

Translation

Michiko Ishimure as a Post-Modern Thinker⁽¹⁾

Nakamasa IWAOKA
Kumamoto University

INTRODUCTION

To introduce Michiko Ishimure⁽²⁾ is difficult since her thoughts are a colossal body of work. She is a thinker whose thoughts and writings have been categorized as environmental activism and criticism, or most recently, “nature writing”. Some of her writing has been translated into or introduced into other languages. I see Ishimure fundamentally as a “post-modern thinker.” Today, Japan is at the limit of rapid modernization, and its extremity brings about pathologies such as the Minamata Disease, and these enormous problems become a focal turning point for the times and for its thinkers therein. In the search for resolution and understanding, the prescription is thoughts that are equally grandiose. In their sum, Ishimure’s thoughts are a kind of chaos that is very difficult to simplify or put into words. Yet, this chaos itself is appealing. We live in a world of reason, and are eager to rationalize everything, yet there is much that can’t be rationalized. This is where poetry and literature are born. Nonetheless, the dilemma here lies in trying to convey some logic and understanding of her chaotic thought.

⁽¹⁾ A translation of ‘Michiko Ishimure and the Modern Age’ by N. Iwaoka (*Dohyo*, No. 10, Sept, 2005)

⁽²⁾ Michiko Ishimure (1927~), born in Amakusa, Japan. Novelist and poet, the author of *Paradise in the Sea of Sorrow* (1972).

Translation

POETRY THAT TRANSCENDS “THE MODERN”

Transcending time cannot be done through logic, but through poetry. Logic alone has no strength to overcome the fundamental problems of this age. What is necessary is expression that has the power to excavate right down to the critical points of compassion and actions that are overcoming the problems of the age. It's a kind of piercing edge found only in poetry that flat logic just can't penetrate.

“The Modern,” as we call it, is in itself a prosaic constitution. In the physical world, we analyze everything according to cause and effect. In modern times, we analyze every phenomenon of nature in numerical terms using pre-established laws and scientific methods, which began with the scientific revolution of Descartes and Newton. Then we manipulate and utilize nature to reap our own benefits. Nature's resources have become capital, which we produce and reproduce, then market and sell for a profit. On this ground, the capitalist society has been built. In other words, the modern world is a reflection of this cause and effect outlook. Thus, the human way of thinking about everything has been materialized into a rationalized, mechanized and efficacious world view. But such a systematic outlook goes against our flesh and blood, and ‘the project’ which is a typical modern way of thinking destroys our identity. That is to say, our true aspirations for life cannot be attained in the midst of this corporate, mechanic and prosaic modern spirit. If we want to transcend this spirit of the times, we need poetry. Of course, it is not the literal poems themselves we need, but instead the imaginative spirit of poetry, which is in itself one revolt against this age, precisely what we mean by saying the transcending of “The Modern.”

ISHIMURE AND POETRY

Therefore, the spirit of poetry is needed at the center of contemporary thought. There is an irritation in the realization that some words and thoughts are

predestined, though not yet realized in society. As soon as we give words form, the primitive meaning is lost. Yet we must give shape to these words. It's what one can't verbalize, but yearns to say that is poetry, for originally poetry is the cry of the primitive being. So, poetry remains undefined, and Ishimure's words contain this innate power of ambiguity.

Prof. T. Kim wrote that the charm of Ishimure's work is its state of chaos, or the dawn of consciousness that lies just beyond the border of this world and the next world. Clearly, Ishimure's literary world is poetry. The enabling energy to transcend this hard modern prosaic spirit of the times comes from the inward thoughts not yet put into words. One cannot help but be attracted to the power Ishimure's ambiguous, primitive, and innate words hold.

As the Romantic poet P. B. Shelley once wrote, "Poetry is a germ, or the bud of life, as the first acorn, which contained all oaks potential (Defence of Poetry)." Shelley also tells us that poetry has the ability to be the species of social motivation in itself, and the motivation to change society and the age. Prose has this same power to bring about change. But today, when we find ourselves gasping for air in the mechanic and material world, and our humanity is choked out, the only force to change such a mechanical world is the force of poetry. This is the reason I estimate Ishimure as a poet and a critic of the Modern Age. But, I should add a word that my stance on the Modern Age differs a little from Ishimure's. I believe that there was a livelihood at the beginning of the Modern Age. Of course it may have started off in the wrong direction, but Ishimure does not admit the value of its original "Modernity" because she felt so strongly that the world was degenerating and coming to an end because of the Modernity. In this sense, she thoroughly is a poet, as Shelley would define as an "unacknowledged legislator of the world" or "priest of spirit", one who sounds the trumpet

Translation

before the age and orients the future.

