

# **Toward the Spiral of Questioning: A Manner of Thinking and Writing for Philosophers of Education after 3.11**

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## **Abstract**

This paper investigates a manner of thinking and writing toward the future for philosophers of education to adopt after huge catastrophes such as the Great East Japan Earthquake. The earthquake and tsunami that struck Japan on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 (hereafter called 3.11), followed by the nuclear disaster in Fukushima, exposed the crucial problems of homelessness and human alienation in modern society more vividly than ever before. This paper explores the ways in which philosophers of education can think and write toward the future in such critical situations. This investigation is inspired by Otto Friedrich Bollnow's philosophy of education and Martin Heidegger's ontology of technology as they illustrate the existence of hope and a savior in an age of homelessness and human alienation. This paper takes into account Bollnow's theory on trust in the world and the future, alongside Heidegger's theory on technology and releasement. This paper reveals that Bollnow's and Heidegger's works contain several impossible-to-ignore twists in their arguments and that these twists are the key devices in the theory of each philosopher. The twists prevent the readers from representing the trust in the being and the state of releasement as convenient ideals of human life, leading them to walk along a spiral way of questioning on the essence of the world and humans. The essential ambiguity between the feeling of security and insecurity in the world, hope and despair toward the future, and yes and no to a world dominated by technology manifests itself from the spiral way of questioning as the depth of the essence of the world and humans. This paper concludes that philosophers of education today are expected to keep walking on the spiral way of questioning, wherein twists in the arguments inevitably originate, so as to listen and respond to the depth of the essence of the world and humans that is forcibly exposed during critical situations such as that after 3.11.

## **Keywords**

twists in philosophical arguments, trust in the world and the future, modern technology and releasement, need for thinking and questioning

How is it possible for philosophers of education to think and write toward the future after huge catastrophes such as the Great East Japan Earthquake? We are confronted with this critical question about the possibility of thinking and writing by philosophers of education after the disaster in East Japan on March 11th, 2011 (hereafter called 3.11). The serious damage caused by the earthquake and tsunami and the aftermath of the nuclear disaster tore us apart: whatever anyone writes about after the big catastrophe, for example, his/her words are inevitably evaluated by who he/she is, where he/she is from, where he/she was on 3.11, and how he/she experienced the disaster. In addition, we are faced with the sensitive problem of clarifying which area we are referring to when we say “stricken area” and whom we are referring to when we say “we.” One of the most serious difficulties for each researcher in the field of human science today is that thoughts and words after 3.11 always become carelessly linked and tightly bound to his/her individual experience of the catastrophe. Thus, we need to confront a critical question: how is it possible for philosophers of education to think and write toward the future, while constantly reconsidering the range of “the stricken area” and the classification of “we,” without withdrawing into their own experiences when facing such a crucial situation? This paper investigates a manner of thinking and writing toward the future for philosophers of education to adopt after such huge catastrophes that upset the foundation of human activities such as education.

## **1. Homelessness and Human Alienation**

Many houses and school buildings completely destroyed by the earthquake and tsunami, extensive city areas reduced to rubble and debris, reactor pressure vessels with lost bottoms, and reactor buildings with outer walls blown to bits—these are the tragic symbols of the experience of the loss of grounds and boundaries that has, at times, depressed people into silence and, at other times, prompted people to talk too much.

The 9.0-magnitude earthquake and enormous tsunami destroyed hundreds of thousands of buildings, including countless residences, and caused land subsidence and soil liquefaction in many places in East Japan. Lifelines to the stricken areas were seriously damaged and cut off. What made the situation so much worse was that the reactor buildings in the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant were damaged by the earthquake and tsunami and, subsequently, exploded one after another, scattering enormous quantities of radioactive material. People in areas that were expected to become seriously contaminated by the radioactive fallout were forced to evacuate their

houses. Over 15,000 people were killed in the disaster and more than 2,500 have been missing since 3.11. The total number of completely and partially destroyed buildings reached almost 400,000<sup>1</sup>. The number of refugees today, including those who lost their homes to the earthquake or tsunami and who left their hometowns to avoid radioactive contamination, is still over 180,000<sup>2</sup>.

Otto Friedrich Bollnow once remarked on the importance of houses and hometowns for humans. We cannot live without building houses. A house must have walls and a roof. We can take root only when we are separated from the vast outside world and protected against threats such as strong winds, heavy rains, storms, wild animals, and enemies by our houses. Hometowns, like houses, are places that protect us and have certain boundaries that make us feel safe and calm, even though they do not have actual physical barriers. They are our original central places in the world, where we begin our journey and return to rest. Bollnow repeatedly outlined the importance of houses and hometowns—in other words, the construction of grounds and boundaries in our vast world. Here, we see that a philosopher writes thoughtfully and sincerely on a subject that seems self-evident in our everyday lives as if he were referring to something precious<sup>3</sup>.

When you lose your own house, you do not simply lose your property but also the promise of safety and peace in your life. You lose the boundary that separates your space from that of others, your foundation, the center of the world you live in, the most important memorial of the history of your family, and even the order and rhythm of your everyday life. Bollnow insisted that we cannot live without dwelling in houses and that homelessness (*Heimatlosigkeit*) in modern society is a crucial problem for all people<sup>4</sup>. The 3.11 catastrophe deprived many people of their living places and forcibly reminded us of the significance of dwelling: the value of safety and peace derived from having a house and a hometown.

