines cast by all of the people who have adapted to living in a society that is becoming painless expand into a kind of net that catches and binds all human beings. It is “self-entrapment” taken to the level of society as a whole. (A “self-catching” net that expands to cover an entire society may be thought to refer to the workings of “power” that have penetrated every corner of our society. Today’s theories of power do indeed speak of “micro power” that rises up from the grassroots of society and attempts to constrain us from the inside. But in order to accurately understand the nature of the source from which this power emanates and pulls us in, it is necessary to move from such a “theory of power” to a “theory of self-entrapping desires.” This shift is pivotal to painless civilization theory (see Chapter Eight). The nature of self-entrapment must presumably also differ between the various social strata and lower-level groupings that make up society. A micro analysis of self-entrapment in differing social strata and other

groupings is a task that must be undertaken in the future).

Putting all of this together, within contemporary society that is becoming painless we can be said to be entrapping ourselves in three dimensions: the individual dimension, the dimension of intimate human interaction in the form of complicit relationships, and the social dimension of the tide of painless civilization. We are thoroughly immobilized in this self-made trap in which these three dimensions overlap in complex and baffling ways. In the following chapters I will dig deeper into these three types of self-entrapment and consider them from a new angle.

6. Where Is the Enemy?

At the root of modern civilization there is capitalism. The first to clearly assert that human beings were losing something important through the development of capitalism was Marx. He called this “estrangement.”

Estrangement is being expelled, externalized, or excluded from something to which we were originally supposed to belong. “Estrangement” was a concept conceived by Hegel and Feuerbach. Marx redefined it as a civilizational problem. Marx said that workers are estranged in a capitalist society because the things they make belong not to the workers themselves but to the capitalists who employ them. The harder they work, the more is taken from them. As this continues, “in his work, therefore, he [the worker] does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental

energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind.”¹¹ Workers are thus estranged not only from what they produce but also from themselves. Marx calls this “self-estrangement.” This is the “estrangement of man from man,” and each person is estranged “from man’s essential nature.”¹² In other words, in a capitalist society workers are estranged from what they have created, and, by continuing to perform this barren labor, they are then also estranged from the essence of what makes them a human being – freedom, happiness, and life.

On this basis, Marx believed we must build a society in which human beings can take back true freedom. In order to do so he believed it was necessary to destroy the structure in which capitalists exploit workers through violent revolution, resolve class conflicts, and build a society that would create the conditions in which the development of the freedom of each person is the development of the freedom of all people. Marx takes the perspective of workers (the proletariat) and aims to overthrow capitalists and capitalistic relationships of production.

This idea from Marx’s early period would go on to have a major influence on later generations. In the process his thought was popularized and served as a catalyst for the emergence of the following two ideas. (Marx himself, from his middle period onward, developed an approach that in a sense overcame the problems these ideas contained).

One idea was a theory of civilization in which human beings have been exiled, through the development of civilization, from the place in which they were originally

¹¹ Marx, Karl. *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, translated by Martin Milligan, Prometheus Books, 1988, p. 74.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 78.

supposed to live. “In the past human beings were one with nature, but now, thanks to having developed a civilization that has conquered nature, we have been cut off from it and forgotten its value.” “With the progress of modernization, the warm human relationships found in communities have been lost, and we have all become isolated individuals indifferent to each other.” “Thanks to the increasing interventions of science and technology in life, modern human beings have lost the sense of respect for life possessed by people in the past.”

These civilization theories advocate approaches such as returning to a state of unity between human beings and nature or restoring the warm human relationships of the sort that existed in the past. They are formed out of the idea that we should solve our problems by “bringing back what has been lost.”

