

Fear and Choice: A Ten-world Reading of Shimazaki Toson's *The Broken Commandment*

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Table of Contents

I. Introduction

1. Gaps in the studies on *The Broken Commandment*
2. The oneness of life and environment
3. The theory of the Ten Worlds
 - (1) The mutual possession of the Ten Worlds
 - (2) Various ways of life in *The Broken Commandment*
 - (3) The world of Animality

II. Animality of the world

1. Hating heterogeneity
2. Depriving the weak of everything

III. Animality of the weak

1. Employing the logic of the strong
2. Ignoring the weak
3. Erasing the traces of the bonds

IV. Choosing the path

1. Rentaro's path
2. Ushimatsu's choice

V. On the ending of *The Broken Commandment*

1. Dismantling the logic of Animality
2. An alternative view of human beings

By way of Conclusion

Works Cited

I. Introduction

1. Gaps in the studies on *The Broken Commandment*

This paper is an exploration of egoism and self-renunciation which is found in the protagonist in *The Broken Commandment* by Shimazaki Toson. This novel, published in 1906, delineates the long process of agony of Segawa Ushimatsu, a young schoolteacher of *eta*¹ birth, until he breaks his father's commandment to confess his origin in public.

A whole series of Ushimatsu's experiences travels between perpetual fear of the world and desire to get away from the sufferings that his birth inflicts on him. His strong fear of the world that discriminates, displaces and disempowers *eta* induces him to avoid and neglect anything that relates to *eta*, treading privately on them. This fear is coupled with an ardent desire to lead a normal existence as others who are not born *eta*. Yet irony is that this desire for normality oppresses his being as his own, because he is suffocating under the incessant check of himself—his behaviour in daily life—in order for him to *be* normal, that is, non-*eta*.

There is, however, one other kind of desire in him to get away from his sufferings: the kind of desire to be what he is, without pretending to be like others. It is eloquently articulated in the statement “He yearned for spring, yet the life within him, walled in by suspicion and fear, could not expand and grow”(104). Sometimes this desire opens his critical eyes to the wrong of the world. Yet his despair over *eta*'s doom soon closes them and his indignation is quenched. Thus, he is possessed with lamentation and the first of his desires—desire for normality—again, continuing a masked, precarious living.

And yet Ushimatsu's life is also the process of finding out the true path for him to overcome his sufferings. In it is found a radical change in his modes of viewing the world; in it he renounces himself whom he so fervidly kept protecting from the world.

Such intricacy and subtlety of his inner struggle has scarcely been taken up in an entire episode by literary scholars and critics for more than sixty years, although it has been partially touched on as the “rise of his ego” or the “struggle for his self-consciousness.” Their main concern was limited to the subject of the novel, either Ushimatsu's confession of his origin or protest

¹ *Eta*: one of the outcaste classes in Japanese feudal society in its middle ages. They dealt with the carcass of cows and horses as well as arrest and execution of criminals. Together with *hinin*, another outcaste class dealing with vulgar entertainment, bringing criminals and burying the executed bodies, they were fixed under the four castes of warrior, farmer, craftsman, and merchant, and their residence and work were restricted; most of them participated in the industry of leather. Even after the government ordinance in 1871 that they are no more an outcaste class and admitted into citizenship, the discrimination against them remains in society. (*Kojien*)

against discrimination, and they evaluate the controversial ending accordingly, i.e., the miserable form of Ushimatsu's confession and his succeeding leaving Japan for Texas. The following reviews by two critics show part of opposite readings of the ending.

Noma Hiroshi evaluates the social protest in the novel saying that it clearly depicts the “absurdity of the Meiji society” from the viewpoint of the lowest class and “advances a piercing criticism of Japanese militarism and the imperial system in the form of his [Ushimatsu's] sorrow”(343). Yet, he argues, the lack of scientific ground for human equality shows in his wretched style of confession and his departure for Texas, which is nothing less than escape. He concludes that the novel does not solve the problem of *eta* in essence (347).

Hiraoka Toshio, asserting that social protest and Ushimatsu's self-consciousness must be regarded as one (203), considers the problematic scene of the confession as the dynamics of social bias and confession—the more keenly his confession is felt, the stronger the indictment of social wrong becomes (202).

There are at least two problems concerning these studies. First, their reading is made in total neglect of many other elements in the story, and what they regard as the subject of the novel—whether social protest or the protagonist's confession—is lifted out of the narrative context. Secondly, in almost all studies lies a categorical, simple image of Ushimatsu, who assumes only a passive role of a tragic victim of society. Some studies attribute his passiveness to his immaturity as an individual, while others to the oppressive nature of *seken*². The common thread running through both is the idea that Ushimatsu is completely robbed of agency under the sway of his environment. Environment defines and influences an individual and an individual is defined and influenced by environment—such one-way relation is obvious in their reading. It is such a monolithic framework that overlooks struggle and change in his mind, needless to say his subtle form of egoism.

It is here that a new paradigm is called for, a paradigm which can recuperate influences that both an individual and its environment have on each other. I have found a Buddhist view of the world, “the oneness of life and environment”, very effective for encompassing them.

² *Seken*: the concept that designate the “reality of society” in Japan, “a rather small circle of human relationship to which one belongs” and has an exclusive and discriminative nature (Abe 21). They are utterly different from *shakai* or society, a new concept that came from the West in the Meiji period.

2. The oneness of life and environment

The oneness of life and environment, *esho-funi* in Japanese, means “inseparability of the subjective existence (*shoho*) and the objective environment (*eho*).” The idea of inseparability of subjective existence and objective environment is compared to the relation between the body and its shadow: “environment is like the shadow, and life, the body. Without the body, no shadow can exist, and without life, no environment. In the same way, life is shaped by its environment”(Nichiren 644). In other words, this comparison of the body and its shadow signifies, besides the point that they are inseparably one and having influences on each other, the importance of influence that the subjective existence exercises on its environment. The importance of one individual in its inseparable relation with environment is explained by Ikeda Daisaku as follows:

The teachings of Nichiren Buddhism include the passage: “Without life, environment cannot exist...” In other words, Buddhism regards life and its environment as two integral aspects of the same entity. The subjective world of the self and the objective world of its environment are not in opposition nor are they a duality. Instead, their relationship is characterized by inseparability and indivisibility. Neither is this unity a static one in which the two realms merge as they become objectified. The environment, which embraces all universal phenomena, cannot exist except in a dynamic relationship with the internally-generated activity of life itself. (Ikeda, *New Humanism* 211)

Transcending the distinctive binary between the subjective existence and the objective environment, a change in one single human being affects others in some way or other. And yet there are a variety of degrees in the way of influencing and being influenced by each other. The theory of the Ten Worlds, another Buddhist view of life, gives us a comprehensive picture of it.