However, the destruction of houses and the radioactive contamination of hometowns were not the only reasons for the loss of grounds and boundaries that we experienced due to the catastrophe. As several thinkers have described, the nuclear disaster in Fukushima revealed the great uncertainty of such dichotomies that we usually take for granted:

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<sup>1</sup> Keisatsucho (2016.1.8) Heisei 23 Nen Touhoku Chihou Taiheiyō Oki Zishin no Higai Zyoukyou to Keisatsu Sochi (The damage of 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami and the police measures against it). <https://www.npa.go.jp/archive/keibi/biki/higaijokyo.pdf> (viewed on January 13th 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Fukkoucho (2015.12.25) Zenkoku Hinansya-tou no Kazu (The number of the refugees in Japan). [http://www.reconstruction.go.jp/topics/main-cat2/sub-cat2-1/20151225\\_hinansha.pdf](http://www.reconstruction.go.jp/topics/main-cat2/sub-cat2-1/20151225_hinansha.pdf) (viewed on January 13th 2016).

<sup>3</sup> cf. Bollnow 1955: 168ff.

<sup>4</sup> cf. Bollnow 1955: 168ff.

natural disasters and man-made disasters, human and natural beings, stricken areas and unstricken areas, danger and safety, and present and future. Discrepancies among specialists' theories and opinions regarding the disaster demonstrate that modern science does not always offer a definitive basis for our decisions and behaviors in such critical situations. When we discuss the merits and demerits of nuclear power plants—one of the biggest fruits of modern science—we must consider the politics and economics that have been supporting the development of modern science and the principles and thoughts that have been operating within modern science, politics, and economics. In fact, this broadened range of consideration had already been adopted by the professionals of these fields as a matter of course, but the nuclear disaster forced even non-professional people to face the complicated relationships among these fields. This differentiates the discussion on the merits and demerits of nuclear power plants after 3.11 from that which took place prior to the catastrophe.

After World War II, Martin Heidegger clarified the essence of modern technology as “*Ge-stell*” (en-framing), which he insisted is the hidden principle of modern science, politics, and economics. Heidegger argued that modern technology tends to capture everything in the world from a rationalist and functionalist point of view and exploit it as a useful standing-reserve. Usually, we believe that modern technology is based on modern science and that developments in modern technology simply depend on developments in modern science. However, Heidegger added the insight that the tendency of modern technology to utilize everything in the world for the benefit of human beings has been driving the development of modern science and making use of it as the groundwork for technological development. The principle of technological exploitation that regards all beings as tools for the achievement of goals and attempts to maximize rationality and functionality was realized at the highest level in atomic bombs as weapons of mass destruction and in nuclear power plants with the myth of safety<sup>5</sup>. Heidegger's concept of en-framing has enabled us to see the core of the multitude of problems facing us after 3.11 more clearly by keeping a distance from the endless discussions about the merits and demerits of nuclear power plants and without being involved in the ongoing discrepancies among theories regarding the nuclear disaster and its aftermath.

Human beings, like natural resources, are captured for use as tools for the pursuit of goals by the essential principle of modern technology. Even though it is common practice to believe that humans are leading the development and utilization of modern technology, we, as human resources useful for its development, are also actually exploited by modern

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Heidegger 2000: 5ff.

technology. The cruel working environment in the nuclear power plants in Fukushima, reported numerous times after 3.11, surprised many people, even though the issue had already been reported by several books and articles before the disaster. One of the greatest matters of concern for many companies today is how to hire employees who can work for longer hours and lower pay. The explosions at the nuclear power plants in Fukushima enlightened people to the fact that the insatiable pursuit of economic profit based on the ideas of rationality and functionality tends to reduce both human beings and natural beings to disposable materials. Here, we are confronted with a critical contradiction: the pursuit of rationality and functionality for the betterment of human life actually exploits and alienates human beings.

Many natural and man-made disasters that have deprived many people of their homes and hometowns have occurred throughout history. The nuclear disaster in Fukushima is not the only case of crisis caused by highly developed technology. World Wars I and II were two of the greatest catastrophes that killed many people and destroyed many homes, towns, and cities, employing weapons invented through modern technology. When humans invented atomic bombs and other nuclear weapons, they created weapons of mass destruction that can annihilate humanity. Bollnow's theory on the significance of dwelling and Heidegger's theory on the essence of modern technology were deeply influenced by the respective philosophers' experiences of surviving two world wars and witnessing the true menace of nuclear weapons.

Indeed, we are living in an age of homelessness and human alienation wherein safety and peace in human life are continually threatened by natural and man-made disasters. However, Bollnow outlined a ray of hope in human activities toward the future in such critical situations and insisted that hope is the ultimate foundation of human life. This reminds us that Heidegger also suggested that a savior grows where there is a danger that the being of all beings is veiled under the prosperity of the ideas of rationality and functionality. What is essential for the theme of this paper is the fact that Bollnow's theory on hope during crises and Heidegger's theory on salvation during times of danger both contain contradictions, or twists, in their arguments that violate the basic principles of traditional logic. The following sections aim to clarify that these contradictions in the arguments are not defects but key devices of Bollnow's and Heidegger's thought processes.