The other idea is that in order to build a good society we must defeat a great external force that is overpowering us. The reason we cannot lead rich, full lives is that some powerful force existing outside of us is unilaterally depriving us of various things that would enrich our daily existence, such as a proper income, a safe environment, and a social safety net, and monopolizing them for itself. Sometimes it makes use of an unfair economic system, sometimes it brandishes violence or military might in order to maintain exploitative structures. What is needed now, therefore, is for people who have been oppressed and exploited to band together and bring down this powerful external force. The powerful external forces cited include capitalists, capitalism, social and political systems, globalization, and so on.

Painless civilization theory deliberately distances itself from these two ways of thinking.

The first is a way of thinking which holds that human beings have been exiled from the place we are supposed to be, but what we must do is neither return to “the happy place where our wholeness used to be secured” nor restore here and now the state of affairs that presumably existed in these other times and places. What we have to do is set foot in a completely new and unknown world by freeing ourselves from our self-entrapment. The idea of wanting to go back to the “good old days” is one of the biggest traps into which earnest concern about the shape of contemporary society is liable to fall. Having the wisdom to avoid getting caught in this trap is absolutely necessary.

The second idea is a way of thinking that holds we must defeat a powerful external force, but painless civilization theory does not acknowledge a powerful enemy that stands separately and independently outside of ourselves. Every relevant force comes out of what each of us has inside ourselves, and our enemy, too, is always present inside us.

In painless civilization theory, we are thought to exist in a state of self-entrapment. What binds us is nothing other than our own “desire of the body” and the “painless stream” that arises when it is organized at the level of a society. What we must do, therefore, is not bring down an external enemy, but rather carefully unravel the “ropes in which we have bound ourselves” that restrain us from both within and without. What we must do is not “bring down” but “unravel.” With our own hands we must unravel each of the cords that we alone have tied around ourselves. By focusing too much on a powerful external force, we tend to lose sight of the fact that this powerful force exists inside us as well and strongly connects us with forces on the outside.

It is of course a fact that in this society the group of people who have power and wealth satisfy their own desire of the body more greedily than anyone else, and it is also a fact that they have more opportunities to reach for various possibilities. But these people focus so intently on expanding, maintaining, stabilizing, and preventing the collapse of their own great influence that they tend to forget to live their own lives fully and without regret. Clinging to their power and wealth, they are then led further and further toward a fossilized life of living death without ever realizing it.

People who lack power and wealth, on the other hand, are so focused on working in order to live another day that they are deprived of an environment in which they might live fully and without regret. Marx saw in them the hope of revolution, but it must be said that in this he was overly optimistic; while among them there are many who live fully, there are also many who support the structures of domination and exploitation by leading perfunctory lives without thinking about the meaning of life, by only taking the transient pleasure provided by society, by yearning to raise themselves up and reign as one of society's power holders, and by committing acts of violence against those weaker than themselves.

Moreover, those who try to fight against the domination and exploitation that exist in society, too, by averting their eyes from the lust for power inside themselves and from their own "desire of the body" that seeks the pleasure and stimulation of a "fight," can be said to support these structures from below.

As a result, the structure of self-entrapment is not torn down simply by targeting a direct attack on the ruling class. In

order to dismantle it, to begin with every person living in a contemporary society that is becoming painless must inspect their own way of life, and each must unravel the painless civilization inside themselves in their own position. After that, they must concretely dismantle the structures of self-entrapment within society and the social devices that support them.

This undertaking, however, must inevitably become a hard, painful fight full of loneliness. A contemporary civilization that is becoming painless will surely come to put those of us who are trying to face ourselves to sleep. While dangling nostalgic fantasies before our eyes that entice us to reach out with both hands, this civilization asks us what merit is to be gained by engaging in this kind of fight. It will try every trick in the book to put the “power of life” inside us to sleep. It will try to change us into a being that resembles a patient sleeping peacefully in an intensive care unit.

