

The Inner Realm of Life in Ikeda Daisaku's Philosophy and Practice of Human Education: Considerations in the Context of Spirituality in Education

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Abstract

This article examines Ikeda Daisaku's perspectives on the inner realm of life in his philosophy and practice of ningen kyōiku, or human education. Also rendered incompletely as "heart" or "spirit" in English translations of Ikeda's works, the inner realm of life pervades Ikeda's corpus and is central to his view that external change in the world and society happens only through profound internal change in the individual. Through analyses of the original Japanese and English translations of Ikeda's works, this article examines how Ikeda articulates the nature and cultivation of the inner realm of life in general and relative to human education, and explicates important denotative aspects of that Japanese that warrant attention as we consider Ikeda's perspectives (in translation) relative to the meaning and role of spirituality and

religiosity in education today, as well as to the constituent elements of human education.

Keywords: Realm of life, human education, Ikeda, spirituality

現代の危機の根本が人間の心の中にこそある。
—池田大作 (Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 101, 14)

1. Introduction

This article examines Ikeda Daisaku's (池田大作) perspectives on the inner realm of life in his philosophy and practice of *ningen kyōiku* (人間教育), or human education. Also rendered often incompletely as "heart" or "spirit" in English translations of Ikeda's works, the inner realm of life pervades Ikeda's corpus and is central to his view that external change in the world and society happens only through profound internal change in the individual. For Ikeda, the ceaseless cultivation of the inner realm of life is proof of our humanity and the mark of civilization; it is the means to effectuate social self-actualization, create culture, and usher in an age of peace through "soft power". Properly understanding how Ikeda articulates and characterizes the inner realm of life philosophically and practically, in general and relative to human education – the focus of this special issue of *Critical Hermeneutics* – is essential. As this special issue seeks "new educational philosophies and perspectives that aim to (re)center the education of all individuals across the age span in a holistic and fully human sense", including in terms of "moral and social, civic and cultural, and even spiritual or psychological skills" (Call for Papers, 2023), consideration of Ikeda's perspectives is warranted. Ikeda advanced his philosophy of human education not only to develop our full humanity and humanness but also

to confront intercultural conflict, existential threats of climate change and nuclear annihilation, violations against human rights, the dehumanizing effects of unrestricted artificial intelligence, and more (Goulah 2019, 2024; Nuñez & Goulah 2021). Considering the meaning and role of the inner realm of life in such human education is critical in the current moment.

Born and raised in Japan, Ikeda was a Buddhist leader and philosopher, global peacebuilder and educator, and the founder of an international network of nonsectarian schools and universities and centers to advance peace, nuclear disarmament, environmental sustainability, and cultural exchange and understanding through dialogue, the arts, and Eastern philosophy. Goulah (e.g., 2020, 2021, 2024) has examined Ikeda's perspectives on human education, finding dialogue, global citizenship, creative coexistence, and value-creating approaches to knowledge, society, and power to be its four core elements, the means and ends by which Ikeda avers all people can develop their "intellect, emotion, and will" in the endless process of being and becoming fully human. He further finds that Ikeda sees these elements more thoroughly realized through persistent processes of inner transformation, or what Ikeda calls "human revolution" (*ningen kakumei*; 人間革命), life-to-life encouragement, and the cultivation of what Ikeda terms *shigokoro* (詩心), or the "poetic heart", "poetic mind", or "poetic spirit". Yet unexamined in the scholarship on Ikeda's philosophy of human education is consideration of the presence and scope of the deep interiority or inner realm of life therein. We begin such examination here. Analyzing the original Japanese and English translations of Ikeda's works, we examine how Ikeda articulates the nature and cultivation of the inner realm of life in general and relative to human education, explicating important denotative aspects of his Japanese that warrant attention as we consider Ikeda's perspectives (in translation) relative to

the meaning and role of spirituality and religiosity in education today, as well as to the constituent elements of human education. These aspects also illuminate important convergences with the heritage of thought in critical hermeneutics and Makiguchi Tsunesaburō's (牧口常三郎) pedagogical theories of value creation and character value. Makiguchi, whose thought informs Ikeda's, was an educator and Buddhist war resister. In 1930, he co-founded *Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai* (Value-Creating Education Society) with Toda Jōgai (戸田城外), later known as Toda Jōsei (戸田城聖), the person who would become Ikeda's mentor. *Sōka Kyōiku Gakkai* is forerunner to *Sōka Gakkai* (Value-Creating Society), of which Ikeda served as third president (1960–1979), and Soka Gakkai International, of which he served as founding president (1975–2023) until his death in November 2023.