3. The theory of the Ten Worlds

(1) The mutual possession of the Ten Worlds

Classifying ever-changing life state into the ten categories, this theory shows a variety of interrelations between an individual and the world. The source of this theory is found in the following passage in the Lotus Sutra:

...they can hear all the different varieties of words and sounds in the thousand-million fold world, down as far as the Avichi hell, up to the Summit of Being, and in its inner and outer parts...men's voices, women's voices,...voices of heavenly beings,...asura voices,...voices of beasts, voices of hungry spirits,...voices of voice-hearers, voices of pratyekabuddhas, voices of bodhisattvas and voices of Buddhas. (Ikeda *et al.* 103)

Based on this passage, the Great Teacher T'ien-t'ai (538-597) of China formulated the doctrine of the Ten Worlds—namely, Hell, Hunger, Animality, Anger, Humanity, Rapture, Learning, Realization, Bodhisattva and Buddhahood—that are innate in life (Ikeda *et al.* 103). Its characteristic lies in the direct focus on the states of life “that are manifested in both physical and spiritual aspects of all human activities” (Ikeda, *Dialogue* 252). According to this theory, an individual perceives one's self, others, and the world (in other words, its relations with the outside) and behaves differently according to its life state, as Nichiren describes:

Hungry spirits see the waters of the river as fire, human beings see them as water, and heavenly beings see them as amrita. The waters are the same in all cases, but each type of being sees them differently, according to the effects of its karma. (Nichiren)

Each life state from Hell to Buddhahood is explained as follows (Ikeda, *Dialogue* 252):

Jigoku: Hell. This is the state in which one is swayed by the impulse to destroy and bring ruin upon oneself and others. “Ji”(lit., ground) implies the lowest state of all, and “goku”(lit., restraint) means loss of freedom. Jigoku essentially means the greatest agony.

Gaki: Hunger. This life-condition is dominated by insatiable selfish desires for wealth, fame or pleasure—one is never truly satisfied.

Chikusho: Animality. This is the state in which one follows the pull of desires and instincts, and turns totally toward self-preservation and immediate profit, lacking the wisdom of self-control.

Shura: Anger. In this state, one is conscious of self and driven by the competitive spirit to dominate, but cannot grasp things as they are and therefore tramples on the dignity of others.

Nin: Tranquility or humanity. This is the life-condition in which one can temporarily control one's desire and impulses through reason. One lives a peaceful life in harmony with one's surroundings, other people, and the environment.

Ten: Rapture or Heaven. This is a condition of contentment and joy from the satisfaction of a desire or a victorious struggle. Nin and ten arise from a relationship between life and the external factors surrounding it. For this reason, when the balance in life is disturbed, calmness and contentment inevitably plunge into the trouble-filled states of Hell, Hunger, or Animality.

Shomon: Learning. This is a condition experienced when one strives toward a lasting state of contentment and stability by self-reform and development.

Engaku: partial Enlightenment or Realization. The eighth of the Ten Worlds in which a person realizes the impermanence of life from natural phenomena.

Bosatsu: Bodhisattva. This is the expression of total devotion to aiding and assisting others and indicates a life filled with compassion. A bodhisattva finds that the way to self-perfection lies only in the act of compassion—saving other people from their suffering.

Butsu: Buddhahood. This highest state of the Ten Worlds is reached when one has the wisdom to realize the essence of his own life, that it breathes in perfect harmony with the rhythm of the universe and continues to exist from the infinite past to the eternal future.

It should be noted that the life states from Hell to Realization are self-centered in nature, while the other two of Bodhisattva and Buddhahood are other-centered. The lower life state you have, the bigger influence you receive from environment; the higher life state you have, the stronger influence you exert on environment.

The theory of the Ten Worlds is considered capturing the phenomenon of ever-changing life state because of the idea of “mutual possession of the Ten Worlds”:

As the major premise, we should bear in mind that only with the Lotus Sutra's revelation of the principle of the mutual possession of the Ten Worlds can we talk about the Ten Worlds as conditions of human life....without understanding that each world is endowed with all Ten Worlds, the beings in each of the Ten

Worlds can only be understood as dwelling in distinct and separate realms, and as having absolutely no contact with or relation to one another.

In other words, because those in the world of Humanity—meaning us—have all of the Ten Worlds in our lives, the Ten Worlds can be understood as states or conditions of life. Moreover, because of this we can talk about changes in state of life. (Ikeda *et al.* 102-3)

The constant flux of life is explained from the viewpoint of the Ten Worlds as follows:

One can go from one state to another. A person who has no appetite because he is running a high fever, or because he has a horrible toothache, is not in the state of Hunger. We would be closer if we said he was in Hell. But if his fever goes down, or if his tooth gets better, only to find that he is not allowed to eat solids, he is apt to leave the state of Hell and enter that of Hunger.

Agony and insatiability, helpless anger and sheer greed, are different one from the other, and we know and feel them to be different. The states characterized by these feelings are qualitatively different and therefore cannot be combined. On a purely practical level, people simply do not get hungry when they are suffering true agony, and they do not get angry at themselves when they are being greedy. (Ikeda, *Life* 94)

That is to say, at each moment you manifest one life state of the ten worlds. But then where are those other nine worlds when one world is manifested? Here comes the Buddhist idea of *ku* or latency:

All of the Ten Worlds are simultaneously contained in every moment of life—even in the condition of Rapture. Each world contains the potential of all the others within it. Thus Buddhism expounds that Rapture holds all the Ten Worlds within it. And this is equally true of all the other states. (Ikeda, *Dialogue* 18)

In other words, there is always potential that the other nine worlds will manifest itself in response to the stimuli of the outside world:

These Ten Worlds are intrinsic to all life. At every moment one manifests one life-state, corresponding to the change in surroundings. And at this present moment, whatever world one manifests, the other nine worlds are latent within oneself, which means that one has the potential to change to any other life-state in an instant. (Chandra and Ikeda 278)

It is this idea of latency that endorses potential to change in an individual and the relation between him and the world. It is therefore possible to look at Ushimatsu's inner struggle from the viewpoint of the Ten Worlds, and regard any change in his mind and behaviour as a change in his life state and consequently a change in his relationships with the world.