How is it possible for philosophers of education today to think and write toward the future? The following sections will focus on the twists in Bollnow's and Heidegger's arguments to answer this question. This paper primarily explores how philosophers can think and write on hope and salvation in an age of homelessness and human alienation

so as to investigate the manner of thinking and writing toward the future in such critical situations. This paper also unravels some clues for clarifying the responsibilities that present-day philosophers of education should assume in this historical age following 3.11 to ensure the future of subsequent generations.

## 2. The Twists in Bollnow's Arguments about Crises and Hope

### (1) Trust in the World and the Future

The restoration of the areas stricken by the Great East Japan Earthquake, including the rebuilding of private and public housing, is still in progress today. Humans have constantly and indomitably built houses since ancient times, even though they have frequently faced the menace of natural and man-made disasters that have destroyed countless homes and hometowns. Bollnow discerned the moods (*Stimmung*) of security and hope as trust in the world and the future behind the human activities in such critical situations. Bollnow insisted that humans could not repeatedly build houses after experiences of irrepressible destruction if they did not have the moods of security and hope as vital foundations of human life<sup>6</sup>. He therefore declared that learning to trust in the world and the future is a primal task for humans and located the concepts of security and hope at the center of his philosophy<sup>7</sup>.

The concept of security (*Geborgenheit*) in Bollnow's theory means a mood or feeling that we are protected by the space(s) surrounding us. He distinguished two dimensions of security: one is trust in specific spaces with clear border lines, such as houses and hometowns, and the other is trust in the whole space without any limits, that is, the world itself. Bollnow thought that it is especially important for humans to acquire security in the world. He insisted that they should not be content with security in specific spaces. Bollnow believed that humans can safely and peacefully dwell in houses and rebuild these houses even after monumental disasters as long as they are sustained by their absolute trust in the world in its entirety<sup>8</sup>.

The concept of hope (*Hoffnung*) in Bollnow's theory signifies a mood or feeling that we will be mercifully accepted by the future. He clarified the characteristics of hope by contrasting it with a similar feeling of expectation: to expect something is to anticipate clearly with certain grounds that something specific will happen in the future, whereas to

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<sup>6</sup> Bollnow 1963: 138f.

<sup>7</sup> cf. Bollnow 1964: 18ff. & 52ff.

<sup>8</sup> Bollnow 1955: 145ff. & Bollnow 1963: 306ff.

hope is to trust in an unpredictable future and open ourselves toward it without any certain grounds. Bollnow explained that hope is a kind of belief that we will never tumble down into the abyss and that a way out of difficulties will somehow be provided to us<sup>9</sup>. This type of hopeful attitude toward the future is sometimes referred to as releasement (*Gelassenheit*)<sup>10</sup>. He insisted that hope is a vital foundation of human life and that all human activities, including those of expectations and plans, would be entirely impossible without it<sup>11</sup>.

What is especially important for the main topic of this paper is the point that Bollnow strongly related trust in the world and the future to experiences of crises (*Krise*), such as setbacks and ruin in human life. He insisted that the mood of security in the form of trust in the whole world must be clearly distinguished from a naïve belief in certain safety since the former originates from tensions between safety and danger and, as such, cannot sublimate all threats to human life<sup>12</sup>. He also declared that only those people who have faced serious adversity can learn to resign themselves to their fate and accept the unpredictability of human life and thus acquire the mood of hope as the belief that all human activities will somehow be rewarded<sup>13</sup>. Here, one of the most important characteristics of Bollnow's theory regarding trust in the world and the future can be identified: he closely connected the moods of security and hope as the vital foundations of human life with serious crises that sometimes ruin it ruthlessly.

Therefore, it must be pointed out that Bollnow's theory provides its readers with two tasks incompatible with each other when it asks them to acquire the moods of security and hope. When we attempt to acquire trust in the world and the future, we must recognize, on the one hand, that the world and the future can easily ruin our life by way of crises, but on the other hand, we must believe that the world and the future can also mercifully protect and accept us. The world is felt to be simultaneously filled with both danger and safety for those people who have acquired the mood of security. The future involves great unpredictability alongside a promise of mercy for those people who have acquired the mood of hope. The moods of security and hope in Bollnow's theory are always in tension with desertion and despair and thus contain such indelible contradictions and conflicts. Bollnow perceived trust in the world and the future, which includes these lasting contradictions and conflicts, in human activities for restoration after

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<sup>9</sup> cf. Bollnow 1955: 107ff.

<sup>10</sup> Bollnow 1972: 22f.

<sup>11</sup> cf. Bollnow 1955: 114ff.

<sup>12</sup> Bollnow 1955: 24, 156f., 163.

<sup>13</sup> Bollnow 1955: 122f. & Bollnow 1971: 143f.

crises.

Bollnow's theory on the significance of trust in the world and the future itself contains strange contradictions or twists in its arguments as it reflects contradictions and conflicts within the moods of security and hope. While, for example, he insisted in a book that we can never eliminate the dangerous nature of the world against human life, he also declared in another book that the world loses its dangerous character when we acquire trust in the whole space<sup>14</sup>. Although he emphatically stated in a section of the former book that we must build houses to protect ourselves, there is also a passage in his lecture (held in Japan) stating that the environment (*Umwelt*) is not primarily hostile<sup>15</sup>. In addition, he distinguished hope from expectation on the grounds that only the latter features the certainty of future incidents, but he sometimes described the essence of hope by the certainty that one's actions somehow have meaning or that one can somehow find their way out of difficulty<sup>16</sup>. It seems that when the mood of hope is evaluated as the vital foundation of all human activities, it is reduced to a kind of expectation by the functionalist way of thinking that is embedded in Bollnow's theory.