LIBERALISM RECONSIDERED

Much of what Ishimure sees as the ultimate problem of today can be surmised in Prof. Y. Fujiwara's book, *Liberalism Reconsidered*. This was Fujiwara's last book published before his early death, and was a kind of will and testament about the self-conquest of liberalism. Liberalism politically is a parliamentary democracy, economically is capitalism, philosophically is utilitarianism, and now this liberalism reins over the entire world and the human mind. In other words, liberalism is the doctrine that satisfies the materialistic desires wherein possessions are our complete happiness. To achieve this, market systems and capitalism appear to be most suitable. But just 100 or 150 years of history have passed since this doctrine took over. This liberalism is now in a deadlock. Of course, we know of socialism and its attempts to compete with liberalism, but these attempts have failed for many reasons. However, you cannot say that liberalism has truly triumphed. In our human history, we have confronted many problems that are difficult to solve, such as war, the unbalanced distribution of world wealth, poverty, the environment, and pollution. Now we are compelled to reconsider the efficiency of liberalism.

To address this issue, in the academic world, we have debated and weighed the Western communitarian theory but to no avail. So we must reconsider what we have lost in liberalization and modernization. I think the first thing we have lost is the communality and publicness, or in other words, our social bonds. Modern times have destroyed our once plentiful bonds with nature and with other people, as well as the bond with our own bodies. In the end, we set our personal desires and interests above everything else, and have destroyed all sense of communality and publicness. Our world view itself has collapsed. We have degenerated to what

Michael Sandel calls, “unentrenched self,” that has no connection or responsibility to society. Yet it would be a rash conclusion if we propose that every individual should be firmly re-oriented under the name of the state. We must reconsider inwardly what we have lost in modernization.

THE RECOVERY OF COMMUNALITY AND PUBLICNESS

Ishimure first suggests that we recover this communality and publicness and a more holistic world view. Her central thought is that we need to reject the modern human-centered nature-world view, and return to humankind’s original state of existence, wherein we are part of a larger world. This is a paradigm change from a human-centered mechanical world view to an organic world view in which man plays just a small role. Through Ishimure’s thoughts, we must learn about this world view and the recovery of the communality and publicness.

What we have lost is the “common good” which is the core value in this communality and publicness. This expression of a “common good” was used and brought forth from ancient Europe. This so-called common good that is the foundation of society has been lost and is no longer recognizable. Today, it is especially evident in Japan, in our concentrating on rapid modernization. This is the result of modern liberalism. If we look at one of Ishimure’s most recent works, *Shiranui*, our consciousness of this loss of the common good and the emphasis on the world’s decline are depicted. The Noh play *Shiranui*, addresses the egoism, utilitarianism, liberalism, and economic rationalism that push individuals and organizations to their limits in this modern age. It also depicts what happens to modern society when we lose track of ethics and the common good. Such a prophecy of the end of the world and its recovery is the theme of *Shiranui*.

Translation

THE NOH PLAY *SHIRANUI*

Ishimure says in *Shiranui*, “Heaven calls out that the end of the world is coming. Just as in my dream...and there is a sea of ill omen.” This sea of ill omen is the Shiranui Sea. Ishimure adds, “I had been watching this world for a long time, and we cannot stop the coming of life’s extinction from this world.” and, “To the extent that people’s souls are extracted from their own body.” Here, she asserts the separation of the body and spirit. She says, “The body remains, but it is just a shadow of the bad spirits strolling around.” This implies a kind of alienation, a state in which one loses all sense of self. Then, she refers to scientific technology and writes, “The various poisons we have toyed with our own fingertips,” and asserts, “It is the most sorrowful tragedy since the beginning of this human world, and it is almost impossible to be saved from it.” This comes from sincere heartfelt grief. These expressions reveal Ishimure’s unique rhythm, similar to an old Buddhist sermon. She concludes that, “We can do nothing about the disappearance of human discretion and the spirit of life. How disgusting this dirty world is!”