(2) Various ways of life in *The Broken Commandment*

In employing the theory of the Ten Worlds for reading *The Broken Commandment*, let us have a bigger picture of the story.

The Broken Commandment, when viewed from the social, historical, and the Ten-World perspectives, is dealing with the 'way of life,' centering on Ushimatsu, a twenty-four-year-old schoolteacher of outcaste birth.

The place settings of the novel are the elementary school where Ushimatsu teaches, the temple of the Pure Land Faith Rengeji where he stays, and a farm village surrounding them in Nagano, a province of the northern part where the climate is cold and snowy, and is far from Tokyo. The time setting is considered most probably around 1900, i.e., the interval between the Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904-5) (Ito 28).

From the social viewpoint, the school and the temple are the sites where the educational and religious ideologies are produced and reproduced, where the particular ways of thinking and behaving are taught—all the things relevant to the way of life. In the school there are such figures as the principal who "himself had always believed in military-style discipline for children"(14), and "a retired army captain" who comes to a school on a lecture tour of the provinces to promote the "military spirit"(164). It is obvious that education and war are closely linked with each other. Ushimatsu, being a young and earnest teacher, is a most popular teacher, and the principal's intention to remove Ushimatsu from the school implies that the latter upholds the educational principle running counter to the military discipline of the principal.

There are the other two influential figures—Ushimatsu's father who commands him to hide his *eta* birth, and Inoko Rentaro, a philosopher who reveals his own *eta* birth in public and

fighters bravely against discrimination. Both Father and Rentaro, who represent the two opposite ways of living, are very dear and important to Ushimatsu; the latter is particularly so, for his ideas and life Ushimatsu passionately admires. Indeed, Ushimatsu is in the midst of the struggle over his own way of living.

The various living depicted in the novel also reflects the historical changes of Japan. In the first place, these are related, in the town where the modern and pre-modern elements coexist:

Not surprisingly, Buddhism having flourished here more than in any other part of Shinshu, the sight was like the past itself unfolding before your eyes—everything old, and everything, from the shingle tiles of the queer, squat northern houses and their wide down sweeping eaves protecting them against the snow to the soaring temple roofs and the topmost branches of the trees that showed themselves here and there above the mass of humbler buildings, seeming wrapped in a faint mist of incense. If anything in the panorama had a modern air, it was the white-painted building of the primary school where Segawa Ushimatsu taught. (3)

In this scene, the 'old' scenery of the town with a heavy influence of Buddhist culture contrasts with the 'white' building. This elementary school is, in the midst of the pre-modern view, the very symbol of modernity. It is also articulated in the doctrine of the principal: "Like clockwork" was his watchword, the supreme precept he expounded to the pupils, the spirit behind everyday instruction he gave to his staff"(14). The school is the place of administering and disciplining pupils and staff, requiring of them a precise behaviour that is "like clockwork." The metaphor of the clock is associated with such concepts as linear time, precision, certainty, and management which did not exist in pre-modern society. In contrast, a pre-modern nature of the village is represented by the temple Rengeji. The sound of the bell ringing three times a day—in the morning, at noon, and in the evening—is the time keeper of the village.

This hamlet, where the modern and the pre-modern elements coexist, shows wide ranges of response to the change of times—from the ambitious young men seeking success in society, to the old who are left behind and disappear in silence. To the former category belong Ushimatsu, his close friend Ginnosuke, his rival Bunpei, as well as those power-seeking adults like the inspector, the principal, and Takayanagi, the candidate for Diet member. To the latter

belong Keinoshin, the old schoolteacher with a samurai ancestor, Ushimatsu's father who leads a secluded life deep in the mountains, and most of the peasants and workers.

The subject-position of Ushimatsu is complicated. As a schoolteacher and boarder of the temple Rengeji, he is breathing both modern and pre-modern airs of his time. However, he lives the deeply rooted social class conflict—discrimination against the *eta*—the element which runs through both categories that a mere change of time can never eradicate. Ushimatsu seemingly belongs to the center of the new time, for the principal is secretly jealous of Ushimatsu's popularity among pupils; Keinoshin is envious of his youthfulness and bright future, but in reality he stands in the most marginal of Japanese society and history because of his *eta* birth. He carries, therefore, a great contradiction within, and precisely because of this complicated position, he sees the severe reality of his time.

The perspective of the Ten Worlds, on the other hand, reads irony in the text. Those in the school and the temple possess the characteristic of exploiting the weak, despite their mission to guide people, one through education, the other through faith. For instance, the principal, the inspector, and his nephew Bunpei, who is the principal's favorite, show the characteristics of the World of Anger in their jealousy of Ushimatsu, in their arrogance, and in the regimentation of pupils and staff. The chief priest of the temple Rengeji, who is revered from believers, secretly shows the World of Hunger in his desire for his adopted child Oshio, a daughter of Keinoshin. In their respective life states they have one element in common “bullying the weak”—the main characteristic of the World of Animality.

(3) The World of Animality

Among the ten categories of life state, the world of Animality is most evident in *The Broken Commandment*. Indeed, the cruel discrimination against *eta* is the very articulation of Animality's main characteristic—“threatening the weak.”

The world of Animality is defined as “the state in which one follows the pull of desires and instincts, and turns totally toward self-preservation and immediate profit, lacking the wisdom of control” (Ikeda, “Dialogue” 250) .

The Japanese equivalent of the term “Animality” is *chikusho*, the general term for animals—birds and beasts, insects and fish. Thus it originally refers to the state of animals. The world of Animality as a life state is essentially characterized with two nature: foolishness and the logic of power:

Foolishness. The world of Animality is characterized by a lack of discernment, or what is called “foolishness,” *oroka* in Japanese, meaning “stupidity that one cannot distinguish right from wrong” or “being lost in reason or incapable of making a sound judgment and getting lost”:

“In human terms, those in this state are in essence so caught up in their immediate circumstances they lose sight of the underlying principles that govern all things. (Ikeda *et al.* 111)

Even though they imagine that they are moving toward happiness, in the final analysis they are heading in precisely the opposite direction. They only see what is right before their eyes, and they get lost easily and ultimately come to grief. In “Letter from Sado,” [Nichiren] says: “Fish want to survive; they deplore their pond’s shallowness and dig holes in the bottom to hide in, yet tricked by bait, they take the hook. Birds in a tree fear that they are too low and perch in the top branches, yet bewitched by bait, they too are caught in snares.”(WND, 301) Because they fly toward the bait in front of their eyes, in the end they are destroyed and undone. This is what is meant by “foolishness.” (113)

In other words, they are driven by instinct, completely lacking in their ability to think or reflect.