2. Methods

We conducted bilingual-bicultural and critical discourse analyses (Rogers 2004) of the original Japanese and extant English translations of selected works by Ikeda. Accounting for translation approaches of *domestication* and *foreignization* (Venuti 2008), we systematically coded, triangulated, and synthesized texts thematically, recognizing that Ikeda's works have been published and translated with intention mainly by *Sōka Gakkai* and Soka Gakkai International. Further recognizing that multiple and partial translations exist for some of these texts, we analyzed the original, translated, and, when present, revised versions, noting any intra- and inter-textual differences. Analyses considered content and themes relative to repeated linguistic expressions and structures in order to capture social meanings in interactions between language, society, and culture. We quote Ikeda extensively to frame analyses with his words and reference the most authoritative Japanese versions, comparing (cf.) them to extant English translations

when available. The English translations on the Ikeda website (daisakuikeda.org) are typically the most complete; however, here we reference the 2010 collection of Ikeda's university addresses for ease as a single source. It is also worth noting that the website does not contain the English versions of Ikeda's "*SGI no hi" kinen teigen* (1983-2022), or annual proposals commemorating "SGI Day", the founding date of Soka Gakkai International (SGI; January 26, 1975), published before 2000. Unofficial digital versions were available for some time on a third-party website that is no longer live; these versions were also consulted in our analyses. Similarly, the *Ikeda Daisaku zenshū* (Complete Works of Ikeda Daisaku, 1988-2015) contains Japanese versions of the commemorative proposals only from 1983-2007; subsequent Japanese originals are available in various *Sōka Gakkai*-affiliated outlets.

As the entire Ikeda corpus is voluminous – the definitive but incomplete collection of his "complete" works spans 150 volumes (Ikeda 1988-2015) – analyses centered on the following texts wherein Ikeda engages with the inner realm of life. There are others, but the texts selected do so explicitly and in depth and are representative of the range of voices, modes, and styles characteristic of Ikeda's oeuvre – public addresses, published dialogues, essays, and education and commemorative proposals:

1. *Addresses*: Ikeda's 1991 and 1993 addresses at Harvard University (Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 2, 323–337, 418–433; cf. Id. 2010: 189–197, 165–175); his 1992 address at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, China (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2, 373–387; cf. Id. 2010: 155–164); his 1993 address at Claremont McKenna University in the United States (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2, 388–402; cf. Id. 2010: 198–206), and his 1997 addresses at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies in New Delhi, India (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 101, 439–456; cf. Id. 1997).

2. *Dialogue: "Shūkyō to seishin no runesansu"* (Renaissance of religion and spirit), Chapter eleven of Ikeda's dialogue with educationist and Club of Rome president (1991-2000) Ricardo Díez-Hockleitner (Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 117, 149–162; cf. Ikeda & Díez-Hockleitner 2008: 97–105 [Renaissance of Religion and Spirituality]);

3. *Education proposal: Ikeda's 2001 education proposal, Kyōikuryoku no fukken e uchinaru "seishinsei" no kagayaki wo* (The brilliance of inner "spirituality" in restoring the power of education; Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 101, 354–378; cf. "Reviving education: The brilliance of the inner spirit" [Id. 2021: 29-52]);

4. *Annual commemorative proposals: We analyzed all 40 of Ikeda's annual proposals commemorating the founding of SGI, finding that 29 engage explicitly with dimensions of the inner realm of life (e.g., Ikeda 1988-2015: vols. 1, 2, 101, & 150; cf. proposals at daisakuikedata.org).*

