CRITICAL BUDDHISM

批判仏教

A Buddhist Hermeneutics of Practice

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ABSTRACT

This study critically analyzes Critical Buddhism (*hihan bukkyō* 批判仏教; hereafter: CB) as a philosophical and a religious movement; it investigates the specific basis of CB, particularly the philosophical categories of *critica* and *topica*, vis-à-vis contemporary theories of knowledge and ethics, in order to re-situate CB within modern Japanese and Buddhist thought as well as in relation to current trends in contemporary Western thought.

This study is made up of seven chapters, including the introduction and the conclusion. The introduction provides the religious and philosophical context as well as the motivations and intentions of the study. Chapter 2 with the title "Eye of the Storm: Historical and Political Context") is largely explanatory. After a brief analysis of violence, warfare and social discrimination within Buddhism and specifically Japanese traditions, some important background to the context in which Critical Buddhism arose is recalled. In addition, the development of so-called Imperial Way Zen (*kōdōzen* 公道禅)—which represents in many respects the culmination of the 'false' Buddhism the Critical Buddhists attack—is examined. The following chapter on the roots of *topica* analyses a number of the larger epistemological and ethical issues raised by CB, in an attempt to reinterpret both 'criticalism' and 'topicalism' with reference to four key motifs in Zen tradition: experience (*jikishi-ninshin* 直指人心: "directly pointing to the human mind [in order to realize the Buddha-nature]" [B.]); tradition (*kyōge-betsuden* 教外別傳: "an independent transmission apart from written scriptures" [M. 6, 28]); language (*furyū-moji* or *furyū-monji* 不立文字: "not relying on words and letters" [M. 6]); and enlightenment (*kenshō jōbutsu* 見性成佛: "awakening to one's original Nature [and thus becoming a Buddha]" [Dan. 29]). Here and in Chapter 4, on "New Buddhisms: Problems in Modern Zen Thought," the CB argument against the many sources of topical thinking is outlined, paying particular attention to question of 'pure experience' (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験) developed by Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 and the Kyoto School. Chapter 5 on "Criticism as Anamnesis: *Dempō* / *Dampō*" develops the positive side of the CB case, i.e., a truly 'critical' Buddhism, with respect to the place of historical consciousness and the weight of tradition. Chapter 6, "Radical Contingency and Compassion," develops the theme of radical contingency, based on the core Buddhist doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* (Jp. *engi* 縁起) as the basis for an effective Critical Buddhist epistemological and ethical strategy. The conclusion elaborates a paradigm for comparative scholarship that integrates the insights of Western philosophical hermeneutics, pragmatism, CB, and so-called 'Buddhist theology'. The implications of the Critical Buddhist project on the traditional understanding of the relation between scholarship and religion are examined, and also the reconnection of religious consciousness to social conscience, which CB believes to be the genius of Buddhism and which makes of CB both an unfinished project and an ongoing challenge.

RÉSUMÉ

Cette étude propose une analyse du mouvement philosophique et religieux récent au Japon communément appelé "Bouddhisme Critique" (ci-après: BC). L'accent porte particulièrement sur les fondements propres de ce mouvement, notamment les concepts philosophiques de critique et de topique, comparé aux théories de la connaissance et à l'éthique. Le but poursuivi est de mieux situer BC à la fois dans la mouvance de la pensée bouddhiste japonaise moderne et par rapport aux orientations majeures de la pensée occidentale moderne.

L'étude comporte sept chapitres, incluant l'introduction et la conclusion. L'introduction expose le contexte religieux et philosophique ainsi que les motifs et les objectifs de l'étude. Le chapitre 2, intitulé L'oeil du cyclone: Le contexte historique et politique, est largement exploratoire. Après une brève analyse des notions de violence, de guerre et de discrimination sociale au sein du bouddhisme et particulièrement des traditions japonaises, certains aspects constituant l'arrière-plan du contexte d'émergence de BC sont rappelés. Ensuite est examiné le développement de ce qu'on a appelé la 'Voie Impériale Zen' (Kõdõzen), qui constitue à maints égards la réalisation la plus achevée du 'faux' bouddhisme que les Bouddhistes Critiques attaquent. Le chapitre 3 sur les racines des topiques analyse certaines questions épistémologiques et éthiques plus générales soulevées par BC, dans le but de proposer une interprétation autre à la fois du 'criticisme' et du 'topicalisme' par rapport aux quatre aspects essentiels de la tradition Zen: l'expérience (i.e. "la référence directe à l'esprit humain" afin de réaliser la nature du Bouddha), la tradition (en terme de "transmission indépendante des sources écrites"), le langage (au sens de "ne pas se fier aux mots et aux lettres"), et l'illumination (i.e, "s'éveiller à sa propre nature originaire" et ainsi devenir un Bouddha). Dans le chapitre 3, ainsi qu'au chapitre 4 sur Les nouveaux bouddhismes: Problèmes inhérents à la pensée Zen moderne, les arguments de BC contre les nombreuses sources de la topique sont soulignés, avec une attention particulière à la question de l''expérience pure' telle que développée par Nishida Kitaro et l'École de Kyoto. Le chapitre 5 sur Critique en tant qu'anamnèse: Dempõ/Dampõ développe le côté positif de BC, i.e. ce que serait un bouddhisme véritablement 'critique' en regard de l'importance accordée à la conscience historique et au poids de la tradition. Le chapitre 6 sur Contingence radicale et compassion développe le thème de la contingence radicale fondée sur pratitya-samutpãda au coeur de la doctrine bouddhiste et qui est le fondement d'une stratégie bouddhiste effectivement critique aux plans de l'épistémologie et de l'éthique. La conclusion propose un paradigme de comparatisme qui intègre les visées propres à l'herméneutique philosophique occidentale, au pragmatisme, à BC ainsi qu'à ce qu'on appelle habituellement la 'théologie bouddhiste'. Les implications du projet de BC sur la façon traditionnelle de comprendre les rapports entre érudition et religion sont examinés, ainsi que le lien de la conscience religieuse à la conscience sociale, lien qui constituerait, selon BC, le génie propre du bouddhisme et qui fait de BC à la fois un projet ouvert et un défi constant.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AT	*Œuvres de Descartes*. 12 volumes. Edited by C. Adam and P. Tannery. Revised edition. Paris: Vrin / CNRS, 1964–76.
B.	*Baso goroku* 馬祖語錄 (The record of the sayings of Mazu). Text with annotations by Iriya Yoshitaka 入矢義高. Hanazono University: Zenbunka kenkyūsho, 1984.
BNS	*Brahma Net Sutra* (Skt. *Brahmajāla-sūtra;* Jp. *Bonmōkyō* 梵網經).
CB	Critical Buddhism (*Hihan Bukkyō* 批判仏教)
Ch.	Chinese language (romanized, followed by glyphs)
CR	Critical Realism, a contemporary philosophical movement led by Roy Bhaskar and Rom Harré
Dan.	*Rokuso dankyō* 六祖壇經 (The sixth patriarch's platform sutra); the record of the sayings of Huineng 慧能 (Jp. Enō).
DDB	*Digital Dictionary of Buddhism.* Web resource created and maintained by Charles Muller: <http://www.acmuller.net/ddb>.
Dhp.	*Dhammapada* (Skt. *Dharmapāda*; Jp. *Hokku kyō* 法句經).
DJHB	*Daijō hi-bussetsuron* 大乘非仏説論. A Meiji era scholarly movement led by Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851–1929) and Anezaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949), inspired by modern Western scholarship and asserting that Mahāyāna Buddhism is not the 'true' Buddhism taught by the Buddha Śākyamuni.
EncRel (E)	*Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade. 16 volumes, 1986.
Fr.	French language
G.	*Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼蔵 (The treasury of the eye of the true dharma), 95 chapters, by 13th-century Japanese master Dōgen 道元.
Gr.	German language
H.	*Hekiganroku* 碧巖錄 (The Blue Cliff Record).
It.	Ialian language
Jp.	Japanese language (romanized, followed by glyphs). This abbreviation is employed only in cases where more than one foreign translation is provided (e.g., Chinese or Sanskrit). Otherwise, the 'default' language is Japanese.

Ju.	*Jūgyūzu* 十牛圖 (Ten ox-herding pictures) by 12th-century monk Kuoan 廓庵 (Jp. Kakuan).
KSP	Kyoto School of philosophy (*Kyōto gakuha* 京都学派).
L.	*Lunyu* 論語 (Jp. *Rongo*); the analects of Confucius / Kongzi 孔子 (Jp. Kōshi).
Lt.	Latin language
M.	*Mumonkan* 無門關 (The gateless gate); 48 *kōan* with verses compiled by 13th-century Chinese master Wumen Huikai 無門慧開 (Jp. Mumon Ekai).
MMK	*Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* (The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way) by 2nd-century Indian Buddhist thinker Nāgārjuna.
NS	Nirvāṇa Sutra (Skt. *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*; Ch. 大般涅槃經後分; Jp. *Dai nehan kyō*).
REP	*Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Online version 2.0. General Editor: Edward Craig. <http://www.rep.routledge.com/>
Rin.	*Rinzairoku* 臨劑錄 (The Record of Lin-chi / Rinzai)
S.	*A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, by William Edward Soothill, and Lewis Hodous. <http://www.hm.tyg.jp/~acmuller/soothill/index.html>
SCAP	Supreme Commander Allied Powers, the title for Douglas MacArthur during the occupation of Japan following World War II. Also refers more generally to the offices of the occupation, including the staff of several hundred American civil servants and military officers, among whom were those responsible for writing the postwar Japanese Constitution.
Skt.	Sanskrit language (romanized with diacritics)
TaM	*Truth and Method*. English translation of *Wahrheit und Methode* by Hans Georg Gadamer. Translated and edited by Garrett Barden and John Cumming.
T	*Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大蔵經 (Taishō tripitaka canon), edited by Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. 55 volumes, 1924–29.
TTC	*Tao te ching* 道徳經 (Jp. *Dōtokukyō*) by Lao-tsu 老子 (Jp. Rōshi)
Tz.	*Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (Essays in idleness) of 14th-century Zen Buddhist priest (Yoshida) Kenkō 吉田兼好

Any attempt to speak without speaking a particular language is not more hopeless than the attempt to have a religion that shall be no religion in particular... Thus every living and healthy religion has a marked idiosyncrasy. Its power consists in its special and surprising message and in the bias which that revelation gives to life. The vistas it opens and the mysteries it propounds are another world to live in; and another world to live in—whether we expect ever to pass wholly over into it or no—is what we mean by having a religion.

(George Santayana, *Reason in Religion*)

The problems are solved, not by giving new information, but by arranging what we have always known.

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, §109)

Edification takes us out of our old selves by the power of strangeness, to aid us in becoming new beings.

(Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*)

INTRODUCTION – BREAKING THE WAVES (*paṭisotagāmin*)

All phenomena are constantly changing.
Therefore always remain assiduous.
(reputedly the final words of Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha)

The first task is not to begin but, from the midst of speech, to remember with a view to beginning.
(Paul Ricouer, *The Symbolism of Evil*, pp. 349–50)

1.1 Modern Japan: A Culture of Perpetual Reinvention

> Buddhism has proved especially well-suited for the role of cultural gadfly, for, as N. B. Jacobson insists, it is a philosophy which, by dint of its astringent analysis of all conceptual frameworks and presuppositions, "is one of humanity's most persevering efforts to keep from enveloping itself in those linguistic and symbolic systems that reduce awareness and understanding to the limits of the tribe, social class, age, race, ethnic background or nation" (Jacobson 1983, 18) .... By its very nature it possesses a self-corrective methodology which can release us from the "hypnotic grip of mental habits, or parochial patterns and social convention," and which "constitutes one of the major resources, therefore, in the struggle of the contemporary world to free itself from the culture-bound astigmatisms of the past" (52).
>
> (J. J. Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*, pp. 107–8)

There are certain iconic images of Japan that tend to recur in the modern West. Alongside the sensual-innocent white face of a geisha or the forboding nobility of Mount Fuji, the most famous of these may be the image of a large-crested wave caught in the moment before breaking, depicted by nineteenth-century *ukiyo-e* master Hokusai.[1] This particular print, for whatever reasons, seems to hold a place for Westerners as no other painted image from Japan. On one level, as Patrick Smith suggests, Hokusai's *Ō-nami* carries with it a familiar orientalist trope, one that has been accepted and propounded by Japanese as well

[1] Katsushika Hokusai 葛飾北斎 (1760–1849), artist and wood engraver, abandoned traditional styles of engraving for the coloured woodcut designs of the *ukiyo-e* 浮世絵 school. Best known for his works on Mt. Fuji, such as *Fuji sanjūrokkei* 富嶽三十六景 ("Thirty-six Views of Mt. Fuji," 1829) and *Fugaku hyakkei* 富嶽百景 ("Hundred Views of Mount Fuji," 1835), his work greatly influenced the French Impressionists. It is this last aspect which makes Hokusai and his art particularly symbolic for my own research into cross-cultural borrowing and philosophico-religious syncretism and more specifically the utilization—mostly by Japanese but increasingly of late by Westerners too—of foreign elements to criticize, renew or reinvent one's own traditions. Throughout this study Japanese names are generally presented in accordance with Japanese convention, i.e., family name preceding personal name, with the coda that a) there are cases in which certain historical figures, artists and poets in particular, such as Hokusai, (Matsuo) Bashō 松尾芭蕉, and Natsume Soseki 夏目漱石 are known by their 'personal' rather than their family name; and b) a few modern figures such as Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 are more commonly known by the 'Western' reading (i.e., inversion) of their name (i.e., D. T. Suzuki).

as Westerners: Japan is a place of 'otherness', where time moves slowly, if at all, where harmony and stability (religious,[2] social, and environmental) reign and where dreams and illusions—the floating world—are as significant as "reality" itself (P. Smith 1997, 3-4). Indeed, despite the power of the wave itself, there is for many Westerners a sense of calm or serenity in Hokusai's image. However, for Japanese eyes, Hokusai's wave has a different, more jarring and disruptive effect. This is not due to any particular inherent Japanese aesthetic sensibility, but to the simple fact that traditionally Japanese art was, like writing, 'read' from right to left. Thus the wave cuts across, impedes upon, the Japanese viewers' vision.

Another archetypal image of Japan that lingers even today is the notion that Japanese culture, and by extension, the Japanese people, are somehow 'enigmatic' or 'inscrutable'—a notion employed to various purpose by sundry writers over the past century.[3] Yet even a superficial study of such matters makes clear that the Japanese thought and culture tradition is and has long been complex and diverse; perhaps the 'enigma' lies only in the frequency with which this diversity has been whitewashed or

---

[2] According to Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs, "The multiplicity and complexity of Japanese religious phenomena is related to an assimilative tendency in Japanese culture. Historically, Japan has adopted various cultural and religious traditions and therewith enriched her spiritual life. In this process the newly introduced traditions did not uproot the indigenous but were invariably assimilated into a kind of homogeneous tradition which itself might be called the 'Japanese religion.' What stands out in this assimilative process is not value conflict or discord but continuity and harmony" (Hori et al. 1972, 12). Beyond the question of historical accuracy in this claim, it is precisely this "homogenization"—or rather, the blithe assumption that such is inevitably "enriching"—that CB, like Ichikawa Hakugen and Dōgen, questions; see Hakamaya 1997b, 122.

[3] "The Japanese thought-and-culture tradition is probably the most enigmatic and paradoxical of all major traditions," declaims Charles A. Moore, without bothering to give evidence as to what this means or why it is so. Enigmatic to whom? As compared to what? By which standards? (Moore 1982, 6).

denied by advocates of cultural purity or ethnic/racial difference.[4] In this regard, the aptness of this particular icon—Hokusai's breaking wave—lies less in its 'face value' than in the fact that *ukiyo-e* is neither particularly ancient nor entirely 'indigenous'. In fact, the very popularity of woodblock painting in Japan only emerged after such works began to arouse interest in Europe. Thus we have with Hokusai's 'breaking wave' a double-edge metaphor encompassing both the rhetorical *truism* of Japanese cultural uniqueness and the more historical *truth* of the dynamism and syncretism—the manifest hybridity—so deeply rooted in virtually all aspects of Japanese culture, past and present.

Modern Japanese history is—at least as much, probably more, than any other nation—a history of almost constant transformation, absorbtion, and reinvention. Historian John Dower goes so far as to suggest that, for modern—and particularly postwar—Japanese culture, change,

> was itself a continuity. The Japanese had not been socialized to preserve the status quo. On the contrary, ever since the Meiji Restoration in the 1860s they had been involved in a whirlwind of change. The war years represented an acceleration of this process in innumerable ways... The point is not complicated, only generally neglected: *renovation and*

[4] Davis (1991, 792) notes the conscious efforts on the part of post-Meiji Restoration (1868) governments to emphasize "harmony" and eliminate traces of diversity in Japan's past and present, a process he refers to as being, in many respects, "fundamentalist": "Religious ideology was therefore applied to the task of submerging 'the divisions of gender, class, and ethnicity in the cozy, penumbral illusion of spiritual unity'"—a process supported by a succession of laws such as The Newspaper and Publication Laws (*hanken jyōrei* 版権條令, 1887), and the euphemistically entitled Public Peace Police Law (*chian keisatsu hō* 治安警察法, 1900) and Peace Preservation Law (*chian iji hō* 治安維持法, 1925).

iconoclasm were strains as deeply embedded in consciousness as were reverence for the past or acquiescence to the powers that be..." (Dower 1999, 178, my emphasis)[5]

Patrick Smith's book, *Japan: A Reinterpretation* (1997), is a critique of what the author sees as the destructive legacy of postwar collusion between Western (specifically American) orientalism and colonialism, and unresolved guilt and social conservatism on the part of a great many Japanese. He argues that, as a culture, the Japanese have, by and large, had great difficulty in their most recent postwar attempt at self-reinvention because, unlike past experiences such as the Meiji Restoration, postwar Japanese national culture has been defined largely in terms of *negation*—as something that is not only clearly *not* the imperialist military regime of the late Meiji–Showa Eras, but also that can wholeheartedly embrace *neither* Western ideals *nor* those of its own premodern period. This, according to Smith, has led to a powerful sense of 'dis-ease' among the Japanese, whose official but undeveloped 'internationalism', combined with a lingering fascination/fear of the hegemonic intrusion of Western—again, specifically American—culture, has not been able to replace in any meaningful way the nationalist ideology of the previous turbulent half-

[5] Dower 1999, 178, emphasis mine. See also Benedict 1946, 304–5: "Japan's real strength which she can use in remaking herself into a peaceful nation lies in her ability to say of a course of action, 'That failed,' and then throw her energies into other channels."—As we shall see below, this "ethic of alternatives" has both positive and negative elements. And of course, this affinity for constant renovation involves leaning heavily on ideology. As Carol Gluck notes in the beginning of her 1985 book on *Japan's Modern Myths*, the strong ideological element makes classifying the 'facts' of Japanese culture and history extremely difficult.

century (1894–1945). On this score, if nothing else, Japanese conservatives, who lament the vacuity or malaise of contemporary Japanese culture, seem to have a point.[6]

The primary virtue of recent works like *Japan: A Reinterpretation*, Dower's *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (1999), and Herbert Bix's *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2000), is that such books confront the shibboleth—especially popular during the heady 'bubble' days of the 1980s—that since the last great wave immersed Japan and its neighbours, the seas have been calm, and Japan has enjoyed fifty years of progress: material, moral, and spiritual. In this happy scenario, by the 1980s Japan had emerged as the ultimate fusion of Western industry and Eastern spirit/values—the "best of both worlds," as it were. Materially, progress is undeniable, though recent years have tarnished the surety of even this aspect of the Japanese success story. However, many of the questions which were being debated before and during the War regarding modern Japanese society and Japan's attempt, in particular, to come to terms with modernity in some meaningful way, have never been resolved, and have been only sporadically addressed since the *Shōwa Tennō* 昭和天皇 (known to the West as Emperor Hirohito), under duress, renounced his divinity on that fateful first day of 1946.[7]

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[6] "The economy may have reached or passed the pre-war level but we have not returned to the basic value system (*komponteki kachi taikei* [根本的価値体系]) which was destroyed by the war. And, even though it is natural not to return to it, another value system has not been constructed to take its place" (Takeuchi Yoshimi, cited in Bellah 1976, 128).

[7] The Imperial Rescript of 1 January 1946 (*Kanpō gōgai Shōwa niju-ichi nen ichigatsu tsuitachi shōsho [ningen sengen]* 官報號外昭和二十一年一月一日詔書「人間宣言」) declares that, in fact, the ties between the Emperor and his Japanese subjects are historically rooted in "mutual trust and affection" and were never meant to be based on "fictitious ideas that the Emperor is a manifest god [*akitsu mikami* 現御神]."—Postwar writer Sakaguchi Ango 坂口安吾 (1906–55) has some intriguing comments on the epoch-making nature of the "I am no god" speech: "perhaps the emperor too is no more than illusion, and the emperor's true history begins from the point where he becomes an ordinary human... Japan was defeated and the samurai ethic has perished, but humanity has been born out of the womb of decadence's truth... Humans don't change. We

These recent (Western) attempts at "reinterpretation" make the following point, no less crucial than simple: *change, criticism, renewal and reformation are as deeply 'Japanese' as are continuity, status quo-ism and a preference for stability.* Thus, as Dower concludes, "it was entirely 'traditional' to find pundits gathering soon after the surrender to engage in a 'roundtable discussion' on 'changing the world'" (1999, 178). Likewise, the immediate postwar period witnessed a general surge in Japanese iconoclasm, especially—though by no means exclusively—among the disillusioned intelligentsia and avant-garde literary circles. Alfred Oppler, an American Occupation official, found that "the shock of defeat had stimulated 'the revaluation of all values,' even to the point of prompting a thoroughgoing iconoclastic feeling of 'damn what you have adored and adore what you have damned'". Such feelings were a boon for occupation (SCAP) authorities, since, in the initial years at any rate, "the reformist ardor of the Americans thus was complemented by a striking 'open-mindedness for innovations on the other side'" (Dower 1999, 245). Perhaps the best exponent of such intellectual reformism was Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 (1914–96), who led a group espousing a self-conscious "modernism" (*kindai shugi* 近代主義) that attempted to replace the old notion of community with a "new democratic human type"—a form of subjectivity emphasizing both individual and social autonomy. Maruyama's

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have only returned to being human" (quoted in Dower 1999, 155–57). Writing about the cathartic appeal of decadence in the immediate postwar era, Sakaguchi, along with Dazai Osamu 太宰治 (1909–48) and Tamura Taijirō 田村泰次郎 (1911–83), fairly revelled in the 'lure of disillusionment'.

modernists were part of a larger movement concerned with the notion of 'subjectivity' (*shutai-sei* 主体性) in modern Japanese society.[8]

In the past few decades, some Japanese liberals have tried to recapture this brief but bright postwar reformist spirit, typified, for example, by the Ministry of Education's Report on New Educational Guidance (*shin kyōiku shishin* 新教育指針), a May 1946 document which could hardly be more different from the Imperial Rescript on Education (*kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語) published some fifty years before.[9] It states that modernization since the Meiji period,

> had consisted primarily of borrowing material aspects of Western civilization while ignoring the basic spirit behind them.... At the same time, war and defeat had come about because the people did not have proper respect for 'human nature, personality and individuality'. Failure to develop a rational critical spirit had allowed militarism and ultranationalism to arise and, 'in this sense, responsibility for the war must be borne by the entire populace, and the people must deeply apologize to the world for their crime'. (Dower 1999, 248)

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[8] Smith 1997, 47–48. In the very different climate of the Cold War 1950s, modernists such as Maruyama were roundly dismissed as subversive "leftists" despite their attacks on "freedom-destroying" collectivism. (Smith 1997, 49)

[9] See Bellah 1970a, 106–7, for a full translation of the 30 October, 1890 Rescript on Education; the original document can be found on-line at http://www.meijijingu.or.jp/intro/education/.

It would be too easy to mark this down as a transparent case of SCAP-imposed 'victor's justice'—thereby undercutting the sincerity of the many Japanese who indeed felt remorse and the desire for something new and better.[10] To the chagrin of latter-day liberals, these ideals, however nobly borne in the hearts of a few, were never realized within the educational system, let alone in society at large, a fact more than amplified by the present recurrence of 'textbook wars' between Japan, China, and the Koreas. Yet, due to changing orientation within the Occupation (made manifest in the so-called "reverse course" policies of the latter 1940s), the Chinese Communist Revolution (1949), the Korean War (1950–53), and the subsequent decision by those clinging to the strings of power to focus on economic growth at all costs, these postwar discussions soon slowed to a trickle and, by the 1960s, had dried up completely. (see Buruma 1995)

1.2 *Hihan Bukkyō* 批判仏教 – "Critical Buddhism"

1.2.1 Preliminary Considerations

> Critique does not exhaust religion, but
> religion that cannot critique is already dead.
> (Robert Ackermann, *Religion as Critique*, p. 1)

In the past several decades, and particularly since a succession of traumatic events in the early to mid-1990s—the bursting of the economic 'bubble' (バブル), the Great Hanshin Earthquake (*Dai Hanshin jishin* 大阪神地震), and the Aum Shinrikyō オウム真理教 terrorist attack on the Tokyo subway (地下鉄サリン事件)—Japan has witnessed the re-emergence of

[10] On the matter of Japanese contributions to the occupation, see also Moore and Robinson 2002.

debate about the meaning of modernity, as well as the role of religion in modern life. As early as a decade prior to the beginning of the present economic crisis, however, movement towards cultural re-evaluation had already begun, in some quarters. A startling claim made by Machida Muneo 町田宗雄, then-president of the Buddhist Federation of Japan (*zen Nihon bukkyō kai* 全日本仏教界) and secretary general of the Sōtō Zen sect 曹洞宗, unwittingly helped to galvanize a new movement of self-conscious criticism within Japanese Buddhist scholarship. Machida proclaimed to those gathered at the 3rd World Conference on Religion and Peace (WCRPIII, 1979) that there was, in fact, no social discrimination of any sort in Japan.[11] This comment, coupled with a perceived rise in the rhetoric of 'Japanism' (*Nihon-shugi* 日本主義) in the 1980s, planted the seeds of discontent among a number of scholars, which in turn broke into a full-fledged storm in 1985, with the publication of several essays by two Komazawa University 駒沢大学 Buddhist scholars affiliated with Machida's own Sōtō Zen sect, Hakamaya Noriaki 袴谷憲昭 and Matsumoto Shirō 松本史郎—thus bringing to birth a movement known as Critical Buddhism (*Hihan Bukkyō* 批判仏教; hereafter, CB).[12]

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[11] Machida's comments were directed against a proposed draft of the findings of the WCRPIII Commission on Religion and Human Rights, Dignity, Responsibility, and Rights, which read, "We should all be deeply concerned with the plight of people such as the Burakumin of Japan and the Untouchables of India." Decrying this as an unsubstantiated stain on Japanese national honor, Machida managed to convince his fellow delegates to rewrite the statement thus: "We should all be deeply concerned with the plight of people such as the so-called untouchables." To his credit, and the surprise of many, Machida gave a dramatic apology for his earlier comments at the next WCRP, held in Kenya in 1984 (see Bodiford 1996, 1–3). But the storm had already been unleashed, and the repercussions linger today, with the Sōtō sect still attempting to come to terms with the issue of social discriminatory practices and doctrines.

[12] Although the writings of Professors Matsumoto and Hakamaya diverge at certain points, both in style (Matsumoto the more cautious, Hakamaya more vitriolic), and in substance (Matsumoto tends to focus on more specific problems in Buddhist doctrine, Hakamaya, while also attending to such, draws a much larger net, and seems to be more concerned with social issues), I will for the most part treat CB as a single category,

In a forthright manner rare to modern Japanese academia Hakamaya and Matsumoto proceeded to launch a full frontal assault against not only past and present advocates of Japanism and various wartime Buddhist leaders who collaborated with the wartime regime, but also prominent Japanese philosophical figures (e.g., Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 and the Kyoto School of philosophy 京都学派; hereafter, KSP), specific Buddhist doctrines (e.g., *tathāgata-garbha* [Jp. *nyoraizō* 如來蔵] and 'original enlightenment' [Jp. *hongaku* 本覚]), and even entire sects (e.g., Zen), all of which were judged by the Critical Buddhists to be lacking in certain 'critical' criteria, thus forfeiting any and all claims to being 'truly Buddhist'.

The ferment reached a peak in the early 1990s, with the publication of Hakamaya's *Hongaku shisō hihan* 本覚思想批判 (Critiques of the Doctrine of Original Enlightenment, 1989), *Hihan Bukkyō* (Critical Buddhism, 1990), *Dōgen to Bukkyō* 道元と仏教 (Dōgen and Buddhism, 1992), and Matsumoto's *Engi to kū: Nyoraizō shisō hihan* 縁起と空—如来像思想批判 (*Pratītya-samutpāda*[13] and Emptiness: Critiques of the Doctrine of *Tathāgata-garbha*, 1989) and *Zen shisō no hihanteki kenkyū* 禅思想の批判的研究 (Critical Studies on Zen Thought, 1993), followed by a session at the American Academy of

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housing numerous arguments and foci, without specifically relating each to one or the other of its founding fathers.

[13] Variously rendered in English as 'co-dependent arising', 'dependent origination', or other permutations of such, none of which sufficiently convey the nuances of this important term (though 'equiprimordiality' perhaps comes closer than those listed above, and connects nicely with Heidegger's understanding of *Gleichursprünglichkeit*; see Boutin 2000, 2). Given the continuing debates concerning a precise English translation of *pratītya-samutpāda*, I have chosen to leave it in the Sanskrit, which is the most familiar reading for buddhologists (though Hakamaya seems to prefer the Pali *paṭicca-samuppāda*; see, e.g., Hakamaya 1990, 16). At any rate, the Japanese *engi* 縁起 similarly fails to convey the full Indian meaning, particularly as the word has come to mean, in ordinary Japanese, something like the English 'omen'.