METHOD OF MODERN SCIENCE

In *Shiranui*, Ishimure criticized the Modern Age to the very end. She blames the Modern Age for what has become of this world. What have been lost in modernization, first of all, are the previously mentioned communality, publicness and whole-world view. In other words, we have lost all plentiful relationships. The modern mechanical and scientific view of nature reduces everything to micro-units. Modern science can only see humans and nature, and their relation to each other, through the eyes of Descartes, Newton and mechanics. This modern view within itself became a method of destroying our rich relationships with nature and others. Rephrasing that, every living organic body was viewed instead as a dead object composed of the maximum mechanical units. This was actually

a very useful method for the analysis and realization of taking control over nature's materialistic wealth. But this modern world view and modernization has cut the bonds between humans and nature, humans and each other, and the human mind and body. In addition, modern artificial organizations and projects, made for the purpose of their own interests, have destroyed such relations and hastened us to the infinite pursuit of profit based on competition for function and convenience. As a result, modernization destroys humans and human life itself, which should not be the means but the end.

LITERATURE AND LIFE

To counter the modern trend, there is much we should learn from Ishimure's literature. I want to formulate Ishimure's literature as "Literature of Life" and a celebration of life. Of course, Ishimure cannot manipulate nature or the social system by herself. An individual is powerless. Yet, the power of literature and words is great. Through her narration, Ishimure aims to recollect and bring back the life, soul, and spirit that fills the nourishing relationships and the stories of nature and the human world. Just as in prayer or the rituals of sorcery, she praises and calls upon the abundance and beauty of nature and the human world. When I speak of sorcery, it is rhetorical, and it does not imply the modern mysticism. I want to emphasize that this life-centered and organic view of Ishimure has a very close connection to the post-modern world view as a precursor of modern life science.

Now, let us continue our discussion of how the plentiful relations have been lost by modernization. At one time, humans lived a complete, holistic existence. For instance, we can imagine the pastoral and nostalgic medieval community life. It was a holistic and harmonious world within which humans lived. Such a harmonious world, or cosmos, has collapsed. It's easy to recall many popular Japanese songs from after the Second World War. Among them is the song,

Translation

“Leaving the Lone Cedar Tree.” (*Wakare no Ippon Sugi*) which if we listen carefully, is a song of grievance for Japanese modernization. Many people left their rural homes, and moved into urban cities to work, becoming the laboring power for Japan’s modernization and rapid growth after the war. Japanese Enka tunes were nostalgic songs for these people who were sent off to the cities, and homesick funeral songs for their dying existence.

HOMETOWN OF LIFE

Humans cannot live by cutting themselves off from their most precious memories and feelings. It is painfully hard to be cut off from the whole, from the landscapes and soundscapes of one’s community, because it is a separation from the rich relationships therein. At the core of Ishimure’s thoughts, which go against the ideals of modernization, are the concepts of reconnection, and nostalgic feelings for the all-encompassing whole, or the whole of life, or what we might call our “hometown of life.” We share these feelings of self-reflection and regret over the extreme rapidity of modernization in the post-war Modern Age. Ishimure represents such a change of spirit for the times, and this draws us to her literature.

THE LOSS OF ETHICS

Something else that has been lost in modernization is “the good way of life.” This is hard to put into words, so most simply, our “ethics.” At one time, there was “the good” in our community and our everyday living. “The good” is inseparable from the plentiful relationships I have mentioned. It seems that humans have lost their human-like way of living, or in other words, lost their sense of ethics. Ishimure said about the victims of Minamata Disease that what was most regrettable to them, was being cut off from their social ties. That is to say, the victims’ fight was not just the fight for rights, but the fight against being deprived of their entire harmonious world within the natural and social

community. The biggest tragedy in their struggle was that everything collapsed including the harmony with nature and harmony with others. In short, all they lived for in this fishing community was lost. This modern age disease called “Minamata Disease” uprooted everything held inside each individual, including pride, values, lifestyles, and morals, all of which are rooted in community.

HISTORY AND THE VIRTUE OF PEOPLE

The problem we face now is how we can regain the humanity and the good old way of living that have been lost in modernization. It is the job of today’s thinkers to think about what has been lost, what the problem is, and then how we can recover and resolve it. These issues are addressed in the writings of Kyoji Watanabe, particularly in his book, *The Paradox of Modern Japan*. It raises the question of whether Japanese modernization is good for the Japanese people, and whether or not we could have taken a path leading to “another modernization.” In his book, *Facets of the Lost World*, he sheds light on what we have lost and why we lost such things, and why we need these things now. He points out that things are not good just because they are old. *The Paradox of Modern Japan* suggests that we reconsider modern Japan from the perspective of the anti-modern passion exemplified by the people of the 2.26 Incident’s military coup, Kita Ikki, or the Seinan Rebellion.