3. Articulating the Inner Realm of Life

To understand how Ikeda characterizes the nature and cultivation of the inner realm of life, it is important to begin with the Japanese terms and orthography used to articulate it. In certain works, such as his 1991 Harvard address and multiple commemorative proposals, Ikeda refers to the inner realm of life as 内面 (*naimen*), literally the *interiority* or *inner dimension*, as well as in derivations such as 内面的 (*naimenteki*), *the inner*, and, in the Harvard address, 内発的 (*naihatsuteki*), or an *inner-motivated* aspect of life (see below). Importantly, Ikeda also uses different but corresponding terms, often interchangeably, that, not without textual basis, are regularly rendered incompletely in the English translations as "spirit", "spiritual", and "spirituality". These include 心 (*kokoro*) and the triplet 精神 (*seishin*), 精神的 (*seishinteki*),

and 精神性 (*seishinsei*), all terms used throughout Ikeda's corpus that, as Gebert (2024) notes about Makiguchi's use of *seishinteki*, have "a wide range of associations and as such point to virtually the entire gamut of non-corporeal human life. In addition to 'spiritual' it could be translated as 'mental', 'intellectual', 'psychical', or 'psychological'" (180). *Kokoro* and *seishin*, the root of *seishinteki* and *seishinsei*, both have an equally broad scope and could each be similarly translated as "mind", "spirit", "psychology", "mentality", "intention", or "will", with *kokoro* also meaning "heart", "feelings, and "emotions". The epigraph opening this article, excerpted from Ikeda's 1996 commemorative proposal, is a good example. While it was rendered as "[...] the roots of our modern crisis are to be found in the human spirit" in the English translation circulated at the time, "spirit" in the original is *kokoro*, giving the sentiment a broader valence that includes the intellectual, psychological, and volitional as well as the emotional/spiritual.

Further illustrating the point, Sino-Japanese character-combinations comprising *seishin* produce Japanese terms with a range of meanings, from psychoanalysis (精神分析; *seishinbunseki*) and spiritual or moral education (精神教育; *seishinkyōiku*) to the development of one's mind or spirit (精神修養; *seishinshūyō*). More germane to this journal, coupling *seishin* with the characters for *science* produces *seishinkagaku* (精神科学), from the German *Geisteswissenschaften*, meaning the "human sciences", as in the work of Wilhelm Dilthey (1989) and in which Roberge (2011) explicitly positions critical hermeneutics.

Gebert's (2024) cross-linguistic analysis of Makiguchi's language helps to clarify Ikeda's use around similar phrasing. Gebert identified denotative limitations in Bethel's (2000) English translation of Makiguchi's earliest book, *Jinsei chirigaku* (The Geography of Human Life [1901]; Makiguchi 1981-1996: vols. 1-2; hereafter *Geography*). Specifically, Makiguchi divides human interactions into two major

categories, *nikutaiteki* (肉体的), the corporeal, and *seishinteki* (精神的), the non-corporeal. As the Gebert quote above indicates, Bethel rendered the latter only as the spiritual, limiting its full meaning for the English reader. Coincidentally, the English translation of Ikeda's 2005 treatment of Makiguchi's perspective on *seishinteki* and its relation to character is similarly rendered only as "spiritual" (Ikeda 2005: 12; cf. Id. 1988-2015: vol. 150, 127).

Ikeda does not seem to invoke *seishinteki* relative to *nikutaiteki* in characterizing the former; however, in multiple instances, such as his 1989 and 2001 commemorative proposals, he juxtaposes *seishin* and *seishinteki* with "the material" (物質的; *busshitsuteki*), "materialism" (物質万能主義; *busshitsubannōshugi*), and "the external" (外面的; *gai-menteki*), which was rendered in the English version as "material and physical" (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 101, 228; vol. 2, 59; Id. 2001: 2). It warrants noting that the English version includes these under a subtitle "Material progress, spiritual regression", which does not appear in the Japanese original (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 101, 228; Id. 2001: 2). In the 1989 commemorative proposal, Ikeda acknowledges that material abundance, money, and information "are important as ever, but materialism and mammonism lead inexorably to the debasement of the human spirit [*ningen seishin*; 人間精神]" (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2, 59). It is perhaps also relevant that in the 2002 commemorative proposal, Ikeda references his own remarks from a 1973 dialogue with students wherein he noted the exclusionary rigidity of political-philosophical ideologies such as liberalism, socialism, and communism, critiquing the fact that "materialism [唯物論 (*yuibutsuron*)] rejects spiritualism [唯心論 (*yuishinron*)], and vice versa" (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 101, 285–286; cf. Id. 1973, 2002: 6).