Religion's 1993 meeting in Washington, D.C., entitled "Critical Buddhism: Issues and Responses to a New Methodological Movement," out of which emerged the English-language collection of essays, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism* (1994). As with all storms, this one, we might say, eventually passed the critical stage. Indeed, looking back now, with a full decade's hindsight, the Critical Buddhist 'movement' seems to have had little effect beyond the academy; even within such, its lasting effects seem minimal.[14] This is lamentable, because CB, for all its flaws and imprecision, raised a number of important issues for Buddhism, Buddhist studies, and the modern study of religion.

Dan Lusthaus says that CB "was inevitable [and] necessary...[as] the inevitable revisiting of a theme that has been central to Buddhism since its onset" (Lusthaus 1997, 30). According to such a reading, the tradition of self-criticism in historical Buddhism finds full flower in the recent movement (more on this in 4.3.1). Yet CB is also very much a child of its time, our time: its particular motivations and intent are, however related, ultimately distinct from those of Buddhist reformers of the past.[15] As Patrick Smith points out in his "reinterpretation" of Japan on the brink of the millennium, there is a palpable sense of ethical and institutional crisis in the Land of the Rising Sun, certainly compounded by the decade-long economic slump. Though the infamous Machida Incident has been cited as the spark that ignited Critical Buddhism, the postwar rise of New

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[14] It has recently been brought to my attention that the two 'instigators' of CB have since had a rather acrimonious, public falling out. Matsumoto, in particular, has chosen to distance himself and his work from the tasks of his erstwhile collaborator.

[15] "Critical Buddhism is not only reviving a traditional Buddhist debate but responding to the ideological problems of a very specific, modern historical context" (Stone 1999, 168).

Religious Movements such as Soka Gakkai, and, more disturbingly, the terrorist cult Aum Shinrikyō, combined with the re-emergence of nationalist sentiment among political leaders and academics—in short, the broader socio-cultural conditions of the past several decades—provided a more fundamental catalyst for criticism within and by contemporary Japanese Buddhism. Central to the project of Critical Buddhism is the simple question of whether Buddhism can co-exist, let alone flourish, in today's world. Certainly, North American Buddhism has proven itself sustainable, even marketable; meanwhile in Southeast Asia many young people are turning not only to New Religious Movements (NRMs) but to Western religions like Christianity for answers to their spiritual questions. And in twenty-first century Japan, Buddhism has become, for all intents and purposes, a dead religion. As Japanologist Donald Keene remarked several decades ago: "As far as religion goes, one would have to look very hard to find in Japan even as much fervor as exists in [the USA], let alone India...real interest in [Buddhism] is comparatively unusual" (quoted in Dazai, 1956, ix–x). This may sound like a strong claim, which might too readily gloss the differences in the conception, display, and acknowledgment of "religion" in the two cultures, but it is nonetheless apt. Contrary to lingering Western stereotypes of Japan as a nation of geisha, samurai and meditating monks, Buddhism has little impact on the lives of ordinary Japanese people (as opposed to, say, *karaoke* or the ubiquitous *keitai*). Indeed, Buddhism in Japan today is frequently referred to as "funerary Buddhism" (*sōshiki Bukkyō* 葬式仏教) since preparation for death seems to be the sole remaining office it provides to the vast majority of people. In this way, we might draw parallels with the effects of Christianity in certain European (especially Scandinavian) countries, where the

religion serves largely as a ceremonial vehicle at certain key junctures in one's life: birth, marriage, death (ironically, in Japan Christianity also plays the role of wedding-provider for many, while Shintō covers the events of birth). Of course the argument is often made, by Japanese and foreigners alike, that Buddhism has seeped into Japanese culture in ways that are subtle but nonetheless real and deep. While this is, at one level, true, since Buddhism, along with Shintō and Confucianism, played an important role in the development of Japanese culture, it is a claim usually associated with more dubious assertions about the "Japanese mind" or Japanese sensibility that are without substance. Moreover, not only is there very little interaction between Buddhism and modern Japanese social life, there are socially-constructed barriers preventing such. One priest of the Jōdō Shin sect remarks: "In order to keep Buddhism sacred enough to serve the deceased, people do not seem to want Buddhist monks to do secular activities, especially like getting involved in politics."[16]

The single biggest issue raised by CB involves the meaning of Buddhism itself. What does it mean to identify something or someone as 'Buddhist' or 'non-Buddhist'? Of course, at the basic substantive level, there are a few fundamental teachings or doctrines that we can point to as common to all or virtually all forms of Buddhism—the Three Marks (*tri-dṛṣṭi-namitta-mudrā*; Jp. *sanbōin* 三法印) of impermanence (*anityā-bata-saṃskārāḥ*; Jp. *shogyō mujō* 諸行無常), no-self (*anātman*; Jp. *muga* 無我), and nirvana (Jp. *nehan*

[16] *Japan Times*, 3 January 2002, p.3. Without belabouring the point, I think it important that scholars of modern Japanese Buddhism come to grips with the ineffectiveness of Buddhism in contemporaray Japan. On the other hand, another recent article in a Japanese newspaper noted one of the year's best neologisms: *satori-kei* 悟り系, defined as "the realization that seeking out less expensive goods and services does not necessarily make you a lesser person. You can lunch on ¥250 beef bowls every day at Yoshinoya and still drive a Mercedes without feeling a discomforting sense of contradiction or loss of self-esteem." One puzzles to think how the creation and use of such a term reflects back upon the Buddhist culture of Japan.

涅槃), as well as the Four Noble Truths (*ārya-satya*; Jp. *shitai* 四諦) and the Eightfold Path (*āryāṣṭāṅga-mārga*; Jp. 八聖道) are perhaps the most obvious and widely-known. More specifically, the Mahāyāna (*Daijō* 大乗) stream manifests certain key doctrines or beliefs, of which we might name four: 1) all things are impermanent and constantly changing; 2) all things are selfless; 3) nirvana or enlightenment is some form of release or 'extinction'; 4) compassion is a virtue. Of course, different branches of Mahāyāna have emphasized these four ideas in different ways, but there remains a remarkable consistency at the core of doctrine. Indeed, as we shall see, CB places great emphasis on certain key Buddhist doctrines, particularly those that have emerged from Buddhist lines influenced by Mahāyāna, and, more particularly, Mādhyamika streams. However, their choice of doctrines is bound by a seemingly deeper criterion—*criticalism*. Reflection and exploration of this key term, along with its supposed mirror opposite, *topicalism*, will form the bulk of my investigations here.

At first glance, as with most 'insider' interpretations of religion, Hakamaya and Matsumoto seem to hold to an ahistorical or idealized conception of Buddhism. However, we would be mistaken to conclude that they thereby presume a certain originary Buddhism that existed at one time but has been lost, ravaged by the accidents of history and culture.[17] At any rate, such grasping onto what Michel Foucault would call an "ideality of origins"

[17] It must be admitted, however, that Hakamaya in particular often employs language that gives a strong implication of such a pursuit. Indeed, in some ways Critical Buddhism does seem to be a continuation of earlier movements such as the late-Meiji and Taisho-era "Daijo hi-bussetsuron," led by scholars such as Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851–1929) and Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949), who argued that Mahāyāna Buddhism, due to its mainly sinitic cultural accretions, is not "true Buddhism" (see Nishijima 1997, 16; more on this below, 3.7; 3.7.1).

could easily be deconstructed also from a Buddhist perspective.[18] Matsumoto makes his opposition to such an approach plain when he states that Critical Buddhists must be willing to criticize even the *teachings of the Buddha* (or what are presumed to be), if they seem to contradict certain inviolable doctrines such as *pratītya-samutpāda* or *anātman*.[19] Thus, in CB we have an outright dismissal of any attempt to define Buddhism as a religion either *historically*—as a culturally-embedded set of ideas and values shaped entirely by

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[18] See, e.g., Wright 1999, 59; also Hubbard: "Critical Buddhism denotes a philosophically critical pursuit of truth, not a historical or textual search for origins" (1997a, xiii); and Griffiths (1997, 158–59) contra Schmithausen.—Yet this desire or appeal to Buddhist origins is surprisingly strong, arising even when one would least expect it, such as in the work of many 'reformists' who assert that their work is getting to the 'original' teachings of Śākyamuni. In this case, the following remarks of Richard P. Hayes are pertinent: "[W]hen we Westerners think about...Buddhism, we think about it through the vocabulary of Christian and Jewish theology, neo-Platonism, German idealism, Kantian Critical Philosophy, Jeffersonian democratic theory, Marxism, Weberian sociological theory, Existentialism, American Pragmatism, Freudian or Jungian psychoanalytic theory or Romanticism... I might even be so bold as to declare that when Westerners think that they are thinking about Buddhism, they are not thinking about anything at all but a wild and unpredictable mixture of elements taken from the history of European thought, all ripped out of context and mangled beyond recognition by the process of incessant vulgarization" (Hayes 1999). It is only the last line that I would contend is somewhat overstated, given that this process of 'misreading' has been going on likely since the very beginnings of 'Buddhism' in India—and certainly since the time of the Mahāyāna sutras and 'sinification' of Buddhism—thus it can hardly be dismissed as 'vulgarization' without seeming to re-establish the standard of an orginary, pure form of Buddhism. To his credit, Hayes elsewhere recognizes this: "Did Dharmakiirti have a clue what the Buddha had taught? I don't know. I reckon Dharmakiirti may have understood the Buddha that Dharmakiirti created, but I am not sure he had a clue about the Buddha that Gotama reportedly was...[besides,] I cannot see even the smallest difference between Dharmakiirti's trying to understand the Buddha's message in terms laid down by Bhartrhari and my attempt to understand the Buddha's message in terms laid down by Immanuel Kant, Charles Peirce, Carl Jung, James Joyce and Bob Dylan. Both Dharmakiirti and I are creating our own Buddhas. We can claim to be free of folly only to the extent that we acknowledge that. Only to the extent that we have the courage to admit that we are praising our own folly in the name of Buddhist wisdom can we hope to extricate ourselve from the damaging effects of our folly" (Hayes 1999). On the basic situation of the so-called East-West dialogue and the comparative appraoch referred to by Martin Heidegger in 1957: "...in case we dare to interest ourselves in those foreign cultures [i.e., the worlds of ancient India, China, and Japan], we should first of all ask ourselves whether we are really able to listen to what has been thought in these cultures. This issue becomes all the more crucial as European thinking threatens to become planetary also through the fact that Indians, Chinese, and Japanese today make their own experience known to us mainly through use of our own European way of thinking. Most of the time, the result is an awful mess in which it is no longer possible to appreciate whether and to what extent the old Indians were indeed English empiricists, or Laotse in fact a Kantian philosopher. Under such circumstances, where and how should there be a sound and genuine dialogue if both sides keep being inspired by such a loss of substance?" (Heidegger 1994, 79: 145–46)

[19] The apparent boldness of this claim is of course mitigated by the murkiness of history and diversity of source texts, which render the "real words" of religious founders ultimately unknowable.

personalities and the impact of political and social realities; *ideally*—as the trans-historical continuation of an original essence located either in the Dharma, Buddha or Sangha; or *progressively*—as the unfolding of truth over time or the progressive clarification of particular set of doctrines and practices. None of these, by themselves, can offer us a picture of 'true Buddhism'.

In CB interpretation, Buddhism, *true Buddhism*, resides not in history, not even in the history or teachings of Śākyamuni, the 'historical Buddha', but in *criticism*, based on a rigid adherence to several essential Buddhist doctrines—and thus not, as in Hakamaya's over-simplified mantra, "criticism alone". Indeed, as Peter Gregory (1997, 293) remarks, despite their apparent anti-foundationalism, there is an *essence* upon which CB rests. Gregory uses this to question whether so-called Critical Buddhists are truly 'critical'; though it is hard to imagine any type of thought, criticism or expression without some sort of 'foundation', the point is to analyze how the particular foundation is conceived. 'Criticalism' may be better understood less as a pure form of 'critical rationality' than as a type of hermeneutical praxis rooted in specific Buddhist and Western philosophical theories of language, epistemology and ethics.

Given the above, and Hakamaya and Matsumoto's claims to be locating a 'true Buddhism', we might ask, as many of their critics do: Are the Critical Buddhists themselves, in their insistence on locating Buddhist truth in language, reason, and criticism, themselves guilty of misrepresenting Buddhism? On first glance, indeed, it seems as though they fall into the trap of conceptual thinking, so often condemned within the Mahāyāna, and especially Zen traditions. Yet even Abe Masao 阿部正雄, whose work

is far removed from CB, admits that "in Zen, the positive and creative aspects of human thinking have been neglected and only its dualistic and discriminating aspects have been clearly realized as something to be overcome" (Abe 1985, 112). Yet this debate becomes more complicated by the difficulties in distinguishing the tradition (or traditions) from common interpretations or misunderstandings of such. Recently both Dale Wright (1997) and Victor Sōgen Hori (2000) have argued, in different ways, that the common 'transcendent' reading does not give an accurate reflection of the realities of either the traditional understandings or of the current monastic practices of Zen. Thus the CB project can be understood as an attempt towards redressing a skewed imbalance in Zen towards things like experience, intuition and interiority over language, reason and practice. We might attribute some of the Critical Buddhist intransigence on these matters to rhetoric—to a feeling that, in order to truly reveal the middle path or simply in order to get their ideas heard,[20] unconventional extremes must sometimes be posited without quarter. This may, however, be giving undue—and perhaps unwanted—credit.

What is being presented in CB is at once simple and decidedly complex. Simple, because here truth does not seem to be based on any single foundation, whether historically or metaphysically located. As Foulk has adequately shown in his work on "The Ch'an School and Its Place in the Buddhist Monastic Tradition" (1987), there is in fact no doctrine, practice, genre or institution that can be called an essential, defining feature of

[20] Sueki Fumihiko 末木文美士 notes the CB "strategy aimed at insuring that the issues they raised would not be ignored or get swept aside in the general current of minute scholarly problems" (Sueki 1997, 322).

Ch'an/Zen.[21] Rather CB seems to be based on a vision of what is deemed the best representation of Buddhism in terms of real-world effects and practical manifestations—that is, the phrase 'true Buddhism' seems to be shorthand for: *the kind of Buddhism that, though it may be historically rare, is the 'best' in terms of what we believe are the most important practical effects rooted in the core teachings of the (Mahāyāna) tradition.* Though this seems like a simple formula, it is actually rather complex, mainly because employing such a criterion for truth is notoriously difficult to sustain.

When Hakamaya and Matsumoto make claims such as 'Zen is not Buddhism', we must carefully unpack the possible underlying motivations and implications before engaging in specific points of analysis or critique. What can such a statement mean? First, as noted above, we must say that it is highly rhetorical, and quite clearly presented in such a way that it evokes challenge and calls for response. Beyond this, what does 'is not' imply here? On the most basic level, the statement might mean something like the following: *According to our own attempts to reformulate or reinterpret Buddhism along lines of critical rationality, ethical circumspection, and political awareness, the Japanese Zen tradition, as it has been expressed and lived, does not, in the main, fit within this new conceptual category of Buddhism.* Or, in other words: *We, rather because than in spite of*

[21] Foulk however allows this conclusion about Zen's historicity to be considerably weakened by suggesting that, while Zen as a tradition can be studied historically, enlightenment is "entirely beyond the scope of critical historiography" (Foulk 1987, 32). For Dale S. Wright, "the metaphysic required to make [this] division are currently untenable. Although Foulk's historical research could hardly be more distinct from Blofeld's romantic theology, nevertheless, both share the same modern metaphysics, on the basis of which history and the 'transcendent' can be separated" (Wright 1997, 146 n.8).

being affiliated with the Sōtō Zen school, do not like what has happened to Mahāyāna[22] *(and particularly Ch'an/Zen) over roughly the past thousand years, and hope that, by initiating dialogue (and counter-critique), we may be able to instigate a thoroughgoing reformation of Zen from within.* Such a reading of the truth-claims proferred by CB would once again align it squarely with the pragmatic conception of truth whereby truth is neither correspondence to reality nor coherence within a system but relates to the users of a language (or 'language game'), and as such can be argued for, using logic and the various tools of rational analysis. All of the above indicates that there is an inescapably *heuristic* element to the CB project, which gives the movement an overtone that calls for further analysis.

Abe Masao, echoing a trope of D. T. Suzuki,[23] says, "It is clear that Zen is not a philosophy. It is beyond words and intellect and is not, as in the case of philosophy, a

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[22] One thing is clear: the Buddhism that serves as the touchstone for CB is decidedly Mahāyāna Buddhism. Though their harshest critiques are directed in the main towards Japanese Buddhism—and Zen in particular—both Hakamaya and Matsumoto uphold a vision of Buddhism that is Mahāyānist, even if it is of a decidedly reformed sort. This way of thinking is reminiscent of the supersessionism that characterizes the history of the so-called Greater Vehicle since the earliest schisms in India. However, what distinguishes CB here is that, just as it avoids the originalist temptation, so does it refrain from suggesting that Buddhism has been a historical line of progression from relative ignorance to enlightenment in the flower of the Dharma tree that is Japanese Buddhism. More important is the spark of criticalism in the Mahāyāna stream, noted by Abe as follows: "In Mahayana Buddhism, criticism against the oneness of everything beyond differentiation as a false equality and the rejection of Nirvana as simply the transcendence of samsara are key points by which Mahayana Buddhism distinguishes itself from Theravada Buddhism. These points have, however, often been overlooked by Western scholars" (Abe 1985, 178–79).

[23] Suzuki Daisetsu (Teitarō) 鈴木大拙 (本名：鈴木貞太郎, 1870–1966), known to the West as D. T. Suzuki, made it his mission to spread Buddhism from Japan to the Western world, with substantial success. In recent times, however, his works—and in particular his characterization of Zen—have been criticized from a number of angles. According to CB, Suzuki, in bringing Zen to North America, spread the already rampant topical undercurrent to Buddhism in the New World. Much of the problem lies in Suzuki's conflation of Zen and 'Japanese culture'. Hakamaya, in "Zen-shū hihan" 禅宗批判 (A Critique of the Zen School, 1990), argues that Suzuki, along with Yanagida Seizan and countless other apologists and commentators of the past century, has missed a critical distinction between these two things, a distinction based on the intrinsically *critical* nature of Buddhism, and the intrinsically *topical* nature of Japanese culture (see Swanson 1997, 19). Suzuki has been criticized by others, for things as diverse as his distortion of Zen along the lines of Jamesian

study of the processes governing thought and conduct, nor a theory of principles or laws that regulate people and the universe."[24] Such runs counter to the CB interpretation, which insists that, in fact, Buddhism (with which Zen aligns itself, however loosely) *is* a philosophy, if by philosophy is meant a practice of critical thinking and engagement with the world in a clear, thoughtful, discriminating fashion. For Hakamaya and Matsumoto, contemporary understandings—or rather, misunderstandings—of Zen encapsulate what has 'gone wrong' with Buddhism. Indeed, Hakamaya and Matsumoto see in contemporary Sōtō Zen (their own sect) a misunderstanding of the teachings of the founder of Sōtō Zen, Dōgen 道元 (1200–53), especially but not exclusively with respect to the question of Buddha-nature (*busshō* 仏性).

We come now to an important point in the argument of CB, and one that in a sense sets the stage for the present study: The idea that there is *something wrong with especially Japanese, and even more particularly Zen Buddhism* is an assumption that appears to undergird the whole structure of the quest for a Critical Buddhism. Yet there are two problems with this: 1) the presumed *wrongs* of Buddhism—which seems to flip between accusations at the socio-ethical and buddhological-doctrinal levels—are not clearly or consistently spelled out in the work of CB; and 2) the emphasis in Critical Buddhism on reinterpreting and re-examining key texts in Buddhist tradition gives their work a highly

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metaphysics, or his ideological support and Buddhist justification for the war effort (see Victoria 1997; Heisig and Maraldo 1994).

[24] Abe 1985, 4. — Abe's next words are "For the realization of Zen, *practice is absolutely necessary*" (1985, 4). Though the Critical Buddhists would applaud this addendum, they (and I) would question the assumption that words and intellect—thought—is somehow intrinsically *opposed to* action or practice. Moreover, the very term 'practice' means different things to different people.

philological tone, which in turn weakens—or, at any rate, does not adequately support—their strong statements regarding the ethical or political lapses of Japanese or Zen Buddhism. In short, the links between some of the main arguments of CB are tenuous at best. This is not to say that the arguments themselves fail on their own, but that they would be stronger if connected in a more direct and concise fashion.

Although clearly locating themselves within the Sōtō Zen tradition, and bolstered by the high position given to Sōtō sect founder Dōgen, the Critical Buddhists could also invoke Rinzai 臨濟 (Ch. Linji, ?-866) as a prophet of CB. After all, it is Rinzai's "Kill the Buddha! Kill the patriarchs!" that inspired his eponymous sect's early nonconformism.[25] "Rinzai threatened his followers with perpetual agony in life's 'birth-an-death-sea' if they continued to love the sacred and hate the secular," says Covell (1977, 58), when commenting on Rinzai's influence on the equally iconoclastic Japanese Rinzai master Ikkyū 一休 (1394–1481). Yet, at the same time, Covell adds, "Rinzai in the ninth century had made the Buddhist truth or 'Dharma' almost synonymous with the 'Way' of philosophical Taoism as expounded in the *Tao Te Ching*," and that one contemporary Kyoto rōshi has said that, largely as a result of Rinzai, "ninth-century Zen was ninety-nine percent Taoism; only the vocabulary was slightly different." If true, this would of course eliminate Rinzai from the CB pantheon of heroes, and show that iconoclasm itself is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for criticalism. It also points to the complexity of

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[25] "If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill the Buddha.
If you meet the patriachs or the arhats on your way, kill them too...
Bodhidharma was an old bearded barbarian...
Nirvana and Bodhi are dead stumps to tie your donkey to.
The sacred teachings are only lists of ghosts, sheets of paper fit for wiping the pus from your boils" (Rin.).

'purity' and reformation as envisaged by Zen masters and students throughout history. Though Hakamaya and Matsumoto can cite strong precedents to the *form* of CB, the historical roots for their specific doctrinal beliefs and critiques may be a different story altogether.

The above remarks lead us to the ideal of harmony and the historical Buddhist notion that causing a 'rift' in the Sangha or Buddhist community is a great—perhaps the greatest—of all evils. A few words need to be said about this. Let me begin by noting a recent short piece written by Eliot Cohen in 2002 for the *Middle Way* journal. Cohen is particularly concerned with the effects of an anti-intellectual tendency of modern Zen, especially in America. In response to an informal poll among self-professed Buddhist members of various on-line chat groups, which asked the questions: "What is Dharma?", Cohen received the following five main replies: "It is about finding your oneness with all things;" "It cannot be articulated"; "It is about finding God"; " It's about reincarnation"; and "There are no rules to follow." These reflect, according to Cohen, a kind of "wooly Buddhism"[26] that pervades American Buddhism today, in which ignorance seems to be viewed "as one of the signposts on the road to enlightenment instead of part of the heart of the problem" (Cohen 2002, 235). Yet, for all this, Cohen's piece is muddled by what appears to be a serious contradiction: while lambasting those "pseudo-Buddhists" who dare to proclaim sectarian superiority to others, Cohen himself clearly believes in the need for a return to some sort of non-sectarian, ideal or original Buddhism. Which leads us back to the main questions: What criteria serve to make such a distinction between true and false

[26] See also Hori 1994, on "sweet and sour Buddhism."

Buddhism? What exactly is Cohen bothered by? How could it be fixed? Part of the confusion here can be attributed to the modern (relativist) tendency to conflate anything exlusivist or sectarian with authoritarianism—which flies in the face of much evidence showing precisely the opposite, i.e., a strong connection between the *non-sectarian* ideal of *harmony* or *unity* and authoritarianism. To his credit, Cohen notes this potential problem near the end of his piece; but he does not go out of his way to clarify or rectify the matter. In fact, one of his concluding tips for students of Buddhism is for them to verify the authority of a particular Buddhist organization by checking for the group's authentic lineage: "If the lineage is missing, you may well find that the Dhamma/Dharma is missing too." (Cohen 2002, 236)

Besides issues of politicized Buddhism and the dynamics of power, also important to note at the outset is the aspect of Zen that seems to trouble Hakamaya more than anything else: the assumed Zen critique of reason and language. Though Zen is generally assumed to be anti-doctrinal and less overtly ritualistic than other forms of Buddhism, thus presumably more free from the taint of topical metaphysical doctrines, it has long placed emphasis on its fundamental teachings as being ultimately "beyond words and letters," and on the direct transmission of Zen from master to student, in which the teacher's authority over the student is virtually absolute.[27] The latter requires little by way of explication; it clearly falls within the scope of Critical Buddhist social criticism. Hakamaya explicitly

[27] See Lachs 1994, 1, for a critique of the 'authoritarian' element within American Zen, a problem which he sees as the root of the many 'Zen scandals' of the 1980s and 1990s: "Having been attracted to Zen Buddhism by the presence of an 'enlightened person', the students came to regard the teacher's behavior as beyond criticism, and unrealistic attitude that had unfortunate consequences." — Yet, as Hori (2002) and others have rightly noted, even this seemingly simple idea of authority within the Zen monastery is complicated by our own modern Western notions of freedom as simply "freedom from constraint."

rejects the authoritarian idea that a teacher is absolute and never mistaken.[28] But it is really the former assumption—that Zen is anti-rational and apophatic—which faces the most trenchant criticism, and it is this aspect that will form the bulk of the present study.

1.2.2 A New Methodological Movement

More needs to be said about the character of 'true Buddhism' being advocated by CB. Hakamaya provides the most striking and simple answer in his infamous declaration that "criticism alone is Buddhism."[29] Which of course begs the question: What is *criticism*? For Hakamaya criticism seems to imply the ability to make distinctions, to be, in a literal (i.e., not pejorative) sense, 'discriminatory'. He argues that it is *only* critical thinking that can combat *real* discrimination (in the socio-political sense), which results from lack of logical/ethical 'discrimination,' often in the name of some greater unity or harmony. But what is the *content* or *ground* of 'critical thinking', beyond reason, logic and discrimination? This is not always clear in the writings of Critical Buddhists, who have been criticized for not being very forthright on the substance of criticism (or 'criticalism'),

[28] This aspect of the critique certainly has precedent in Zen tradition, in which the antinomian character of Zen occasionally manifests itself in the idea that not only one's teacher, but even the Buddha himself can stand in the way of true enlightenment, and eventually, like the proverbial raft, must be left aside or even killed. Some have argued that the acceptance of authority is a problem of modern Japanese society in general, even beyond the scope of Buddhism. Indeed, a recent series of articles running in Japan's largest-selling paper, the *Daily Yomiuri*, featured a number of leading thinkers debating the most pressing issues of today's Japan. Although on one hand these scholars sought to hold off rampant individualism, they also pointed to the need to encourage the development of "strong subjects," referring to the 1995 Aum Shinrikyō sarin gas subway attacks as a worst-case scenario of over-reliance on group dynamics and loyalty. Blocker and Starling (2000, 183) invoke the Zen admonition to "kill the Buddha" as a potential aid to the development of a critical subjectivity.

[29] Hakamaya later extrapolated upon this slightly, by saying that "By 'Critical Buddhism' I mean to indicate that 'Buddhism is criticism' or that 'only that which is critical is Buddhism'" (Hakamaya 1997a, 56).

while being all-too-clear—to the point, Jamie Hubbard claims, of obsession—about what it stands against: 'topicalism'. Let us begin then with a brief introduction to this key term. The following chapters will be concerned mainly with an exposition of *criticalism* and *topicalism*, utilizing of the work of CB, the comments and reactions of their critics, and my own attempts to extend the concept into the realm of ethics.

Topicalism, sometimes referred to by Matsumoto using the Sanskrit neologism *dhātu-vāda*—meaning something like the 'way of locus'; or simply, *essentialism*—stands as the *bête noire* of CB. Defined by Matsumoto as "a substantialist monism in which the Buddha-nature is the sole foundational reality out of which apparent reality is produced" (1997b, 171), and by Hubbard as "an aesthetic mysticism unconcerned with critical differentiation between truth and falsity and not in need of rational demonstration" (1997a, vii), topicalism is a way of thinking about Buddhism, scholarship, religion and, one might add, life more generally, which is based on the notion of "a singular, real locus (*dhātu*) that gives rise to a plurality of phenomena...a 'generative monism' or a 'transcendental realism'" (Matsumoto 1997b, 171). Moreover, it is a longstanding Buddhist heresy which, dating back at least to the Indian Abhidharma, has dominated and continues to dominate the Mahāyāna tradition as a whole, and its Japanese offshoots in particular, bolstered not only by Shintō and Taoist incursions but also in more recent times by so-called 'postmodern thought'. (Hakamaya 1997a, 56)

It is important to note here that 'criticalism' is not understood as merely Cartesian rationalism or Enlightenment humanism in Buddhist guise, but is ostensibly founded on certain inviolable Buddhist doctrines or principles, against which everything else—even

other doctrines and forms of belief held sacrosanct in some Buddhist quarters—must be judged. Thus, beyond rationalism, criticalism is founded on (Buddhist) *faith*, where faith is not 'the unity of the object of belief and believer' but rather believing in—holding true and abiding by—certain key doctrines such as, most crucially for CB, *pratītya-samutpāda*, while using one's intellect and language to judge and elaborate the meaning and practical application of these principles in contemporary society.