The logic of power. Their “foolishness” or “lack [of] a sound standard for judging good and evil, a firm moral or ethical foundation”—drives them to instinctive acts “without any sense of shame”(111). It is frequently followed by the other characteristic of Animality—the logic of power: “It is the nature of beasts to threaten the weak and fear the strong” (Nichiren 302):

To “threaten the weak and fear the strong” is certainly an inherent part of the logic of power. It’s a psychology of survival of the fittest. It could be said that those in this state, while human, have lost their humanity. (Ikeda *et al.* 111)

The most dangerous bestiality dwells within human beings. Dostoevsky writes, “People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that’s a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel.” (112)

... People in this state of life tend to look down on the weak, harass the honest but flatter the strong.... People who keep quiet against the evil and immorality of society are no better. They too fall into this category. (Kansai 28)

In other words, there is a peculiar form of relationship found in the world of Animality. As its characteristic “to threaten the weak and fear the strong” suggests, one changes his/her

attitude according to the other, that is, one turns both weak and strong. It yields the insight that there is no dichotomized category of the strong and the weak, but instead there is only a possibility that one can change into the other, and vice versa. That is to say, power relations among people are neither fixed nor categorical, but fluid and relative. Those who threaten others can fear someone, and those who fear someone can threaten another.

In the course of a Ten-World reading of *The Broken Commandment*, I'm going to answer the following questions: When, how and why are the characteristics of the world of Animality described in the text? How are the self, the others or the world represented in the text and how are their relations described? What new relations are established between the self and others, and the self and the world? In the course of answering these questions, egoism and self-renunciation of the protagonist will be clarified.

II. Animality of the world

1. Hating heterogeneity

Ushimatsu, who is from the *eta* class, is the weakest in society, and is afraid of society persecuting *eta*. Viewing this from the state of life, we can see the part of the world of Animality that “fears the strong.” Here in exploring his particular relation to the world, I temporarily separate the elements of Animality into the two categories of the strong and the weak, and view how the world appears to the weak who is fearing the strong. The commandment that his father gives to Ushimatsu captures the gist of the relationship:

One thing more he added: that the only way—the only hope—for any *eta* who wants to raise himself in the world was to conceal the secret of his birth. “No matter whom you meet, no matter what happens to you, never reveal it! Forget this commandment just once, in a moment of anger or misery, and from that moment the world will have rejected you forever.” Such had been his father’s teaching. (9-10)

Here lies a kind of society, oppressive and overpowering, and *eta*, thoroughly powerless in front of it. Being an *eta* in this world is nothing less than carrying in his body the fatal stigma of the weak. In effect, there are “many fine *eta* men and women whom society had discarded merely because of their *eta* origin”(11):

Tell no one! Life and death hung on those words. Compared with this single precept, all the commandments and austerities that black-robed disciples of the Buddha imposed so painfully upon themselves were as nothing. Buddhists who betrayed their Master incurred nothing worse than the name of apostate; an *eta* who betrayed this commandment of his father's was utterly and permanently ruined. What *eta* who wanted to make anything of his life would be so mad as to reveal by his own choice the secret of his origin? (38)

As the sentence “death hung on those words” suggests, the ultimate destiny of the weak is to be driven into death by the strong. To the weak, the world assumes the aspect of Animality in which the strong is the fittest. Then, what is it that divides the world into the two categories of the strong and the weak? The most probable answer can be found in Ushimatsu's lament when he hears his colleagues insulting Inoko Rentaro, the *eta* philosopher:

Just because he was an *eta*, they had implied, the man and his work were to be dismissed out of hand....But no tears, no arguments, however deeply felt, no ideology, however passionate and powerful its attack, could break down such prejudice; so it was that great numbers of the “new commoners,” honourable, law-abiding citizens, had been ostracized from birth, buried alive in the world that hardly knew of their existence. (37)

That is to say, it is “prejudice” that separates people. It is simply put as “prejudice” in the English translation, but a more literary translation of the original³ could be “hatred of racial difference.” The world can turn stone-cold for Ushimatsu and his father as well as other *eta*, because they are *different* from them in terms of birth. Hatred of heterogeneity produces a binary view of the world—the same and the different, and the latter is forced to occupy the weak position in it.

2. Depriving the weak of everything

The Broken Commandment describes how the weak are robbed of various things by the strong in both physical and symbolic terms. Its most direct appearance is found in the beginning of the story of the persecution of an *eta*: a rich man called Ohinata is driven from the lodging where Ushimatsu is staying:

³ The original for “prejudice”: 「種族の相違というわだかまり」

A couple of weeks before, a rich man from the outlying district of Shimotakai—Ohinata was his name—had been staying there while waiting to enter Iiyama Hospital. It was not long before the hospital admitted him. The extra services he could so well afford—a special private room, a nurse to help steady him in his walks up and down the corridor—inevitably attracted attention, and soon some jealous tongue, nobody knew whose, began to put it about that the man was an *eta*, an outcast. The word spread instantly all over the hospital, and every patient was up in arms. Angry threats confronted the hospital director: “Turn him out—at once! If you don’t, we’ll go ourselves, the lot of us!”