4. Characterizing and Cultivating the Inner Realm

Ikeda casts the non-corporeal, inner realm of life as being present in every individual and thus in society, nations, regions, and entire cultures. In various commemorative proposals he remarks about this nature relative to Japan, Europe, and the United States, and repeatedly refers to India as a great nation of the spirit (*seishin*). In his address at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, he identifies the ethos of *kyōsei* (共生), or creative coexistence, as characterizing “the spirituality [*seishinsei*] that pulses throughout the culture of the East Asian region” (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2, 374; cf. Id. 2010: 156). In his dialogue with Diéz-Hochleitner, Ikeda highlights the relationship between culture and education in similar terms of *seishin*, arguing that education helps us refine or cultivate our humanity, and that culture aids and directs education. Noting that the Latin root of culture (文化; *bunka*) and cultivate (教養; *kyōyō*), *colere*, is to tend or till, he asserts that we cultivate individual human beings by tilling the fields of the intellect, emotion and will (知, 情, 意; *chi, jō, i*) and, thereby, cultivate society, which in turn improves culture. He concludes that the idea of culture thus inspires expectations for seeking and manifesting “inner” (*naimenteki*), “mental/spiritual” (*seishinteki*), and “spiritual/existential” (*supirichyuaru*; スピリチュアル) value (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 117, 152; cf. Diéz-Hochleitner 2008: 98).

In his 1987 commemorative proposal, Ikeda casts *seishin* as that which “wells from the depths of life to do battle with the powers of authority, money, and brutality” that work to “violate human dignity” (cf., Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 1, 199). He clarifies,

by *seishin*, I mean the good that is in humanity and, above all, the power of self-control. Progressive and strong-willed, this *seishin* is free but cannot degenerate into license since it

is always controlled, balanced, and self-restrained. The powers of brutality, authority, and money tend to stimulate the evil in humanity. The superior human *seishin*, on the other hand, acts as a catalyst evoking good (*Ib.*).

Whether at the level of individuals, nations, or society, this focus on self-control is a core element of Ikeda's perspective on the nature and cultivation of the inner realm. Using a host of analogous expressions – e.g., 自制 (*jisei*), 自制心 (*jiseishin*), 自制能力 (*jiseinōryoku*), 抑制の思想 (*yokuatsu no shisō*), 自己規律 (*jikokiritsu*), 自己規律の精神 (*jikokiritsu no seishin*), 自己規律の心 (*jikokiritsu no kokoro*), 内面の制覇 (*naimen no seiha*), and 克己心 (*kokkishin*) – Ikeda repeatedly affirms across more than a dozen works the significance of what has been variously translated into English as “self-mastery”, “self-control”, “self-restraint” and, drawing on Michel de Montaigne, “self-questioning” (see e.g., Ikeda's 1991 Harvard address and his commemorative proposals from 1987, 1991, 1994, 1995, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010, 2011 in Ikeda 1988-2015: vols. 1, 2, 101, & 150).

He defines this self-mastery explicitly in his 2002 commemorative proposal as

the ability to be the protagonist of one's life, maintaining genuine independence and direction amidst the kaleidoscopic evolution of phenomenal reality. This requires an unclouded cognitive precision, achieved... by polishing one's life [*kokoro no kagami*, literally the mirror of one's heart/mind/spirit] so that it reflects even the most subtle changes and developments – those things that lie beneath the surface of a transient reality and cannot be fully grasped or expressed by existing language or ideational categories. In other words, we are

charged with the task of establishing – through self-mastery – the kind of robust and adamant inner world in whose light we may experience the undisguised, true nature of all things and events. Based on this concrete appreciation of the actual realities of life, we must decide how we should live and the kind of world we wish to create (Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 101, 287–288; cf. Id. 2002: 7).

We see a similarly phrased perspective in the English version of his 2008 proposal, wherein he calls for “restoring people and humanity to the role of central protagonist, something which ultimately can only be undertaken through a ceaseless *spiritual effort to train and to temper ourselves*” (Id. 2008: 2; emphasis added). In his 2004 commemorative proposal, *Uchinaru seishin kakumei no banpa wo*, literally Waves/Multitudes of Revolutions of the Inner Spirit/Mind, he asserts that “self-mastery is something that can only be attained through a sustained effort of the will” (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 150, 58; cf. Id. 2004: 3). It is essential note, however, that Ikeda repeatedly argues that this conquest of the inner realm can only be truly forged through an acute awareness of the humanity of others and, especially, through the inner, spiritual tempering of ceaseless dialogic engagement with difference, with the Other in all its forms. As he puts it in his 2002 commemorative proposal:

It is the nature of human beings that the ‘self’ can develop only through awareness of ‘the other’; we grow into selfhood in the other’s gaze. Intense spiritual [*seishin*] interaction – including that marked by conflict – is essential if we are to grow, mature, and become truly human (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 150, 56–57; cf. Id. 2002: 4).