In some important respects, the methodological criterion employed by the Critical Buddhists is the same as that presented by Roger Corless in his 1990 essay entitled "How is the Study of Buddhism Possible?" Corless suggests that, first of all, Buddhism cannot be adequately studied, taught, or understood using the 'objective' framework of modern academia, and, second, the proper approach to Buddhism must involve an employment of the common ground of all Buddhist sects and movements—Śākyamuni Buddha as "the most recent re-discoverer of *pratītya-samutpāda*"[30] and the "primary manifestation of *sūnyatū*." Taking this matrix as a basis, "we could then select significant incidents in the transmission of the Dharma (that is, in 'Buddhism'), expand them synchronically and diachronically, and subject them to any kind of critical anaysis that does not destroy our declared Buddhist axia."[31]

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[30] See Matsumoto's (1997b, 165) comments on the essence of CB as "the twelve-membered chain of dependent arising as taught in the *Mahāvagga*, which I believe to be the twelvefold chain of dependent arising that Shakyamuni pondered in its forward and reverse order, and to the truth of which he was awakened."

[31] Corless 1990, 38. Another way to understand the project of CB is to see it as an attempt to transform—or 'correct'—the Zen Buddhist notion of Enlightenment or Awakening, by fusing it with Enlightenment or Liberation in the rational/ethical—one might say, modern Western, sense. Of course, the notion of fusing or 'Westernizing' Buddhism raises a whole host of concerns, not least of which is the taint of several centuries of orientalism and reverse orientalism—or, in Snodgrass's terms, 'occidentalism' (see Hori 1994; Snodgrass 2003). As Wright (1999, 136) notes, in the standard modern Western understanding, 'enlightenment' or

Elsewhere, Hakamaya is more explicit in his answer to the question of what is *true* or *critical* Buddhism. It consists, he suggests, of three defining elements:

1) The law of causation or *pratītya-samutpāda*, which implies the 'emptiness' of all phenomena; thus anything that implies an underlying substance (a *topos* or *locus*) is *dhātu-vāda*;
2) The moral imperative to act selflessly to benefit others (*mahākarunā*); thus doctrines such as *hongaku*, which assert that all things are 'originally enlightened' or 'included in the substance of the Buddha' must be rejected;
3) The use of "faith, words, and the use of the intellect (*prajñā*) to *choose* the truth of *pratītya-samutpāda*"; thus doctrines of promoting apophatia (i.e., *zetsugon*) are denied, and the practice of discriminating wisdom (*dharma-pravicaya*) upheld.[32]

The first of these three levels might be called the *doctrinal-substantive cover*, the second the *evaluative-ethical core*, and the third the *pragmatic-critical foundation.* Each level has its topical antithesis or 'shadow', the conventional understanding that must be

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'emancipation' is understood as the "progressive attainment of power and maturity [based on] self-possession [and a] consciousness in command of its processes, freeing itself from the repressive forces of authoritative power and the prejudices of immature conceptualization [while] Zen freedom, by contrast, evokes images of reliquishing autonomy and the will to power in their various forms—the will to explain, the will to certain knowledge, the will to control, the will to security, and so on." — While Wright's general point is well-taken, one must be careful not to fall into easy idealization of 'Zen' and 'the West', the kind so familiar to Suzuki and the Kyoto School. The Romantic stream, in particular, complicates the dichotomy here: the Romantics were just as concerned to banish ratiocination and Cartesian certainty as they were to develop a Promethean hero; while Zen, as with all forms of Buddhism, certainly aims to combat 'immature conceptualization'.

[32] Hakayama 1989, 21; adapted in Swanson 1997, 13-14; also see Sueki 1997, 324–25.

replaced.[33] Stated simply, the first level, faith or adherence to the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda*, counters the notion of *hongaku* 本覚 or original enlightenment as well as related understandings of Buddha-nature / *tathāgata-garbha*. The second, "moral-ethical" level, centered on *mahākaruṇā* (Jp. *daihi* 大悲) or great compassion, CB opposes to the (non-)ethic of *satori* 悟り, understood as a kind of 'pure contemplation'. Finally, level three, which provides the "means," in this case *dharma-pravicaya* (Jp. *chakuhō* 擇法) or discriminating knowledge,[34] is for CB the antithesis to the apophatic tradition signified in Japanese by *zetsugon* 絶言—the denial of words.

In order to get at the heart of the matter, the proper question to ask is not what Buddhism *is*, but rather what is the *purpose* of Buddhism. Hakamaya, in his attack on so-called topical thinking, criticizes the notion that *satori* or awakening is the goal of Buddhism; rather, he says, the goal is *dharma-pravicaya*—"the clear discrimination of phenomena" (Hakamaya 1997a, 74). But this is not really the 'end' or *telos* of CB, it is rather the mode or method; in short, it is "criticism" itself. As we have seen, criticism—in terms of discriminating knowledge—is the ground of the proper Buddhist sphere; and it is, at least for Hakamaya (1997b, 113), the "minimum requirement" for *any* religion. The *goal* of CB is rather what centers the sphere: "the realization of 'wisdom' (*bodhi*) for the practice of 'great compassion' (*mahakaruna*)" (Yamaguchi Zuiho, quoted in Hubbard

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[33] Paul Swanson (1997) suggests three levels at which the Critical Buddhist critique of Zen works. The first of these is buddhological, the second sectarian, and third the level of social criticism. Sueki Fumihiko adds a fourth level—the philosophical—to these three. Of these four levels primarily the third and fourth are the concern of this study, though of course the first will also play an important role, given the impossibility of doing 'Buddhist philosophy' without some measure of buddhology.

[34] *Dharma-pravicaya* is elsewhere defined as "investigation of the teaching"; "analysis of the teachings using correct (discriminating) function"; "to analyse a matter" (DDB).

1997a, xvi). Here we shift from a primarily ontological or 'objective' inquiry to a more explicitly constructive, ethical, soteriological, or perhaps even 'theological' one.

1.3 Scope of the Study

In this study, I will treat CB as a contemporary case of what in traditional Buddhism might be called *upāya kausālya* (Jp. *hōben* 方便)—'expedient' or 'skillful means'.[35] In other words, as a heuristic movement that, despite the sometimes extreme rhetoric, may be better envisaged as a potential medicine—itself conditioned by circumstances—directed at curing a particular modern 'illness' affecting many Buddhists: *topicalism.* The inspiration and fundamental insights of CB are extremely valuable for 21st-century scholarship in Buddhist studies and Japanese thought, and, more specifically, may serve as a philosophical

[35] "The wisdom of being able to save sentient beings by knowing discriminated phenomena. A temporary teaching established in order to lead sentient beings to the true teaching" (Mulller, DDB) — a subject of primary importance in the *Lotus Sutra* (Skt. *Saddharmapuṇḍarīka-sūtra*; Jp. *Myōhō renge kyō* 妙法蓮華經). This notion has led to great flexibility within Mahāyāna tradition, for it promotes the idea of expedience: one should use whatever means are most useful in bringing about the goals of Buddhist teaching, whether these be conceived as wisdom, compassion, enlightenment, awareness, or a combination of these. Of course, the corollary is that *upāya* has been used on occasion to justify acts which in ordinary circumstances would be prohibited. For example, the *Upāyakausālya-sūtra* tells a story in which the Buddha in a previous existence as a celibate religious student had sexual intercourse with a poor girl who threatened to die out of love for him. Here the vows of celibacy were trumped by the Buddha's compassion for the girl. With respect to the use of violence, there is a popular Mahāyāna story which tells of how, again in a previous life, the Buddha killed a man—in order to prevent him from killing 500 others and consequently falling into the lowest hell for a long, long time. In this case, it is judged that the Buddhas as Bodhisattva acted out of pure compassion for the other man (and perhaps, though only secondarily, out of compassion for those who would have been killed by him). Elsewhere, in the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (Jp. *Dai nehan-kyō* 大涅槃經), the Buddha speaks of how in a previous life he had killed several Brahmins to prevent them from slandering Buddhism. Again, this act of violence on the part of the Buddha himself is couched in terms of compassion—he was concerned with the punishment the Brahmins might have incurred through continuing their vicious attacks on the Dharma. Here we see the line between pragmatic utility in teaching slide into a theory of just war or just violence, and perhaps even past this into a justification for 'holy war' and the righteous punishment of heresy. The question remains, however—to what extent are such arguments simple 'casuistry', as Victoria is suggests, and to what extent are they 'genuine'—meaning sincere attempts to work out a Buddhist 'ethic' based on the priority of compassion?

complement or support to recent trends such as Engaged Buddhism and so-called 'Buddhist theology'.[36] In particular, as Stone notes,[37] the *ideological* component of CB is a most valuable contribution, in the double sense of working to uncover and clarify the ideological effects of Buddhist doctrine in the 'real world', while presenting its own critical work as unabashedly normative and even ideological. Much more needs to be said, however, about the meaning—that is to say, the *implications* in the broadest sense—of this "new methodological movement." Though this label—employed as part of the title of the American Academy of Religion's 1994 Meeting Panel—might appear a highly containing label, it is apt in alluding to the hermeneutical element of CB, and it fits with one prominent Japanese scholar's reading of the spirit of CB as a broad "perspective from which to reflect on life and culture" (Sueki 1997, 334). Rather than look inward, that is, examine CB in terms of a highly specific (textual or philological) debate about the meaning of certain Buddhist doctrines, I would like to expand the discussion outwards—into the history of modern Japanese intellectual traditions as well as those of the modern West—and to shift focus away from a disclosure of the truth of Zen or Buddhism towards an interpretation of meaning, defined largely in terms of relevance to those concerned with the future of Buddhism and Buddhist ethics in particular.

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[36] In recent years, Matsumoto has taken on the task of uncovering what it means to do "critical theology [in Buddhism]" (*hihan shūgaku*) within the context of Dōgen studies (Matsumoto 2000). See Heine 2001 for a review of this work and comments on this recent *Kehre* of Matsumoto.

[37] "Too often those who study Buddhist doctrine have treated it purely as philosophy or soteriology, without attention to its ideological dimensions, while those concerned with Buddhism's ideological side have tended to focus on institutional or economic factors, dismissing the importance of doctrine" (Stone 1999, 182).

In short, the goal here is to provoke a 'second wave' of CB, by emphasizing in particular the epistemological and ethical components of criticalism, in order to "more fully release the transformative energies of [Buddhist] tradition and of scholarly questioning of tradition" (O'Leary 1998, 279). Thus, the following study is an attempt by a comparative scholar to critically reformulate and re-situate CB in a new, 'mature' stage, to recoup some of the rivulets before they return to the sea, and finally, to extend the streams of this 'new methodological movement' into the broader seas of Buddhist ethics and of critical scholarship in the humanities.

Despite the importance of the epistemological distinction between topicalism and criticalism, the primary goal of CB is largely *ethical* or even *political*—rooted in a particular liberal, humanist understanding of Buddhism. In any case, CB cannot be defined on the basis of shared community, a specific historical tradition, or even a set of ritual practices, but finds its foundation in the Mahāyāna dialectic of *wisdom* and *compassion.*[38] In explicating what he means by criticalism, Hakamaya invokes the Cartesian tradition in Western thinking, opposing such to the topical tradition primarily associated with the critique of Giambattista Vico (1668–1744) to Descartes' rationalism, but extending all the way down to twentieth-century phenomenology and the philosophy of the Kyoto School. Aside from the many implications of positing a 'Buddhist Descartes', the CB attempt to

[38] A recently published book by Stephen Batchelor, given the provocative title *Buddhism without Beliefs: A Guide to Contemporary Awakening* (1997), unapologetically attempts to wrest Buddhism from the grasp of dogma, ritual, and belief, in order to show how it can be used as a 'healing practice' for contemporary Westerners. Of course, implicit here are a number of questionable assumptions; e.g., that these specific practices can be so easily decontextualized, and shorn of twenty-five centuries of doctrinal and ritual accretions, however dubious; and that actions can be truly meaningful without the beliefs which give them even a minimal claim to being truths. Hakamaya (1990e) is well aware of the increasing popularity of Buddhism, especially Zen, in the West, following on the heels of Suzuki, Alan Watts, Allen Ginsberg and the Beat poets.

draw upon one of the foundational philosophical paradigms of the modern West in order to support a thesis of the meaning of true Buddhism raises a number of important questions for philosophy of religion, as well as comparative ethics and hermeneutics. Particularly significant is the assumption that criticalism can provide a solid and sure foundation for Buddhist ethics in particular and religious ethics in general. Herein, I would like to explore this presumably intercultural category vis-à-vis the work of the Kyoto School, which acts as an important foil for Critical Buddhists, Western philosophical hermeneutics, especially the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), and finally the recent movement towards both 'Engaged Buddhism' and 'Buddhist theology'.

While accepting many of the basic insights of CB, I argue that the polarity of logic/*critica*/reason ('Descartes') versus intuition/*topos*/myth ('Vico') is no longer sustainable—if, indeed, it ever was. Contra CB, the twentieth-century backlash against Descartes indicates *not* a return to premodern thinking but rather an awareness of the *limits* of Cartesian rationality—based, in large part, on an appreciation of language as a historically mediated and *world-building* phenomenon, elements which resonate through Buddhist tradition and in the work of the Critical Buddhists themselves. Moreover, in order to hold on to the twin poles of reason and compassion, the Critical Buddhists would do better to employ an alternative vision of rationality to that of Descartes. This alternative paradigm has roots in both Western and Mahāyāna Buddhist traditions.

At this point the work of the Kyoto School philosophers must be briefly addressed. As Steven Heine (1997, 280) has noted, CB has presented perhaps the first systematic challenge to this inceptional and long-dominant movement in Japanese Buddhist thought.

In the confrontation of CB, a late 20th-century movement of Zen scholars who utilize Eastern and Western philosophy for purposes of religious and social reform, and the Kyoto School, an early to mid 20th-century movement of Japanese philosophers who utilized Buddhism and Western thought in order to elaborate a properly indigenous but ostensibly universal philosophy, many broader issues about the relation of religion and philosophy, religion and ethics, and the nature of Buddhism and Zen, are raised, particularly issues surrounding Buddhist language, ethics, epistemology and also debate over the notion of 'pure experience' or 'pure consciousness'. Indeed, the latter point is even more than *tathāgata-garbha* or *hongaku shisō*, the most problematic idea to be found in modern interpretations of Buddhism.[39] This is the point where CB reconstruction can begin.

[39] I am indebted to Victor Hori for this idea, in particular his comments in "Kōan and Kenshō in the Rinzai Zen Curriculum," where he asserts that in contrast to *samādhi*, "pure consciousness" is "a political concept which wants to affirm the original purity of the individual against the demeaning influence of society" (Hori 2000, 309).

Chapter 2

EYE OF THE STORM: HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

> To what degree does any religion bear responsibility for those who speak in its name? The Roman Catholic Church has been forced to confront its past in relation to European Jewry. The deep issue that this confrontation has raised is not whether individual church authorities abused their powers or distorted church teaching but whether there is something in traditional church doctrine, said or unsaid, that made official anti-Semitism possible... if any religion is to cope with these deviations it must recognize that they do not arise from nowhere but have roots, however twisted, in the faith itself.
>
> (Mark Lilla, "But Any Religion's Extremists Have Their Roots in It," *International Herald Tribune*, 8 October 2001)

> All of the great inherited religious traditions play their role in sanctioning beliefs, attitudes, and actions that contribute to degraduation and oppression. The way this happens is quite different in the theistic and in the non-theistic ones, but all need to be deconstructed.
>
> (John B. Cobb, Jr., "Responses to Relativism: Common Ground, Deconstruction and Reconstruction," p. 608)

2.1 Rudra & the General: Buddhism, Criticism and Postwar Japan

Taken together, the following two quotes provide the basis for the project of CB:

> Nobody foresaw in 1946 what now appears as an inherent disposition to continue the myth of prewar Japanese order...the reification of this model of social relationships that was fundamentally legitimated by the machinery of emperorism. While it is undeniable that this interlocking network of relationships has resulted in guaranteeing minimal security and welfare for every Japanese by incorporating all into a national program, it has also severely inhibited the spirit of criticism and opposition within all areas of Japanese society. This effort to make the Japanese appear as members of the vast 'middle stratum' has been reinforced immeasurably by an ideology of cultural exceptionalism that has sought to construct a national subjectivity devoid of class and gender divisions (*Nihon-jinron*). Furthermore, it has enabled Japanese society to resist all outside intervention and interference, which invariably means that any view expressed or articulated by foreigners will be dismissed as uniformed, inaccurate, and thus invalid. Yet, the Japanese, by the same measure, have too often appropriated foreign views and analyses, especially to answer critics when it was convenient or when it was useful for them to affirm more indigenous pieties. (Masao Miyoshi 1991, 2-3)

> On receiving an initiation from his guru, Rudra took the idea of nonduality as license to act out his dark side. Since there is no absolute good or evil and all social codes originate in the conceptual mind, he felt that he could do anything he wanted. He ran brothels and criminal gangs, and taught yoga to his henchmen to make them more efficient murderers. When a fellow disciple told him he was perverting the dharma, Rudra asked his guru which of them was right. The guru told Rudra that he was wrong. Enraged, he drew his sword and killed his teacher on the spot. This act propelled him into hell. He was not put there as a punishment, his own state of mind put him there. And he never gets out. (Butterfield 1992, 50)

The first quote, taken from a recent analysis of contemporary Japanese political culture, makes the point that postwar Japan has only tentatively, and, the author is by no means the first to claim, insufficiently come to terms with its recent past and some of the deeper problems surrounding the construction of Japanese 'modernity'. This point is

extrapolated upon at some length and with great nuance by John Dower in his recent book on postwar Japanese culture and the 'legacy of censored democracy' brought about by collusion between conservative Japanese leaders and American occupation authorities.[1] As Dower puts it:

> [O]ne legacy of the revolution from above was a continued socialization in the acceptance of authority—reinforcement of a collective fatalism vis-a-vis political and social power and a sense that ordinary people were unable to influence the course of events. For all their talk of democracy, the conquerors worked hard to engineer consensus; and on many central issues, they made clear that the better part of political wisdom was silence and conformism. *So well did they succeed in reinforcing this consciousness that after they left, and time passed, many non-Japanese including Americans came to regard such attitudes as peculiarly Japanese.* (Dower 1999, 439, emphasis mine)

Several important points are raised in this passage. First, evidence of the overwhelming power exercised by the SCAP authorities in reshaping postwar Japanese political culture, especially regarding the curbing of free expression with regard to

[1] "The deeper levels of this censored democracy transcended ideology. Can anyone really believe that no harm was done to postwar political consciousness by a system of secret censorship and thought control that operated under the name of 'free expression'—indeed, waved this banner from the rafters—and yet drastically curbed any criticism of General MacArthur, SCAP authorities, the entire huge army of occupation, occupation policy in general, the US and other victorious Allied powers, the prosecution's case as well as the verdicts in the war-crimes trials, and the emporer's personal war responsibility once the victors pragmatically decided that he had none?" (Dower 1999, 439) See also Herbert Bix's monograph on *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan* (2001)—like Dower's the year before, a Pulitzer-Prize winning book.

criticism of political or social authority. Though the initial impulse in the Americans' hugely idealistic vision for reshaping modern Japan was deeply (perhaps naively) 'liberal', a scant three years after the war's end this was to change considerably, for reasons both external and internal. This change has become known as the 'reverse course', which is said to have begun with National Security Council (NSC) document 1412 in October 1948, or alternatively with the quashed general strike of February 1947. In any event, by 1948 the Occupation had "retracted its original plans to demilitarize, democratize, and perforce weaken Japan through punitive indemnities. Japan was now a key ally in the crusade against Peking and Moscow.... Americans regretted their earlier reformist zeal, especially after the Korean War broke out in June 1950."[2]

Second, and perhaps more important for our purposes, is the recognition of a 'recreation' or perhaps the winnowing of a cultural mythology: namely, the widespread notion among Japanese as well as foreigners that criticism is itself foreign and un-Japanese. While it is certainly true that prewar, especially immediate prewar Japan was a culture where free expression and dissent were rarely encouraged, it is equally true that,

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[2] Wakabayashi 1998, 23. — As Wakabayashi notes, according to certain left-wing views in Japan, after the reverse course began, "American robbed the Japanese of the freedom to make just settlements to those peoples whom they despoiled most during the war, and Japan as a U.S. client continued to victimize these Asian peoples after the war. Indeed, the Japanese media and general public did not come to recognize this war guilt toward fellow Asians until the late 1970s, and the process is still only beginning" (Wakabayashi 1998, 26). See also Najita and Harootunian 1998, 266–67: "[D]espite the criticism by the prewar writers and intellectuals against the modern state and its bureaucratic excesses, what would eventually emerge in the rubble was an even more rational bureaucratic arrangement of power, dedicated not to the pursuit of war but to industrial growth and supremacy." A recent article in the *Dailly Yomiuri* notes the role of the San Francisco Peace Treaty of 1951, and its principal architect, U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles (1888–1959), in supporting the reverse course: "Protecting Japan from its past was one of the aims of the architect of the San Francisco Peace Treaty, John Foster Dulles... the treaty...contained no 'war guilt' clause and limited reparations to be paid by Japan. With the Cold War under way and a hot war raging on the Korean peninsula, U.S. foreign policy sought to mold Japan as a bulwark against communist encroachment in Asia...In a *quid pro quo* deal, Japan agreed to ally itself with the U.S. in exchange for a 'soft' peace treaty" (*Daily* Yomiuri, 9 January 2001).

whether it be the Kamakura Era (鎌倉時代 1185–1333) Buddhist reformers reappropriation of Chinese Buddhism or the adoption of neo-Confucianism in the Tokugawa Era (徳川時代 1615–1868) or the revolution of the Meiji leaders itself (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新 1868), criticism of the powers that be was very often the vehicle for change and transformation in Japan. One might even say that criticism, along with—usually combined with—the appropriation and transformation of foreign ideas, is a defining motif of both modern and traditional Japanese culture.

The second quote cited above is quite different from the first. Rather than a critical appraisal of recent political history, here we have a story from within the canon of Buddhist teachings designed to present a truth of some sort about Buddhist ethics. And indeed, here the meaning of the passage is much less straightforward. It would seem that the tale of Rudra's behaviour and eventual damnation is meant to be a warning of sorts, against a particular, simplistic reading of non-duality. Two points merit our attention: 1) there appears to be an admonition against license in the most general sense; namely, the view that, since all is relative or non-dual, then there is no proper way of acting; 2) at a somewhat more specific level, the nature of Rudra's acts—all of them couched in violence—suggest that what is particularly key to this story is Rudra's breaking of the Bodhisattva vow of compassion. Moreover, the story could be read as suggesting that there is a link between the misreading of non-duality and the temptation to act in a greedy and murderous fashion. Investigation of this basic connection—at the most general level, between enlightenment or awakening and 'practice'—is one of the key elements of the task of CB.

2.2 Buddhism and Violence: Preliminary Considerations

> The history of Buddhism, especially of Mahayana, is no less rich and profound than that of Western philosophy and religion... Yet, this 'history of heresy' that Buddhism manifests has evolved without serious bloody inquisitions, religious wars or crusades... I would like to suggest that it was the application of *kyōsō-hanjaku*, backed up by the notions of *anatman* and *sunyata*, that may have made the decisive difference.
> (Masao Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, p. 18)

> Speaking from the point of view of the ideal outcome, this [the North China Incident of 1937] is a righteous and moral war of self-sacrifice in which we will rescue China from the dangers of Communist takeover and economic slavery. We will help the Chinese live as true Orientals. It would therefore, I dare say, not be unreasonable to call this a sacred war incorporating the great practice of a bodhisattva.
> (Hitane Jōzan, "The Current Incident and the Vow and Practice of a Bodhisattva," quoted in Victoria 1997, 134)

It is a sad but irrefutable fact that the historical connection between religion, violence and warfare provides enough material for a series of heavy volumes.[3] Whether it be ancient Israelites slaughtering the children of Canaan in God's name, medieval Christian crusaders waging righteous battle against the infidel, or Osama bin Laden plotting *jihad* against the West, religion and warfare appear inextricably interlinked. For every Gandhi, Mother Teresa or Dalai Lama, there seem to be dozens of generally less familiar but formidable figures ready and willing to stoke the flames of conflict with the torch of religious truth.

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[3] Indeed, responding to a Harvard Divinity School initiative towards the foundation of a "museum of world religions," one curator wryly noted that such would be a "house of horrors." Beyond the connection between religion and social meaning, power and ideology, Peter Berger's nominization/legitimation thesis raises the issue of the link between religion and violence (see Berger 1969, 44).

And *pace* those such as Abe Masao and Philip Kapleau (1980, 263)[4] who wish to make Buddhism the sole exception to this sad litany, Buddhism also merits a chapter in this lugubrious story.[5]

The matter of violence within Buddhist tradition has only recently emerged as an object of concern among certain scholars; even still it remains something of a taboo subject. Anthropologist Marvin Harris has noted the strange irony of the emergence of "religions of love and mercy": none of these so-called "nonkilling religions"—by which he means Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism—"has had any influence on the incidence or ferocity of war and each is implicated in devastating inversions of the principle of nonviolence and reverence for life" (Harris 1989, 448). Harris attributes this to the fact that whatever the sincerity of their personal convictions, as heads of state, those involved with spreading the religion were primarily concerned with maintaining stability within their realms and defeating external enemies. The Roman Emperor Constantine ('the Great', 273–337 CE) is a prime example, but even the lately lionized Indian Buddhist Emperor Aśoka ('the Great', 299–237 BCE) falls into this category (see Mishra 2004).

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[4] Ironically, despite his assertion that Zen is free from any form of 'holy war', Kapleau in the same book falls into the type of antinomian justification for violence that was the favourite tool of wartime Zen militarists: "Yet the right to life is not absolute, and individual life may unavoidably have to be sacrificed to preserve the health and welfare of society... If the act [of killing] were done no-mindedly, beyond *self-conscious* awareness of one taking life and a life being taken, no painful karma would be incurred, for in the profoundest sense there would be no killer and nothing killed" (1980, 246-47). Although Kapleau "hasten[s] to add that only a highly developed individual could act in this way," this type of rhetoric is hardly less justifiable than the wartime remark by one Zen master that "the precept throws the bomb" (see Victoria 2001, 16; Harvey 2000, 267; Demiéville 1957, 347; 352-53).

[5] For Robert Aitken, such Buddhist infelicities hardly began and ended with the collapse of the Japanese Empire: "Buddhist teaching places responsibility upon human beings for maintaining harmony and enhancing maturity, but rulers who have professed the Buddha's Way have neglected their vows and played political games. Governments in South and Southeast Asia to this day can include the five main Buddhist precepts in their respective constitutions, yet violate them outrageously" (Robert Aitken, quoted in Kotler 1996, 95).

Ironically, the so-called nonkilling religions' emphasis on compassion may have persuaded enemies to let themselves be captured, thus facilitating political expansionism. In terms of Buddhism, Harris notes that, after an early period of "peaceful missionization," Buddhism became intimately involved in state formation in South and Southeast Asia—from the early Sri Lankan kings such as Parakrama Bahu who drove the Hindus from Tamil Nadu and attempted to conquer south India and Burma, through the Khmer Buddhist leaders who attacked Cambodia and Vietnam in the tenth century, the Thai Buddhist rulers who tried to control the Malay Peninsula, to the expansionist policies of both Tibetan lamas and their eventual conquerors and new converts, the Khans of Mongolia, rulers of perhaps the largest empire in world history. (Harris 1989, 450) In addition, India and China, and Western Asia have witnessed the birth and decline of sundry Buddhist empires—indeed, as often as not the religion's fortunes was determined by the waxing and waning of the power of Buddhist kings.

Within recent Buddhist studies, in a normative vein, James Stroble argues that all violence—whether Buddhist or non-Buddhist—must be criticized from the dual standpoint of causality and *ahiṃsā* (Jp. *fugai* 不害).[6] More recently, in response to the events of September 11, 2001, Bernard Faure has published a short but illuminating piece entitled "Buddhism and Violence," in which he suggests, citing many of the same cases as Harris,

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[6] Stroble's paper begins with an assumption that I find rather dubious, though rather common: that Buddhists are *more shocked*—and justifiably so—to learn of violence and warfare in Buddhist tradition than are those of other faiths. This 'fact'—which is both highly anecdotal and frankly insulting to other religions—provides the very basis for Stroble's inquiry into, as he puts it, "why they [i.e., Buddhist justifications for war] should not have arisen" (Stroble 1991, 1). If it is indeed the case that self-confessed Buddhists, or at least those of the "western" sort, find Buddhist war so 'jarring,' my suspicion is that it can be attributed to a combination of two things: a) idealistic and naïve ideas of Buddhism, and b) lack of familiarity with Buddhist history.

that even though (traditionally) Buddhism had no concept of 'holy war', it did "at times legitimize the recourse to violence and the just war" (Faure 2002, 1). Despite the clear prohibitions against killing to be found in, for example, the *Dhammapada*[7] (Jp. *Hokku kyō* 法句經) and *Brahma Net Sutra* (Skt. *Brahmajāla-sūtra*; Jp. *Bonmōkyō* 梵網經),[8] factors such as ethnic and political identity, clerical and state power, and various interpretations of doctrines regarding 'spontaneous action', 'emptiness', and even compassion itself contributed to cases of Buddhist violence and warfare. Moreover, as Demiéville has noted, as early as the Mahāyāna *vinaya* (Jp. *kairitsu* 戒律) masters an argument for killing was being produced, to the effect that, "[i]f sentient beings do not exist, then there is no offense in killing... There is no offense in killing a heap of five aggregates, for it is like killing an illusory dream or an image reflected in the mirror."[9] Thus, to raise the issue of whether Buddhism is either non-violent or 'pacifist' is something of a misleading inquiry,[10] since

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[7] "All fear death. Comparing others with oneself, one should neither kill nor cause to kill" (Dhp. 129).