We can also find such twists in the arguments in Bollnow's theory on human maturation through crises. The next subsection will investigate this theory in detail.

## **(2) Human Maturation through Crises**

The Great East Japan Earthquake is often referred to as an unprecedented catastrophe because of not only the enormous damage inflicted by the earthquake and tsunami but also the serious aftermath of the nuclear disaster. The great disaster in the Fukushima I Nuclear Power Plant destroyed the myth of safety promoted by the Japanese government and electric power companies and raised an outcry among people against nuclear power plants. Theorists from different fields began to claim that we should view the nuclear disaster as a kind of lesson that admonishes the arrogance of humans in terms of the exploitation of nuclear power and instructs us to moderate the endless development of modern science and technology. However, some insist that nuclear power plants are necessary in modern society, stressing on the importance of a steady supply of electricity and economic development. In any case, it is important to recognize that many people who had previously not taken part in the discussion on the merits and demerits of nuclear power plants have become very interested and deeply involved, regarding it as one of the

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<sup>14</sup> Bollnow 1955: 23f. & Bollnow 1963: 310.

<sup>15</sup> cf. Bollnow 1955: 168ff. & Bollnow 1988: 48.

<sup>16</sup> cf. Bollnow 1964: 61 & Bollnow 1971: 143f. & Bollnow 1972: 108.

most important issues of national elections.

However, since 3.11, there is much confusion arising from discrepancies among specialists' theories and opinions about critical issues such as the state of the reactors and the level of danger due to radiation. To what extent were the reactors destroyed? How high are the risks of low-dose radiation? Is it true that we would not have enough electricity if we stopped using nuclear power plants? Which areas are seriously contaminated with radioactive fallout and which areas are not? Have the currently operating nuclear power plants really been proven to be safe? We have an endless list of such unanswered questions even today. The knowledge of modern science lost its foundation as the reactors lost their foundation, and the myth of the safety of nuclear power plants, which people believed in at least to some extent before 3.11, was debunked by the great disaster. We are now in a maelstrom of incoherent information and are being forced to take individual responsibility of judging the safety and danger of radiation and the merits and demerits of nuclear power plants without any firm evidence. Given that there are discrepancies between the information provided by the Japanese government and the serious doubts voiced against it by some specialists, we are compelled to make decisions on issues such as whether we should evacuate from East Japan to West Japan to escape any radioactive fallout and whether we can eat farm and marine produce from East Japan. These are decisions closely linked to the stability and safety of our lives.

Bollnow insisted that ruinous crises in human life present opportunities for people to question their submission to mass opinion and acquire the competence for independent judgment. Mass media, such as newspapers and television, as well as propaganda by national governments, tend to deprive people—who hardly notice such machinations in their daily lives—of the chance to judge anything on their own responsibility, encouraging more compliance to mass opinion. People can easily become embroiled in thinking collectively, even though the individual tends to look down on the masses; this simply implies that the masses dislike the masses in reality. Bollnow declared that the experience of crises, which makes it impossible for people to continue upholding their naïve common sense and can even drive them to critique trite opinions, is an opportunity for them to become independent of the masses. It is the fatal experience of crises in human life that awakens people from submission to the masses, urging them to develop the competence of independent judgment and take responsibility for this judgment<sup>17</sup>. The 3.11 catastrophe actually forced people to individually confront and reconsider crucial issues, such as the merits and demerits of the exploitation of nuclear power, the pros and

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<sup>17</sup> Bollnow 1971: 168ff.

cons of modern science and technology, the relationship between human beings and all other beings, the conjunction between culture and civilization, and the ideal future for human society.

Some thinkers therefore regard 3.11 as a great turning point in human history when the modern conceptions of the world and humans were crucially altered. This notion reminds us of Bollnow's insight that crises present new beginnings and opportunities to restart with renewed vigor, discarding situations in which we are exhausted by monotonous daily lives and/or we cannot continue satisfactorily to develop further. Bollnow's theory on new beginnings refers to the renewal of human life through crises such as ruins, collapses, setbacks, and deadlocks. The theory also refers to the renewal of trends in a society, pointing out its close relationship with cultural criticism<sup>18</sup>. The 3.11 disaster aroused deep suspicions of many kinds of values that had been congealed and considered self-evident in modern society. For example, these values include the idea that humans can and should control nature for their own sake, the capitalist tendency to excessively promote the expansion of economic profit, and the concept of risk management that allows us to estimate any risk numerically. As such, we have good reason, based on Bollnow's theory, to think that we have now made a new beginning post-3.11, which is a great turning point in human history.

Bollnow evaluated human transformation through crises as a shift to a higher stage of maturity (*Reife*: perfection) and considered helping and supporting younger generations achieve such maturation to be an important responsibility of education<sup>19</sup>. However, his theory on maturation through crises, which considers transformation through crises to be a valuable shift, also contains strange contradictions or twists in the arguments, just as his theory on the moods of security and hope does. Bollnow's theory demands people to regard life after crises as a new beginning, wherein they must abandon the old concept of development on one hand and evaluate their new life as a higher stage of maturity on the basis of the accustomed concept of development on the other. The theory expects its readers to acquire the competence of independent judgment through crises and by criticizing old values held by the masses. At the same time, the theory suggests that we should preserve the accustomed idea of maturity—an idea that the masses favor and preach loudly—that places a high value on concepts such as criticism and independency.