The fight against painless civilization, therefore, becomes a fight against “sleep.” It is a fight that demands we keep ourselves from drifting off while swimming against the tide of painlessness that tempts us with slumber. The coziness of curling up in a blanket and falling asleep on a cold winter’s day. The pleasure of drifting off while lying in bed and listening to music after a satisfying meal. It is a fight that requires us to make a constant, conscious effort to stay awake and never slumber even as we are drawn in by these sorts of feelings. Overcoming “sleep” is indeed the most difficult hurdle in the fight against painless civilization, because we must resist the “temptation to sleep” while constantly confronting the question of why we must stay awake.

When people are exhausted, however, they are not strong

enough to triumph over the temptation of sleep. Even as they are trying to fight, before they know it they discover that they have succumbed to temptation and fallen into a light slumber. People whose "power of life" has been put to sleep give themselves over to resignation and comfort, and, just like being swallowed by a current in a pool, one by one they are sucked from the rocks of resistance toward the middle of the maelstrom of painless civilization, spinning limply in the current like straw dolls floating on the water.

Seeing these people out of the corner of my eye as I struggle in the whirlpool, eventually I begin to think, "If they've all given up, sought comfort and stability, demanded daily stimulation, and adapted their way of life to painless civilization, why must I alone keep fighting and desperately enduring this suffering?" I want to take them up on their invitation, let my body go, enjoy being comforted, and sleep to my heart's content alongside them in the bosom of painless civilization. How pleasurable it would be. How comfortable it would be. The truth is, I too want to feel good. I want to avoid hardship and suffering and enjoy a life in which I can feel at ease.

Over there, a warm and peaceful world is waiting. The world right here, in comparison, is lonely and cold. Why must I spend any longer stuck on this side? Why must I stay here forever on this cold, bleak, uninhabited expanse? The strength drains from my legs. My body is heavy. How good it would feel to give in and collapse. My body craves warmth, camaraderie, kindness, and healing. It wants to be taken up in painless civilization's embrace. It pleads to be wrapped in peaceful sleep. I no longer know what painless civilization is. I no longer know what is wrong with it. I no longer care what

happens. My body has become leaden and cold. I want warmth. I want milk. I collapse. I am no longer the me I had become and return to my original self. I go back to the me of those nostalgic days. I melt. I dissolve from the inside.

It feels like I'm dreaming, but sometimes I mutter as though I'm having a nightmare. I mustn't be here. I have to get away. But why do I have to escape from here? Can't I stay here forever just as I am now? Why do I have to fight? What's wrong with my staying in this painless world just as I am? I have a feeling it's wrong to carry on like this. But why is it wrong? I feel as though I used to know why it was bad to stay here like this. But now I can't remember. Why did I doubt myself? Why did I doubt whether this was really the sort of life I should be living? I can no longer remember the reason for these doubts. I'm comfortable. I can't remember anymore. Who I used to be. What I was so intent on. What I was trying to think about when I had not yet fully become an adult.

*

Why must I fight? There is only one answer to this question. I want to live this one limited life, the only life I will ever have, to the fullest and without regret. I want to live better, and to die better. So I fight. If I continue living inside a painless civilization, I won't be able to live my one and only life fully in the way that brings the most affirmation to me. So I fight. Even if it seems that I am about to be swept away by painless civilization's tide and lose myself, I stop right at the brink and keep pursuing the meaning of life. I stop because no matter how much I am blinded by the painless stream, no matter how deeply I am lulled into a comforting sleep,

somewhere deep in my consciousness there is still a clear understanding that this is not the life that brings me the most affirmation. As long as the “power of life” continues to exist, I can never truly be deceived on this point.

The truth is, I know. Everyone knows. That this is a life of lies. And even though we know this we feign ignorance and deceive ourselves. So I fight. I fight for myself. I fight to live a full life. Not for the sake of anyone else. I fight so that I myself can live my life to the fullest and without regret.

End of Chapter Three

Afterword – 2023

How were Chapters Two and Three of *Painless Civilization*? From the next chapter, readers will be invited to the deepest layers of painless civilization theory.