Ishimure challenges modern Japanese history in a similar way in the *Legends of the Seinan Rebellion*. In this book, Ishimure attempts to discover the nature of people and their virtues by ascending beyond Japanese history. Thus it is not a simple textbook-like version of Japanese history, but rather a kind of wandering reportage or episodic version of its history. She looks at history from a completely different viewpoint than usual, from the viewpoint of common people, and her aim was to find the origin of popular thought. She questions Japan’s rootless path

Translation

to modernization that neglects the achievements of the Pre-modern Age. This is the same viewpoint as stated in the famous lecture *The Civilization of Modern Japan* by Natsume Soseki. But unlike Soseki, Ishimure interprets these matters not from the viewpoint of the intelligensia, but from the viewpoint of common people.

In this way, Ishimure eagerly reflects back on “the good” which is rooted inside all people. And I am very surprised by her historical imagination. This book was written in such imaginative narratives that one is soon drawn into the story. Reading through *Legends of the Seinan Rebellion* carefully, we find it a search for what modern Japan has forgotten. Ishimure’s sense of regret and disappointment with the Modern Age is very closely connected to the Minamata Disease Affair. She criticized the nature and structure of modern Japan, wherein the Minamata Disease was born. The morals that are displayed in *Legends of the Seinan Rebellion* are the same ones that can be found in the people who stood up to fight in the Minamata Disease Affair. And these are the virtues, ethics, and good way of living that Ishimure claims that modern Japan has forgotten.

BEYOND THE HISTORIC VIEW OF PROGRESS

Reflecting on history, Ishimure sees history not as progress, but as downfall. The idea that history always makes linear progresses was a thought commonly held by the 18th Century Encyclopedics (philosophé) and other thinkers during the Age of Enlightenment in their preparation for the French Revolution. Contrary to this is Ishimure’s viewpoint of history as a downfall, wherein we have lost what was once most important to us through modernization. Ishimure believes this world is heading toward its final and worst possible termination.

Of course, history will recover from this catastrophic state. So, Ishimure shows

us from another angle, in the Noh Play *Shiranui*, the viewpoint of history as a renaissance or resurrection. This spiraling view of history in which downfall and resurrection are one and the same, is similar to the historic view of Rousseau, who himself questions, in his book *Discourse on the Arts and Sciences* after the Renaissance, whether the evolution of science and the arts actually leads humans to a better life. He similarly asserted history as a downfall, or degeneration, insisting that as civilization progresses, human's way of living and habits deteriorate. Rousseau expressed in *The Origin of Human Inequality*, that in this process of degeneration, society falls to the worst possible despotism through political, economic and social inequality. And from the degenerative state, Rousseau imagines the regeneration of man and society at an individual level in *Emile*, and at the social level in *Social Contract*. I believe it meaningful to compare Ishimure to Rousseau from the points of their common feelings and despair towards modernization. Both Rousseau and Ishimure search for an idealistic modernity through self-retrospection of history and the human inner self.

REGENERATION OF MAN AND SOCIETY

To regeneration of the age, Ishimure insists that society itself be regenerated. In doing this, we should look at the relationship between politics and literature. Ishimure has made this connection indirect, yet deep. At one time, Ishimure was at the center of the Minamata Disease movement. Being in contact with the various political parties and social movements, Ishimure most likely questioned herself as a novelist concerning the role of literature in the process of social change. She probably wondered what the motivating force is that lies within each person's consciousness, sensitivity and world view. She realizes that society cannot be changed without changing this basic motivation. Then, it becomes necessary to identify what kind of sensitivity and morals are needed, and how the

Translation

virtues of the pure fundamental man can be passed on in order to revive and bring about change in our society. This is another important theme of Ishimure's literature. That is to say, Ishimure's literature has a concealed message that we must go back to our origins and retrieve the plentiful morals and sensitivity in order to change society. Moreover, Ishimure's literature is not a superficial accusation, but a literature profoundly radical in the original sense of the word. Ishimure herself has realized that ideological politics and rigid self-gratifying politics are limited and abhorrible.