In all instances, Ikeda frames this tempering of the inner realm – of the will, heart, mind, and spirit – to be an all-out struggle that engages our entire being, a battle against our lesser self (小我; *shōga*) of base impulses to bring out the greater self (大我; *taiga*) of wisdom, creativity, interdependence, courage, and compassion. Drawing from Spanish philosopher Ortega y Gasset (1883–1955) in his 2003 commemorative proposal, Ikeda asserts that in this sense *civilization* is “a quality of inner self-control made manifest” (Ikeda 2003: 4; see also Ikeda 2004). This conquest of the inner realm, Ikeda argues, moves us from “hard power” impulses of might and force to those of “soft power” characterized by knowledge, information, culture, ideas, and systems. It illuminates the human spirit and engenders what Makiguchi called 人格価値 (*jinkaku kachi*), or “character value”. Such character results in “individuals whose presence is always sought after and appreciated in times of crisis even if they may not otherwise attract much attention. Such people always function as a unifying force in society” (Id. 2014: 3). This soft power – the overflowing of creative expression and value in the world – is “inner-generated energy deriving from the internal urge that is created through consensus and satisfaction among human beings” (Id. 1988–2015: vol. 2, 324; cf. Id. 2010: 190). Significantly, Ikeda centers this pursuit of soft power on *seishinsei* (精神性), *spirituality*, and 宗教性 (*shūkyōsei*), literally *religiosity*, *religious nature*, or *a broad religious sentiment*, arguing that the “inner-motivated processes of soft power have since ancient times been considered the proper province of philosophy in the broadest sense, rooted in the spirituality and religious nature of human beings” (Id. 1988–2015: vol. 2: 324; cf. Id. 2010, 190). This perspective on spirituality and a religious sentiment also features in Ikeda’s philosophy and practice of human education.

5. The Inner Realm in Human Education

In 2000 and 2001, Ikeda released two substantive proposals on education (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 101, 320–379; cf. Id. 2021: 29–84). Aimed at addressing the many problems facing society, and especially young people, each lays out multiple recommendations and approaches. The former advocates a fundamental paradigm shift from education serving society's interests to society serving the essential needs of human education. By education he means the "the broad spectrum of intellectual [知的; *chiteki*] and spiritual [*seishinteki*] activities" (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2: 101). The latter furthers this perspective and argues that the revival of human education lies in the development of the inner resources of every individual. He situates this in a coupling of spirituality and religiosity but is clear to distinguish the latter from religion. Echoing his stance on the province and importance of the sources of soft power in the previous quote, Ikeda first states:

How to inspire spirituality [*seishinsei*] and religious sentiment [*shūkyōsei*] is a challenge that has exercised humanity throughout history. I maintain that if we are to revive in education its ability to foster spirituality and broad religious sentiment, every individual, every family, every organization, and every sector of society must pool their energies and resources (Id 1988-2015: vol. 101, 368; cf. Id. 2021: 42).

He clarifies firmly: "There is a sharp distinction between the broad religious sentiment I describe here and narrow sectarianism" (*Ib.*). He also firmly distinguishes human education from religious education. As Ikeda's philosophy gains purchase in the academy, care must be taken not to misinterpret or mischaracterize his views on spirituality and the religious sentiment in human education relative to religion and

religious education. This is particularly so as Ikeda was a Buddhist leader and founder of schools and universities. To be clear, Ikeda in no way advocated religious education or the inclusion or proselytization of religion in education (Matsufuji 2001) – his educational philosophy is not a surrogate for “Buddhist education”. Among the first generation of students educated under Japan’s Shinto-based wartime (1931–1945) indoctrination system, Ikeda repeatedly opposed sectarianism (宗派性; *shūhasei*) in education, including at the schools and universities he founded.