[8] "1. First Major Precept (On Killing): A disciple of the Buddha shall not himself kill, encourage others to kill, kill by expedient means, praise killing, rejoice at witnessing killing, or kill through incantation or deviant mantras. He must not create the causes, conditions, methods, or karma of killing, and shall not intentionally kill any living creature. As a Buddha's disciple, he ought to nurture a mind of compassion and filial piety, always devising expedient means to rescue and protect all beings. If instead, he fails to restrain himself and kills sentient beings without mercy, he commits a Parajika (major) offense (BNS 4.1)."

[9] Demiéville 1957, 353; from the *Great Perfection of Wisdom Sutra* (Skt. *Mahāprajñāparamitā-śāstra*; Ch. *Ta chih tu lun*; Jp. *Daichido-ron* 大智度論, T 25.164a19–23). — Demiéville goes on to note the irony in the fact that "Hinayana Buddhism views life as full of iniquity, yet maintains a strict prohibition against taking life. In contrast, Mahayana Buddhism claims to revere life, yet allows room in its logic to excuse or even glorify the taking of life" (353). I would contend that the irony is overstated, since, historically speaking, 'Hinayana' (or Theravada) Buddhist societies have not been so free from violence, warfare, or social oppression as the above seems to suggest.

[10] In a related piece, psychiatrist Paul Fleischman (2002) makes the case that, while Buddhism is "nonviolent," it is not "pacifist," based on what the Buddha actually taught. While the author rightly notes that, in the time and place of the historical Buddha, there was no clear conception of 'pacifism' or of any sort of "organized, systematic theorizing about the human collective," his own argument betrays vestiges of a projection of modern, individualistic, thinking onto the Buddha (e.g., his goal was "to release its practitioners

there seems to be little doubt that Buddhism *has at times been* violent, and perhaps even 'pro-war' at both the individual and the institutional level. When the question is raised, however, it more often is meant to ask whether "inherently" Buddhism is non-violent, which, as I shall argue, is ultimately a fruitless, and perhaps even 'non-Buddhist' type of inquiry.[11]

In the past decade and a half, since the birth of CB, the issue of specifically Buddhist involvement—or collaboration, to use a more loaded term—in twentieth-century Japanese militarism and Imperial Way 'fascism' has been raised in the West by a number of books, including the compilation *Rude Awakenings: Zen, the Kyoto School, and the Question of Nationalism* (1994) and Brian Victoria's *Zen at War* (1997) and *Zen War Stories* (2003). Another, more 'popular' work, Iris Chang's *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II* (1997), tells the grim story of the carnage levied upon the Chinese city of Nanking (also Nanjing 南京) by Imperial Japanese troops over a

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from authorities and ideologies" [2]). The deeper problem, however, is the attempt to confine and clarify an originary, non-violent but non-pacifist Buddhism. Faure (2002, 2), on the other hand, does allow himself to make the much weaker claim that, relatively speaking, Buddhism has been on the whole less prone to warfare and violence than other major world religions—or, one assumes, the Abrahamic ones. Even this, however, must be further problematized by extending our definition of violence beyond the obvious cases of war, and including things like revolt or revolution, domestic violence, sectarian violence, and passivity in cases of injustice.

[11] In "The Nonduality of Good and Evil: Buddhist Reflections on the New Holy War" (2002b), David Loy attempts to distinguish the conception of evil in Buddhism from that held in the "Abrahamic religions" based upon a purely doctrinal, modern and idealized understanding of Buddhism (e.g., "Karma implies that when our actions are motivated by these roots of evil, their negative consequences tend to rebound back upon us"—a statement which glosses over the inconvenient fact that, in Buddhist tradition, karma was understood to work across one's successive lives, thus giving the notion a decidedly less modern spin, more akin perhaps to the idea of 'original sin' than 'what goes around, comes around'), combined with a heavily historicized understanding of the Abrahamic traditions (e.g., using the policies of the present US administration under George W. Bush as a spokesperson for such). Moreover, Loy's expression of sadness for the fact that bin Laden et al. may well soon reap their own karmic rewards (2002b, 5) is condescending at best, another version of the 'just wrath of God' at worst. What Buddhism *can* provide, as Loy notes, is an emphasis on understanding the conditions that underlie all events.

several month period in 1937.[12] Though Chang speaks very little about the role of Buddhism, she asks some searching questions about the incident, which has been, until recently, virtually forgotten by the world—though not by China or Japan's Asian neighbours. "What broke down on the scene," she asks, "to allow the behaviour of Japanese soldiers to escape so totally the restraints that govern most human conduct?" and "Why did the Japanese officers permit and even encourage such a breakdown?" (Chang 1997, 19). More to the point of CB, Brian Victoria, in *Zen at War*, asks what was specifically "Buddhist" about prewar and wartime militarism in Japan, including not only the actions and beliefs of soldiers but also—perhaps more important—intellectual and political justifications for these actions and beliefs. It would seem that the attempt to justify and support the Japanese war effort in Buddhist terms was a fairly common occurrence, not simply the work of a few zealots and hard-liners. A number of high-ranking Buddhists, as well as most prominent intellectuals of the day were, at one time or another, quite ready

[12] The plundering or 'rape' of the nationalist capital of Nanking by invading Japanese forces in 1937 is an important case in the study of not only Japanese militarism and human tragedy, but also in the way that particular historical events, even ones such as this which were highly publicized at the time, seem to fade from historical memory, while others, such as the Holocaust, seem to gain in significance. Of course, making comparisons in such cases of extreme horror is always a rube's game, at best, but the point is not to be taken lightly. As Chang reports, even today there are high-ranking Japanese politicians who are not willing to face up to Nanking as what it was, and the recent textbook controversy (coupled with Prime Minister Koizumi's visit to Yasakuni Shrine, in which a number of war criminals are buried) proves that this is a problem with international implications, endangering Japan's relationships with the Koreas and China. Also see the recent documentary film by Matsui Minoru 松井稔, *Japanese Devils: Confessions of Imperial Army Soldiers from Japan's War Against China* (Jp. *Nihon kishi: Chū-nichi jūgonen sensō–moto nōgun heishi no kokuhaku* 日本鬼子日中15年戦争・元皇軍兵士の告白), which won acclaim at the 2001 Berlin Film Festival for its forthright portrayal of the confessions of Japanese veterans in China. The film's synopsis reads: "Under the vicious hierarchy of Japan's Imperial Army, soldiers regarded superior's orders as expressions of Imperial will. The system obliterated any sense of individual conscience or responsibility, molding obedient men who followed orders blindly. New recruits quickly learned to see Chinese civilians as less than human; murder, torture, medical experimentation and vivisection were routine in their military training. Soon they were numbed to the act of taking Chinese lives" (http://www.japanesedevils.com).

to express their support of the war in terms that were often explicitly religious. In a by-now infamous passage, D. T. Suzuki corroborates Victoria's point succinctly:

> Zen has sustained [the military classes] in two ways, morally and philosophically. Morally, because Zen is a religion which teaches us not to look backward once the course is decided upon; philosophically, because it treats life and death indifferently...The military mind, being—and this is one of the essential qualities of the fighter—comparatively simple and not at all addicted to philosophizing finds a congenial spirit in Zen. (Suzuki 1970, 61)

Remarks like this, coming not just from intellectuals with Buddhist leanings but also—more problematically, from a Buddhist perspective—from high-ranking Buddhist leaders themselves, have recently prompted some reflection in Japanese scholarly and Buddhist circles.[13] Of course, at the most basic and banal level, criticism of the wartime complicity of major twentieth-century Japanese religious leaders and philosophical figures has become a commonplace.[14] As the story goes, we are faced with the brute fact of a

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[13] Reflection finally reached the level of offical 'apology' in November 1992, when the Sōtō sect issued a "Statement of Repentance" (*Sanshabun* 懺謝文) for their sect's wartime activities—"for both support[ing] and eagerly [seeking] to cooperate with a war of aggression against other peoples of Asia, calling it a holy war" (quoted in Victoria 1997, 156). On the other hand, the Rinzai sect has not yet made it this far, though I have been informed that Tenryūji temple 天竜寺, upon receiving a letter from Mrs. Ina Buitendijk of the Netherlands, entitled "After Reading Brian Victoria's *Zen at War*," may make a formal apology for Rinzai's unwillingness to oppose the Japanese war effort (Victor Sōgen Hori, conversation, 07/2001; extracts from Buitendijk's letter can be found in "Editor's Note: Japanese Buddhism and Social Ethics," *The Eastern Buddhist, New Series* 33, 2: 13–14).

[14] Though very few—and largely Marxist or Christian—thinkers criticized the writings and ideas of Japanese intellectuals during the war, it was after the defeat, and perhaps the security of being 'with the tide', that criticism swelled (see Heisig 2001, 139). "More common than [intellectual's] self-abnegation was the rapid

regime—manipulated by a cadre of hypocritical and power-hungry militarists—which, since the late nineteenth century, had become increasingly authoritarian, ready and willing to eliminate resistance to imperial policy in whatever form such might take. Thus, the story continues, the issue of individual responsibility is complicated (if not overridden) by the power and authority of the Japanese state to squelch all glimmers of resistance.[15] But all of this begs an important question: were those—and they were many—who not only abided but actively promoted and supported the war effort acting out of fear or out of a genuine commitment to the growing nationalistic fervor? To a certain extent, we can indeed attribute the complicity of these figures to a simple matter of survival, not only in terms of their careers, but increasingly, as the Pacific War began, in terms of their lives. But this hardly seems sufficient by itself.

At a slightly deeper level, we might note the phenomenon which Hannah Arendt has called the *déformation professionelle* which seems to affect prominent scholars everywhere when it comes to authoritarian political ideologies. Arendt provides evidence for this by pointing to the history of Western philosophy, where she sees an almost unbroken line of agreement and support with "tyrants and *Führers*" (Arendt 1961, 293–

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embrace of those who had been 'right', abstracting, as it were, a concrete historical object vis-à-vis which guilt was to be felt or expressed. The result, Wada Haruki 和田春樹 has argued, has been a continued 'ethnocentrism' in Japanese thinking about the meaning of 'August 15, 1945' as liberation: from the *Tennōsei* 天皇性, certainly, but also from the necessity to confront the real history of empire. But the empire's disappearance from the map, Wada insists, did not justify its disappearance from the mind; it should have remained as a historical problem of the first order" (Barshay 1998, 283).

[15] See Daniel Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners* (1997), for a highly engaging and informative (though controversial) attempt to deal with the issue of responsibility in the case of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust. More recently, James Carroll in *Constantine's Sword* (2002) attempts something similar with respect to the role of the Catholic Church in the history of Christian anti-Semitism. See Ian Buruma, *Wages of Guilt: Memories of War in Germany and Japan* (1995) for an analysis of the different ways in which these two nations have dealth with their wartime activities.

303). Arendt's thesis is quite simple: philosophically-minded men intent on building abstract systems of thought frequently fall prey to the delusion that their ideas can or should find concrete application in political systems, particularly those which preach purity or single-mindedness as part of their ideology. Along the same lines, contemporary scholars like Robert Sharf (1994, 50), Jan van Bragt (1997), and James Heisig (2000) have accused the Kyoto School thinkers of allowing their own critical philosophy to get caught up in the nationalistic winds sweeping Japan at the time.

Japanese scholar and former diplomat Arima Tatsuo 有馬龍夫 lends his support to Arendt's thesis: "The primary sin of a Nishida or a Watsuji was not that their ideal of harmony in the individual might be untenable, but that they confused the realities of politics with personal longings for serenity and harmony" (Arima 1969, 12). Elsewhere, Najita and Harootunian provide even harsher criticism of Kyoto School philosophical support for "Japanese fascism," suggesting that, especially as seen in the *Chūōkōron* 中央公論[16] writings of the late 1930s and 1940s, we see "a thinly disguised justification, written in the language of Hegelian metaphysics, for Japanese aggression and continuing imperialism" (Najita and Harootunian 1998, 238–39).[17] More recently, Heisig (2001) has dealt in some detail with this issue, only to conclude: "One has, deliberately or otherwise,

[16] Originally the name of a journal established in 1899, the title *Chūōkōron* 中央公論 came to be applied to a series of 'discussions' held between various Japanese intellectuals (including Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime and Nishitani Keiji) in 1943 and 1944, meant to serve as a 'brain trust' for the Imperial Navy. See Heisig 2001, 201.

[17] A 1997 work edited by James Heisig and John Maraldo, entitled *Rude Awakenings*, provides a fairly comprehensive overview of the arguments (both critical and apologetic) regarding Kyoto School 'collaboration' with militarism. Since these arguments extend beyond the scope of the present study, I direct the reader's attention to this work, specifically the articles by Ives, Ueda, Yusa, Van Bragt, and Maraldo. Many of the arguments echo, in a number of ways, the recent splurge of books written about the so-called Case of Heidegger.

to ignore the greatest bulk of the writings of these thinkers to arrive at the conclusion that anything approaching or supporting the imperialistic ideology of wartime Japan belongs to the fundamental inspiration of their thought. Insofar as any of them did willingly add support, it may be considered an aberration from their own intellectual goals" (6). Of course, to suggest that Kyoto School 'militarism' was somehow fundamental or essential to their project would be misleading; however, the point is whether their role as philosophers and cultural critics required more than evasion. As Hakamaya and Matsumoto would ask (as did Tosaka Jun before them), what is the point of Nishidan "awareness" or "experience" without a practical/ethical element? Heisig blames Nishida especially for "confusing" politics and "philosophy"—his "collapse into Japanism" occurred precisely where he entered the former realm, in which, as a pure philosopher, he had "nothing of much importance to add to" (Heisig 2001, 38, 88, 98–99). In many respects, Tanabe went further than Nishida, boldly asserting that "our nation is the supreme archetype of existence and that, as a union of objective spirit and absolute spirit, it manifests the absolute as a Buddha-embodiment" (99). As Heisig notes, "there are no formal, rational grounds in Tanabe's thought to warrant the conclusion that the Japanese nation so viewed deserved a place of honor as a 'supreme archetype' in the larger scheme of things, or that service to the emperor is the ideal way for Japan to become an 'open' society... It is as if Tanabe was quoting himself out of context." Whatever the case, "in publishing his views, sound though many of them may be in the abstract, Tanabe let loose a brood of ideas that seemed to flock right into the nests of the ultranationalists in a way

that Nishida's though never explicitly did" (137). Along the same lines, Andrew Barshay makes the point that although,

> No doubt Tanabe's self-criticism [in *Philosophy as Metanoetics*] was sincerely meant... Tanabe's moral system istelf placed the notion of service above that of recusal. It does not seem to have occurred to Tanabe that 'contributionism', the willing provision by the intelligentsia of ideological resources to the state, might be a problem, or that refusal to serve might be a noble act and not merely the irresponsibility of the 'bystander'. It seems no less problematic that Tanabe continued to press for a single path for all Japanese. In the end, Tanabe remained locked in a world in which 'the compassion of Other-power' might be underwritten by state coercion. (Barshay 1998, 276)

Beyond these specific debates concerning the Kyoto School's involvement with militarist ideology, we must extend the issue to include the role and place of Buddhism within the development of modern Japanese nationalism. In this respect we may ask the following question: was Buddhism being used—i.e., misused—in service of an all-powerful nationalist ideology? Or, as CB and some others suggest, was the connection deeper than one of pure expediency, perhaps traceable to certain elements within Buddhism, specifically Buddhist doctrine itself? In order to examine this complex issue fruitfully, we need to first set the historical and political context for an understanding of so-called 'Imperial Way Buddhism' (*kōdō bukkyō* 后道仏教).

2.2.1 Japanese Buddhism and the Martial Spirit

> The relation of religion to political rationalization is a close one in Japanese history.
> (Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, p. 86)

2.2.1.1 *Sōhei* 僧兵: The Warrior Monks of Kyoto

Before turning to the case of Imperial Way Buddhism and an analysis of topicalism in Japanese and Buddhist traditions, an interesting and little-studied case of Buddhist militarism from an earlier period bears mention. It is by now something of a truism to note that, from its very inception, Buddhism in Japan has been closely connected with state power in a way that has been somewhat less common in the long histories of Chinese and Indian Buddhism.[18] A contemporary chronicle of the Nara period (奈良時代 710–794) states quite matter-of-factly that the wholesale adoption of Buddhism in the 6th century onwards was largely due to its being perceived as a religion "excellent for protecting the State" (Sansom 1986, 131). Over time, the power and prestige of Buddhist temples grew, and by the late Heian period (平安時代 794–1191), around the same time that various reformers began to lament the 'degeneration' of Buddhism in Japan, this power took on a military mantle. From the 10th century through the 13th, the monks of the most powerful

[18] See, e.g., Hori et al. 1972, 51: "On the whole...when Japanese Buddhism is contrasted with the Buddhism of other countries, it is this tie with the state which is singularly conspicuous." Also King 1991, 787. There are of course cases of the politicization of Buddhism—often to dubious ends—in China, Southeast Asia, and India as well. Seventh patriarch Shen Hui 神會 (Jp. Jinne, 670–762), according to Dumoulin (1988, 114), "spent his old age basking in the graces of the powers that be"—a situation due in no small part to his role in financially aiding the Tang Dynasty 唐朝 Imperial forces during the Anshi (or An Lushan) Rebellion 安史之亂 of 756–763 (see Victoria 2001, 18).

temples and shrines in the Kyoto and Nara regions frequently formed armed bands to wage battle against not only rival temples but also occasionally even the imperial court itself.[19] Reviewing this situation, Funazaki Takeshi (2001, 7) is prompted to ask *why*: "Why did these monks comport themselves in such a blasphemous, warlike manner?" — given the fact that "Buddhist teachings forbade the destruction of life and the possession of weapons [and that m]onks and nuns alike took vows to live lives of compassion." According to Funazaki, the answer has to do with the long historical development of what he calls "secular Buddhism." Virtually since its introduction—often precisely dated to 594 CE, when the Empress Suiko 推古天皇 (r. 592–628) established Buddhism by Imperial edict—until the Meiji Restoration attempts at disestablishment after 1868 (*haibutsu kishaku* 排仏毀釈), Buddhism had been protected in Japan by the ruling classes, and had in turn been committed to "protecting the state" (*gokoku bukkyō* 護国仏教). As Funazaki explains, "this was especially apparent during the Nara and Heian Periods, when the officials, emperors, and noblemen entertained the deep-seated belief that peace within the nation could be ensured only when politics and Buddhism were interconnected. At that time the relation between Buddhism and the body politic was likened to the two wheels of the vehicle called 'the nation'" (Funazaki 2001, 7). A number of emperors of the time, upon retirement, even became Buddhist priests (Victoria 2002, 8).[20]

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[19] A good literary source for the fighting of this period can be found in the 13th-century classic *Heike Monogatari* 平家物語.

[20] Victoria 2002, 8. — In *Zen War Stories* (2003, 194–96), Victoria notes the little-known fact that, in late 1945, amid the immediate postwar turmoil, several high-ranking leaders in Japan pushed for the Emperor Hirohito to follow this ancient tradition—as Victoria implies, mainly to save him from the wrath of the Occupation's judgement; a fear, it turns out, that was decidedly misplaced.

The Taika Reforms (*Taika kaishin* 大化改新) of 645 CE, which served to unite the country for the first time, also established Buddhism further by putting all temples under quasi-jurisdiction of the Court as well as the local clans. A 741 CE edict promulgated by the Emperor Shōmu (聖武天皇, r. 724–749), a devout Buddhist, sought to further unify politics and religion by 'nationalizing'—i.e., bringing under direct court control—one temple (called *kokubunji* 国分寺) in each of the 68 provinces or *kuni* 国. By the 9th century, the most powerful *kokubunji* were those in the Kyoto-Nara region, particularly Tōdaiji 東大寺, Kōfukuji 興福寺, and Enryakuji 延暦寺. At these temples court-appointed priests were instructed to pray for the peace and prosperity of the nation. Moreover, other temples were subsidized by the government as well as by the local clans by way of donations of land and servants, and thus gained increasingly in wealth and prosperity. By the tenth century, disputes over land ownership between clans were frequent, and manor lords began to organize their servants and peasants (*shōmin* 姓民) into armed bands. "At the same time, the influential temples began to use *sōhei* to protect the rights of the large religious institutions and manors" (Funazaki 2001, 8–9).

Lest it be thought that, in the early stages, these court-appointed monks and nuns were political freeloaders totally unconcerned with Buddhist doctrine, it should be noted that the examinations a would-be 'national priest' had to undergo were strenuous—involving, just as a preliminary stage, the memorization of the full text of either the *Hokké-kyō* 法華經 or the *Konkōmyō-kyō* 金光明經 (Skt. *Suvarna-prabhāsa-sūtra*)[21] as

[21] "A text primarily regarded as a scripture for state protection, which offers a wide variety of instruction on Buddhist practices such as expression of faith and repentance, as well as basic doctrine, such as the five

well as tests on Buddhist concepts and cultic practices. However, as more and more peasants began to enter the priesthood, these standards were gradually lowered until, by the mid-ninth century, Miyoshi no Kiyoyuki 三善清行 (847–918), in a report to the Emperor Daigo (*Daigo Tenno* 醍醐天皇, r. 897–930) on the existing state of affairs, complained, "At each temple the number of those who enter the Buddhist priesthood annually reaches two or three hundred, more than half of whom are possessed of no morals whatever.... Only outwardly are these men priests; inwardly their minds are as vicious as slaughterers" (Funazaki 2001, 10–11). Funazaki provides a modern commentary no less awash in critical bile: "As ambitious and greedy men who sought honor and high social standing rather than spiritual enlightenment flocked into these powerful temples in greater and greater numbers, the Buddhist world degenerated into a cockpit of corruption, trickery and ambition" (12). In short, this is the inevitable outcome of what Funazaki calls "secularized Buddhism." While there is certainly some truth in this characterization, the 'secularization thesis' advanced by Funazaki can be criticized for evaluating medieval Japanese Buddhism in terms of modern, largely academic categories of 'religion'—where such is separate from the vicissitudes of politics and economics (see McMullin 1989c, 32–33; Stone 1999, 100). In other words, the more interesting issue of the role of Buddhist doctrines in supporting violence is obscured by a blanket condemnation of 'politicized' Buddhism of any sort.

Japanese scholars Satō Hirō 佐藤弘夫 and Taira Masayuki 平雅行 have argued that behind the 'secularization' of Buddhism in medieval Japan lies a doctrinal foundation

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skandhas, dependent origination, emptiness and so forth. There are five Chinese translations" (C. Muller, DDB).

based largely on *hongaku* 本覚 or 'original enlightenment'. Taira, in particular, notes the reality of the justification of all sorts of monastic abuse on the basis of original enlightenment.

> Novices who were scions of the nobility, having received the secret transmission of arcane rites, were easily able to lord it over the most senior monks accomplished in difficult and austere practices. This was because of original enlightenment thought. The discourse of absolute affirmation found in original enlightenment thought readily translated into an immediate affirmation of personal desires, becoming an excuse for precept-breaking and the excesses of aristocratic monks. It was further employed to rationalize the attack and razing of rival temple-shrine complexes and became the intellectual basis for the activities of warrior monks. (Taira, quoted in Stone 1999, 84)

While it will remain difficult to clearly decipher or ascertain the specific doctrinal causes or conditions for the phenomenon of the *sōhei*—or, as they were more derisively known, *akusō* 悪僧—it is important to see the *sōhei* as an early precedent for the fusion of politics and religion that was to once again emerge in the Meiji 明治 (1868–1912) and Showa 昭和 (1926–1989) periods. This study cannot explore in detail the historical relationship between Buddhism, power and the state—such would be material for a set of lengthy volumes. Yet it is important to note that while the connection certainly has a long history,

dating back at least to the Aśoka the Great (290–232 BCE), in Japan it became almost the single defining motif in the nation's religious history.[22]

In any case, the *sōhei* phenomenon diminished significantly in the Kamakura Period 鎌倉時代 (1185–1333), and came to an official end with Toyotomi Hideyoshi's 豊臣秀吉 (1536–1598) government decree in 1588—the *katana-gari rei* 刀狩り令—which forbade all men but samurai from possessing weapons. However, as Bodiford (1996) and Stone (1999) have noted, it may be in the more recent Tokugawa 徳川 or Edo 江戸 period (1603–1867) that the deeper roots of Buddhist social discrimination, if not Buddhist sectarian violence, may be found:

> From 1635 (when the *tera-uke* [寺受け, i.e., temple registration] system began) until 1871 (the year that legal enforcement of outcaste segregation officially ended), nearly all Buddhist temples ...were legally obligated to function essentially as part of the police arm of the government in supervising local populations...This system aligned the religious authority of Buddhist temples with many of the worst features of government oppression. (Bodiford 1996, 7)

One of the most powerful 'weapons' wielded by the Buddhist temples in this regard was the practice of necrologies (*kakochō* 過去帳), death registries which structure the

[22] Ichikawa Hakugen 市川白弦 (1902–86), in his analysis of twelve issues pertaining to the problematic relationship between Japanese Buddhism and society, notes the general historical relation between the state and Buddhism, particularly the emphasis on Buddhism as "protector of the state," an idea which he dates back to the Indian Mahayana sutras (quoted in Ives 1992, 92. n. 95). Also see Brazier 2002, for a sustained critique of the tendency of historical Buddhism to align itself with the state, in effect giving up much or all of what is critical and revolutionary in the Buddhist message.

memorial services to be performed for the dead over a period of several years, and which even today provide a large part of the income of many village temples. Striking a person's name from a registry, segregation of entries based on social status or religious affiliation, and giving more exalted posthumous Buddhist titles on the basis of social status are some of the main ways that discrimination became a part of the practice of necrologies (Bodiford 1996, 8–9). The most notable practical consequence of such discriminatory records can be found in the continuing use of such as family background checks for prospective marriage partners (De Vos and Wagatsuma 1966). Elimination of such discriminatory death records has become a main concern for the Sōtō sect's Human Rights Division.[23]

2.1.1.2 *Bushidō* 武士道: The Way of the Warrior

In order to understand the place of violence and the martial spirit in Japanese tradition, we have to mention *bushidō*—the so-called samurai warrior code. Essentially an ethic for Japanese warriors, which, though it may have earlier precedents, was only given full expression in the 17th century by the military strategists and Confucian philosophers Yamaga Sokō 山賀素行 (1622–85)[24] and Daidōji Yuzan 大道寺友山 (1639–1730)[25], and

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[23] See Bodiford 1996, 10. The Human Rights Division—Jinken Yōgo Suishin Honbu 人権擁護推進本部—was established in 1982 to deal with problems of social discrimination in the Sōtō sect.

[24] Sometimes considered the 'founder' of the samurai way, Yamaga coined the phrase "The way of the warrior is found in death"—*bushido to wa shinu koto* 武士道とは死ぬこと.

[25] Author of *Code of the Samurai* (*Budo shoshinshu* 武道初心集, 1686), a martial arts primer and guide. See Daidōji 1999.

the samurai Yamamoto Tsunetomo 山本常朝 (1659–1715)[26], the qualities emphasized in *bushidō* are not unlike the ideals presented in medieval European codes of chivalry, though without the element of romantic love, and a somewhat more pronounced level of asceticism and loyalty to one's military superior. Though *bushidō* ethics were intended for soldiers and fighters, by the late-19th century the ideals had, to an extent, trickled down to include all loyal Japanese subjects. In fact, the imposition of *bushidō* ideals onto the general population was part of a conscious effort by the Meiji and Showa governments to instill patriotism and loyalty into the people.[27]

It is important to note that initially *bushidō* had no direct link to Buddhism, or even to Shintō, for that matter—most its early proponents were Confucian of neo-Confucian,

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[26] Yamamoto wrote the well-known *Hagakure* 葉隠—a narration of his thoughts on being a samurai—late in his life, after he had renounced the world for a solitary life in a mountain heritage. Though the book was little known in the centuries after his death, it became extremely popular in the early Showa period (1930s) with the growth of militarism in Japan. See Yamamoto 1983.

[27] One necessary change made by Meiji ideologues was to re-direct absolute loyalty towards the Emperor rather than to one's superior or feudal lord. "By continuous effort along these lines, the samurai code of ethics (*Bushidō*) tended to become the code of ethics for all loyal citizens of the Japanese state, but particularly for the soldiers of the new national army. In the past, the military leaders were interested in the development of *Bushidō* as a means of strengthening the Tokugawa military regime; but in the hands of the post-restoration leaders, *Bushidō* not only became a powerful cohesive force within the army but served gradually as a very effective means of directing the loyalties of all Japanese citizens to the Emperor, the symbolic head of the nation" (Brown 1955, 98). See also Victoria (2003, 126-27), for discussion of the role of *bushidō* in the army's 1941 *Field Service Code* (*Senjinkun* 戦陣訓). — Benedict (1946, 175) makes the case that overemphasis on the impact of *bushidō* as a generalizable phenomenon can be misleading: "Modern Japanese writers and publicists have made a selection from among the obligations of *giri* [義理] and presented them to Westerners as the cult of *bushido*... This has been misleading for several reasons. Bushido is a modern official term which has not the deep folk-feeling behind it that 'cornered with *giri*,' 'merely for *giri*,' 'working strongly for giri' have in Japan. Nor does it cover the complexities and the ambivalences of *giri*. It is a publicist's inspiration." Benedict's warning, and her use of the term 'publicist' is especially apt today, with the recent release of the Hollywood blockbuster, *The Last Samurai*. Scholars of Japan have, for the most part, reacted with shock and anger at the film's historical inaccuracies—and even more at the romanticization of an ideal that was in fact something of a modern political construction, one which Luke Roberts notes "amounts to the fantasies about samurai and modernity that right wing Japanese nationalists held in the 1930s and 40s" (Luke Roberts, message to *H-Japan* internet discussion list, 13 December 2003; see also Paul Dunscomb's [2003] critique of the film).