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<sup>18</sup> Bollnow 1971: 92ff.

<sup>19</sup> Bollnow 1959: 36ff. & Bollnow 1971: 88ff.

### (3) Sitting between the Two Chairs

As shown above, Bollnow's discussions on trust in the world and the future and on the higher stage of human maturation are interwoven with the experience of crises and involve impossible-to-ignore contradictions or twists in their arguments. If we interpret and accept the contradictions in Bollnow's theory simply as contradictions and do not try to sublimate them, we can conclude that the world and the future are full of critical threats and yet trustworthy enough to rely on at the same time. We can view crises as an opportunity to be reborn with new conceptions of the world and humans on one hand and to achieve a higher stage of maturity evaluated by the preserved concept of development on the other. Although Bollnow did not analyze the twists in his arguments in detail, we can find an important description of the contradiction between two aspects of human beings in his book that the investigation of meanings of each phenomenon must inevitably be confronted.

The difficulty is in that the one [the existential aspect of humans] does not let itself simply be joined into the other [the hopeful aspect of humans] and that the balance between these two aspects does not let itself be established through any harmonizing synthesis. There remains an unsublatable contradiction. Humans must bear it in their lives and struggle with it over and over again. This may be unsatisfactory for formal systematic thinking but it is the necessary expression of our inevitably contradictory *Dasein* [being-there] that can never be captured in any logical system.<sup>20</sup>

Bollnow explained the unique characteristic of his own thoughts as being comparable to "sitting between the two chairs" in a dialogue with his disciples. The two chairs suggest two different fields of philosophy: the philosophy of life and existential philosophy. According to Bollnow's description, existential philosophy explores some aspects of the essence of human beings but overlooks other aspects clarified by the philosophy of life. The opposite is true for the philosophy of life. Bollnow insisted that existential philosophy focuses on the "dark" side of human life, symbolized by the moods of anxiety and despair, whereas the philosophy of life investigates the "light" side of human life, typically represented by the moods of security and hope. He declared that these two fields of

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<sup>20</sup> Bollnow 1971: 106.

philosophy must complement each other<sup>21</sup>. Hence, the unique feature of Bollnow's theories is the way in which he attempted to clarify the essence of human beings more broadly and deeply by maintaining the tension between the two different fields of philosophy without deviating to one fixed viewpoint. Bollnow's theory on human life after crises is exactly the point where the philosophy of life and existential philosophy encounter each other, and it is here that we can recognize the characteristic comparable to "sitting between the two chairs" most distinctly.

"Sitting between the two chairs" is obviously the primal factor underlying the contradictions or twists in the arguments in Bollnow's theory. However, while he repeatedly insisted that the philosophy of life and existential philosophy must complement each other, he never explained the influence of the twists on the entire theory in detail. Therefore, it is quite natural to assume that Bollnow's theory on human life after crises can do nothing other than resign itself to such illogical twists so as to treat the two incoherent conceptions of the world and humans as equally as possible without prejudice.

To investigate the possibilities for thinking and writing toward the future after catastrophes, this paper must clarify the effects of the twists in the arguments in Bollnow's theory. The next section will explore Heidegger's works that also contain strange twists in their arguments with the intent to view the role of twists in philosophical thought. Heidegger's philosophy after World War II provided important inspiration for Bollnow's theory on security and dwelling and was the origin of the concept of releasement that Bollnow adopted as the central characteristic of the hopeful attitude. The subsequent section will investigate Heidegger's philosophy on the relationship between modern technology and human beings, focusing on both its contents and form, to clarify the origin and influence of twists in the philosopher's arguments.

### **3. Twists in Arguments and the Spiral of Questioning**

#### **(1) Thinking on Technology by Heidegger**

The tendency of modern technology to reduce everything, including human beings, to mere tools for the achievement of goals is infiltrating modern society. Modern technology attempts to maximize rationality and functionality through the insatiable exploitation of resources and the development of technology itself. The tendency to pursue rationality and functionality drives not only modern science as the groundwork

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<sup>21</sup> Göbbeler & Lessing 1983: 22, 28, 31, 43f.

for technological development but also almost all human activities, including political struggle and economic competition. Such extreme rationalism and functionalism has led to a strange conundrum in contemporary times: it is difficult for us to decide whether or not to abandon the profits from nuclear power even though we know that many people have been forced to abandon their houses and hometowns because of nuclear disasters and the serious threat of radioactive contamination is still spreading over the seas. The endless controversies regarding the suppressed information of nuclear disasters and the pros and cons of restarting nuclear power plants reveal the fact that our society and we are deeply controlled by the essence of modern technology that Heidegger once referred to as en-framing and that it is seriously difficult for us to change this rationalist and functionalist tendency. We are now living in a post-3.11 world wherein critical problems stemming from the tendency of en-framing that pervasively reigns over our everyday lives broadly and deeply are coming to light ever more clearly.