No amount of money can overcome prejudice of this kind. One evening soon after, taking advantage of the dusk, Ohinata had himself carried out of the hospital in a chair; he was taken straight back to the lodging house, where the doctor came to see him every day. But now it was the turn of the other lodgers to object. When Ushimatsu came home one afternoon, tired after his day’s teaching, the place was in an uproar, with everyone clamouring for the landlady and complaining openly that Ohinata was “unclean....” (4)

Ohinata’s expulsion for his *eta* birth, first from the hospital, and next from the lodging house, shows that the weak are deprived of the place to live a peaceful existence. Before anything else, however, what he is deprived of is “human nature,” exactly expressed in the invective “unclean.” Indeed, the word *yotsuashi* or “four legs”, implying animals, has been used to indicate *eta*. Animals do not have the command of human language, and it is not possible that they communicate by means of it. In the same way, there is no dialogue between *eta* and all the others, needless to say that there is no equal relation between them. Throughout the series of this turmoil, Ohinata utters no single word. He is *silent*. It is as if the very existence of Ohinata is drowned out by a hail of abuse:

“I told you so!” the boarders were saying to each other triumphantly. When Ushimatsu, a little paler than usual, entered the house, most of them were still milling about in the long corridor that ran round the outside of the building, some fuming with self-righteous indignation, some venting their feelings by marching up and down noisily on the floor, some ostentatiously tossing handfuls of salt out into the garden to purify it of the defilement caused by the

eta's presence. The landlady had produced a pair of flintstones, from which she was attempting to strike a “cleansing fire.”(8-9)

Those people are many and homogeneous in response against *eta*, unlike Ohinata, lonely and *different* from them. His silence implies that to be deprived of the place is at the same time to be deprived of his voice—the opportunity to get himself across, his feelings and claims. The pain of Ohinata, who disappeared into the roar of anger, is only represented through Ushimatsu’s imagination:

Pity, fear, and a thousand other thoughts and feelings jostled violently in Ushimatsu. Driven from the hospital, driven from his lodging, cruelly humiliated—with what bitterness the man in the chair must have cursed his fate as he was carried out, silent, into the street. But Ohinata’s destiny, inevitably, was that which all *eta* had to face sooner or later; and was not he himself an outcast, an *eta*? (9)

What the weak are deprived of are not only their human nature, place, and voice; but also opportunity for self-realization in society and a variety of choices in life. Ushimatsu’s father himself, despite “a longing for fame and position [that] burned within him all his life,” hid himself in the mountain with a “fierce resentment that nothing in his own life had gone the way he wanted...because his birth made it impossible for him to work his way up in the world.” Needless to say, being driven out of the place leads to being deprived of his job, and consequently, his daily bread:

Nothing could soften the horror of total rejection: of dismissal from the school, for instance. The humiliation would follow him to the grave. And how, afterwards, could he make a living? He was still young, with hopes, desires, ambitions. Why should he be singled out as less than human, when all he wanted was to live as others lived? (210)

That is to say, the weak are robbed of everything that relates to their existence—human nature, a safe place to lead a peaceful life, voice, a variety of chances of self-realization in the future, and livelihood—the very foundation of everyday life. Animality of the world is characterized by voracious usurpation and erasure of the weak, while the weak are characterized by silence and disappearance.

III. Animality of the weak

1. Employing the logic of the strong

Both Ushimatsu and his father assume the characteristics of the weak: silence and disappearance. Yet, precisely because of a profound awareness of their weak position, they show another element of the world of Animality—“to threaten the weak.” It privately shows in his father’s narrative of their ancestors that is related just before mentioning his commandment:

When he left home for the very first time, his father, deeply concerned for his only son’s future, had given him much advice. It was then that he had told him about their ancestors; how they were not descended, like the many groups of *eta* who lived among the Eastern Highway, from foreign immigrants or castaways from China, Korea, Russia, and the nameless islands of the Pacific, but from runaway samurai of many generations back; that however poor they may be, their family had committed no crime, done nothing dishonourable. (9)

As is indicated, the same class of *eta* is now divided into the two categories: Ushimatsu’s family and many others. What separates them is racial difference. The former is the “runaway samurai of many generations back,” that is, Japanese; their origin is evident. On the other hand, the latter includes “foreign immigrants or castaways from China, Korea, Russia, and the nameless islands of the Pacific.” These are foreigners and non-Japanese; and their origins are unclear, as the words “immigrants or castaways” and “nameless islands” suggest. The latter suffers such negative values as guilty and dishonorable, just as the former bears positive ones like innocent and clean.

The logic of the strong manifests itself here: a tendency toward homogeneity and hatred of racial difference. Father claims cleanness by contrasting themselves with heterogeneous *eta* groups coming from other countries. In other words, he cites the weaker so as to claim *their* cleanness, through which he seeks to maintain the authenticity of their family’s participation in society. Father employs the same way of the strong bullying the weak—depriving the weak of their right, when he excludes those foreign *eta* from participating society by insinuating their stigma as uncleanness—just as the lodgers are calling Ohinata “unclean.” Those who are driven into the weak are silent and disappear from the story, their ghostly traces left only in Father’s narrative.

“We are not the dishonourable family.” This message of his father seems, at first glance,

an encouragement to the son who is destined to carry the fatal disadvantage throughout his life. Father's narrative is probably meant to justify his son's success in society, which might be the reason why it is related right before giving his commandment. Yet it is clear now that this justification is grounded on the very sacrifice of the weaker.

It is a great irony that those who are suffering from society repeat the same oppressive power relation of it toward others. The weak fearing the strong is now the strong threatening the weaker. Making a sacrifice of the weak for one's own sake can be called an Animality form of egoism. More ironical too is the fact that his father's narrative is based on the myth of the nation state; he distinguishes his family from other *eta* in terms of racial difference—Japanese and foreigners. It should be remembered that the symbol of Japan is the emperor, who occupies the noblest, which is the remotest place from *eta*. With such innocence, Ushimatsu's father is involved in the conventional framework that keeps excluding *eta*. Ushimatsu, who conceals his origin obeying this commandment, also lives the very power relations of Animality.

2. Ignoring the weak

Ushimatsu, seeing the discrimination against *eta*, is furious at its absurdity and feels keen empathy for them, lamenting such society:

...*why* should the “new commoners⁴” be so despised and mocked? Why should they not mix with their fellow human beings? Why should the *eta* alone have no right to live out their lives as members of the community around them? Life for them signified only continual torment, unredeemed even by pity. (206-7)

The greatest concern of Ushimatsu is, however, “his life to continue as it was now” (38), that is, to live in the *seken* as an ordinary man as ever. Knowing the absurdity of discrimination, he keeps hiding his birth out of fear that society might direct its attack against him. To hide his birth, however, implies that he has to conform to the strong on the one hand, and to threaten the weak, on the other.

After the “ceremony to mark the sovereign's birthday” at school, Ushimatsu is immediately surrounded by pupils to play with him. Among their frolic, Ushimatsu finds a lonely-looking *eta* boy standing against the wall:

⁴ New commoners: *shin-heimin* in Japanese, a discriminative word referring to those who are from the *eta* class. People discriminatively called them this way, even after they were released from the *eta* class since 1871.