Yamage, while one of its later proseltyzers, Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸稲造 (1862–1933), was Christian.[28] This does not mean that there was no cross-fertilization, however. As we see in a number of D. T. Suzuki's writings, certain values of Buddhism—especially Zen, with its emphasis on mindfulness, concentration, calmness, and rigour—have long been used to solidify and support *bushidō* ethics.[29] Rinzai master Takuan 沢庵 (1573–1645), in a letter to his patron, the warrior and master swordsman Yagyū Tajima-no-kami Muneyoshi 柳生但馬守宗巌 (1527–1606), wrote that:

> The uplifted sword has no will of its own, it is all of emptiness. It is like a flash of lightning. The man who is about to be struck down is also of emptiness, and so is the one who wields the sword... Do not get your mind stopped with the sword you raise, forget about what you are doing, and strike the enemy. Do not keep your mind on the person before you. They are all of emptiness, but beware of your mind being caught in emptiness. (Harvey 1998, 268; see Victoria 2001, 16)

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[28] Nitobe Inazō wrote *Bushido: The Soul of Japan* (in English) in 1898; it was published in 1905. See Nitobe 1998.

[29] As a prime example of this see Seisetsu Seki 関精拙 (1876–1945), *The Promotion of Bushido*, published in 1942. — "The very best of *Bushido* is to learn that there is no enemy in the world rather than to learn to conquer the enemy. Attaining this level, Zen and the sword become completely one, just as the Way of Zen and the Way of the Warrior [*bushidō*] united. United in this way, they become the leading spirit of society" (quoted in Victoria 1997, 113). While Nitobe's famous work cites Buddhism as the "first source" of bushido—for the contribution of stoicism and resignation to fate—it also notes the contributions of Shintō (patriotism) and Confucianism (ethics) (Nitobe 1998, 43–49). Robert Bellah sees the warriors adoption of Zen as an prime example of the (Japanese?) "tendency to value religion for its results in action rather than for its own sake" (1957, 16–17). Some, like Paul Smith (1997, 50), have argued that the Japanese samurai's understanding of loyalty and filial piety fail to balance these with the primary Confucian virtue of humanity or benevolence.

Though this explicit conflation may have been rare in Takuan's time, by the late 19th century, the use of Zen to provide support for the (newly 'democratized') way of the warrior had become fairly commonplace (see, e.g., Nukariya 1913; Victoria 2003, 118–19) —and this tradition was continued through the Great East Asian War.[30] Thus, the general ideology of *bushidō* played a significant role in the development of the ideals of modern Japanese militarism, though it is going too far to suggest, as some have (e.g., Victoria 1997, 95), that *bushidō* is the single-most important causal factor to Imperial Way Zen. (See Ives 2001, 20)

2.2.1.3 *Kōdōzen* 公道禅: Imperial Way Zen

> As the [Meiji Restoration—*Meiji ishin* 明治維新] leadership grew more confident, it spread its authority in two very different if not contradictory directions made to look complementary. On the one hand it guided the education system to preserve the traditional values that had been the bulwark of social harmony... On the other hand, the government was determined to build itself up militarily to protect its prosperity... All of these factors came into play within the sphere of a single generation, seeding the Japanese soul with the makings of a mass neurosis of preoccupation with its own identity. Thereon hangs the tale of the spiritual environment that twentieth-century Japan inherited and whose symptoms were to provoke not only social upheavals and ideological nationalism in Japan but also to lay the foundations for its modern intellectual history. (Heisig, *Philosophers of Nothingness: An Essay on the Kyoto School*, pp. 10–11)

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[30] It should be noted once again that some elements of the use of Buddhist 'compassion' as a vehicle for violence can be found in earlier times, in Japan and elsewhere. Mujū Ichien 無住一円 (1227–1312) —considered by some as a 'voice for pluralism' in Kamakura Japan—speaks of the use of "sacred formulas to subdue one's opponent," which is done "for the sake of society and for the sake of others...in a resolve to show compassion and benefit sentient beings... Were the exorcist to act simply with the thought that the man was his enemy, this would be contrary to the spirit of his religious discipline and clearly a misdeed to hinder his spiritual progress" (Mujū 1985, 92; compare remarks of a similar nature by 'His Holiness' the 14th Dalai Lama Tenzin Gyatso, as quotred in Goldman 2003, 288–89).

Japanese nationalism, as virtually all aspects of modern Japan, was essentially born out of the Meiji Restoration (*Meiji ishin* 明治維新) of 1868—properly not a 'restoration' so much as "a complete revolution, which affected all levels of society."[31] In what surely remains a unique historical event, a self-appointed new government in that year effectively invented a modern nation out of what was largely a feudal assemblage of warring states. This invention involved not only the centralization of authority, both literally and symbolically, in the Emperor, but also the drive to modernize Japan—to create an industrial and military power to rival those of the West. Among other scholars, Najita and Harootunian (1986, 208) note the deep and abiding ambiguity at the heart of the Restoration, "between the capacity of an indigenous culture to withstand change and the claims of new knowledge demanding transformation."[32] Some *bakumatsu* 幕末 (i.e., late-Tokugawa period) intellectuals such as Sakuma Shōzan 佐久間象山 (1811–1864) had already preached the social doctrine of *tōyō dōtoku seiyō gakugei (or geijutsu)* 東洋道徳西洋学芸(芸術)—'Eastern ethos and Western technologies' (see Pyle 1986, 106). In the period leading up to the Restoration, this idea was developed further by political activists such as Hashimoto Sanai 橋本左内 (1831–1859) and Yokoi Shōnan 横井小楠 (1809–1869), both of whom

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[31] Nishijima 1997,3. — Indeed, the Japanese term *ishin* 維新 (lit., 'new ties') implies something more radical and transformative than the Engish 'Restoration'. See Sharf (1994, 47) for remarks on the paradox of modern nationalism: "As nationalist representations of self are inevitably constructed in dialectical tension with the foreign 'other', the nationalist promise to restore cultural 'purity' is always necessarily empty."

[32] "On the one hand, the Meiji restorers announced, in the opening decree proclaiming the Restoration, that the aim of the new policy was to return to the 'events of antiquity and the Jimmu emperor's state foundation.' This meant returning to origins, a mythical time before Japan had been corrupted by Buddhism and Chinese civilization, and to the unalloyed practices of native experience. Yet at the same time, the new government declared in the Charter Oath its determination to 'search for new knowledge throughout the world' and to 'eliminate old customs' 'based on the universal way'" (Najita and Harootunian 1986, 208). — See also Wakabayashi 1998, 3.

eventually fell victim to assassination (see Hirakawa 1998, 42). Yet for all the ambiguity, the early years of the Restoration were characterized by a remarkable openness to Western ideas as well as technologies.[33]

Indeed, the legacy left by the Meiji Restoration was mixed, almost 'schizophrenic', in the popular understanding of the term, yet deep enough that it lingers in the cultural air of Japan even today, almost a century and a half later. However, the driving impulse of the Meiji reformers was itself not foreign to Japanese tradition: 'reform' here meant, as it always had in the Japanese context, borrowing, adapting, and reshaping what was considered best from the 'highest' cultures. If in the past this role had been played by China (and perhaps even, through Buddhism, India), after 1868 it had clearly become the West. This reform was also, like the earlier ones, intended to make Japan stronger economically, militarily, and culturally—as well as more 'modern'. However, whatever seemingly liberal appeals to tolerance and self-criticism may have existed in the minds of the early reformers, this critical spirit was, by the mid-1870s, considerably blunted. Earlier progressive reforms were nullified, dissidents silenced, and the ranks of the elite were closed once again.[34] Indeed, the solidification of the growing conservatism of Meiji times

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[33] It is interesting to note that once the antiforeign loyalists had toppled the Tokugawa *bakufu* and seized power themselves, they immediately proclaimed a policy of peace and opened the country to foreign trade and diplomatic intercourse. As has been noted, this fact exposed the slogan 'revere the emperor, expel the barbarians' (*sonnō jōi* 尊王攘夷) for what it actually was—a catchphrase devoid of meaningful content that was used to unite and mobilize the energies of dissident samurai activists.

[34] Of course, post-revolutionary conservatism is nothing new (see e.g., France, ca. 1793; Russia, ca. 1925). The phrase 'Meiji conservatism' is often used as a way to characterize the period immediately following the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, but the use of the term 'conservatism' masks the complexity of the ferment within Japanese intellectual circles at the time. For one thing, it should be noted that the kind of organic culturalism propounded by most conservatives at the time and into the 20th century was not simply an anti-Western movement but itself borrowed heavily from conservative movements in the West,

can be dated to two specific documents: the 1889 Constitution (*Dai nihon teikoku kenpō* 大日本帝国憲法) and 1890 Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku chokugo* 教育勅語).[35] "These sacred texts enshrined the *kokutai* [国体], or 'national essence and polity,' that placed limits on legal and moral permissibility in Japan. Before 1889-90, Japanese thinkers enjoyed reasonable freedom to debate many sensitive issues.... After 1889-90, the number and scope of such disputable issues diminished" (Wakabayashi 1998, 11).

With the restoration of the Emperor came a desire on the part of some to restore to prominence the ostensible indigenous religion of Japan, Shintō. In the preceding Tokugawa period (1600–1868), the ruling shoguns had adopted Buddhism as the *de facto* state religion;[36] thus, some of the Meiji restorationists felt compelled to launch a sustained

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particularly those of a Romantic and historicist (ironically, even relativist) tendency (e.g., the concept of *kazoku kokka* 家族国家 or 'family-state'; see Duus and Scheiner 1986, 148).

[35] "The Charter Oath [*Gokajō no goseimon* 五箇条の御誓文] issued in 1868 and the Imperial Rescript on Education promulgated in 1890 may be considered official proclamations that mark the beginning and end of an era" (Hirakawa 1998, 94). "The Imperial Rescript on Education and narrow patriotism that it spawned over time made for less, not more, openness. The rescript prescribed national morality based on state Shintō, the imperial family state, and the *kokutai*. In the 1870s, Fukuzawa Yukichi and Katō Hiroyuki had used this term to denote 'nationality' or 'a nation's sovereignty'. Likewise Shiga Shigetaka coined *kokusai* to translate 'nationality'. Thus some key Meiji thinkers spoke of *kokutai* and *kokusai* in a general sense. The Japanese had *a* national polity and essence worth preserving, as did other peoples. But after the 1889-90 watershed *kokutai* became *the* national polity and essence that made Japan not only different but also better than other lands—and defense of Amaterasu's divine imperial line became its categorial imperative. Rather than try to share more in common with the world, the Japanese began to exalt peculiarities that set themselves apart.... Popular and scholarly works on the Japanese national character written between 1925 and 1945 show a fixation with traits like 'Yamato spirit and 'bushidō'" (Wakabayashi 1998, 13–14). — See Minami 1994, 137–83; Najita and Harootunian 1998, 210–11; Ito 1889 for a translation of the 1889 Constitution and Bellah 1970a, 106, for a translation of the Imperial Rescript of 1890.

[36] In Tokugawa Japan, "religion supplied a context of ultimate meaning to the central value system through the fact that the primary collectivities in the society—the nation and the family—were conceived as religious as well as secular bodies.... Acting in closest accord with the political values of the society, that is, giving one's full devotion to one's particularistic superiors, and expressing this devotion in vigorous and continous performance with respect to the collective goal, was seen as the best means to acquire the approval and protection of divine beings or to attain some form of harmony with ultimate reality. It was precisely the attainment of such approval and protection of divinities or of a state of enlightenment which was the best way to handle the basic frustrations and anxieties of existence" (Bellah 1957, 39–40).

critique of Buddhism as non-Japanese, under the slogan "*Haibutsu kishaku*!" (lit. "Throw away Buddha and abolish Śākyamuni!") (King 1991, 787; Nishijima 1997, 15–16). However, as its would-be persecutors quickly discovered, Buddhism had been in Japan for over 1300 years, and was not about to be disestablished without severe disruptions to the national fabric (see Horton 1963, 127–28). After a short period of severe persecution (1868–73), the government generally abandoned its zero tolerance towards Buddhism. Thus, official attitudes towards Buddhism and the specific relations between Buddhism and Shinto shifted much during the final years of the 19th century,[37] while "the Buddhist world was buffeted and tossed about by the policies of the government" (Ishikawa 1998, 88). Even after the end of the initial burst of persecution, the growing nationalism of the period placed increasing pressure on Buddhism to prove itself as a truly national religion. As Victoria notes, "If only to protect itself, the Buddhist response was to embrace the nationalistic fervor of the day as its own" (Victoria 2001, 19). In 1889, Buddhist leaders from all of Japan's major sects joined to create the United Movement for Revering the

[37] The larger historical and doctrinal relations between Buddhism and Shintō are complex. The sense of insecurity felt by many Buddhist leaders vis-à-vis the Shintō establishment in the early Meiji period seems to have contributed to their growing desire to appear nationalistic and distance themselves squarely from truly 'foreign' religions—i.e., Christianity. Also, the close connection of so-called State Shintō (*kokka Shintō* 国家神道) to the Imperial ideology—which led, among other things, to the spectacle of Hirohito's denying his divinity in a postwar radio address— has further obscured the relation of Buddhism to prewar and wartime militarism, by allowing postwar Buddhists supported by official SCAP postwar policy to lay primary, if not sole, responsibility on State Shintō. However, as Victoria notes, "[w]hile not discounting the impact of the emperor-related cultic practices it promoted (especially within the educational system), it is nevertheless true that, as missionaries had earlier charged, Shintō was an 'almost creedless religion'"—thus needed to be "filled" by doctrines which came from elsewhere, including Buddhism. Moreover, "because State Shintō-affiliated priests were 'non-religious', they were forbidden from spreading, at least by word, the new nationalism among the populace. That job was left to public school educators in the first instance and the approximately 200,000 Buddhist priests in some 70,000 temples scattered throughout Japan even after the demise of the Great Doctrine movement in 1875" (Victoria 2000, 8–9).

Emperor and Worshipping the Buddha (*Sonno Hōbutsu Daidōdan* 尊王奉仏大同断),[38] and actively participated in whipping up nationalist sentiment through the 'Great Teaching' (*Daikyō* 大教) campaign of 1871, in which 80 percent of 'doctrinal instructors' were Buddhist priests. (Victoria 2002, 8) As Victoria notes,

> In understanding why the government, despite misgivings, had to rely so heavily on Buddhist priests to promote nationalism among the populace, it is necessary to understand that unlike the usually small, mostly unattended Shinto shrines scattered throughout rural Japan, every village, no matter how small, had one or more Buddhist temples with resident Buddhist priests. This was a carry-over from the Tokugawa period (1600–1867) when every Japanese family was required to register at a nearby Buddhist temple as proof they were not Christians. As a result, Buddhism enjoyed a monopoly on funerary and ancestor veneration rites. This monopoly on matters relating to death became increasingly important as Imperial Japan employed the military to expand its overseas empire. (Victoria 2002, 8)

In 1894, Japan and China became engaged in a war over the Korean peninsula. Thus began a period of intermittent hostilities between the two countries that would last for

[38] Whose intent was "to preserve the prosperity of the Imperial Household and increase the power of Buddhism. The result will be the perfection of the well-being of the Great Empire of Japan... The time-honored spiritual foundation of our empire is the Imperial Household and Buddhism" (quoted in Victoria 1997, 18).

fifty years; its impact can still be felt today.[39] Within Japan, response to the outbreak of war was enthusiastic on virtually all sides of the socio-political spectrum. The Meiji regime, supported by intellectuals and public figures of all stripes, had for some time been propagating the notion of a 'Japanese essence' connected with loyalty to the nation and Emperor. This ideology, which came to be called 'Japanism' (*Nihon-shugi* 日本主義 or *Nihon-jinron* 日本人論),[40] denoted a belief in the cultural, spiritual, military, and sometimes, in its more extreme forms, racial superiority of the Japanese people. Within the rhetoric of Japanism, foreign ideals were not simply rejected, but severely criticized as both inferior and dangerous. Japanese people were urged to follow the Japanese way of life, and to avoid all other—especially Western—ways.

Given the above, it is hardly surprising that it was around the time of the Sino-Japanese War that the particular phenomenon of "Zen nationalism" became apparent for the first time. A young D. T. Suzuki wrote:

> There is a violent country [i.e., China], and insofar as it obstructs our commerce and infringes upon our rights, it directly interrupts the progress of all humankind. In the name of religion, our country refuses to submit itself to this. For this reason, unavoidably we have taken up arms. For the sake of justice and justice alone, we

[39] Literally, today. As I write these lines, in April 2005, Chinese mobs are demonstrating against Japanese 'failure' to acknowledge their aggressive history vis-à-vis China.

[40] The term came to prominence in 1897 due to the writings of nationalists like the writer and critic Takayama Chogyū 高山樗牛 (real name: Takyama Rinjirō 高山林次郎, 1871–1902), and scholars Kimura Takatarō 木村鷹太郎 (1870–1931) and Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944). Critical Buddhism's Matsumoto defines Japanism as "the location of ultimate or absolute value in Japan" (1997e, 357). See Kosaku 1994 for a lengthy analysis of *Nihon-jinron*.

> are simply chastising the country that represents injustice, and there is nothing else we seek. *This is a religious action.*[41]

Suzuki does not mince words. The war with China, he claims, is *not* a war for resources or an act of aggression: it is rather an act of righteous chastisement. As such, it must be seen as part of Japan's *religious* mandate, which clearly extends beyond its national borders and into the very lands from which Buddhism once came to Japan.

By 1904, Japan was again at war, this time fulfilling what just a generation before would have been a vain hope. Not only were the Imperial forces able to equitably battle a European power; they were able to hand the Russians a resounding defeat.[42] The boost this war gave to national pride was enormous: only a generation after the Restoration, Japan had officially become a world power. According to Ichikawa Hakugen 市川白弦 (1902–1986), one of the few postwar Japanese scholars to raise the issue of Zen complicity in militarism, during the Russo-Japanese conflict Imperial Way Zen grew apace with the boost to national confidence.[43] Around this time, Suzuki's earlier remarks about the religious underpinnings of Japanese military activity in China were given a more explicit

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[41] Quoted in Ives 1994, 17, emphasis mine. — Ives's translation of this particular passage has been challenged in a recent article by Hagiwara Takao (2001). While Hagiwara raises some good points about Western readings of Suzuki and Zen, this essay is marred, like Suzuki's own works, by a heavy-handed emphasis on 'East-West'-ism, and the familiar unsupportable contention that "the Western mindset is dualistic...that of the East or Japan, non-dualistic" (130).

[42] A defeat that so shocked and embarrassed the Tsarist regime that it had no small effect on the eventual success of the 1917 revolution in the country.

[43] See, especially, *Bukkyōsha no sensō sekinin* 仏教者の戦争責任 (The War Responsibility of Buddhists), published in 1970.

Buddhist foundation, as can be seen in the following remarks by Zen scholar-priest Inoue Enryō 井上圓了 (1858–1919):

> Buddhism is a teaching of compassion, a teaching for living human beings. Therefore, fighting on behalf of living human beings is in accord with the spirit of compassion. In the event hostilities break out between Japan and Russia, it is only natural that Buddhists should fight willingly, for what is this if not repaying the debt of gratitude we owe the Buddha? It goes without saying that this is a war to protect the state and sustain our fellow countrymen. Beyond that, however, it is the conduct of a Bodhisattva seeking to save untold millions of living souls throughout China and Korea from the jaws of death. Therefore Russia is not only the enemy of our country, it is also the enemy of the Buddha... [O]n the one hand this is a war of politics and on the other hand it is a war of religion. . . . If theirs is the army of God, then ours is the army of the Buddha. (Quoted in Victoria 2002, 10–11; see Nukariya 1913, xiii–xvi)

Yet it was not until the 1930s, when Japan again became engaged in outright hostilities with China in Manchuria, that the rhetoric of Imperial Way Zen reached its most virulent heights.[44] In 1934, Sōtō Zen priest Iida Tōin 飯田欓隠 (1863–1937) declared that, "There is no Buddha-Dharma apart from loyalty... The Imperial wind and the Buddha's

[44] As this matter is chronicled in great detail in Brian Victoria's works, especially *Zen at War* (1997), a few examples should suffice here.

sun are nondual" (quoted in Ives 1994, 18). Reflecting Suzuki's earlier remarks, Iida went on to urge Buddhists to relish "how much power Zen gave to the Way of the Warrior." Harada Sōgaku 原田祖岳 (1871–1961), a Sōtō Zen master who receives favourable treatment in a number of Western studies, wrote in 1939, "[If ordered to] march: tramp, tramp, or shoot: bang, bang. This is the manifestation of the highest Wisdom [of Enlightenment]. The unity of Zen and war of which I speak extends to the farthest reaches of the holy war [now under way]."[45] Harada's disciple, Yasutani Haku'un 安谷白雲 (1885–1973), carried on his master's transmission by noting that, when considering the precept

[45] Quoted in Victoria 1997, x. — See Harada's comments published in the magazine *Chūō Bukkyō* 中央仏教, in which he blandly conflates "fascist politics," the "Great Way of the Gods," and "Mahayana Zen" (quoted in Victoria 2002, 14). See also the critical work of Fujii Tadatoshi (2001). It might be useful to ask whether the Pacific War can be understood as a Shintō-Buddhist Holy War (Jp. *seisen* 聖戦) in the sense often used to refer to Christian and Muslim military ventures. According to James Turner Johnson, there are three distinct criteria for establishing whether a conflict can reasonably be called a Holy War: 1) That the war have a transcendent authority, either given directly from God or mediated through the religious institutions in some way; 2) That the war have a purpose directly associated with religion, wither its defense or its propagation or the establishment of a social order in accord with religious requirements; 3) That the war be waged by people who are in some sense set apart, whether culturally or morally or simply by membership in the religious community, from those against whom the war is waged. All of these conditions, with certain allowances made for the differences in Japanese and Western understandings of religion, are met by the Pacific War. On the flipside, for many Japanese writers at the time, the war was not precisely a Holy War so much as a "Just War." Many Japanese intellectuals—even those who did not see the conflict in religious terms—saw the so-called Fifteen Year War as a war of liberation, not only justified but necessary. Japan, as the self-proclaimed single remaining uncolonized nation of the East, was destined to break the shackles of Western—and particularly Anglo-Saxon—colonialism, liberating Asia into a realm of peace and freedom euphemistically dubbed the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere (*Dai tōa kyōei ken* 大東亜共栄圏). The authors of a work entitled *The Buddhist View of War* turn a phrase which bears striking accord with the mantra of many Western just war theorists: "The reason...for fighting a war is not to continue war, but to eliminate war." On this issue more analysis is required; such analysis should not only be descriptive but also critical and based less on a Western approach than ideals held within Buddhist and Japanese traditions themselves. Victoria (2003, 228–31) too-readily conflates the concepts of 'just' and 'holy' war—as if the former were *ipso facto* simply a euphemistic expression of the latter. The study of the ways in which Buddhism has been used in *all* contexts of violence, as well, of course, in contexts of peace, is an important chapter in the cross-cultural study of these phenomena. Certainly, much has already been written about Buddhist peace movements, whether they be of Thich Nhat Hanh or the 14th Dalai Lama. A study of Buddhist war—holy, just or otherwise interpreted—in its various historical manifestations would be an important chapter in a larger cross-cultural study of this important issue (see Schmithausen 1999, for a rare contribution to this topic).

that forbids the taking of life, "Those who understand the spirit of the Mahâyâna precepts should be able to answer the question immediately:

> That is to say, of course one should kill, killing as many as possible. One should, fighting hard, kill everyone in the enemy army...Failing to kill an evil man who ought to be killed, or destroying an enemy army that ought to be destroyed, would be to betray compasson and filial obedience, to break the precept forbidding the taking of life... In killing [the enemy] one should swallow one's tears, bearing in mind the truth of killing and not killing.[46]

Such comments as these, while not representative of any official Zen or Buddhist stance on the war effort, are not by any means unrepresentative of a very strong trend within Japanese Buddhism and Zen in the period up to and including the Second World War.[47] Indeed, Buddhism contributed a few slogans to the ultranationalist cause, including *shinzoku nitai* 真俗二諦 ('undivided obedience to religious and political institutions'), *chingo kokka* 鎮護国家 ('pacify and protect the country' through Buddhism), and *kôzen*

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[46] Yasutani 1943, 245–46; quoted in Victoria 2001, 18, including an exposé of Harada and Yasutani.

[47] See Yoshida 1970; Kashiwahara 1990; Victoria 1997; and Ives 1994, 2001. — While there were a few voices raised against this form of Buddhist militarism, even early critics like Ōtani Sonyū 大谷尊由 (1886–1939) eventually either fell silent or revoked their critical stance (see Victoria 2002, 15, for the case of Ōtani).

gokoku 公禅護国 ('protect the country by protecting Zen').[48] Besides propaganda activities (*kyōka undō* 教化運動), from the 1920s through the 1940s Buddhist priests and leaders,

> Organized and/or participated actively in patriotic groups; exhorted parishioners to 'serve the public' (*hōkō* 奉公) by enlisting, practicing austerity on the home front, and buying war bonds; engaged in monthly 'patriotic alms-begging' (*hōkoku takuhatsu gongyō* 報国托鉢勤行); donated temple funds for the construction of warplanes; ran officer-training programs; performed ceremonies and chanted sutras to promote Japanese victory; assisted the families of the war dead; served as chaplains for troops fighting overseas; and helped 'pacify' (*senbu* 宣撫) occupied and colonized areas and mold colonized Asians into imperial subjects (*kōminka* 皇民化). (Ives 2001, 16)

Precedent for thinking of Japanese military activity in terms of holy war had been earlier set by Tokugawa-era nativist or *kokugaku* 国学 scholars and was continued in later periods by promoters of so-called State Shintō. In *Shinmin no Michi* 臣民の道 (The Way of the Subject), a major government edict issued just four months before the 7 December, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, military ideologues dwelled on the direct descent of the emperor from the Sun Goddess Amaterasu and characterized the national polity as a 'theocracy' in which "the way of the subject is to be loyal to the Emperor in disregard of

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[48] Davis 1989, 306. Tsurumi Shunsuke, commenting on these slogans, asserts that the damage caused by such can be attributed to their "pseudo-assertive use and the habit of using words without properly understanding their meaning" (Tsurumi 1967).

self, thereby supporting the Imperial Throne coextensive with the Heavens and with the Earth."[49]

2.1.1.4 *Nihon-shugi* 日本主義: 'Japanism' and Nationalism

By the late nineteenth century, *bushidō* ethics had come to be wedded with the emerging ideology of *Nihon-shugi* 日本主義—or 'Japanism'—while at the same time institutional Buddhism was becoming more deeply embroiled in the culture of emergent nationalism. In his paper on "Buddhism and the Kami," Matsumoto defines *Nihon-shugi* as a theory espousing "the location of ultimate or absolute value in Japan" (1997e, 357). It could be argued that Japanism dates back at least to Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282), one of several highly successful Buddhist innovators of the Kamakura Period.[50] Though there are certainly precedents for the notion of Japanese cultural, spiritual and ethnic is not racial superiority dating back to very early contacts with foreigners, the ideology was more clearly formulated by the Shintō restorationist movement of the eighteenth century called *kokugaku*, spearheaded by so-called 'nativist' scholar Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–

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[49] Dower 1999, 277. As Dower puts it, "Filial piety and loyalty were the supreme virtues of the imperial state, and *Shinmin no Michi* was at pains to denounce the 'individualism, liberalism, utilitarianism, and materialism' that imperiled those virtues. Emperor Hirohito was sacrosanct. His war was holy. The virtues he embodied were unique and immutable" (Dower 1999, 277).

[50] A fierce prophet in the style of the biblical Isaiah and Ezekiel, Nichiren criticized the doctrines of the rival Jōdo 浄土 or Pure Land sect as fragmentary, objected to the cult of faith in Amida Buddha, ridiculed Shingon 真言 esotericism as superstitious nonsense, and derided Zen 禅 meditation as insufficent at best. He went further to insist that his own *Hokke* 法華 (*Lotus Sutra*-based) sect should be adopted as the state religion, calling on the government to suppress deviant doctrine and establish Japan as the 'Land of Truth'. Moreover, Nichiren believed that this Truth would subsequently spread from Japan to embrace the whole world, reversing the spiritual decline of the day (*mappō* 末法) and ushering forth the Pure Land of Śākyamuni Buddha on earth.

1801).[51] There are many factors involved in the development of the *kokugaku* 国学 movement, such as the increasing power and threat of Western culture (including Western technology), and the penetration of neo-Confucianism in Japan from China.[52] During this period the West effectively replaced China as the Other (presumed to be in some ways superior) culture against which Japan would come to define itself—both with and against. As had been the case with China, "it was the representation of the 'other' that clarified for the Japanese the essence of their own culture.... If the 'other' defined what was exceptional in Japanese culture, it also offered a model of excellence against which such distinctiveness could be measured" (Najita and Harootunian 1998, 207). Whatever its ultimate origins, by the early 20th century Japanism had emerged as shorthand for the nationalistic understanding of Japanese cultural superiority, and was subsequently channeled into the war effort, leading to a kind of 'manifest destiny' approach to military conquest.