As the strong tendency to understand all beings as tools for goals permeates over society, everything in the world comes to be evaluated with a single criterion: “What is it useful for?” Heidegger admonished the danger of this essential tendency of modern technology by suggesting that it veils the possibility for beings to emerge as something beyond rationalist and functionalist conceptions<sup>22</sup>. He did not directly criticize individual products of modern technology, such as nuclear and other kinds of power plants, motor vehicles, long railroads, large airplanes, and super computers. What he did do was cast suspicion over the essential tendency of modern technology itself that drives technological innovation. Modern technology has been trying to maximize the rationality and functionality and thereby drive us further into the endless development of technology itself and exploitation of the world. Even if we abandoned all the nuclear power plants around the world, the danger of the continuous exploitation of all beings in the world, including humans, as standing-reserves would still remain, unless we commit to investigating and criticizing the essential tendency of en-framing in detail. Heidegger insisted that we must liberate ourselves from en-framing and become independent of technology to be open to the possibility for beings to emerge as something beyond rationalist and functionalist conceptions<sup>23</sup>.

Heidegger coined the term *Gelassenheit* (releasement) to denote this free relationship with technology. While the German term *Gelassenheit* usually refers to composure or calmness, Heidegger suggested a different implication of this concept: “yes and no at the

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<sup>22</sup> Heidegger 2000: 24ff.

<sup>23</sup> Heidegger 2000: 7.

same time” to a world dominated by technology. We have no choice but to accept the inevitable use of the products of modern technology—saying “yes” to it—as we live and exist in a modern technological society. However, we must deny the tendency of modern technology to evaluate all beings with the criterion of “What is it useful for?” and thus effectively say “no” to it<sup>24</sup>. Indeed, it sounds like an arbitrary idea at first glance if we miss the contradiction in the concept of releasement as “yes and no at the same time” to a world dominated by modern technology that may be too obvious to focus upon. The concept of releasement as the free relationship with technology assigns us the task of resigning ourselves to the absolutely inconsistent without insisting on a certain fixed representation<sup>25</sup>. Here, we must recognize the fact that Heidegger plainly marked out the self-contradiction in the concept of releasement as liberation from the control of modern technology.

Heidegger’s theory on releasement also contains contradictions or twists in the arguments as it deals with self-contradiction in the concept of releasement and attempts to maintain it. In his dialogical essay entitled “Toward the Conversation on the Releasement,” for example, much illogical discourse can be found, such as obvious self-contradictions, explanations with tautology, gaps between questions and answers, exaggerated praise for naïve remarks, dodging and glossing, and arguments that go round in circles. The dialogue written by Heidegger is full of irrationality. It seems that he was trying to destruct the ideas of logicity and objectivity as important bases of traditional philosophy<sup>26</sup>. He presented the irrational characteristics of the concept of releasement while retaining the contradiction between “yes” and “no,” without reducing the concept to a convenient ideal. The essay therefore prevents its readers from glorifying the concept of releasement as a naïve objective of human life and education. A specialist in modern science in the dialogue (Researcher), who is at the nearest standing point to the readers, becomes confused by such an illogical conversation with the Teacher and Scholar and says candidly,

Researcher: Then what are we to wait for? Where are we to wait? I hardly know anymore where and who I am.<sup>27</sup>

The Teacher responds significantly,

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<sup>24</sup> Heidegger 1959: 22f.

<sup>25</sup> Heidegger 1959:22.

<sup>26</sup> Heidegger 1959: 27ff. & cf. Itani 2013: 436ff.

<sup>27</sup> Heidegger 1959: 35.

Teacher: We all do not know it anymore once we give up trying to trick ourselves into believing in something.<sup>28</sup>

Here, it is implied that the twists in the arguments on releasement as the free relationship with technology lead the readers to ask radical questions about releasement (What are we to wait for?) and the essence of the world and humans (Where and who are we?). Actually, the question of releasement as “yes and no at the same time” to a world dominated by modern technology naturally involves reconsideration about the present state of the world and human beings: the world as the object of insatiable exploitation by technology and human beings as the subjects working for the development of technology. The readers are expected to walk along a way of questioning on the essence of the world and humans that lies between the rationalist and functionalist conception of the world and humans and the conception of the world and humans out of rationalism and functionalism. The way of questioning is the way of thinking for Heidegger. His dialogical essay, with its illogical twists, brings the readers to walk along the way of thinking, keeping a distance from the simple dichotomy of object and subject, wherein the attraction to and repulsion from the essential tendency of modern technology maintain the tension. The way of thinking is the way of releasement in this sense. A specialist in the history of philosophy in the dialogue (Scholar) comes to realize the hidden relationship between releasement and the dialogue itself:

Scholar: But it means that it [the conversation] brings us to the path which seems to be nothing but releasement itself...<sup>29</sup>

Heidegger's theory on the free relationship with technology never explains releasement as a certain ideal that we must and can represent clearly. His theory leads the readers to the question about the essence of the world and humans and encourages them to walk along the way of releasement by themselves. Heidegger had no choice but to apply such an unusual strategy because if releasement were glorified as a convenient ideal for human life and education, it would be understood in the light of rationalism and functionalism<sup>30</sup>. The essential self-contradiction contained in “yes and no at the same time” would be eliminated and the free relationship with technology would, same as natural

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<sup>28</sup> Heidegger 1959: 35.

<sup>29</sup> Heidegger 1959: 44.