MODERN ORGANIZATIONS – CORPORATE, STATE, AND LAW

Concerning regeneration of the modern society, Ishimure points out the inhumane aspects of modern organizations. These modern organizations include corporations controlled by the pursuit of profits, as well as the systems of state and law. At the beginning of the Minamata Disease trials, victims still had a paternalistic trust in the state and judicial system. But actually they were betrayed, and realized that modern organizations were inhumane and apathetic. Ishimure has come to believe that all the modern language is useless and fictitious, including everything from the jargon of modern law, the judicial system, and the compensation system, to the language of rights, human rights and the environment. Ishimure expresses, as in works like *The Tale of the Cat's Cradle* (Ayatori No Ki) that, "modern words we use daily are full of fiction and vacant lies."

What is the essence of modernity or the modern state? There is an interesting story, "Paddle-wheeler (*Sotoguruma No Fune*)" in Ishimure's *Legends of the Seinan Rebellion*. During the Seinan Rebellion, Royal Navy ships approached a fishing village, hoping to recruit the fishermen of the village, but all the fishermen escaped in their own boats and hid in the islands. If the Royal Navy had bombarded them, the situation may have been very tragic, but the Navy had no

time to bother with such a small village, so the Royal ships left. This episode shows the reposed condition of the state at the beginning of the Meiji Era. Gradually, however, the situation did not remain so pastoral, and the state grew into a powerful and centralized empire. This modern centralized power then began to despise and invade the peripheral areas. And there in the periphery lies Minamata, which would eventually be swallowed up by the huge modern Chisso Corporation. Ishimure points out the inhumanity and insensitivity that arises when modern scientific rationalism combines with modern corporations and their constant pursuit of profit. In other words, there is a modern paradox in the sense that organizations that were once built for human happiness have transformed into entities that use people as instruments and instead spoil humanity.

RECOVERY OF PUBLICNESS AND THE PUBLIC SENSE OF GOODNESS

One way to retake control of modern society and the organizations within it, is through the recovery of publicness and a public sense of goodness. In this Modern Age, it is necessary to bring back the spontaneous and organic sense of communality to replace the artificial, contrived communality of the modern organizations and projects. Furthermore, we also need to recover the sense of publicness and a public sense of goodness. This would be a recovery of the virtuous way of living we have lost, and a renewed sense and atmosphere of openness. Publicness does not imply the authoritarian “public” that is monopolized by the state, nor is it the “private” of individuals, but is the open and liberating sphere between the two. In order to reach this sphere, we first need the sense of compassion to go beyond the self and be open to others.

In the beginning of the Minamata Disease movement, there was a famous saying, “With righteousness, lend a helping hand.” This age-old and simple humanistic moral of the pure fundamental man is precisely the publicness and

Translation

common goodness which once existed in Japan. In Ishimure's writings, we can envision a true, humanistic and organic sense of publicness and common good through a deep and holistic interconnectedness with nature, with the God of Anguish (Modaegami) and Worldly Desires (Bonno). True publicness is transcendental. As Masato Ogata says, "We must reunite with our "original livelihood (Moto No Inochi)." The sphere of the "public" must be readdressed and be based on the premise that our interconnectedness to all living things transcends lands and generations. We might call this a publicness of "glocal" (global+local) living.

INDEPENDENCE AND COOPERATION

Ishimure also addresses the point of "independence and cooperation." Ishimure's view of communality is not the pre-modernistic inter-dependence, but is communality premised on independence. Ishimure "walked together" with the victims of Minamata Disease, through their absolute and deep solitude, in what she calls, "Eloping Suicide (Michiyuki)." This is not simply compassion or sympathy, but a more profound "cooperation" that presupposes "independence" even when death is apparent. These insights show that nobody is a more truly independent "modern person" than Ishimure. Transcending beyond the abstract sense of modernity and independence, Ishimure's thoughts are genuinely modern and independent.

NEW ETHICS

We can look at the Minamata Disease Affair and see how the age-old ethics of the fundamental man can be revived. As is expressed in Minamata Disease victim and activist Mr. Masato Ogata's statement, "I also was the Chisso Corporation," we could see a new kind of ethics emerging from the victims' suffering of the Minamata Disease. Transcending the dualistic stance that separates the suffering

of the victim and offender, the victims resolved to take on the entire crime themselves. This is neither a compelled resignation nor is it a self-sacrifice typical of the Pre-Modern Age. This new ethics raises profound questions about the state of universal human rights that have, up to this point, been centered on the modern private ego.