Despite the relatively liberal cultural and intellectual climate of the period which later came to be known (rather wistfully) as 'Taisho democracy', the first decades of the

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[51] See Blocker and Starling 2001, 106, for an analysis of Motoori as a "Shinto fundamentalist." — Along with others, such as Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤 (1776–1843), Motoori often used Buddhism as a foil for their arguments about the true Japanese spirit. The latter's *Tamadasuki* 玉襷 (1832), in attempting to show how neglect of the ancient ways led to the decline of the Imperial institution, cites Buddhism as the chief agent for this neglect, listing off the many sins of Buddhism in Japan (e.g., undermining filiality, opposing the naturalness of the passions, and undermining family harmony, trust among friends and servants). See Harootunian 1988, 221.

[52] Ironically, the very impetus for a return to *kokugaku* or 'national learning' may have itself come from China, since during the Qing Dynasty 清王朝 (Jp. *Shin ōchō*, c.1644–1912) many Chinese Confucianists called for a purification of Confucianism, which meant rejecting the 'foreign' (i.e., especially Buddhist, but even Taoist) elements of the neo-Confucianism of the earlier Song 宋 (Jp. *Sō*, 960–1279) and Ming 明 (Jp. *Min*, 1368–c. 1644) dynasties—e.g., the writings of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529). See Blocker and Starling 2001, 72.

20th century saw continued resistance on the part of nationalistic groups to the incursion of foreign ideas and values, with the 1889–90 watershed documents frequently cited as support for the Japanist vision of the nation. By the mid-1930s, support for such a vision had grown considerably, though, as Najita and Harootunian note, there remained a stalwart few who, unwilling to abandon the Taisho legacy, attempted to construct a more moderate model for modern Japan, in which the Japanese contribution to global culture, while significant, was not by any means unique or superior to that of other nations. By the late 1930s, these moderate voices were lost amid the rising tide of nationalism.[53] "Whereas an earlier cosmopolitanism promoted the ideal of cultural diversity and equivalence based on the principle of a common humanity, which served also to restrain excessive claims to exceptionalism, the new culturalism of the 1930s proposed that Japan was appointed to lead the world to a higher level of cultural synthesis that surpassed Western modernism itself" (Najita and Harootunian 1998, 208).[54]

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[53] "Many believed that by realizing the best of East and West, Japan had achieved a new cosmopolitan culture. The recognition of having achieved this unprecedented synthesis validated the subsequent belief that Japan was uniquely qualified to assume leadership in Asia, although much of the rhetoric that writers used referred to the world at large" (Najita and Harootunian 1998, 208).

[54] Najita and Harootunian 1998, 208. — It is important to note, as Barshay (1998, 247) reminds us, that the phenomenon of Japanism "did not begin simply as an exercise in national self-celebration but was a product of 'shock'"—or, one might say, an understandable desire for self-justification in the face of threats both real and perceived. In the 1990s, after the collapse of the 'bubble' economy, followed closely by the Great Hanshin earthquake and the Aum Shinrikyo sarin gas incident, *Nihon-shugi* all but disappeared from the cultural scene, replaced by what Barshay calls a "classic malaise" (247). Also significant is the impact of economic growth on cultural movements such as Japanism and related trends in other Asian countries. In the past fifteen years the so-called Asian tigers have modernized at a rate unthinkable to Western nations like the USA or Germany (or, lately, even Japan). Along with this rapid growth (recently stalled but not reversed) came the inevitable rhetoric of Asian cultural/spiritual superiority over the 'decadent' and declining West. This attitude was famously encapsulated by former President Matathir of Malaysia, chief proponent, along with Lee Kuan Kew of Singapore, of Asian values', who proclaimed to the heads of European governments in 1996: "Asian values are universal values. European values are European values."

In short, this vision emphasized that Japan had a special, divinely inspired mandate to guide other Asian nations to 'enlightenment', and that it was Japan's duty as the 'big brother' of Asia to save its siblings from the rampaging West—a threat which while exaggerated for polemical purposes was unquestionably real.[55] In order to fulfill this mission, however, Japan was forced to absorb Western technology, while attempting to retain its own cultural and spiritual assets. Accompanying this sense of political mission came an emphasis on the essential similarity of the 'Yamato race' (*yamato minzoku* 大和民族) or the '100 million' (*ichioku* 一億), i.e., the Japanese people. (see Najita and Harootunian 1991, 208–9)

The intellectual shift from mid-Taisho to the 1930s was a shift from cosmopolitanism to what was called 'culturalism' (*bunkashugi* 文化主義)—a term which refers not only to the views of the radical right and military ideologues, but also to many pronouncements coming from mainstream intellectuals, writers, religious and political leaders. More complex than simply a superficial ideology to justify military expansion, proponents of this 1930s culturalism quite earnestly—one might say, naïvely—sought a definition and understanding of modern Japanese culture and the values undergirding such (Najita and Harootunian 1998, 232–33). Within this intellectual trend we see a highly romantic spirit; not least in the contrast between 'culture' (meaning creative self-realization, depth of spirit, and aesthetic value) vs. 'civilization' (meaning the rational,

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[55] As Arisaka Yōko 有坂陽子 notes (1996, 1), despite the recent apologies on the part of Japanese politicians for wartime aggression and atrocities in Asia, justification of the war as the "'liberation of Asia from Western imperial powers' still enjoys considerable support among the conservative sector of society today." — See also Sanger 1995 and Oe 1995.

material, pragmatic, but ultimately spiritually vacuous wisdom of the modern industrial West).

Indeed, the influence of Western idealist philosophies in late-19th and early-20th century Japan can hardly be overemphasized. After the Restoration, Western philosophy—specifically German thought—was, somewhat ironically, among the main imports that helped to shape modern Japanese nationalism. This became especially true in the 1890s, after the Imperial Rescript on Education was issued. Basil Hall Chamberlain's *Things Japanese* (1890) and Miyake Setsurei's *Shinzenbi Nipponjin* 真善美日本人 (The Japanese: Truth, Goodness and Beauty, 1891)[56] are classic statements of Japanism. Takayama Chogyū, one of the main spokesmen of the *kokusui hozon* 国粋保存 (Preservation of the National Essence) movement, whose "first aim was to enhance the aspiration for establishing an empire," recognized the importance of Hegel for Japanese nationalist ideology: "The individual had to reach his fulfillment through the state."[57] Hegel's work also had an impact on Okakura Tenshin (1862–1913), the fierce critic of Japan's westernization who called for a joint Asian defense against Western imperialism, under the motto: "Our recovery is consciousness...Our remedy is the sword."[58] Contemporary critic

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[56] Miyake Setsurei's 三宅雪嶺 (1860–1945) founded the *Seikyousha* 政教社 (Political Teaching Alliance) in 1888, as well as the journal *Nihon-jin* 日本人.

[57] Quoted in Piovesana 1969, 238–39. See above, note 40, for more on Takayama.

[58] Art historian Okakura Tenshin 岡倉天心 (born Okakura Kakuzō 岡倉覚三, 1862–1913), author of *The Ideals of the East* (1902) and *The Book of Tea* (1903) was perhaps the first, long before D. T. Suzuki and Watsuji Tetsurō, to pronounce upon the cultural distinctiveness and superiority of Asian culture, within which Japan was of course the "key to this great cultural code." After all, Japan alone among Asian nations had assimilated the Asian love for "grand visions of universal sweep grounded in the concrete and particular" and the Western propensity for "science and organized culture armed in all its array of undifferentiated knowledge, and keen with the edge of competitive energy" (quoted in Najita and Harootunian 1998, 211–12).

Kuno Osamu 久野治 has outlined how German sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies' writings on the distinction between *Gesellschaft* and *Gemeinschaft* were adopted in the 20th century by a number of Japanese thinkers, "because the relatively simple description of social development leading from an agrarian community to a state-like society appeared suitable for Japan's contemporary needs."[59]

Matsumoto Shirō argues that one of the key documents in the establishment of Japanism as an entrenched ideology was the *Kokutai no hongi* 国体の本義 (Cardinal Principles of the National Entity of Japan), published in March, 1937.[60] Significantly, the *Kokutai* does not reject Buddhism as a foreign religion, as might be expected given the growing Shintō-based nationalist spirit, but rather attempts to absorb Buddhism into a homogeneous Japanese spirit or essence—the *kokusui*.[61] Matsumoto also cites comments from Prime Minister Nakasone Yasuhiro 中曽根康弘 (leader from 1982–1987) and philosopher Umeharu Takeshi 梅原猛, both of whom insist that Buddhism was "adapted to the Japanese spirit" (Matsumoto 1997a, 364). In this way, the tension between Buddhism

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[59] Richter and Kitagawa 1996, 1028–30; Botz-Bornstein 2004, 156. In *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887), Ferdinand Tönnies (1855–1936) distinguished between two basic types of social groups, based on two basic forms of human will: the essential will, which is the underlying, organic, or instinctive driving force; and the arbitrary will, which is deliberative, purposive, and future or goal-oriented. Groups that form around essential will, in which membership is self-fulfilling, he called *Gemeinschaft* (often translated as community); those in which membership was sustained by some instrumental goal he termed *Gesellschaft* (often translated as society). See Tönnies 1957. — Botz-Bornstein further argues that Nishida Kitarō appears to adopt Tönnies 'organicist logic' about the formation of states in some of his later writings, very often with reference to the historical reality of *basho*. (Botz-Bornstein 2004, 156)

[60] See Hall 1974 [1949] for a translation of this document.

[61] As some writers have noted, this was a forbidding task indeed. "Given the polychromatic character of Japan's cultural past, it was difficult [for Japanese 'particularists' of the Meiji period] to identify this cultural essence [*kokusui*]...Unlike China, which boasted of an easily identifiable great tradition, Japan had none. Where then, were the Seikyōshu writers to find the *kokusui*—in the myths and legends of the Shintō tradition, in the sensibilities of Heian culture, in the harsh ethos of the warrior class, in the boisterous arts of Tokugawa townsmen, or in the austere puritanism of Tokugawa Confucianism?" (Duus and Scheiner 1998, 130-31)

and Shintō that had existed since the Restoration was largely diminished, but at the expense of the possibility of Buddhist criticism of government policies, at least at the institutional level. (See #3.7 for more on this, via-à-vis 'New Buddhism' [*shin bukkyō* 新仏教]).

After the war, of course, the outward expression of nationalism and Japanism became unacceptable. Yet, both during the war and after the Allied victory elements of the ideology of Japanism were frequently picked up wholesale and integrated into prevailing Western assumptions about "the Japanese mind" or "the oriental essence" (see Dower 1999, 79–80). In fact, it could be argued that Japanism did not in fact die, but was rather sublimated into the desire for economic and technological superiority. And, indeed, with the booming economy and expanding self-confidence of the nation in the 1970s and 1980s, *Nihon-shugi* made a spirited comeback. According to Harootunian (1988, 437), this more recent form of Japanism was,

> inaugurated in a context in which hopes for a genuine political democracy began to dim and massive economic expansion began to take off; it sought to turn people away from the disappointments of postwar democratic theory and practice to the blandishments of higher standards of living and consumption. The promise of nihonjinron as it self-consciously recycled the nativist vision of folklorism, was to restore everything that had 'eluded' the Japanese in a reconstituted unity…

Peter Dale describes the three major assumptions of proponents of this more recent form of Japanism: 1) "They assume that the Japanese constitute a culturally and socially homogeneous racial entity"; 2) "they presuppose that the Japanese differ radically from all other peoples;" and 3) "they are consciously nationalistic, displaying a conceptual and procedural hostility to any mode of analysis which might be seen to derive from external, non-Japanese sources." (Dale 1986, 5; see Bellah 2003)

2.3 Buddhism and Social Discrimination

> What is the icchantika? The icchantika cuts off all roots of good deeds and the mind does not call forth any association of good. Not even a bit of thought of good comes about. Anything like this never comes about in true emancipation.
> (*Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, p. 120)

Besides the matter of Buddhist contributions to political ideologies supportive of violence or warfare, another issue raised by CB is the more subtle but perhaps even more persistent problem of the role played by Japanese Buddhism in cultivating or sustaining attitudes and practices of social discrimination. Indeed, as mentioned above (see #1.2), the spark that gave birth to CB was the so-called Machida Affair, which revolved around the question of the *burakumin*—or outcastes of Japanese society. Machida's remark was an explicit denial that there is any such problem of discrimination or unfair treatment of *burakumin* 部落民 in modern Japanese society.[62] Yet, by all accounts, this claim appears to be far from the truth

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[62] *Burakumin* 部落民, lit. 'village folk', are more often referred to in Japanese history as *eta-hinin* 穢多非人 lit., 'polluted non-persons'—or occasionally simply *yotsu* 四つ, lit., 'four-legged ones'. The plight of Japan's so-called 'invisible race', numbering perhaps two to three million in 2004, has become publicized in recent decades, though, as with the Dalits in India, legislation eliminating discrimination *de jure* has not erased the

as Machida himself eventually realized. It is important to recognize, first, that any critique of Buddhist support of warfare or outright violence must also take into account the more subtle means of violence couched in social institutions or practices that support and even cause discrimination—what Engaged Buddhists along with their Liberation Theology cousins call 'structural violence'. Thus, one of the flaws of analyses like that of Brian Victoria may be the lack of recognition that peace, i.e., lack of warfare, does not always entail that a community or nation is good or just according to Buddhist ideals. At the same time, a Buddhist critique of social injustice and discrimination may require slightly different weapons than a Buddhist critique of violence, which may stick largely to an emphasis on the role of compassion in all Buddhist streams. Although E. F. Schumacher (1974) and David Brazier (2002) have argued that the Buddha himself provided workable blueprints for social and ecomonic reform, most scholars are less willing to grant that historical Buddhism, in its earlier or later forms, was quite so concerned with such matters; indeed, this may be one reason why *Saṅgha*-state relations seem to have come so naturally.

In Japan, it appears that Buddhism—Machida, Hakamaya and Matsumoto's Sōtō Zen sect in particular—has played a large role in supporting and maintaining a culture or systematic discrimation against *burakumin*, one that is only now slowly beginning to be eliminated. In response to recent pressure and very public criticism by the aggresively

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deeper *de facto* social discrimination against these people. In fact, and somewhat ironically, the very day I read Alldritt's article explaining how some *burakumin* have recently abandoned Buddhism for new religions such as Tenrikyô, which explicitly rejects the doctrine of karmically-driven rebirth (Alldritt 2000, 10), I came across a BBC article on the continuing phenomonon of mass conversions of Indian Dalits from Hinduism to Buddhism, for exactly the same reasons. See Khanna 2003. See also Bodiford 1996 and Alldritt 2000 for thorough reflections on the Buddhist aspect of discrimination against the *burakumamin*.

activist Buraku Liberation League,[63] the Sōtō sect has established a Human Rights Division to tackle the problem, focusing their efforts on the common practice of discriminatory necrologies and posthumous Buddhist names in particular.[64] Although mainly concerned with the issue of unfair treatment of the *burakumin*, it appears that women, the physically handicapped, and foreigners received similar treatment in Sōtō memorial registers. As Bodiford notes, the Machida incident and its aftermath helped to inspire a thorough reform within the Sōtō sect: "As the anti-discrimination campaign gained momentum it discredited the older generation of Sōtō leaders who had allied themselves with prewar notions of social hierarchy and class privilege, while helping empower the younger generation of Sōtō Zen activists in their attempt to make the sect face current issues of social and political injustice" (Bodiford 1996, 5). One tangible result of this has been the publication of a series of books by Komazawa University on topics such as "Religion and Discrimination," "Discrimination and Human Rights," "Religion and Human Rights," and "[Sōtō] Doctrines and Discrimination."[65]

How are we to account for this discriminatory tradition within Japanese Buddhism? On one level, again, we might simply ascribe it to forces of conservatism or syncretism: traditional cultural values from Shintō (e.g., purity rules and taboos concerning the handling of corpses and dead animals) having infiltrated Japanese Buddhism eventually solidified into practices that, over time, were no longer even questioned as being non-

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[63] The Buraku Liberation League (BLL; Jp. *buraku kaihō dōmei* 部落解放同盟) was founded in 1922, but given the circumstances of the period did not emerge as unified and effective social force until the 1960s.

[64] Bodiford 1996. See #2.2.1.1 for more on this.

[65] Respectively: *Shūkyō to sabetsu* 宗教と差別, 9 vols.; *Sabetsu to jinken* 差別と人権, 7 vols.; *Shūkyō to jinken* 宗教と人権, 3 vols.; and *Kyōgaku to sabetsu* 教学と差別, 2 vols. See Bodiford 1996, 6.

Buddhist. Yet this would be too simple, given that at least part of the discrimination against *burakumin* in Japan appears to have been imported from or strongly influenced by foreign customs, namely, the Indian caste-system. Since Buddhism was the primary source of Indian culture in East Asia and Japan, we can say that Buddhism itself—or at least some of Buddhism's own cultural baggage—played an important role in the development of the notion of Japanese outcastes. "[An] emphasis on purity and impurity had a long history in Japan associated with Shintō, yet the Buddhist doctrines invigorated and dogmatized this proclivity within Japanese society." (Alldritt 2000)

Yet, according to Leslie Alldritt (2000), despite the early influence of Buddhism and Indian cultural ideas, modern and existing practices of discrimination are in fact relatively new, in the sense that they evolved slowly over a long period and were affected by a wide variety of factors. "It was during the Tokugawa Period (1603–1867) that specific discriminatory policies arose toward the *burakumin*, and ... the *burakumin* became established as a discriminated-against group" (Alldritt 2000, 4). It was only during the 18th century that physical separation of such communities into the ghettos where many remain today, was first established. This was also the beginning of family registries that recorded the status of the so-called *eta* and *hinin*, which practice had the effect of formally codifying and in effect 'essentializing' outcaste status to a persona and family in perpetuity. "With the use of registries, the incidence of pollution within certain occupations became stigmatized and permanent in that not only was an individual deemed as inherently impure, but so too his or her family name" (Alldritt 2000, 5). Though not identical, this process of substantializing discrimination—making it 'real' in a way that had rarely been done

before—parallels the process happening in Europe and America at the same time (18th-19th centuries), whereby racism and discrimination based on sexual preference became, as it were, 'naturalized' for the first time. Indeed, the tendency to justify discrimination on the basis of 'nature' appears to be largely a modern conception, related no doubt to the rise of science as a discipline. Yet even here, Buddhist ideas play a supporting role, particularly the combination of the ancient doctrine of karma and the notion of *icchantika* (Jp. *issendai* 一闡提)[66]: whereas the former was frequently used to justify the fact of discrimination (just as it has been used in various Asian societies to 'explain' poverty or prostitution) in terms of a simple formula of 'just deserts', the latter has the perhaps more pernicious implication that some folks are simply beyond the pale when it comes to Buddhist liberation.[67]

2.4 "Breaking Out of a Ghostly Cave": Postwar Criticism

Let us conclude our discussion of the historical context that gave birth to CB by stating that the attempt at a critical appraisal of Showa culturalism and Imperial Way Buddhism/Zen (#1.2.1.3) on the part of Buddhist scholars did not originate with the work of Hakamaya and Matsumoto. Directly after the Pacific War, Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治

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[66] "Also translated into Chinese as *duanshangen* 斷善根 'one who has cut off the good roots' and *xinbujuzu* 信不具足 'lacking in the necessary faith'. A person whose roots of goodness are cut off and therefore cannot be saved. Someone who cannot attain enlightenment no matter how strenuously they practice. The term *icchan* originally refers to someone who is in a continual state of craving. In India the term refers to an Epicurean or a secularist. In Buddhism it refers to someone who lacks the basic causes and conditions for becoming a Buddha. The theory of the existence of such people was taught by the Yogācāra school. Buddhist schools such as Tiantai 天台, Huayan 華嚴 etc. disagreed with this theory, teaching that all beings can become buddhas. This becomes the source of debate in later East Asian Buddhism, and is discussed at length in the Buddha-nature Treatise (佛性論)." (C. Muller, DDB).

[67] See Matsumoto 1989, and Heine 2002. — More on this #3.4.

(1900–1990) wrote of the decline of Buddhism in modern times and the pressing need for "reform" (see Heisig 2001, 254–55); also Tanabe Hajime 田邊元 (1885–1962), in his *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (*Zangedō toshite no tetsugaku* 懺悔道としての哲学, 1946), provided an extended and highly personal reflection on what may have gone wrong with Buddhism and Japanese culture in the modern era. In 1958, Watanabe Shoko 渡辺照宏 wrote of "distorted views and a despicable professionalism," and of "'high priests' (*kōsō* 高僧) who, although they professed expressly good intentions, asserted absurd ideas because of a fundamental knowledge of Buddhism was lacking" (Watanabe 1964, 1–2). Watanabe's anger was directed not solely or even primarily at wartime collaborators but upon those whose seemingly good intentions helped pave the road to Hades—or, to properly contextualize the metaphor, to Nanking. Moreover, Watanabe proclaimed, "[I]f we do not make these points clear, we cannot grasp the essential nature of Japanese Buddhism" (3). Not unlike his more recent critical heirs, Matsumoto and Hakayama, Watanabe was determined to expose both the good and bad of Japanese Buddhism, while clearly acknowledging that he knew which was which. Unlike CB, however, Watanabe insisted, in a more Weberian spirit, that his task was ultimately 'objective'. (3–4)

2.4.1 Digging Deeper: Levels of Criticism

Understanding the historical context is of course crucial for any sustained reflection upon the issue of Buddhism and violence or social discrimination. Yet a reductionist contextualization can itself lead to hasty and often unwarranted conclusions. Robert Sharf,

one of the more astute and critical contemporary scholars of Asian Buddhism, argues that modern Zen as developed in the various writings of Zen-influenced philosophers like Nishida and Suzuki came to be conceived as a "mystical or spiritual gnosis that transcends sectarian boundaries." (Sharf 1994, 43). Such an understanding of Zen, Sharf argues, is quite distinct from anything preceding the Meiji period, and vastly different from what goes on in the regular Zen monastery to this day. Stuart Lachs makes the same point, suggesting that Suzuki in particular "promoted a non-traditional, modernist interpretation of Zen" by emphasizing a Zen "freed from its Mahayana Buddhist context, centered on a special kind of 'pure' experience and without the traditional Buddhist concern for morality" (Lachs 1994, 1). This view, according to Lachs, was taken up by the Kyoto School in an attempt to accentuate the aspects of Buddhism "that are both most different from Western traditions and most distinctively Japanese"[68]—an ironic twist, given that it is largely the modernist element of such an interpretation of Zen that has attracted so many Western Buddhists of the past several generations.

Yet, while it is important to recognize with Sharf and Lachs the transformations that have shaped 20th-century Zen and the influence of Japanese intellectuals and Western philosophy on those changes, their thesis of 'decline' has the corollary danger of suggesting that the modern lapses of Zen social ethics are historically anomalous—specific to a particular period of restlessness, cultural and spiritual anxiety, westernization/anti-

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[68] Lachs 1994, 1. — "This view has fostered in the West a widespread conception of Zen Buddhism as a tradition of exclusively cognitive import, inordinately preoccupied with the ideas of Sunyata, non-duality, and absolute nothingness but with little talk of karma, Marga (the path), compassion, or even the 'marvelous qualities' of Buddhahood. Such a view fails to give adequate attention to the positive disciplines, including morality, that comprised the lives of Buddhists, and easily leads one to think that Buddhists are unable to treat the ordinary world of human activity seriously" (Lachs 1994, 1).

westernization, and insurgent Japanese nationalism. Other commentators have made this suggestion even more strongly, with less nuance than Sharf.[69] In such a scenario, Zen becomes exempt from association with modern militarism not because it was blatantly *misused*, but because *Zen itself* had become corrupted by modern circumstances—including the pernicious effect of Western philosophy.

Brian Victoria, author of *Zen at War* (1997) and *Zen War Stories* (2003), is wary of such an interpretation of Zen militarism. He makes it quite clear that the development of Zen from the Meiji Restoration in 1868 up to the end of the Pacific War in 1945, while not entirely representative of the historical relationship between Zen and warfare, was also not entirely unique. "[T]he unity of Zen and the sword," he claims, "has deep roots in Zen Buddhist doctrine and history" (Victoria 1997, 11; see W. King 1994). Moreover,

> Questions related to the use of Buddhist doctrine to console both the living and the dead in wartime Japan cannot be dismissed as nothing more than a momentary aberration within the Buddhist tradition. If indeed Buddhist doctrine ... was "twisted," then that twisting is but one of many such examples in Buddhist history and remains as alive today as it was more than a thousand years ago. To deny this is to deny the unsettling reality that Buddhism, like other of the world's religions, has often justified, if not encouraged, the slaughter of human beings. (Victoria 2003, 162)

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[69] Peter Harvey, in a discussion of the Imperial Way Zen promoted by wartime Zen masters like Harada Sōgaku and Yasutani Haku'un, refers to such as "an amazing distortion of Buddhist values" (Harvey 2000, 270; see #2.2.1.3 for more on this). Yet. as Victoria (2001, 17) notes, Harvey fails to take the analysis any further than this simple statement.

Yet, despite his awareness, Victoria does not explore this issue beyond the modern period; more significantly, he fails to fully address the issue of the use or misuse of Buddhist doctrine in the promotion of warfare. Indeed, despite the many historical cases and incidents cited by Victoria, his work is limited, as he is quick to point out in personal communication and in the introduction to *Zen at War*, by the fact that he is a historian, not an ethicist, a philosopher, or a religious critic. Thus, while the tone of the book expresses an undisguised evaluation of Buddhist betrayal—or, as the author would have it, "emasculation"—of the Buddhadharma, Victoria is not willing to pursue just what this means in terms of Zen or Buddhism today. Clearly, he has taken sides on the issue, and his pacifist leanings are most evident. Yet, for all this he never actually states his own assumptions or biases; he never says why it is that the 'misuse' of Zen or Buddhism is, in fact, a 'misuse' at all—leaving this for the reader to determine, or simply assume with the author the moral high ground.[70] That is to say, the question of 'what', though very much infected with the question of 'how', stops short of a full exploration of 'why'. *Why* did these things come about? *Why* was Buddhism so easily 'manipulated' to suit Japanese militarism? Moreover, and most importantly, *what is to be done*?