In the third-year class there was an *eta* boy called Senta, who was always on his own, carefully avoided by his classmates. There he was now, on his own as usual, leaning forlornly against the wall watching the others play. Even on this festival day, poor lad, he could not join in the fun. Ushimatsu bit his lip. “Come on—don’t be scared!” he longed to call out to the boy. But the other teachers were looking. Like a fugitive, Ushimatsu slipped away from the milling crowd of boys and girls. (56)

Ushimatsu, understanding Senta’s loneliness and longing to encourage him, leaves from the site “like a fugitive.” Without a moment of thinking, he runs away from the eyes of the other teachers for his dear life. He himself utters no words to disappear from the scene. For him, silence and disappearance is the only way to survive an immediate danger. And yet, through those characteristics of the weak, he does the same thing as the strong—neglecting Senta. Ignorance is other form of erasing the existence of the weak, in a sense that they behave as if the weak does not exist at all. For the weak, silence and disappearance can assume the role of the strong against others in a weak position. Here again is seen the Animality form of egoism: Making a sacrifice of the weaker for one’s own sake.

3. Erasing the traces of the bonds

Ushimatsu’s fear of the strong also oppresses his honest and true feelings.

When the politician Takayanagi inquires him about any possible relationship with Rentaro, he immediately denies: “three times denied the man to whom he owed so much, whom he revered as his teacher and guide, as if he were no more to him than any stranger. ‘Sensei! Forgive me!’ he murmured”(149). The same is true of another scene that, as soon as he heard the rumour spreading in the town that “there’s a ‘new commoner’ on the school staff. An *eta* masquerading as one of us”(165), he decides to sell his library of Rentaro’s writings to a second-hand book shop. During this event, there are some scenes that he is erasing his name written on those books:

[Ushimatsu] took out of the closet some books and pamphlets he had hidden away in a corner. They were Rentaro’s, all of them: *Modern Thought and the Depressed Classes*, into which the *eta* writer had poured every drop of vitality and passion he possessed; the pamphlets *The Common Man*, *Labour*, and *A Message for the Poor*; *Confessions*; and other writings besides. Ushimatsu

looked through them one by one. Then he blocked out his name where he had stamped it with his seal on every flyleaf...(167)

At the bookshop, again, he carefully makes sure if his name is left unblocked:

[H]e...before leaving, checked once again the places where he had erased his name. One book, he found, he had missed. Borrowing a writing brush, he drew thick black strokes over the red characters of his name. (169)

His selling Rentaro's writings and erasing his names on them are the act of erasing the traces of Rentaro's existence from his life, thus completely severing his relations with him. Here is, however, one paradox lying when he attempts to erase the traces of Rentaro from his life, he erases *his* own traces—his name. It is subtle and yet suggestive, for erasing the traces of the other to whom he owes seems to be equal to losing his identity. Indeed, he is at a complete loss after selling his books, not knowing any more where to take his path:

This done, he would be safe. So he told himself. But in his mind there was only darkness and confusion; of what his next move should be he had no idea. As he left the bookshop and walked down the passageway under the eaves, thinking over what he had just done, he was already near to tears.

"*Sensei, Sensei—forgive me!*" he mumbled repeatedly. He remembered his denial when Takayanagi had suggested he was a friend of Rentaro. Conscience, unblunted, struggled with excuses—surely, if he was to protect himself at all, he had no alternative? The agony struck deeper. In shame and in fear, not knowing where he was going, Ushimatsu walked on. (169-70)

Such a series of Ushimatsu's behavior may describe another egoistic form of Animality: erasing the traces of the bonds with someone whom he owes, and that without a moment of reflection.

So far I have examined how Ushimatsu, who belongs to the weak, manifests his own Animality in his relation with others. It is at the same time the process of finding out the nature of egoism in him. It is characterized with the strong sway of instinct or impulse for the sake of his own existence, and it never goes without cost of others, including the ones to whom he is indebted. Those who are occupied with such instinctive egoism are too blind with his fear of the strong to care for others, thus injuring or destroying them on their way.

IV. Choosing the path

1. Rentaro's path

Ushimatsu's way of life undergoes a radical change since Rentaro's death, who is assassinated by a subject of Takayanagi. At a public speech in the election campaign of his friend, Rentaro reveals the rival's fatal secret—to have married a daughter of a rich *eta* so that he can procure the campaign fund—and criticizes his mean strategy, exploiting the *eta* as his means of money. This disclosure costs him his life immediately after the meeting is closed. At that time, Ushimatsu is so desperate and depressed that he decides to do away with himself, for his birth has been finally known to the whole town and his colleagues. Before dying, however, he decides to confess his birth only to Rentaro, and is waiting for the end of the meeting. However, he is too late. Rentaro is already cold, lying on the ground.

Rentaro himself would have foreseen a great danger of disclosing the fatal secret of the ambitious politician, yet he has chosen to do it. It is evident that despite the outcaste birth, Rentaro is completely different from Ushimatsu and his father, both of whom are desperate in hiding their birth. Rentaro, on the other hand, does not have an atom of fear of the world; he is courageous enough to face all the jeers and derision of the world, declaring his *eta* birth without hesitation and writing for his people. What makes him so detached from a secure way of life? What enables him to renounce himself so willingly, daring to face the wrong of the world? The answer for these questions is clearly stated in Ushimatsu's defence for Rentaro, as Katsuno Bumpei insults him by calling him "an empty-headed dreamer....a species of madman" (199) :

Inoko sensei *is* a kind of madman, just as you say....It was this society of ours that robbed him of his job, and society that drove him by its persecution to that terrible illness and nearly killed him. Yet it's for this same society's sake that he makes such passionate speeches and writes such moving books, the fire burning him up till his pen breaks in his hand and his voice is worn to a whisper—where else can you find such a crazy, deluded fool? His whole life has been one long confession of his folly, humbly accepting the sneers of 'dreamer' and 'simpleton' the world throws his way. *No man can be called strong who complains of his trials, however cruel or bitter they may be. Let the world jeer at you, and die, if need be, as the wolf dies, in silence, and bravely, like a man.* That's his philosophy. Enough to prove he's crazy, isn't it? (199)

Katsuno says Inoko sensei is inferior, a kind of savage. He's right, and I've been wrong from the start. Oh yes, Inoko should have stuck to his cowhides and kept his mouth shut—if he had, illness wouldn't have nearly killed him. Battling on against society like he did, regardless of his strength or health—sheer madness, wasn't it? Your cultured man has visions of a gold medal sitting proudly on his chest, so he goes in for a solid career in education and things of that sort, but pity the poor barbarian—Inoko sensei could never look to that kind of success, even in his dreams. He knew all along he'd leave no more mark than the dew on the field. He went to the battle expecting death. Isn't it pathetic, that fury of his—and maybe heroic too? (200)

Rentaro is ready to renounce himself because he has an aim for which he lives—creating a better society. Indeed, in a society where most people are absorbed with themselves and seeking success, such a life dedicated to others' sake appears totally nonsense, thus incurring sneers from others. Yet Ushimatsu's statement shows a paradoxical turn that the more fool Rentaro looks in their eyes, the nobler he becomes. Ushiamtsu, therefore, calls Rentaro "heroic."