NEW WISDOM

What I feel really important to discuss is a new “wisdom” and new world view. Mr. Shunsuke Tsurumi once called Ishimure “An ancient person in the modern age,” one who passes on the shared feelings inherent in the common people through elegant interpretations and expressions. In referring to Ishimure’s literature, Mr. Kyoji Watanabe suggests that Ishimure was the first writer in Japan who could really connect to the consciousness of the non-elite, ordinary Japanese people. Ishimure possesses the age-old sentiments of the common people, and keeps the original un-modernized wisdom that has not been tainted by modern knowledge. If we look at the life she has led and the sentiments she has held, it is easy to see that Ishimure has not been poisoned by the excessive modern knowledge and thoughts. Ishimure’s words go beyond the fragility, abstraction and fictitiousness of modern language. And it is precisely these weak points of modern language wherein the problems of modern Japan also lie.

A WORLD WHERE EXISTENCE HAS MEANING

Finally, I would like to address Ishimure’s “Knowledge of Existence,” which she calls, “The world view where every existence has its own meaning.” Ishimure’s world view can be defined as a spiraling world view, a mythical world view, and so forth. Yet, on an even deeper level, it is an existential world view, or the “Thought of Existence.”

Translation

Prof. M. Maruyama speaks about “being” and “doing” in his book *Japanese Thought*. In Pre-Modern Japan, it was important “to be” a Lord, whereas in the Modern Age, it is more important “to do” something, with one’s deed or “action” being the standard in society. This is in fact true, but nowadays, what a person or corporation “does” has a profound relationship to the “being” of that person or corporation. Moreover, what one “does” is judged by standards of efficiency, function and usefulness. Although this “doing” or this “logic of conduct” certainly gave people incentive to free themselves from the pre-modern feudalistic system, in the capitalistic modern society there are many people who cannot effectively “do” because of various handicaps or weaknesses. And so, a number of people are significantly altering their sense of values, diverting from the standards of efficiency and function, and placing importance on a life wherein the existence of all people and creation have meaning. In other words, post-modern society’s values are changing to a, following “world where each existence has its own meaning.” After changing from the pre-modern “being” to the modern “doing,” there seems to be a shift in the post-modern age that places importance again on a higher level, universal sense of “being.”

The poem ‘Cumberland Beggar’ by William Wordsworth has an example. This poem describes an old beggar in a village who is not despised nor discriminated against, but instead taken care of by the villagers. Wordsworth asserts that the existence of the beggar gives all the villagers the sense of charity and communality, and that the beggar is an indispensable constituent of their community. This same sense of communality is an identifiable ingredient in Ishimure’s work, beginning with her essay, *Memory of Tadeko*. This sense that every person, whether they are discriminated against, poor or sick, along with all living things in creation, are undeniably indispensable and irreplaceable, is the sentiment of Ishimure that fills her literature. According to Ishimure, every

existence has plenty of connections to others and is indispensable.

A FINAL WORD – TRANSCENDING OF THE MODERN

In the end, for Ishimure, the conquest of modern society is contingent on overcoming the “inner modernity” of each and every individual. The most important things we can get from Ishimure’s literature are her original, profound perceptions. Her thoughts are not rigid, but instead embody open-minded and supple emotions, a fundamental soul, compassion to feel pain, the power to create a new ideal universe, and a feeling of new birth softer than air. Ishimure believes that we can change society through our behavior and lifestyles with these new and enriching sensibilities. While the Modern Age intended to take control of nature with scientific technology and take control of people by division, competition, and the demand for efficiency, the Post-Modern wisdom esteems multiplicity, individual differences, and plentiful relationships in the attempt to attain harmony and self-contentment. In other words, wherein the Modern Age was, in the end, ruled by “power,” what is important and what has been forgotten in this age is “fraternity,” one of the modern principles of the French Revolution. At that time the ideas of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” were praised. Not long after, however, liberty became bloated and self-righteous, equality has not yet been truly formulated, and fraternity has been almost forgotten without notice.

Though there is much more to be found, I have looked and found meaning in Ishimure’s timely thoughts. There is no uniform way to read Ishimure’s literature, for that is not how we learn. So, I hope you will read Ishimure’s various writings at will with your own interests and consciousness of the issues in mind.