Before turning to several theoretical attempts to resolve this problem, it should be noted that even during the height of militarism in Japan there were exceptions to the

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[70] To be fair, in his more recent publication, *Zen War Stories* (2003), Victoria stands by his 'moralistic' approach by suggesting, quite correctly, "Buddhism has been, from its inception more than 2,500 years ago, a profoundly moral religion, with no more important precept than abstention from taking life" (Victoria 2003, xiv). Yet just a few pages later he laments "Zen's long-standing and self-serving lack of interest in, or commitment to, Buddhism's ethical precepts" (16). The question remains: which is the 'real' or 'true' Buddhism/Zen? Or is should that question itself be rephrased?

general rule of Buddhist passivity or complicity. Beyond individual acts of resistance, the one that stands out most strongly is the so-called Youth League for Revitalizing Buddhism (*shinkō bukkyō seinen dōmei* 新興仏教青年同盟). Founded in 1931 by Senō Girō 妹尾義郎 (1889–1961), the Youth League, based on the principle that "the capitalist system generates suffering and, thus, violates the spirit of Buddhism," generally interpreted Buddhism as an atheistic and ethical religion. The League was active in working with poor farmers and supporting striking workers. However, in 1937 Senō was arrested and the League dissolved. The notion of 'Buddhist socialism' in Japan actually predates the League, however, having been suggested during the Meiji period by Takagi Kenmyō 高木顕明 (1864–1914) and Uchiyama Gudō 内山愚童 (1874–1911), the latter a Sōtō Zen priest who protested against rural poverty as "unjust and anti-Buddhist." As a result, he was arrested and executed on trumped up charges of plotting to assassinate the Emperor. (see Victoria 2003, 204–7; 1997, 66–73; Ishikawa 1998)

In the postwar years, several prominent Japanese scholars of Buddhism have attempted to deal with some of the deeper issues at stake here. Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一 (1889–1980), a student of Nishida Kitarō at Kyoto University and later Professor at Kyoto and Hanazono 花園 universities, was an outspoken critic of what he saw as Zen's ethical and political weaknesses. From early on in his career, Hisamatsu criticized Zen for what he saw as its undue emphasis on monasticism and *satori* 悟り, and its corresponding neglect of 'real-world' problems, making Hisamatsu in many ways a prophet of Engaged Buddhism. Hisamatsu ideas for reform centered on the practice of 'great compassion' (*mahākaruṇā*), which he felt had to be the central driving motif for Zen as for other

Buddhist streams. He frequently cites the priorities of the Fourfold Great Vow (*shigu seigan* 四弘誓願),[71] where the primary vow is to "save all sentient beings," and only thereafter comes the more individualistic vow to "extinguish the passions." However, rather than look at compassion as leading others to awakening, he felt that compassion had to mean the elimination of suffering at the earthly and not simply the existential or soteriological level. If this were not the case, that is, if Zen compassion continued to ignore "the world and history," in the end we will be left with "a forest Buddhism, temple Buddhism, at best, a Zen-monastery Buddhism," or, we might add, given the primary function of Japanese Buddhism today, a "funeral Buddhism." Ultimately, he argued, citing a Rinzai proverb, these false emphases lead to "Zen within a ghostly cave'". (quoted in Ives 1992, 68)

In the late 1940s, Hisamatsu founded a group called *Gakudō-dōjō* 学道道場 (Place for Study and Practice of the Way), which emphasized the oneness of scholarship and religious practice.[72] In 1958 the group became the F.A.S. society, adopting the following

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[71] **1.**衆生無辺誓願度しゅじょうむへんせいがんどたくさんの人が幸せになれるように勤める。
2.煩悩無尽誓願断ぼんのうむじんせいがんだん尽きる事のない煩悩を無くす。
3.法門無量誓願学ほうもんむりょうせいがんがく壮大なお釈迦様の教えをすべて学ぶ。
4.仏道無上誓願成ぶつどうむじょうせいがんじょう最上の悟りを得て仏様と同レベルに達する。
(http://www.tctv.ne.jp/tobifudo/newmon/okyo/siguseigan.html)

[72] "The word 'Gakudo' is derived from *Gakudoyojinshu*, a work of Dogen's. 'Do,' the Way, indicates man's fundamental awakening to Reality, which ... goes beyond the bounds of Buddhism. 'Gaku,' leaning, according to Dogen's way of thinking, can be said to mean to learn one's self, to forget one's self, and to be realized by all Dharmas. However, Gakudo is more clearly explained in the first sentence of 'Our Guiding Principles for Attaining Awakening,' which states, 'We are determined to attain awakening to the ultimate, great way through critical study and struggling practice, and thereby to participate in the honored work of creatively revitalizing the world.' 'The ultimate, great way' indicated the 'do' of 'Gakudo,' which is man's fundamental awakening beyond the limits of Buddhism. We made the ultimate, great way the basis from which we come and to which we go. Whether or not we call the 'fundamental awakening to Reality universal to man' the 'ultimate, great way,' such a great way does not exist anywhere objectively. It is the way to be experienced by each one of us with one's whole existence. This is expressed by the words gakkyu gyoshu, or critical study and struggling practice, in the first sentence of 'Our Guiding Principles.' Then what do we

basic principles: 1. Awakening to the **F**ormless Self (the "depth" dimension); 2. Standing on the standpoint of **A**ll Humankind (the "width" dimension); and 3. Creating History **S**upra-Historically (the "length" dimension) (Ives 1992, 72). Hisamatsu sought, as all good prophets, to bring Zen 'back to earth', which involved establishing (or re-establishing?) a "Zen for all people" (*taishūzen* 大衆禅). There is a forthright admission here—unlike in the work of, say, D. T. Suzuki—that in postwar Japanese society Zen had become irrelevant to the lives, if not the deaths, of the vast majority of Japanese people. As with CB, Hisamatsu's reformation of Zen is not simply about acting better, but includes a distinctively critical component that connects it with the practice of scholarship itself. To replace traditional forms of Zen practice or *sanzen* 参禅, Hisamatsu created something called *sōgo sankyū* 相互参究—"mutual inquiry." According to Hisamatsu, "True practitioners of Zen must study such areas as politics, economics, history and the natural sciences in order to understand more fully the issues facing humanity and to work out skillful means (*upāya*) in responding to them." (quoted in Ives 1992, 71)

Yet, for all his privileging of the ethical and social dimensions of Zen, Hisamatsu, as with his Kyoto School peers, ultimately manages to turn history and 'the political' into abstract categories bereft of substance.[73] Indeed, one could say that, in the end, Hisamatsu

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practice? We decided to practice zazen in the formal lotus posture. This does not mean though that we do zazen merely because it has been accepted and practiced in the Zen sect. We thought that zazen was one of the best ways for us to be thorough in realizing man's true way of being." (Abe 1996, 3).

[73] See #4.2-4.3 for more on the problem of history for Zen and the Kyoto School. See Ives (1992, 82–83) for a critique of Hisamatsu's lapses into tautology, especially with regard to the term 'postmodern'. Ives's reading of Hisamatsu's contribution is generally well-balanced, at least compared with Abe Masao's lofty claims for the work of his teacher. Lapsing into an extended panegyric, Abe unintentionally verges into the realm of the comic when he claims that, "Containing the philosophy of Awakening, his greeting of 'How are you?' inquires directy into the foundation of the other's existence and turns him towards the Awakening of

gets trapped in the entrance to what he had himself called the "ghostly cave," since it appears that in his scheme only upon mass awakening of individuals will our real-world problems of suffering and injustice be solved. This counters the Engaged Buddhist notion that ethical-political activity and engagement is either prior to, or inexorably related to, awakening itself and not its inevitable fruit.

Besides Hisamatsu, the clearest attempt by a postwar Japanese scholar to shed light on these matters is that of Ichikawa Hakugen 市川白弦 (1902–1986), in works such as *Zen to gendai shisō* 禅と現代思想 (Zen and Contemporary Thought, 1967) and the provocatively entitled *Bukkyōsha no sensō sekinin* 仏教者の戦争責任 (Buddhists' Responsibility for War, 1970). Himself a repentant nationalist, Ichikawa may have been the first to draw explicit connections between specific Zen ideas and what he saw were problematic ethical-political activities or passsivity in the face of injustice. On one level, Ichikawa's critique was levelled against the harmonization (*wagō* 和合) of Zen with Shintō and other streams of Japanese culture, a harmonization which, he felt, assimilated Zen into the modern socio-political structure and thus effectively destroyed its critical capacities (Ives 1992, n.91). He also was concerned to develop the notion of freedom within Zen—especially the contrast between what he refers to as "secular" or horizontal and "desecularized" or vertical freedom. (see Hirata 1994, 11)

Finally, Hakamaya and Matsumoto, following up on the work of Ichikawa, are much more willing than either Watanabe, Hisamatsu, Sharf or Victoria to pronounce upon

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himself"(Abe 1981, 26). More importantly, Abe tries to make Hisamatsu into a more orthodox Zen teacher—or, perhaps, a more orthodox Nishidan—than he appears to have been.

doctrines, ideas, schools and sects that they declare not only problematic or distorted, but decidedly 'non-Buddhist'. The goals of the Critical Buddhists are more encompassing than those of previous writers who have criticized Japanese Buddhist leaders and thinkers before, during, and after the Pacific War. Their objective is not simply to expose the particular problems of the past but to pave the way for a better future for Buddhism on the world stage. Thus, while the motivation and instigation for CB emerged out of the context of contemporary Japanese political culture, the focus of their research and ultimate conclusions is situated more squarely within (Japanese) Buddhist tradition, particularly Buddhist metaphysics and ethics. CB works with this precarious balance between history and philosophy: between the manifest realities of the present and recent past, on one hand, and long-standing cultural motifs and doctrines from earlier times, on the other. In order to comprehend the wide front from which CB makes war upon certain ideas and tendencies within Buddhist and Zen traditions, it is necessary to examine the specific philosophical and doctrinal debates in further detail. In this chapter, however, my task has been to provide some historical and political background and context for the philosophical analysis that will follow.

2.4.2 Historical Memory, Victor(ia)'s Justice

In the past decade, as books like *Rude Awakenings*, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, *The Rape of Nanking*, and *Zen at War*—most of them coming from the pens of Western scholars—have opened up new waves of criticism against religious and political figures and philosophical

schools of modern Japan, the authors and contributors to these works have themselves come under criticism. One of the most common charges, faced by Brian Victoria more than the others, is that such works display vestiges of orientalism. In other words, they are examples of 'moral colonialism'; i.e., the imposition of Western ideals and values on a non-Western culture and tradition; or 'victor's justice'—sometimes called by conservative commentators a "Tokyo War Crimes Trial view" of history. Before concluding this section, a few words about these charges are in order. This important issue bears at least cursory treatment in the body of this study, since it also relates closely to the work of the CB. The above charges are based on a deceptively simple premise: Japanese history, whether ancient, Meiji, or modern, cannot be adequately judged in light of Western moral standards.[74] On one level, charges of victor's justice and moral colonialism clearly emerge out of a heightened sensitivity in the past several decades towards orientalism in its many manifestations. Just to cite one case where this charge may be relevant: As a middle-class liberal North American with a bent towards pacifism and humanism, I, along with many of my academic peers, find the idea that killing someone or engaging in a brutal military campaign against another state could be a true manifestation of the 'Great Compassion' of the Buddha as nothing less than a monstrous misuse of a noble concept. Indeed, it may

[74] "The Tokyo [War Crimes] Trial, despite its defective procedures and complex political nature, had a deep, many-sided impact on the Japanese people and their view of the last war. Some right-wing opinion was highly critical, resentful, and angry, and never reflected on Japan's aggression...in academia, intellectuals of Marxist persuasion tended to dismiss the trial as a lost opportunity for deepening Japan's democratization, and as historically insignificant...[while] the majority of Japanese took a 'passive' attitude toward the accused national leaders, but also felt they had received a fair trial under the circumstances... More important, the Tokyo trial was never a straightforward adversarial proceeding, pitting victors against vanquished. The charge of 'victor's justice' leveled most vehemently by [Indian judge Radhabinod] Pal was and remains extremely simplistic, and has impeded understanding of what really happened" (Bix 2000, 612–13).

even be hard for us to believe that there could be any sincerity or real religious faith in what seem to be such obvious rationalizations for what appears to be wanton violence and mindless aggression. Indeed, we must and should be wary of simply importing specific values from our own Western tradition—whether they be Judeo-Christian or Enlightenment humanist—onto a very different culture and tradition with distinct values and ideals. Working in the lengthening shadow of several centuries of orientalism, it is entirely understandable when not only Japanese, but many Western scholars, burdened by the sins of their fathers, invoke the importance of cultural relativism and an 'insider's perspective'.[75]

Still, the charge of moral colonialism has its own limits and can be an extension of an over-active sensitivity to 'political correctness'.[76] At least with Victoria's work, the charge simply does not stick. Could not Victoria's moralizing tone come from the fact that he is—and has been for some time—a *Buddhist?* Victoria is hardly an armchair critic or

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[75] Indeed, the link between orientalism and the political nature of scholarship is key to understanding both orientalism itself and its analysis and criticism by Edward Said (1978) and others. Ultimately, orientalism is neither methodologically nor epistemologically 'wrong'—just based on values and political/racial ideas that are not generally held by those inside the academy today. Though we must always attempt to limit our prejudices, we cannot hope to erase them altogether (see Boon 1982).

[76] Moreover, sometimes the mandate of cultural relativism itself relies upon stereotypes and cross-cultural generalization, which have their root in the very fabric of orientalism that its proponents are trying to deconstruct. In order to effectively study the concept of holy war or the religious use of violence in a cross-cultural perspective, we must press beyond the tired Kiplinesque notion that 'East is East, West is West, and never the twain shall meet'. This is a form of rhetoric whose absurdity is only matched by its pesky resilience in the popular imagination, university classrooms, and in the politically correct wings of scholarship itself. Suzuki was perhaps the most prominent and tireless exponent of the essential differences between East and West. For him, as for countless followers of Beat Zen and its New Age offspring, this rift certainly favoured the East. Whereas the Western mind is among other things analytical, discriminative, inductive, individualistic, generalizing, impersonal, power-wielding, and self-assertive, the Eastern mind is inherently synthetic, integrative, deductive, nondogmatic, intuitive, spiritually individualistic and socially groupminded (see Sharf 1994, 48 n.13). As Sharf notes, this vision of the East, and Japan in particular, is "little more than a romantic inversion of Japanese negative stereotypes of the West" (48). We can and should be sensitive to cultural differences without allowing ourselves or others to use relativism as an easy mask for apologetics.

outsider, for all he may be a 'Westerner' by name and cultural heritage. But more so, despite the silence in the book itself, Victoria's sadness and sense of urgency regarding these matters has less to do with the smug superiority of a Christian missionary than with the sincere belief of a practicing Buddhist that Buddhism need not and should not be used in such a fashion as it was in Japan during the early 20th century. Victoria does not choose to cite Buddhist scriptures or ideas to refute those promulgated for military ends, but he certainly could do so. The assumption that only Western traditions can act as humanistic, pacifist, or human-rights-based critical buttresses is not only false, betraying a highly simplified and uncritical understanding of comparative religious ethics, it is also insulting to those working within such non-Western traditions to criticize existing structures of oppression, both Western and non-Western, and to analyze some of the more negative events in their own past.[77]

One thing *is* clear: Victoria's vision of history is tied to an interpretation of Buddhist ethics that privileges non-violence as the 'higher way'. But this in itself is hardly a Western bias, for it appears in literature from all countries in which Buddhism has flourished, from the ancient Jātaka tales through Śāntideva's *Bodhicaryāvatāra* to contemporary writings by the likes of Abe Masao, the 14th Dalai Lama, Thich Nhat Hanh and Sulak Sirvaksana. Indeed, many Asian Buddhists have understood their tradition as being, at its core, non-violent, and this has been used as a critical foil *against* the Western (i.e., Judeo-Christian-Islamic) way which, for all of its pledges of pacifism, has been

[77] On a related issue, Iris Chang, in the introduction to her exposé of *The Rape of Nanking* (1997), writes of criticism of her own work as 'Japan bashing': "[I]t does a disservice not only to the men, women, and children whose lives were taken at Nanking but to the Japanese people to say that any criticism of Japanese behavior at a certain time and place is criticism of the Japanese as a people" (Chang 1997, 13).

historically less than an ideal model for such. Perhaps Victoria would be wrong to assume (which he clearly does not) that Buddhism, as a general historical phenomenon, *has been* non-violent (just as it would be wrong to make that claim of any world religion). But he is certainly not wrong to make a Buddhist case for non-violence, one based on foundational texts and doctrines, just as one can and has been made for Christianity, in spite of the Crusades and the Inquisition.

Having said this, on one level critics of 'moral colonialism' may have unintentionally raised an important issue. A bigger problem may lie with the implication, in Victoria or in other writers, that ethics is the *core* of religion in general or even of a specific religion like Buddhism. Consider the following. At the recent World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, during a plenary meeting on religion, globalization, and peace, a certain religious leader was asked what could be done to overcome the widespread impression that religions contribute more to conflict than to peace. He quickly replied, "religious people must examine their own traditions with the firm intent to discover whether there are distortions and misrepresentations in those traditions that contribute more to enmity and strife than to charity and peace" (Little 2000, 1). While few would doubt the felicity of these words, such a statement assumes, with John Hick and countless other liberal theologians, that not only Christianity but all major religions are *essentially humanistic in their ethics*, and thus any historical deviations from this ethical path must be a 'misrepresentation' or 'distortion'.[78]

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[78] In the Preface to *Zen War Stories*, Victoria makes the point that his recent work "is not intended as a description of the nature of Zen (or Buddhism as a whole) in any theoretical or abstract sense," but rather "describes what a number of prominent Japanese Zen leaders *believed* or *interpreted* Zen to be" (Victoria 2003, xii).

The main problem with *Zen at War* is not a Western bias but rather a lack of a deeper, critical understanding of the meaning of what we call 'Buddhism'. Victoria at times seems to assume an essence to Buddhism, which transcends history (i.e., it is inherently non-violent and compassionate). This is where CB can add depth to Victoria's work, as I hope to show in the following chapters.

Chapter 3

THE ROOTS OF TOPICALISM

> One problem that the [Zen] tradition has not faced is a pronounced tendency not to recognize Zen doctrine *as* doctrine. Perhaps due to the influence of the 'no dependence' slogan, Zen Buddhists have tended to assume that traditional pronouncements about 'the Way' are something other than doctrine, and therefore not susceptible to critical thought. As long as ideas are naively thought to 'flow directly from experience' (or, in other traditions, directly from God), they will be held dogmatically. Although unreflective Zen is certainly possible, it is not desirable, and constitutes a self-imposed limitation that has, on occasion, weakened the tradition. In much of the tradition, of course, this has not occurred. Creative minds, deeply immersed in both 'one mind' and 'everyday mind', have transmitted a tradition to us that is in some sense unparalleled in its reflective and conceptual capacities.
>
> (Dale Wright, *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism*, p. 179)

Underlying all of the specific targets of the Critical Buddhists lies a more pervasive, underlying source: *topicalism*—for which Matsumoto employs a Sanskrit neologism, *dhātu-vāda*—a mode of understanding, expressing and living religiously in terms of (silent) mysticism and appeals to harmony and unity at the expense of (vocal) discrimination, logic, and criticism. This is in turn based on a assumption of *topos* as a singular place or locus which gives rise to a plurality of phenomena. In order to flesh out the meaning of topicalism, a more extensive analysis of CB with respect to the issue of religious syncretism, the doctrines of Buddha nature and original enlightenment, and Nishida's conception of 'pure experience' (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験) is necessary. All of this leads to the introduction and explication of an understanding of *topos* that better serves the purposes and goals of CB hermeneutics and praxis, and helps to clarify the more positive proposals extending from a counter-reading of *critica* vis-à-vis classical Buddhist doctrines of Emptiness, impermanence and *pratītya-samutpāda* (*engi* 縁起).

3.1 *Topos* as Monism: Socio-Ethical Implications

> Apart from a few anonymous monks who shared the sufferings of the people, Buddhism at the time [i.e., 18th century]—and all the way up to today—took the doctrine of original enlightenment as its foundation and from there encouraged people to accept their karma, giving 'all sorts of reasons as to why such intense sorrow need not bring them to grief'. The sermons of the Sōtō preachers on the *Shusōhgi*, expounding thehir 'knowledge' of the principle of cause and effect, thus led to a complete indifference towards 'others' and in this way supported oppressive controls over them.
>
> (Hakamaya Noriaki, "Thoughts on the Ideological Background of Social Discrimination," p. 354)

The main reason for Hakamaya and Matsumoto's disdain for topicalism, whether Buddhist or otherwise, stems from their suspicion that there is an inherent and inevitable link between a philosophy or religious system based on *topica* and socio-political ideologies of discrimination, exclusion and authoritarianism. While their criticism on this matter is directed mainly at Japanese religious leaders in the modern period, the connection can certainly be extended more broadly.[1] Indeed, modern nationalism and militarism, wherever they exist, often rely on ideologies that emphasize what might be called 'transcendent immanence', or—in Jacqueline Stone's words—"the sacralization of the status quo":[2] "Suffice it here to say that a recurring thread in authoritarian and conservative ideologies over the last four hundred years lies in an appeal to an all-encompassing or immanental ground, said to be manifested in the state, in social relations, or in one's given circumstances" (Stone 2001, 182). When looking to the work of twentieth century Western scholars and writers who have studied and felt a certain affinity for the 'East', this link is disturbingly evident, though varied in manifestation.[3] John James Clarke, after noting the

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[1] Though the cross-cultural implications of topicalism are not spelled out in any detail, Hakamaya and Matsumoto often assume the universality of the 'war' between *topica* and *critica*—a point that, for Jacqueline Stone, leads to the most glaring weaknesses of CB (Stone 2001, 181–82). — However, in their favour, it could be argued that such universalization must be understood as a broad heuristic employed *mutatis mutandis*, and need not be assumed to apply everywhere and in all cases in the same way.

[2] Though Tamura (1965, 467–69) has pointed out this element in the original enlightenment thought of Heian Tendai 天台 Buddhism, an "affirmation of reality" giving rise to "problems in the realm of ethics and practice," it does not appear to have had the broad social and ideological implications to be found in later periods. — See also Shimaji 1933, 473.

[3] "There is no doubt that enthusiasm for Zen, yoga, and Taoism have at times been associated with anti-intellectualist tendencies, with powerful reactions against Western scientific rationalism, and with the desire to find a truth that comes from an inner and often emotionally compulsive source. But in most of the cases the direction of interest was more towards the achievement of balance between Western and Eastern outlooks, on the need to integrate the intuitive with the rational, the inner with the outer, the esoteric with the exoteric..." (Clarke 1997, 199). — See also Batchelor in Mackenzie 2001, 146: "The attraction [of modern Westerner's to Buddhism] is often a romantic longing coupled with idealism... When I look back I can see

anti-Semitic and quasi-fascist utterances to which numerous orientalists (e.g., Tucci[4]) and orientophilic literary modernists (e.g., Pound, Yeats, Eliot) were prone, asks whether this connection is "entirely coincidental or adventitious": "Taking our cue from the earliest Romantic period, we might conjecture that the connection lay not so much in a direct or logical connection between orientalist and fascist attitudes, but rather in the fact that in both cases a robust assault had been mounted on certain established Western ideas and traditions" (1997, 194). Indeed, from the beginning of European Romanticism, a deep skepticism and harsh criticism of the modern Western paradigm took flight, only to find itself gliding, perhaps unaware, into the dark night of full-fledged anti-rationalist ideologies like Nazism and fascism. At the same time, Clarke's answer still evades an important issue: namely, what *are* the points of contact between orientalist, Romantic and fascist worldviews, and what does it *mean* to suggest that the connections are not merely coincidental or adventitious? These questions reflect significantly upon accusations by Critical Buddhists and others of Asian Buddhists' complicity with militarism and totalitarian regimes.

On one level, then, the critique of topicalism, and subsequent dismissal of Vico and his legacy, can be understood as a rejection of the perceived 'irrationalism' that beset

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that trait in myself, which was fed by the 1960s counter-culture. It was certainly a very sincere yearning, but I was caught up with a reaction against something you don't like, rather than a recognition of the values these traditions have" (Mackenzie 2001, 146).

[4] For Tucci, "the spiritual riches and psychological integrity" of the East were contrasted with "the artificial, rootless, and fragmented life of modern Europe" (Clarke 1997, 196). Tucci called for a more authentic existence and revealed a deep antagonism toward industrialization, urbanization, and—here he strays from more utopian Romantic visions—liberal democracy. As Clarke notes, these elements were "a means for coming to terms with modernity that echoed the fundamental agenda of fascist ideology"—both Japanese and European. See Lopez 1995, 182.

Japan from late Meiji through Showa, which, in the eyes of CB, has not entirely disappeared in postwar Japan. In this context, it is understandable that Hakamaya and Matsumoto would be wary of the West's seeming turn away from the spirit of the rationalist European Enlightenment to 'postmodernism', as well as the enthusiastic adoption of such among Japanese scholars, who bank on the newfound Western admiration for the so-called Eastern spirit. But the concerns of CB are by no means limited to a critique of wartime militarism or orientalism. These are offshoots of a deeper problem within Buddhism, rooted in some of the fundamental doctrines, movements and self-understandings within Buddhism tradition.

3.2 The Problem of Religious Intermingling

> Especially by Tokugawa times so much borrowing had occurred between the various major religions that one can abstract out certain elements which are nearly universal and label these 'Japanese religion'. In the national and family religions all the great religious traditions were represented and almost inseparably fused. Confucianism and Shinto had borrowed Buddhist metaphysics and psychology; Buddhism and Shinto had borrowed much of Confucian ethics; and Confucianism and Buddhism had been rather thoroughly Japanized.
> (Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*, p. 59)

Besides the impact of relatively self-contained modern ideologies such as Tokugawa *bushidō* (see #2.2.1.2) and Meiji-Showa *Nihonshugi* (see #2.2.1.4), we must note the complex role of religious syncretism on the historical development of Buddhism in Japan. Buddhism is of course a foreign religion to Japan, but the transplant has been so thoroughly intertwined with its cultural hosts that it is extremely difficult at times to

distinguish them, let alone tear them apart. Moreover, by the time it reached the island of Kyūshū by way of the Korean peninsula around 550 CE, Buddhism had already been transformed considerably by translation from Pali and Sanskrit into Chinese and Korean languages and cultures. It is thus impossible to isolate an originary 'Buddhism' separate from cultural 'distortions'. Watanabe Shōko, perhaps overreacting to the Japanese tradition of understanding their own particular 'transmission' as the true culmination of the teachings of Śākyamuni, makes the bold claim that "the greater part of the Japanese, instead of arriving at an objective apprehension of foreign [Chinese/Indian] culture as such, desired more to select (from foreign culture), according to a subjective standard, only what was convenient for them" (Watanabe 1964, 13). This is undoubtedly harsh, but it does point to the dilemma of what it means to be a 'culture of assimilation'. Particularly pertinent here is Watanabe's assertion that 'we'—that is, we comparative scholars and/or self-reflective moderns—"cannot say at all that Japanese Buddhism, which has been transformed by misunderstanding and insufficient knowledge, is the essence of Buddhism" (13). There is, for Watanabe (and perhaps CB), something called Buddhism as a whole, the multiform tradition that contains both good and bad, better and worse; and there is real or true Buddhism—which has an *essence*, and one that is presumably 'good'. Moreover, even if it were possible to resurrect such an originary Buddhism, would such have any relevance to the contemporary world, or would it be virtually unintelligible? What does seem clear is that a major transformation occurred as early as the switch from Pali to Sanskrit as the 'official' vehicle for Buddhist expression. Indeed, those writers who continue to make appeals to originary Buddhism (e.g., Coleman 2001; Batchelor 1994) are ironically more

often than not calling for a return to a form of Buddhism no doubt already transfigured from its original forms.[5]

Much of the blame for the recurrence, and in their eyes, ultimate hegemony, of topicalism in the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition is placed by Hakamaya and Matsumoto precisely on religio-cultural intermingling and syncretism, often connected to a penchant in both Chinese and Japanese (and even Indian) cultures for preaching 'tolerance' or 'harmony' among varying religious paths. The argument here cannot be that borrowing is in itself defiling (after all, CB clearly borrows from Western philosophy and Enlightenment humanism), but rather that elements *foreign to their standard of criticism*—e.g., Chinese *tao* 道[6]; Shintō *wa* 和[7]; Vichian *topos* (Jp. *basho* 場所)[8]; Nishida's 'pure experience' (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験)[9]; Weberian 'objectivity'[10]; German

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[5] In a recent review of *The New Buddhism* (2001) by James Coleman, Peter Gregory takes the author to task for his originalist presumptions: "In a representative passage, Coleman asserts: 'Buddhism as refracted through the prism of late Western modernity certainly bears a family resemblance to all its Asian ancestors, yet the most striking likeness [of the new Buddhism] is to the original 'Buddhism' Siddhartha Gautama first taught in India over two millennia ago.' As a historical claim, this statement is preposterous. Aside from the difficulty, if not sheer impossibility, of determining the 'original' Buddhism taught by Siddhartha Gautama, this statement flies in the face of everything that is now known about early Buddhism, which began as a renunciatory, celibate movement. Indeed, it would be hard to imagine an ethos that could be more different from that of the new Buddhism Coleman seeks to describe" (Gregory 2001, 108). See also Van Meter Ames: "Bodhidharma personifies the fact that Zen in China was more of a slow-won recovery of essential Buddhism than a departure from it" (Ames 1960, 5).

[6] See Hakamaya 1990a, 25–35 (trans. 1997a, 70–77); Hubbard 1997, 82, 92–95, 110;

[7] See Hakamaya 1990a, 110, 118 (trans. 1997b, 123, 128), 275–304; Matsumoto 1989, 102 (trans. With additions, 1997d, 360–64); Swanson 1997, 16–19.

[8] See Hakamaya 1990a, 3–46 (trans. 1997a, 56–80); Swanson 1997, 13, 15; Hubbard 1997, 81–112.

[9] See Hakamaya 1990a, 71–86.

[10] See Hakamaya 1990a, 95–97 (trans. 1997b, 114–15); Matsumoto 1989, 99–100 (trans. 1997d, 356, 358).

Idealism (Jp. *doitsu kannenron* ドイツ観念論)[11]; so-called 'postmodern relativism' (Jp. *posutomodan sōtairon* ポストモダン相対論)[12]—have all worked in various ways to render much of Japanese Buddhism, along with modern Japanese thought in general, non- or anti-Buddhist. This requires further explanation.

An indisputable fact of history is that the importation of any religion into a new cultural matrix will—if the new religion is to succeed (i.e., gain adherents) at all—produce a certain amount of intermingling. The specific implications of such intermingling on ritual as well as doctrinal levels is notoriously difficult to ascertain. While originalists tend to argue that there is a pure essence which can usually be located in the historical origins of a tradition (e.g., the "Jesus movement," the Medina community, or the initial small group of Siddhārtha Gautama's followers), other religious conservatives, often those of a more patriotic strain, will make the case that the merger of traditions actually helped to illuminate the true intentions of the founder. This latter argument is quite common in Japanese Buddhist writing. Buddhist apologists cannot help but acknowledge the vast cultural differences between Śākyamuni's India and Japan (at any time). Yet rather than lament this incongruity, it is more often celebrated as necessary, fortuitous, even preordained fulfillment or 'flowering' of the true Dharma.[13]

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[11] See Hakamaya 1990a, 128–29 (trans. 1997a, 59, 78); 1997b, 134–35; Lin 1997, 301–2, 305–6.

[12] See Hakamaya 1990a, 127–28 (trans. 1997b, 134–35).

[13] For whatever reasons, the metaphors invoked in such cases tend to be organic: the 'roots' of a tradition only find full 'flower' when transferred to new and more fertile 'soil'. Perhaps this comes from Shōtoku Taishi's arboreal analogy whereby Shintō is the roots, Confucianism the stem/branches, and Buddhism the flowers and fruits of the Japanese tree.