The following is a provisional table of contents of forthcoming chapters:

Chapter 4: Self-Dismantling in the Darkness

1. “I” as a Starting Point
2. Dismantling Self-Made Traps at the Level of Society
3. Dismantling “Domination by Co-Dependency”
4. Identity and the Central Axis
5. In the Case of Myself
6. The Meaning of Encounters
7. Love as an Endless Process
8. Absolute Solitude

Chapter 5: From the Desire of the Body to the Desire of Life

1. “Desire of the Body” and “Desire of Life”
2. Going Through Pain and Suffering
3. Erotic Encounters
4. Against the Expansion of Territory
5. Chain of Predation
6. Prenatal Testing as an Example
7. Body, Life, and Intellect
8. Dismantling the Whole Civilization

Chapter 6: The Trap of Naturalized Technology

1. Double-Controlled Structures
2. Landscape Immersion
3. Invasion of the “Sacred Place”
4. Exposing the Hidden Side of Nature
5. The Meaning of Nature in a Painless Civilization
6. A Strategy for Collapsing

Chapter 7: My Own Death and Painless Civilization

1. Reflections on Death
2. Fear of Death
3. Why is Death Frightening?
4. My Own Death as an Event
5. My Own Death as an Idea
6. The Central Axis Tube

Chapter 8: Painless Civilization as a Self-Healing System

1. Capitalism and Painless Civilization
2. Reconsidering Desire
3. A Study of Flowering
4. The Idea of Predation and the Wisdom of Returning to the Universe
5. The Central Axis Circuit Web
6. Pain Elimination Devices
7. Dismantling Pain Elimination Devices
8. A Self-Healing System
9. The Fight Against the Self-Healing System
10. Penetrator

As I have written in Afterword of *Painless Civilization 1*, I am now thinking about writing a long ninth chapter that provides

a conclusion for the entire book, first in Japanese and then in English. The existing eight chapters were written in my 40s, a comparatively immature age as a philosopher. Having entered my 60s, I now believe that I can describe the true features of painless civilization against the backdrop of the latest academic discourse surrounding this topic.

At the same time, *Painless Civilization* is also a book for young people. It is a young spirit breathing inside me that made me write this text filled with ardent passion and eroticism. I hope that young readers around the world will have an interest in this open access edition of *Painless Civilization*.

In 2022, a Turkish translation of *Painless Civilization 1* from English was published by the publisher LORAS under the title *Acısız Medeniyet* (translated by Ali Tacar). Translations into other languages are also under way. If the reader wishes to translate this book into their native language with a publishing house or in the form of an open access PDF book, please contact me via email or SNS.

Masahiro Morioka

December 6, 2022.

About the Author

Masahiro Morioka, Ph.D., is a professor at Waseda University, where he teaches philosophy and ethics. His specialties include philosophy of life, bioethics, gender studies, and civilization studies. He was born in Kochi Prefecture, Japan, in 1958. He graduated from the University of Tokyo and worked for the International Research Center for Japanese Studies and Osaka Prefecture University before coming to Waseda. He is considered by many to be one of the leading figures in contemporary Japanese philosophy.

Official site: <http://www.lifestudies.org/>

Email addresses are available at :

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BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR



Painless Civilization 1

A Philosophical Critique of Desire

Open Access Book

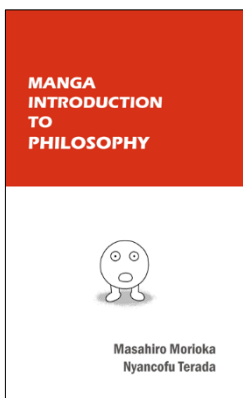
Tokyo Philosophy Project (2021)

Freely downloadable from:

<https://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/painless01.pdf>

The elimination of pain and the acquisition of pleasure seem to be the ultimate aims of our civilization. However, paradoxically, the endless tendency to eliminate pain and suffering makes us totally lose sight of the meaning of life that is indispensable to human beings. How are we to battle against this painless civilization? Published in Japanese in 2003. The translation of Chapter One was published in 2021 under the title Painless Civilization 1.