<sup>30</sup> cf. Itani 2013: 305ff.

and human resources, be evaluated with the standard of “What is it useful for?” The concept of releasement as “yes and no at the same time” to a world dominated by modern technology is not a specific answer that provides the readers with a clear direction of living. Releasement must be realized as a long-distance way of questioning on the essence of the world and humans. The twists in the arguments on free relationship with technology are key devices of Heidegger’s theory. They lead the readers to the way of thinking wherein the free relationship with technology is able to maintain its self-contradiction in “yes and no at the same time” without being admired as a convenient ideal or represented as a naïve objective of human life and education.

The way of thinking does not lead from somewhere to somewhere else like a roadway hardened by cars nor does it exist somewhere in itself at all. First and only the walking, here the thinking questioning, is the opening of the way (*Bewegung*: movement).<sup>31</sup>

## **(2) Need for Questioning and the Spiral of Questioning**

The 3.11 catastrophe compelled us to reconsider the relationship among the threat of natural disaster such as earthquakes and tsunamis, development of modern technology symbolized by nuclear power plants, and human life. It seems, however, that even though many problems caused by the catastrophe are still unresolved, we are becoming even less aware of the present critical situation and losing the motivation to deliberate the relationship described above. When we are confronted with serious problems that cast critical suspicions on our conceptions of the world and humans, we often resign ourselves to easy solutions and persist in them to escape the critical question of the essence of the world and humans raised through the problems. Because of this attempt at escape from the essential question, the problem of the relationship among nature, technology, and humans can be easily treated as a matter of cost performance and risk management in the light of rationalism and functionalism. Indeed, some thoughtless propositions that only search for easy solutions without confronting urgent problems may provide temporary respite as they never deal with the essential contradictions in the world and human life. However, these solutions must be consumed merely for transient tranquility or enthusiasm as they are fated to stay in the previous rationalist and functionalist conception of the world and humans since they can never reach the essential questions at the core of

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<sup>31</sup> Heidegger 2002: 174.

serious problems.

Heidegger explained that thinkers are driven to questioning not out of ethical and moral value but out of a kind of need (*Not*: necessity and difficulty) to face the critical question about the essence of the world and humans<sup>32</sup>. The need for questioning can originate from different situations such as natural and man-made disasters, like earthquakes and wars; encounters with great works of art; and individual experiences of adversity, like diseases, injuries, setbacks, and separations. However, Heidegger declared that these are not the origins of the most urgent need for questioning in modern society. He suggested that the primal need for questioning today comes from a more serious situation. People in modern society are leading peaceful lives and turning away from the need for questioning, although it is now a substantial task to reconsider the essence of the world and humans because the possibility for beings to emerge as something beyond rationalist and functionalist conceptions has been veiled by the essential tendency of modern technology. He identified the oblivion of the essential question as the lack of need<sup>33</sup>. When Heidegger cited, “A savior also grows where danger is,” a line from Hölderlin, during his lecture on modern technology and releasement<sup>34</sup>, he implied that the question about the essence of the world and humans today originates from the lack of need as the most critical need in modern society.

It is to be revealed on the way of questioning that the self-contradiction of releasement reflects the ambiguity of the essence of the world and humans: the world and humans are simultaneously of and beyond rationality and functionality. We cannot represent the ambiguity as a material object because it is a manifestation of the unfathomable depth of the essence of the world and humans that invites us beyond the objects in front of us. Heidegger’s philosophy demands the readers to sense the depth of the essence of the world and humans on the way of thinking without capturing it as a simple object. All beings can be easily evaluated with the criterion of “What is it useful for?” once they are reduced to simple material objects in a modern society dominated by the essential tendency of modern technology. This is why the ambiguity of the essence of the world and humans should neither be seen as a simple object that we can capture as the conclusive answer to essential questions nor praised as a naïve objective of human life and education. Instead, it must be sensed as the depth of the essence of the world and humans on the way of questioning.

Heidegger sometimes compared the way of thinking to a circulation or a spiral.

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<sup>32</sup> cf. Heidegger 1989: 45.

<sup>33</sup> Heidegger 1989: 10f.

<sup>34</sup> Heidegger 2000: 29.

So we must perform the circulation. This is not any makeshift or deficiency. To step into the [circulative] way is the strength of thinking and to stay in the [circulative] way is the feast of thinking [...]<sup>35</sup>

It seems that thinking is continuously taken around the same or just trifled with like in a magical circle and it cannot come closer to the same. The circle is, however, perhaps a hidden spiral.<sup>36</sup>

The depth of the essence of the world and humans manifests itself as the center of the spiral just as long as the spiral of questioning continues to rotate. It is impossible for thinkers to capture this depth as a fixed object like a certain answer because the center of the spiral gradually disappears once they stop walking along the spiral way of questioning. They can indistinctly sense the depth of the essence of the world and humans only in the spiral of questioning as long as the question is being asked continuously. The spiral becomes larger and deeper and develops greater centripetal force to involve people as thinkers continue to walk along the spiral way of thinking. Now, it is revealed that the strange twists in the arguments on the free relationship with technology are derived from the spiral of questioning on the essence of the world and humans that manifests and maintains the depth of the essence and tends to involve the readers into the way of thinking.

### **(3) Philosophy of Hope and the Spiral of Questioning**

We have now acquired the point of view that makes it possible to restore significance to the illogical twists in the arguments on the moods of security and hope propounded by Bollnow. The twists are derived from the spiral of questioning that involves the readers into the way of thinking and creates an opportunity for the depth of the essence of the world and humans to manifest itself.