The question of proper interpretation is also important given social, historical, and cultural perspectives on spirituality and the religious sentiment in and outside the context of education. Until the 19th century in Japan, religion, education, and Buddhism were historically intertwined conceptually, practically, and even orthographically (Isomae 2003). In multiple places today, spirituality and the spiritual are often synonymous with institutional religion rather than with something inherent and shared among all human beings. In other instances, spirituality may be seen as an alternative to institutionalized religion. In the United States, for example, recent studies by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center and PRRI find that, while the number of Americans who identify as religious or affiliate with a religion has decreased, the number of those who describe themselves as spiritual has increased – four in ten in the PRRI study and seven in ten in the larger Pew study, including 22% who are “spiritual but not religious” (Alper *et al.*, 2023; PRRI Staff, 2024). Despite the decrease in affiliation with religion, there is a growing presence of legislative initiatives to insert overtly sectarian, specifically Christian and Christian nationalist, agenda into public schooling, including at the time of this writing the mandated posting of the biblical Ten Commandments in all preK-university classrooms in Louisiana and the mandated teaching of the Bible in grades 5 through

12 in Oklahoma (Meyer & Smith 2024). These initiatives also include reinstating prayer in schools, banning books from libraries, policies against immigrants and LGBTQ people, and more.

For Ikeda, the spiritual and the religious are secular means to help us navigate the necessary “third path” between faith in our own power and recognition of that which lies beyond us – the means for fully developing the inner realm toward the dynamic fusion and balancing of these two forces. He draws from French historian Jules Michelet, Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore, and the American education philosopher John Dewey to clarify the distinction between this sentiment and religion. With regard to Michelet, Ikeda references the same passage from Michelet’s *Bible de l’humanité* in both his 2008 and 2011 commemorative proposals, stating in the former:

Michelet’s research led him to this bold conclusion: “Religion is comprised within the realm of spiritual activity; spiritual activity is not contained within religion”. This statement represents a clear, uncompromising humanization of religion, a rejection of all religious elements that would transcend or take precedence over the human being. It bears noting that Michelet’s praise of the human being embodied a dynamism far removed from the vagueness, indeterminate emotionality and weakness that today seem to attach to the word “humanism”. In contrast to subsequent incarnations of humanism, which were often an ersatz form of liberation that did nothing to rein in the expansion of the ego, Michelet’s humanism was supported by a strong backbone of self-mastery, a belief in the normative nature and essence of the human spirit. [...] I sense here resonances with the spiritual struggle of Buddhist humanism (Ikeda 2008: 5–6).

This resonates with Ikeda's perspective on the parallels between Buddhism and human education. In his 1997 address at the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies, Ikeda cites a passage from the "Parable of Medicinal Herbs" chapter in *The Lotus Sutra and Its Opening and Closing Sutras*, arguing that Buddhism and human education are two aspects of the same reality, sibling processes with identical purpose:

"to open, to show, to awaken and cause to enter". The ultimate purpose of Buddhism, then, is to open, to show, to awaken and cause people to enter the infinite realms of wisdom they already possess. This accords perfectly with the methods and objectives of education. Buddhism, in this sense, is an endeavor directed toward human education, and for its part, to realize its full value education must be supported by the spirituality that enables us to trust and believe in others (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 101, 451; cf. Id. 1997; also Ikeda *et al.*, 1996-2000: vol. 1, 168; cf. Id. *et al.* 2000-2003: vol. 1, 133).

In the same address, in a passage also worth quoting at length, Ikeda then identifies the important, complementary relationship between education and religion:

The trend of the times is clearly for religious matters to be left to the discretion of individuals. This is all the more reason education must ensure that religious sentiment does not become self-righteous or intolerant and is always directed toward the most peaceful and valuable outcome. [...] Unless supported and tempered by the wisdom of education, religious faith is always at risk of becoming blind and undirected.

On the other hand, when illumined by the light of wisdom that education brings forth, the spiritual values of religion shine that much brighter. It was, after all, education and intellect that gave Tagore's profound religiosity a universal appeal that was accessible to the people of the Western world. Nor did he stop at his own education; he established a university and throughout his life devoted himself to the cause of human development. Education makes us free. The world of knowledge and of the intellect is where all people can meet and converse. Education liberates people from prejudice. It frees the human heart from its violent passions. It is education that severs the dark fetters of ignorance about the laws that govern the universe. Finally, it is through education that we are liberated from powerlessness, from the burden of mistrust directed against ourselves (Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 101, 450-452; cf. Id. 1997).