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR



Manga Introduction to Philosophy

An Exploration of Time, Existence, the Self, and the Meaning of Life

Open Access Book

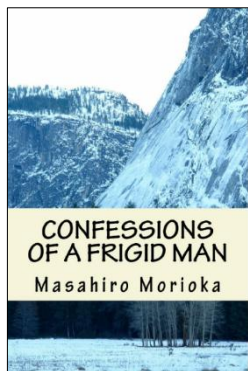
Tokyo Philosophy Project (2021)

Freely downloadable from:

<https://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/mangaphilosophy.pdf>

As the title says, this book is an introduction to philosophy. I tried to write about questions like “What is philosophy?” and “What does it mean to think philosophically” for a general readership. This is not a book that presents easy-to-understand explanations of the theories of famous philosophers. Instead, I have tried to express as clearly as possible how I myself think about four major topics: “time,” “existence,” “I,” and “life.” By following this route, the reader will be led directly to the core elements of philosophical thought.

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR



Confessions of a Frigid Man

A Philosopher's Journey into the
Hidden Layers of Men's Sexuality

Open Access Book

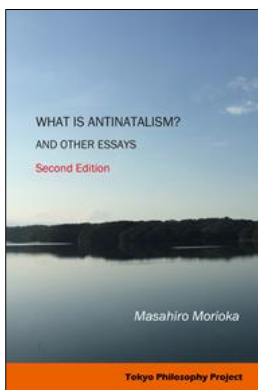
Tokyo Philosophy Project (2017)

Freely downloadable from:

<http://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/frigid.pdf>

The most striking feature of this book is that it was written from the author's first person perspective. The author is a professor who teaches philosophy and ethics at a university in Japan, and in this book he talks about his own sexual fetishism, his feeling of emptiness after ejaculation, and his huge obsession with young girls and their developing female bodies. He undertakes a philosophical investigation of how and why sexuality took such a form within a person who had grown up as a "normal," heterosexual man.

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR



What Is Antinatalism? And Other Essays Second Edition

Philosophy of Life in
Contemporary Society

Open Access Book

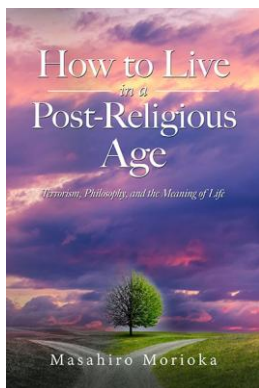
Tokyo Philosophy Project (2021,
2024)

Freely downloadable from:

<https://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/antinatalism.pdf>

This book is a collection of essays on the philosophy of life's meaning in contemporary society. Topics range from antinatalism, meaning of life, the trolley problem, to painless civilization. I am now writing a comprehensive philosophy book on those topics, but it will take several years to complete; hence, I decided to make a handy book to provide readers with an outline of the philosophical approaches to the meaning of life that I have in mind.

BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR



How to Live in a Post-Religious Age

Terrorism, Philosophy, and the
Meaning of Life

Open Access Book

Tokyo Philosophy Project (2025)

Freely downloadable from:

<https://www.philosophyoflife.org/tpp/howtolive.pdf>

This is the translation of a 1996 Japanese bestseller that addresses terrorism from the viewpoints of philosophy and the meaning of life. I do not believe in a religion, but I cannot acquire the meaning of life through science. How can I live in a post-religious age?

In the spring of 1995, the Aum cult released a chemical weapon in the Tokyo subway system, killing and injuring many people. The incident shocked society because there were many young scientists from elite universities among the cult's high-ranking followers. Why did an activity that began as a search for the meaning of life end in unprecedented terrorism with poison gas? As someone who was once an aspiring scientist and turned into a philosopher, I tried hard to find out where and why they went wrong. This is a book in which a philosopher sincerely asks young readers to think about what it really means to live in a society where no one clearly knows what to believe in.