The concept of releasement introduced by Heidegger was adopted by Bollnow through the intermediation of Theodor Ballauff. We can find contradictions and conflicts in the concept of releasement in Bollnow's philosophy of time and space as well as in Heidegger's philosophy of technology as mentioned above. Releasement in Bollnow's

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<sup>35</sup> Heidegger 1977: 3.

<sup>36</sup> Heidegger 1976: 410.

theory as the hopeful attitude toward the future means to believe that a way out of difficulties will be somehow provided while simultaneously knowing that the future is full of uncertainty and unpredictability. The mood of security as the trust in the world means, likewise, to believe that the whole space protects us safely while seeing clearly that the world is full of threats and danger. Reflecting the contradiction and conflict in the moods of security and hope, Bollnow's theory on trust in the world and the future itself contains impossible-to-ignore contradictions or twists in the arguments, as shown in the previous section.

Bollnow recognized that it is not an easy task to chase the moods of security and hope as fixed goals because they contain essential self-contradiction and conflict. His theory demands the readers to abandon not only the natural tendency to imagine a beautiful future naïvely but also the will to leave themselves to trust in the unpredictable gifts of the future<sup>37</sup>. Here, it is suggested that we must give up the will to learn to hope in order to learn to hope in actuality. In addition, concerning the mood of security, Bollnow declared that we are able to dwell in the world comfortably only when we are dwelling in our houses as essential foundations. He insisted, at the same time, that we can dwell in our houses comfortably as long as we are dwelling in the whole space. Moreover, he added that we must overcome the “deceptive” security provided by our houses in order to acquire the mood of security in the whole space<sup>38</sup>. Thus, it is implied that the way toward acquiring trust in the whole world is not a simple one-way street. Bollnow even suggested that whether we can acquire the moods of security and hope as the trust in the world and the future, sometimes referred to as the trust in the being itself, depends on contingent grace<sup>39</sup>.

The moods of hope and security contain unoblittable self-contradictions and conflicts that make it impossible to admire the moods as certain ideals of human life and education. Bollnow's theory on trust in the world and the future ventures to accept the fact that each phenomenon refuses to be completely captured in solid logic and a fixed system. The price for this venture is that the theory contains impossible-to-ignore contradictions or twists in the arguments that prohibit its readers from representing the world and the future as mere objects. Is the world full of threats against us or is it a peaceful and safe place for human life? Is the future filled with the danger of ruin or the promise of relief for human beings? Are crises the chance for new beginnings or the opportunities of predicted maturity? The readers of Bollnow's theory are required to keep

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<sup>37</sup> Bollnow 1955: 124.

<sup>38</sup> Bollnow 1963: 148, 304, 307.

<sup>39</sup> Bollnow 1955: 126f. & 168.

asking these questions. The ambiguity between security and insecurity in the world, hope and despair toward the future, and rebirth and maturity through crises manifests itself as the depth of the essence of the world and humans as long as the readers are walking along and deepening the spiral way of questioning in a thoughtful and continuous manner. The central characteristic of the new security and true hope in Bollnow's theory is nothing other than the ambiguity that is to be kept open through thinking that never advertises itself as facile optimism or easy pessimism.

Here, the style of "sitting between the two chairs" in Bollnow's theory regains its original dynamism as the illogical twists in the arguments on the moods of security and hope are identified as the key devices in the theory.

#### **4. Conclusion toward the Inconclusive Future**

In what manner is it possible for philosophers of education today to think and write toward the future? This paper concludes that it is in the manner of thinking and writing in which contradictions or twists in the arguments involve the readers in the spiral of questioning on the essence of the world and humans that is driven by the need originating in critical situations such as that after the catastrophe of 3.11. Each philosopher must, of course, avoid arbitrarily twisting arguments. Twists in the arguments inevitably arise on the way of sincere questioning on the essence of the world and humans that is driven by the need for questioning originating in critical situations, especially by the lack of need as the most crucial need today<sup>40</sup>. Twists in the arguments by each thinker who is driven by this need invite the readers to the way of thinking about the essence of the world and humans and give them the opportunity to maintain the depth of the essence without capturing it in the light of rationalism and functionalism. What is important is not the answer that is usually obtained through and so distinguished from questioning but the questioning itself. Questioning the essence of the world and humans is itself the human activity that maintains the depth of the essence of the world and humans beyond naïve objectivity and logicity. To undertake the question is exactly to respond to the call from the depth of the essence of the world and humans and this is what we call responsibility.

Continuing to question the essence of the world and humans includes continuing to

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<sup>40</sup> Heidegger admonished people's problematic tendency to reduce questioning easily to a tool for a goal and spread it as a useful model solution for present problems.

Let's pay attention to another thing, however, concerning the overhasty masses. It happens easily that people spread the catchphrase as soon as just tomorrow: everything depends on the questionability. People with this slogan appear to belong under those who question. (Heidegger 2002: 189)

reconsider the problems described at the beginning of this paper: the definition of what we define as a “stricken area” and whom we are referring to as “we.” What philosophers of education today can and should do for future generations is not simply produce convenient ideas and concepts but fully maintain the depth of the essence of the world and humans as the depth that definitely refuses to be captured with easy ideas and concepts. The way of sincere questioning about human life and education that enables us to survive an age of homelessness and human alienation after major catastrophes without absolute reliable grounds and boundaries is opened up as long as the depth of the essence of the world and humans is retained.

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