Likewise, in his 1991 commemorative essay, Ikeda writes that "without the world of knowledge opened up by education, religious belief would run the risk of becoming no more than 'blind faith'" (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2, 101). He continues:

On the other hand, wisdom through education can be the source of light that makes the religious mind [*seishin*] all the more radiant. Religion should not be allowed to turn its back on this vital realm of human endeavor. In fact, the two should complement each other, with religion providing the soil in which education can be nurtured and its progress encouraged. Only then will the intellectual powers of the individual be improved and strengthened, adding further impetus to the tide of democracy and the people's will (*Ib.*).

Perhaps Ikeda's most direct engagement with the distinction between religion and the religious is his support of Dewey's distinction between religion and "the religious" in *A Common Faith*. This appears in Ikeda's second Harvard address, on Mahayana Buddhism and 21st century civilization (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2, 418-433). Rather than focusing on specific religions (which Ikeda argues can fall into dogmatism and fanaticism), Dewey places special focus on that which is "religious", those aspects beyond the institution of religion which have the power to "unify interests and energies" and to "direct action and generate the heat of emotion and the light of intelligence" (Dewey 1934: 51; see Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 2, 418-433; cf. Id. 2010). It is thus the secular experience of "the values of art in all its forms, of knowledge, of effort and of rest after striving, of education and fellowship, of friendship and love, of growth in mind and body" that Dewey views as "the religious" and argues we should seek and develop as our common faith (Dewey 1934: 51; see Ikeda 1988-2015: vol. 2, 418-433; cf. Id. 2010). What Ikeda means by the "religious sentiment" in human education is akin to what Dewey (1934) calls "the religious". Ikeda (1988-2015) concludes, implicitly invoking the ethic of self-mastery:

While Dewey does not identify a specific external power, for him 'the religious' is a generalized term for that which supports and encourages people in active aspiration toward the good and the valuable. 'The religious', as Dewey defines it, helps those who help themselves (vol. 2, 418-433; cf. Id. 2010).

6. Conclusion

This article endeavored to introduce Ikeda's perspectives on the inner realm of life in his philosophy and practice of human education. For

Ikeda, self-mastery of the inner realm is proof of our humanity. He laments, however, that society is not adequately cultivating the processes of such self-mastery, particularly in education (Id. 1988-2015: vol. 2, 323–337, 418–433). Ikeda is not alone (e.g., Inner Development Goals 2023; O’Sullivan 1999). Our own work aims to contribute to this undertaking (e.g., Goulah 2008, 2011, 2018; Kartha 2023). For his part, Ikeda calls on all of us to revive the innate sources of human energy, and to do so in a fin-de-siècle world marked by a deepening desiccation of the mind and spirit. His persistent attention to nurturing the inner realm within teaching and education more broadly offers all educators a narrative to think about themselves in a more profound way than simply as gatekeepers of knowledge, encouraging them to engage with their own humanity. In addition, this inner realm is what Ikeda posits as being a criterion for nurturing the spirit of friendship and harmony as resistance against division and the fracturing of an interconnected perspective of the world. Because Ikeda’s focus on the inner realm calls for unity where there is division, for harmony where this is war, and trust where there is distrust, it presents educators and students, the teacher and taught in all spheres of learning and human becoming in and outside schools, with a framework that requires them to draw on their own hope, courage, wisdom and compassion, words which are not, somehow, part of the linguistic terrain within education and the wider discussions today.

Finally, a note on our positionality as scholars from the United States and India, both of whom have received university education in Japan. While we understand that framing thought in terms of “Eastern” and “Western” is limited and problematic, attention to the specificities of context and geography matter. This is particularly so with regard to the thought of Ikeda, who is at once both Japanese and of Japan while also being global in thought, influence, and (inter)action. Our intention is not to highlight dichotomy that finds itself routinely presented

between East and West. Instead, in approaching the self and the inner realm of life from the point of view that Goulah (e.g., 2010) calls an "East-West ecology of education", we echo the call to reclaim shared perspectives from philosophers and thinkers from both the East and West, as Ikeda's does herein, at a time when certain educational practices, theories, and epistemologies may have been relegated to the sidelines because of socio-economic, political, and cultural fissures in education. At the same time, when appropriate, geographic distinctions must be highlighted because they have led to the world being the way it is.

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Jason Goulah, Riya Kartha, *The Inner Realm of Life in Ikeda Daisaku's Philosophy...*

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