In his heroic struggles lies Rentaro's passionate desire to save his fellow *eta* from the current situation:

Perhaps there'll be an *eta* or two of character who'll look at my books and think enough of them to say to himself, 'Inoko the *eta* wrote this, did he? Then I can do better still!' If that day ever comes, I'll be content. A springboard for others—that's what my life has been, that's what I want it to be." (100)

In other words, it is the pursuit of happiness of *eta*—or, love for others—that carries his solitary struggle against discrimination. Rentaro's life state is the exact articulation of the ninth life state—the world of Bodhisattva. Its characteristics are described as follows:

the "Bodhisattvas dwell among the common people within the six paths, acting humbly and respecting others. They draw devils to themselves and provide blessings to others." (Ikeda et al., "Wisdom" 175)

"Bodhisattvas are those who willingly go out of their way to take on hard work; who possesses the spirit to eagerly undertake difficulties for...other people and society. This is the very antithesis of being self-centered." (174)

There is a great gap between Rentaro's way of life and others'. Their respective ways of life shows that such difference comes from what one pursues in life. Ushimatsu and Father are pursuing security of themselves, other figures like the principal are fame, honor, success and praises from the world. Rentaro is, on the other hand, seeking welfare of his people; only he himself is concerned with others. Hence Rentaro's path. Despite his socially disadvantaged life, he lives not an Animality path, but a Bodhisattva path, whose life continues to be, as you will see, so influential and inspiring even after his death.

2. Ushimatsu's Choice

The following scene captures the very moment of inner change undergoing Ushimatsu:

The tears refreshed his parched spirit....he compared Rentaro's character with his own. Rentaro had lived as a man should—as an *eta* should...Openly proclaiming his origin wherever he went, he had nevertheless won acceptance and recognition. *I hold it no shame to be of eta birth*. With what power those words were charged! And himself? (217)

It is evident that Rentaro's path, "I hold it no shame to be of *eta* birth", opens new horizons for Ushimatsu. Indeed Rentaro's adamant existence was derived from his awareness and acceptance of being *eta*. This idea is so forceful that it dismantles mental framework of Animality—hatred of being different from others—that is so deeply rooted in the weak, that being *eta* is a fatal stigma of the weak. The idea that "I hold it no shame to be of *eta* birth" means to declare that he says a big "No" to be the weak himself that society has imposed on him. Now Ushimatsu comes to realize that hiding his own birth was the very cause of his agony:

For the first time Ushimatsu realized the corrosive effect on his character, on the natural self that he had been born with, of the perpetual obsession with concealment. A life of deception, his had been up till now: of *self* deception....What good did it do, the endless agonizing? *I am an eta*. Why should he not declare the truth, openly and boldly, to all the world? Such was the lesson of Rentaro's death. (217)

The confession of his origin does not mean that Ushimatsu is the loser, who is forced to do so, driven into the corner under social oppression. Rather, it is the declaration of abandoning his position as the weak, discarding the socially established idea that an *eta* is weak. No fear now.

The moment of deciding to declare his birth is, at the same time, the moment of establishing a new relation of the self to the world:

With all that he saw and heard, it became clearer to Ushimatsu that in death his friend was taking him by the hand to lead him to a new world. *Confession*: the public confession of his birth, of which he had never dared even to think, the confession he had hesitated to make even to his fellow *eta* Rentaro....Suddenly a new courage was within his grasp. The man he had been till now was dead. The dreams of love and glory, the pleasures of this world, to taste which most young men would willingly starve themselves of food and sleep together—of what use were they to him, an *eta*? A “new commoner,” that was all Rentaro had been; for himself he wanted nothing more. (218)

His desires for normality, fame and success are all abandoned here, because he has finally grasped the path to take: his tragic destiny of being *eta* turns now into the path of his life, just as represented by Rentaro:

Tomorrow he would go to school and confess the truth. To his fellow teachers, to the children....he spent the night with Ichimura and the others in vigil beside the body of the dead man. At last a cock crew. Ushimatsu sensed the approach of a new dawn. (219)

Ushiamtsu has made a choice: he lives out his destiny, not run away from it.

V. On the ending of *The Broken Commandment*

1. Dismantling the principle of Animality

The scene of Ushimatsu’s confession in the classroom, together with his departure for Texas, has been questioned since Toson’s time. Yet Ushimatsu’s confession is a subtle way of expressing his protest against the prevailing social system of bullying the weak. One form of resistance is the very confession he made in the classroom:

You all know how the people who live up here in the mountain country are divided into five classes....There are the ‘samurai,’ as they used to be called, the

merchants in the towns, the farmers, the priests, and below them the people called *eta*. You know how the *eta* still live by themselves, herded together on the edge of the town, where they make leather shoes and drums and samisen, and the sandals you wear to school—or work the fields as peasants, some of them. You know how once a year these *eta* call on your parents with a sheaf of rice to pay their respects, how when they come they must never step up into any of the rooms where you live but must kneel on the earthen floor of the hall and bow their heads, and take whatever they are given to eat in special bowls kept for them alone. You know the custom there has always been, that when someone from your family goes on some errand to a place where *eta* live, he must light his pipe with a match, not from the hibachi, and that even if the *eta* are drinking tea when he comes, they must not offer it to them. There is no class lower, we say, than the *eta*. Suppose one of these despised outcasts were to come to your classroom and teach you Japanese and geography—what would you think then? What would your parents think? Children, I must tell you: I am such an outcast. (228-9)

Most significant thing in his confession is the fact that he has broken silence that all the *eta* except Rentaro have kept. It is immediately followed by another important significance. The classroom and the school are a kind of *seken* in which those who are peculiarly different from others are excluded, as seen in the plight of the *eta* boy Senta. The fact that Ushimatsu, their teacher, is an *eta* is not only a shocking revelation, but also a very powerful nullification of the rigid categories of homogeneity and heterogeneity, by showing that Ushimatsu has these two contradicting elements—he looks completely a common person, and yet he is an *eta*. Hence he shows that these elements of the “same” and the “different”, the very boundary that constitutes the *seken*, are in fact arbitrary and relative, not absolute or fixed, thus disclosing the violence underlying the superficial peace of homogeneous *seken*. It also means to demystify the myth of the nation state—unity of Japanese people—on which Ushimatsu’s father relied; it implies that their unity is achieved through the constant oppression of the “different.” In this way Ushimatsu’s confession dismantles the weakness of the weak—silence and heterogeneity—both in terms of action and of consciousness, secretly jolting the national frame.

2. An alternative view of human beings

Not only the act of confession, but its content bears one other kind of protest:

Some of you are fourteen, some fifteen: you know something of the world already. Please listen carefully to what I am saying to you now. When in five years from now, or ten, you look back to your schooldays, I would like you to remember you had a teacher called Segawa once, in the fourth year of the upper school, who taught you in this room—who told you, when he confessed to you that he was an *eta* and said goodbye to all the class, that each first of January he had welcomed in the New Year with the same sweet wine as you do, that on the Emperor's birthday he had sung "May Thy Glorious Reign" as fervently as you, and wished you well, praying in his heart for your happiness and success....(229)

What Ushimatsu relates first of all is his affection to the pupils as expressed in the line that he "wished you well, praying in his heart for your happiness and success." In his wish for their happiness and success lies no prejudice or bad feelings against difference coming from birth. It shows Ushimatsu's deep affection for his students, making a strong contrast with such fame-seeking men as the principal and other teachers. Ushimatsu continues:

You will feel disgust and loathing for me now that I have told you what I am.
But though I was born so low myself, I have done my best each day to teach you only what is right and true. Please remember this, and forgive me if you can for having kept the truth from you till today. (229)

The low birth and what he calls "right and wrong" are, from the viewpoint of the Ten Worlds, in contrast. The former represents the very power relation found in the world of Animality, while the latter suggests a particular characteristic of the world of Humanity—the ability to think. In other words, it is a framework based on thinking and not on the logic of power. Japanese society has long judged and discriminated people by the rank of their birth: the meanest is *eta*, and the noblest the emperor. Ushimatsu, however, submits here an alternative framework that makes relative the conventional one: the thought, or the "right and wrong." To submit the framework that has no regard for the rank or the birth is equal to remove nonhuman value—whether it is positive or negative—that has been attached to the emperor and to the *eta*. It enables equality to be encouraged among human beings, regardless of birth. This idea is, as is clear now, directly

counter to the imperialistic system of Japan. Breaking the commandment, therefore, means breaking down the logic of power that is predominant in society, and at the same time breaking down the frame of the nation. In its soft and subtle tone, Ushimatsu's confession bears a radical subversion of current ideas of his time.

Additionally, to relate this story to the children is another form of protest, for, as mentioned in the first part of this chapter, education is closely linked with war discourse, and Ushimatsu's story in fact asks the children to think by themselves, according to what their teacher has taught them "what is right and true."

To sum up, there are three kinds of protest found in Ushimatsu's confession: breaking silence, revealing the arbitrariness and relativity of homogeneity and heterogeneity that have sustained their *seken* and nation, and claiming their thinking ability as an alternative view of human beings. In this way Ushimatsu dismantles the logic of power—the mental framework of Animality world.

Ushimatsu, after resigning his position of schoolteacher, receives the notice that "Ohinata, the rich *eta* who had been expelled from the inn....the humiliation had only inspired him with a fiercer courage and determination—was preparing to start farming in Texas"(241). This has been criticized as a *deus ex machina*; the most expected ending, for many critics, was that Ushimatsu, after resigning his job, fiercely fights against society as Rentaro did. Following the pattern of breaking the commandment, however, this ending can be understood as another form of breaking down the framework, that is, going out of the borders. It assumes a sense of protest when considered this way: Texas is represented as a new world, which is open to anyone who wants to have a new chance and opportunity of creating a new life. It is therefore a sharp criticism of Japanese society for depriving the weak of every chance and opportunity.

After the confession, Ushimatsu finally gains a peace of mind:

The suspicion, the fear, the mental agony that had never left him, day or night, had eased a little now. He was free as a bird....Gratefully, unbelievably, as if recalled from the brink of death, he drank in the cold December air, its taste as sweet to him as that of the sand a sailor falls on his knees to kiss when he steps ashore after a long voyage. Sweeter, yet sadder too....

This world of snow, whispering beneath each step he took—at long last it was *his*... (244)

Ushimatsu's peaceful mind is, from the perspective of the Ten Worlds, called the world of Humanity. His long process of agony shows us how difficult it is to be truly "human."

By way of conclusion

It would be also yielding to look at Shimazaki Toson's *The Broken Commandment* in the historical context of the novel. Japan, in the previous year of the novel's publication, won the war against Russia, and came to pride itself as a strong nation vying with the Western powers. Responding to exaltation among the people, the literary society of Japan longed for "a birth of a new literature, an epoch of literature proper to the people of Great Japan Empire." (Daito 6) Toson, who had already distinguished himself as a renowned poet, had been "the subject of the literary society in Japan at that time" (Hirano 25), and they had been waiting for the publication of his novel that he had been long engaged in.

What Toson spread before their eyes was a negative reality of Japan in which hatred of racial difference separated people. Curiously enough, the inside and the outside of Japan were corresponding to each other then; discrimination against *eta* and wars against foreigners proceeded from prejudice—one single feeling of hatred of heterogeneity. Yet Ushimatsu's confession reveals that the nature of heterogeneity is arbitrary and relative; what people regard as unacceptable and incomprehensible is actually accessible and probably they share a lot of things too.

In this sense, *The Broken Commandment* defines a fundamental problem in his time—"What is it that separate us people?"—and may attempt to answer the question like this—"Is there any solution to the dividing practices in the world?" Ushimatsu's narrative may be considered as a literary form of questioning the way of the world and, at the same time, suggesting an alternative vision of us—equality in humans as thinking beings.

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