3.2.1 The Influence of Taoism (*dōkyō* 道教) on Buddhism

> Because it does not contend, it is never at fault.
> (*Tao Te Ching*, 8)[14]

The tendency to conflate Taoist and Buddhist ideas is prevalent in modern Western writings on Buddhism, particularly those of the period of romantic readings of the East; the writings of Alan Watts are perhaps the prototype here. This tendency is not simply a product of confusion on the part of modern Western popularizers; it is also part and parcel of the history of Mahāyāna Buddhism as it grew and developed in China and Korea and from there, entered Japan. It has been claimed that Rinzai in the ninth century made the Buddhist truth or 'Dharma' almost synonymous with the 'Way' (Ch. *tao* 道, Jp. *dō*) of the *Tao Te Ching*. One contemporary Kyoto roshi has said that, largely as a result of Rinzai, "ninth-century Zen was ninety-nine percent Taoism; only the vocabulary was slightly different" (Covell 1981, 58). Whatever the case, it is certainly no scholarly secret that

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[14]上善若水。水善利萬物而不爭、處罚人之所惡、故幾於道。居善地、心善淵、與善仁、言善信、政善治、事善能、動善時、夫唯不爭、故無尤。(TTC 8). Following is a slightly different English translation of the entire section:

The best of man is like water,
Which benefits all things, and does not contend with them,
Which flows in places that others disdain,
Where it is in harmony with the Way.
So the sage:
Lives within nature,
Thinks within the deep,
Gives within impartiality,
Speaks within trust,
Governs within order,
Crafts within ability,
Acts within opportunity.
He does not contend, and none contend against him.
(Merel 1995, 8)

Chinese Buddhism—Chan 禪 in particular—absorbed much of the language and concepts of the Taoist philosophical tradition.

Ichikawa Hakugen, in his analysis of the socio-ethical lapses of Japanese Zen, looks in particular to the historical context of the development of Chan in 5th and 6th-century China, that is, as a force for cohesion in a period of great turmoil in that country. As such, Ichikawa argues, Chan absorbed some fundamental notions of 'harmony', fusion and non-discrimination from Taoism, ideas that, for Ichikawa as for Hakamaya and Matsumoto, have since had a debilitating effect on Japanese Buddhist (especially Zen) social ethics.

In support of Ichigawa's claims, the 14th-century *Tsurezuregusa* 徒然草 (Essays in Idleness) of Zen Buddhist priest Yoshida Kenkō 吉田兼好 (1283–1350) expresses a clear Taoist sentiment of 'nothingness' (*mu* 無)—as opposed to the more strictly Buddhist 'emptiness' (*kū* 空)[15]—with reference to Taoist sage Chuang-tzu 荘子 (Jp. Sōji, c.369–286 BCE):

> True knowledge is not what one hears from others or acquires through study. What, then, are we to call knowledge? Proper and improper come to one and the same thing—can we call anything 'good'?[16] The truly enlightened man has no learning,

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[15] Charles Muller describes *mu* as "the 'original non-being' from which being is produced in the *Tao Te Ching*. This meaning is explained in Buddhism when making the distinction between it and the Buddhist emptiness (空)." Yet, "[i]n the Zen (Chan) sect, the word 無 is called the gate to enlightenment (see *Wumenguan* 無門關 [Jp. *Mumonkan*: M], Case 1)." (Muller, DDB)

[16] 可・不可は一条なり。いかなるをか善といふ。See *Chuang-tzu*, especially the section entitled 'Levelling All Things'.

> no virtue, no accomplishments, no fame. Who knows of him, who will report his glory? It is not that he conceals his virtue or pretends to be stupid; it is because from the outset he is above distinctions between wise and foolish, between profit and loss. If, in your delusion, you seek fame and profit, the results will be as I have described. All is unreality. Nothing is worth discussing, worth desiring. (Tz. 41)

Ichikawa places much emphasis on the effect of the concept of harmony (*wa* 和 or *wagō* 和合), which incorporates Taoist-inspired ideas of nonresistance and tolerance. The problem, says Ichikawa, is that these ideas, if taken by themselves, become easy prey to ideological manipulation and submission to authority. In a climate of authoritarian control, Buddhists or others who adopt harmony as a guiding ethic commit themselves to upholding the status quo, whatever such may be. This is evident in the Buddhist criticism of Christians and socialists who attempted in whatever ways to oppose the powers that be from the time of the Imperial Rescript through Taisho and early Showa.

> With what has modern Japanese Buddhism harmonised itself? With State Shintō. With state power and authority. With militarism. Accordingly, with war. To what has modern Japanese Buddhism been nonresistant? To State Shintō. To state power and authortity. To militarism. To wars of invasion. To what has modern Japanese Buddhism been tolerant? Toward those with whom it harmonizes. Towards personal responsibility for the war. (Ichikawa in Ives 1992, 90)

Beyond the influence of Taoism on Sino-Japanese Chan/Zen, within Huayan/Kegon 華厳 Buddhism we find the notion of *yuishinron* 唯心論 or 'One Mind Theory', an influential version of Mahāyāna Idealism in which "what is true and real is this one-mind only, and things that are imagined to arise from it are mere phenomena and hence, illusions... When the real existence of these illusory phenomena is denied, the one mind reveals itself."[17] In short, under this Taoist-inspired ideal, adaptation in the name of harmony slides imperceptibly into accommodation with whatever ideology or powers that may be.[18]

Although Ichikawa's arguments are generally persuasive, the interpretation of Buddhism's precise role in Chinese history vis-à-vis Taoism and the notion of harmony could lead in other directions. According to one tradition, Buddhism was introduced into China by the Han Dynasty 漢王朝 (Jp. *Kan ōchō*, 202 BCE–220 CE) Emperor Mingdi 明帝 (or Liu Zhuang 劉莊; Jp. Myōtei, r. 57–75 CE) who sent a mission to Afghanistan to investigate this religion in 68 CE. In the decades that followed, Buddhism was generally unopposed by the pre-existent Taoism and Confucianism but had little influence on

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[17] Sakamaki 1962, 34–35; see T 9.465c.

[18] The notion of harmony has become a benchmark of all things Japanese. One popular English-language book on Japan—specifically, on foreign baseball players trying to adjust to Japanese culture—is called *You Gotta Have* Wa (1990). Again, as overt political ideology this can be traced back to the 17-Article Constitution of Shōtoku (604 CE), which opens as follows: "Above all esteem concord; make it your first duty to avoid discord." Some scholars suggest that *wa* 和 was adopted from Chinese Confucian tradition, but changed in meaning from the *Analects'* (Ch. *Lunyu* 論語 Jp. *Rongo*) sense of benevolence or compassion to the more 'Japanese' decorum or propriety. (See Kishimoto 1982, 145) We should note the possible sectarian implications here, since some forms of Buddhism are more critical of this tendency towards 'harmony' than others. Hisamatsu, for instance, in his critique of the Zen tendency towards oneness, points out that Rinzai rejects such as a form of Zen "attached, degenerating in a ghostly cave" (quoted in Ives 1992, 71). Similarly, Hakamaya and Matsumoto rely heavily on Sōtō founder Dōgen to make their own anti-topicalist argument.

Chinese culture and society until the Han empire weakened, decentralized and fell into disorder late in the 2nd century CE, instigating a period of roughly four centuries of chaos and turmoil. Eventually, nomadic invaders from the north, the Xianbei 鮮卑 (Jp. Senpi), overran the northern provinces and founded the Northern Wei Dynasty 北魏王朝 (Jp. *Hokugi ōchō*, 386–534 CE). They patronized Buddhism to counter the Confucius social ethic that had provided the social foundation of the disintegrating Han empire. Buddhism flourished during this period of turmoil, no doubt in part because of the concept of individual salvation became attractive as the rigid structures of the Confucian ethic floundered. In other words, while state patronage certainly played a role in Buddhism's success in China, as Ichikawa argues, a case could be made that, rather than unify single-minded support for the political rulers, Buddhism was adopted here precisely because it *did not* support the social structures and political framework of the traditional elites, but rather represented change and the possibility of individual 'freedom' (in a spiritual if not political sense).

3.2.2 The Influence of Confucianism (*jukyō* 儒教) on Buddhism

> For principles of moral conduct, Japanese people rely on the Confucian code. The domain of inner problems is left to Shinto and Buddhism.
> (Kishimoto Hideo, "Some Japanese Cultural Traits and Religions," p. 116)

The importance of Confucian contributions to Japanese social ethics can hardly be overstated. Though it is surely too much to say, with Kishimoto and some others, that Confucianism is the *sole* source of Japanese moral relations, it is clear that this ancient

Chinese philosophico-religious tradition, which entered Japan a number of times in various forms, is the primary source for some of the most significant Japanese moral and ethical norms.[19] "After the Meiji Restoration, Confucianism became affiliated with State Shinto and it was within the framework of this ethico-religious combination that the moral ideas and day to day behaviour of the Japanese were ordered" (Hori et al., 1972, 23).

Of course, certain Confucian ideals were conveniently emended or erased to suit prevailing Japanese tastes and customs. For instance, in Confucianism the legitimacy of a ruler or dynasty depends upon something ultimately above and beyond him: the so-called Mandate of Heaven (Ch. *tianming* 天命; Jp. *tenmei*). A change in dynasties signals that the ruler had, for lack of virtue, lost this mandate.[20] This element became, in Japanese eyes (as, no doubt also in those of more conservative Chinese) a dangerous precedent for revolution. Moreover, though Confucianism in China went through many phases, during which it was, at times, as much a fully-fledged 'religion' as Taoism or Buddhism, the impact of Confucianism on Japan was almost entirely in terms of ethics and social norms, and this influence was mainly rationalistic in flavour (Bellah 1957, 69). Finally, Japanese

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[19] See Hori et al. 1972, 105: "Buddhism and Shinto, for their part, more traditionally held that enlightenment and salvation belong to a realm distinct from that of daily life and have been content to assign the sphere of human relations and morality to Confucianism." Of course, one may question whether Zen holds such a transcendental view of salvation, but the general point may be accepted; for the most part, Confucian ideas shaped this-worldly human relations in Japan from an early period.

[20] The concept was first used by members of what would come to be the Western Zhou Dynasty 西周王朝 (Jp. *Seishū ochō*, c.1046–770 BCE) to justify their overthrow of the Shang 商朝 or Yin Dynasty 殷代王朝 (Jp. *Shō* or *In ochō*, c.1600–1046 BCE) and thereafter by many succeeding dynasties. It is first discussed in the writings of the Duke of Zhou (Ch. Zhou Gongdan 周公旦; Jp. Shūkōtan), whose life and ideas proved so influential on Confucius. One consequence of the notion of the Mandate of Heaven was that it was not necessary for a person to be of noble birth to lead a revolt and become a legitimate ruler. We see the historical effects of this doctrine in the fact that both the Han and Ming 明 (Jp. *Min*, 1368–c.1644) dynasties were founded by persons of modest birth.

Confucianism was in fact largely Neo-Confucianism—itself the product of a centuries-old development in China.[21] Though the importation of Neo-Confucianism as a coherent set of ideas and generalized philosophy began full-scale only in the Tokugawa era, for several centuries it had been seeping into Japanese culture from China and Korea. Indeed, as early as the 13th century Neo-Confucian ideas had infiltrated Japan by way of Song Dynasty Chan, ideas which were enthusiastically promoted by Zen teachers as beneficial to the developing samurai ethic.[22] In particular, "The practical ethics of both Buddhist and Shintō sects were largely of Confucian origin, and at least the latter were strongly influenced by neo-Confucian metaphysics (which in turn, of course, had been the product in part of strong Buddhist and Taoist influences)" (Bellah 1957, 54–55). Blocker and Starling concur with this, pointing out that Japanese Confucians were less apt to adopt the overt political ideals of Chinese Confucianism; instead they preferred the 'humanism' of Confucian morality. This was especially true of a number of prominent 17th-century

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[21] Neo-Confucianism (Ch. *Lixue* 理學 or *Daoxue* 道學; Jp. *Shushigaku* 朱子学), a form of Confucianism developed mainly during the Song Dynasty 宋王朝 (Jp. *Sō ōchō*, 960–1279), was a response by Confucian scholars to the dominance of Daoists and Buddhists. Neo-Confucians such as Zhuxi 朱熹 (Jp. Shuki, 1130–1200) recognized that the Confucian system lacked a thoroughgoing metaphysics, and thus set out to devise one by adopting liberally from both rival traditions as well as the traditional Confucian teachings. He "sought to bring philosophy and the center of intellectual life back to social, political, and moral concerns of good government and away from the spiritual, religious, and personal concerns of Buddhism and Taoism" (Blocker and Starling 2001, 73). A well known Neo-Confucian motif is found in paintings of Confucius, Buddha, and Lao Tzu all drinking out of the same vinegar jar, often accompanied with the slogan 'The three teachings are one!' (Ch. *sanjiao heyi* 三教合一; Jp. *sankyō gōitsu*) While Neo-Confucianism incorporated Buddhist and Taoist ideas, many Neo-Confucians claimed to strongly oppose Buddhism and Taoism, frequently on rationalist grounds. One of Hanyu's 韓愈 (Jp. Kanyu, 768–824) most famous essays—which ultimately got him banished from the Imperial court—decries the worship of Buddhist relics, and Zhuxi wrote a number of essays denouncing the errors of Buddhism and Taoism.

[22] Thus, ironically, Neo-Confucianism in Japan was promoted under Buddhist auspices, while it had arisen in China as precisely the opposite—as a revolt against Buddhist-Taoist incursions into classical Confucianism. On the whole, the rise of Neo-Confucianism in China went hand-in-hand with the decline of the influence of Buddhism and Taoism, due less to rejection than to absorption.

writers such as Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728) and Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 (1627–1705), the latter of whom wanted to re-establish *ren* 仁 (Jp. *jin*), which he defines as 'humanity' or 'compassionate love' as the fundamental core of Confucian ethics.[23]

Not everyone was in favour of importing neo-Confucian ideals, however. CB hero Dōgen, for one, had centuries before fulminated against the trend of Zen/Confucian accommodation as a dangerous aberration,[24] and indeed, many shoguns within the new Tokugawa political regime agreed with Dōgen that the two (or three?) traditions should stay separate; contrary to the Kamakura Sōtō master, however, they favoured the development of Confucianism over Buddhism. While Buddhism, they felt, was unnecessarily otherworldly and spiritual, Confucianism was perceived as being humanistic, rational, and focused on socio-political concerns—thus more applicable to the running of a 'modern' state.[25] At any rate, the emergence of Japanese Neo-Confucianism served to bolster the rule of the shogunate (Ooms 1985) and led to what one scholar has referred to as an explosion among all classes of "conventional morality" (*tsūzoku dōtoku*

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[23] Blocker and Starling 2001, 93. "Once more we see [with Itō] the Japanese preference for genuine emotion over abstruse intellectual and moral formalism.... Japanese intellectuals tended to reject any idealist or nihilist denial of the ordinary world of everyday sense experience... this was for Itō yet another reason to prefer the earlier Confucianism or Kongzi to the Buddhistic Canon of Zhu Xi and more so Wang Yingmang. (One wonders, however, if Itō realized that the Zen Buddhist, Dōgen, had also equally rejected the denial of the reality of the phenomenal world)" (Blocker and Starling 2001, 93–94).

[24] "Dōgen's accounts of the pervasiveness of Buddhist accommodation of Confucianism (and Taoism) appear exaggerated when compared to the literature of the Sung Chinese Zen schools, but it may be theorized that his repudiation of this trend was an attempt to forestall another intertwining of government and religion... something he saw as an endemic ill of Buddhism in Japan" (Cleary 1993, 35–36).

[25] For instance, Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583–1687), a Japanese follower of Zhuxi, vociferously opposed Buddhism as being "otherworldly, transcendental, irrational, nonempirical, and foreign to Japanese traditions." Hayashi also denounced Taoism and its 'Way of Nature'. He felt that both Buddhism and Taoism stood against human nature and the so-called 'Way of Man', the true path that only Confucianism helped to promote (see Blocker and Starling 2001, 74).

通俗道徳), which emphasized "self-cultivation through the practice of diligence, frugality and harmony," and was rooted in a vague but influential "philosophy of mind [or spirit]" (*kokoro no testsugaku* 心の哲学) (Yasumaru 1974). Here *kokoro* 心—mind, heart or spirit—was taken to mean the universal immanent ground that serves as a locus for the identification of self, society and nature (Stone 1999, 179). These developments of the Tokugawa era, sponsored in large part by the emerging state for purposes of order and control, may be regarded as a important link in the chain of causality leading to what CB regards as modern Japanese topicalism, i.e., as a significant contributing factor in 20th-century Imperial Way militarism.[26] Ironically, the development of Tokugawa Era ideology plays only a minimal role in the explicit narrative of CB. This is a serious lacuna.

While Hakamaya and Matsumoto are more forgiving than Dōgen on the negative impact of Confucian tradition—indeed, at times they appear to uphold it as an ideal for Buddhism!—their critical forebear Ichikawa Hakugen notes the virtue of loyalty (Ch. *zhong* 忠; Jp. *chū* or *chūsei* 忠誠) as a distinctively Confucian element[27] which seeped into modern Japanese consciouness, such that it became, for a number of reasons, more central than it ever had been in China.[28] (see Ives 1992, 92 n.97) Ichikawa argues that this

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[26] "Ideas of universal topos did not create the social hierarchy of early modern Japan but were nonetheless relentlessly enlisted in the cause of legitimating it. On the contrary, those religious movements embracing a more 'critical' approach, such as Christianity and the Nichiren *fuju fuse* [不受不施] movement, were targets of offical suppression. It is no accident that both of these persecuted groups explicitly valorized loyalty to a truth transcending the state—whether God or the *Lotus Sutra*—and thus provided religious grounds for defiance of the existing order" (Stone 1999, 181).

[27] See L. 14.7.

[28] See Ives 1992, 92 n.97. According to Robert Bellah, the influence of Confucianism in Japan "far exceeds that of a separate differentiated religious movement. It had for many centuries seeped into the consciousness and customs of the Japanese people. Such central concepts as loyalty (*chū*) and filial piety (*kō* [孝]), though

became especially problematic with the emergence of modern nationalism and imperialism in the Meiji era.

3.2.3 Shintō 神道 and Buddhism

> [O]n the assumption that any culture possesses an undergirding value orientation and that if there is any uniqueness in Japanese culture it derives from that of the Japanese, I would tentatively identify what may be called 'basic Shinto' with the fundamental value orientation of the Japanese people. (Hori Ichirō, in Hori et al., *Japanese Religion*, p. 29)

If Buddhism in China was affected by Taoist and Confucian ideas, Buddhism in Japan, from its inception in the mid-sixth century, was faced with the indigenous Japanese 'way of the *kami*'—Shintō 神道. According to Hori Ichirō 堀一郎, "The tendency toward a harmonious fusion of Buddhism and Shinto (*shinbutsu shūgō* [神仏習合]) became in fact one of the primary means by which Buddhism was assimilated in Japan" (Hori et al. 1972, 17). Of course, the affirmation of some preexistent 'tendency' here merely begs the question as to *why* there was this tendency. One reason might be the Buddhist concept of *hōben* 方便 (Skt. *upāya kausālya*) or 'expedient means', one interpretation of which suggested that the Dharma might travel in a number of diverse vehicles.[29] Moreover, unlike Confucianism, a deliberate program of education and social ethics promoted for centuries by the Chinese elite, and unlike Taoism, which, though more gnomic and overtly spiritual than Confucianism, was at least identifiable by a locus of classic texts like the

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they may have been thoroughly Japanized, never lost, as at least part of their significance, the full meaning of these terms in the Confucian tradition." (Bellah 1957, 55)

[29] See #1.3, n.35.

Tao Te Ching and the *Chuang-tzu*, Shintō in 6th-century Japan was without an identifiable locus or a coherent set of doctrines or rituals. This is not to say that it was not deeply rooted within the lives of ordinary Japanese folk, simply that to categorize pre-Buddhist Shintō as a 'religion' is highly problematic.[30] Yet, the doctrinal laxity and unsystematic character of the indigenous way of the *kami* no doubt smoothed the way for Buddhism, since there were very few areas in which the two traditions overlapped.

Eventually, Buddhist writers formulated an elaborate supersessionist theory to account for and justify the promiscuity of Buddhism and Shintō, based on Chinese teachings of *t'i-yung* 體用 (Jp. *taiyū*)—translated by Charles Muller as "(theory of) essence and function" (Muller 1998, 71; see below, #3.4.2). According to the doctrine of *honji suijaku* 本地垂迹 (lit. 'the prime entity and its manifestations'), the Shintō *kami* are secondary manifestations of certain Buddhas or bodhisattvas. By the Kamakura period, an era of profound religious and political transformation, *honji suijaku* found expression in the creation of sects such as Ryōbu Shintō 両部神道.[31] Ichikawa notes that, at this time, writers like Shidō Munan 至道無難 (1603–1676), Hakuin Ekaku 白隠慧鶴 (1685–1768),

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[30] See the work of recent scholars such as Kuroda Toshio 黒田俊雄 who reject the view that Shintō can be called the 'indigenous' religion of Japan. Kuroda (1981) argues that the beliefs and practices usually associated with Shintō were previously part and parcel of a larger, more embracing worldview that he calls "*kenmitsu bukkyō*" (顕密仏教, lit. exoteric-esoteric Buddhism). See also Dobbins and Gay 1981.

[31] Ryōbu (li. 'dual') Shintō refers specifically to the interpretation of local Japanese *kami* associated with Shingon 真言 esoteric Buddhism, and the practices which flowed from that interpretation, beginning in the Kamakura period (1185–1333) and extending to the Meiji Restoration (1868). In particular, Ryōbu Shintō held that the sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami 天照大神 enshrined at Ise Jingū 伊勢神宮 was nothing less than a manifestation of the esoteric dharmakaya Buddha Dainichi 大日 (Great Sun), the central Buddha of the Shingon sect. Moreover, the status of the native *kami* was raised from local folk deities and ancestral spirits to manifestations of Buddhas and bodhisattvas, different but equal to the most revered objects of worship in Shingon. Large temple-shrine complexes of the late medieval period were founded on the principles of Ryōbu Shintō.

and Tōrei Enji 東嶺円慈 (1721–1792) helped to further Shintō and Zen. (Ichikawa in Ives 1992, 90 n.9) Beginning in the Muromachi period (室町時代, 1392–1573) but particularly during the Tokugawa era, when nativist Shintō scholars began to forthrightly question the 'Japaneseness' of Buddhism, this hierarchy of *honji suijaku* was reversed to form what some scholars call *han honji suijaku* 反本地垂迹, in which Buddhas and bodhisattvas became manifestations of the singular prime entity constituted by the *kami* or, at a later stage in (State) Shintō apologetics, the Emperor himself.[32]

In the Tokugawa Period, even while Buddhism became a de facto state religion wielded by the shogunate as an instrument of social control—or perhaps, due in no small part to such politicization of Buddhism—the nativist (*kokugaku* 国学[33]) movement arose. Spearheaded by the voluminous writings of Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730–1801), this Shintō-nationalist movement rejected the traditional promotion of Buddhist-Shintō intermingling or *shinbutsu shūgō* 神仏集合, however hierarchically ordered. Prompted in part by this revival of Shintō nationalism, the leaders of the 1868 Meiji Restoration decreed that Shintō and Buddhism were to be henceforth officially separated. Of course, thirteen centuries of amalgamation could hardly be washed away overnight, and it is doubtful that, for the ordinary Japanese believer, this official 'separation' held anything

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[32] Stone 1999, 42. — Yoshida Shintō 吉田神道, a syncretist movement of the Muromachi period, argued that while "Buddhism may be the flower and fruit of all principles of order (Skt. *dharma*) in the universe and Confucianism their branches and foliage...Shinto is their root and trunk" (Hori et al., 1972, 18; see #3.2 n.13).

[33] In his book on Tokugawa nativism, Harootunian (1988) opts to translate *kokugaku* as "nativism" or "nativist" as opposed to the more common and starkly literal "national learning," a term which, he asserts, verges on the incomprehensible.

more than a vague symbolic resonance.[34] At the political level, beginning in the late Meiji period and culminating in early Showa, the emergence of 'State Shintō'—less a religion per se than a national institution of an ethical, mytho-historical, and of course highly political character—overwhelmed the conceptual structure of the indigenous Japanese religion. Precisely because of the way State Shintō was used to buttress Japanese nationalism and militarism, it became the obvious culprit in postwar reflection and reprisals. Sakamaki Shunzō goes so far as to say that "In its role as a state cult, State Shintō fed the flames of ethnocentric chauvinism that finally led to the fiery holocaust of war and the utter defeat of Japan in 1945." (Sakamaki 1982, 31)

Despite 'State Shintō' nationalist reliance on mythology and divine descent, folk or 'shrine' Shintō is and has long been extraordinarily practical and down-to-earth—emphasizing the concrete particularity of things over any abstract or transcendent whole.[35] Precisely at this point, the particularity and radical everydayness of Zen finds a common stream. (see Blocker and Starling 2001, 57, 59) Indeed, against CB, the incorporation of this radically empiricist Shintō element may be re-imagined as a boon for Japanese Buddhism.

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[34] Indeed, when the Meiji regime began an attempt to more forcefully disestablish Buddhism via the policy of *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈, they were faced with such backlash that the program was stopped, and by the 1880s Buddhism was recognized as fully Japanese, though still, of course, secondary to State Shintō. One might draw an analogy here with Hitler's brief hope that Christianity, along with the Jews, might be eliminated in Germany. He, too, quickly decided against the idea, given the backlash it would have created among ordinary Germans. See Goldhagen 1997.

[35] "The affirmation that the evolvement of life-giving, life-promoting powers is to be understood in terms of particularity may also be expressed by saying that the essence and value of existence is to be discovered not in an absolute, *a priori* rational principle (Gk., *logos*), nor again in a universal norm of law (Skt. *dharma*), but in the possibilities inherent in concrete forms of existence. Accordingly, Shinto is a religion of the relative..." (Hori et al., 1972, 40).

3.3 Weakness of the Critique of Syncretism

Mixing and assimilation, not only for Buddhism but for any world religion, even revealed ones such as Islam, which strongly emphasize the purity or non-syncretic element of the message—the continuing significance of the Ka'aba and the *jinn* after Muhammad being just two examples of that—is simply inevitable. More significantly, the claim to a pure tradition would be to pledge for an an essence of tradition, an admission that, in the case of Buddhism—and especially CB—goes against teachings of *praitītya-samutpāda* and emptiness. Therefore, the case against topicalism cannot rest on offhand remarks about the dangers of syncretism. Rather, topicalism must be given a more specific meaning and implication. In sum, it denotes a belief or presentation of some kind of substantial ground framed either in terms of a cosmic lifeforce, mind, or 'Buddha nature' (Stone 1999b, 182).

In some ways, this debate has been going on for centuries within Asian Buddhism, extending back even to the earliest Indian interpretations of Buddhist teachings. Critical Buddhists' understanding of topicalism, and as a result the force of their argument, must be understood in terms of modern interpretations of Asian—and specifically Japanese—Buddhism, from Tokugawa times to the present. Although this is not clearly expressed by Hakamaya and Matsumoto themselves, there are significant differences between their understanding of topos and the earlier inter-Buddhist debates regarding the question of substance or essence (Skt. *svabhāva*, *prakṛti* or *dhātu*; Ch. *xing* 性; Jp. *shō*).[36] The most

[36] Although these terms have some variance in their use, and do not form perfect equivalents with the English terms, they have been defined according to the following range of meanings: nature, essence, substance, self-nature; (pre-)disposition, inclination, temperament; that which a person (or thing) is born

important of these can be expressed by the CB concern for social justice and humanistic ethics. Given the CB formulation, the main problem of *topos* is its actual working effects—its applications or implications. Earlier Buddhist arguments concerning the dangers of a recurrence of *Upaniṣad*-ic notions of *ātman* or *brahman* do not appear to revolve around this issue.

Jacqueline Stone makes the following judidicious remarks about the 'errors' of CB:

> The first lies in the assumption that, because immanentalist or 'topical' thought has been deployed by an authoritarian ideology in modern Japan, it must have been similarly deployed in the premodern period, and in other cultures as well. This assumption leads Hakamaya in particular to paint a picture of the whole of human religious and intellectual history as a tension between 'topicalists' and 'criticalists', inflating a specific historical situation into a historical principle. The corollary, of course, is that because an oppressive modern ideology may draw on elements traceable to a medieval Buddhist discourse (such as original enlightenment), then that discourse must be deflied at its source and incapable ever of being assimilated to worthy ends.[37]

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with; quality, characteristic; the inner essence of something as opposed to its outer form; that which does not change according to external influences; innate, inherent, inborn; the quality or constituent by which one becomes a buddha; suchness, reality. (DDB, *svabhāva*) Also see Soothill: "The nature intp. as embodied, causative, unchanging; also as independent or self-dependent; fundamental nature behind the manifestation or expression. Also, the Buddha-nature immanent in all beings, the Buddha heart or mind." (S., 性)

[37] Stone 1999b, 183. — Stone adds: "This reifying of a specfic historical situation in turn leads to a second error, namely, the naïve claim that 'topical' or immanentalist thought causes social oppression. Given Critical Buddhism's either/or categories of 'topical' and 'critical' thought and its universal claims for their social consequences, one should expect to find, historically, a far superior level of social justice in those societies where 'topical' thinking has not prevailed. However, racial and ethnic prejudice, subordination of women, discrimination against the handicapped, and other oppressive practices have flourished, not only in cultures

As Stone notes, the argument here does not appear to be very strong if this is indeed the way it is intended to work. Causation, or conditionality, collapses into a cheap form of determinism which then effectively subverts the doctrine of karma. What is more pressing than to establish a universal schema about *topica* and *critica*, is to work out the historical and ideological usage of topical themes within Asian Buddhism—in particular modern Asian Buddhism. Along the way, a broader understanding of topical and critical thinking—one that extends beyond the modern Asian Buddhist scene—will surely contribute to building a stronger case against topicalism. To that end, let us turn to one of the major concerns of CB, the matter of 'Buddha-nature' (Jp. *busshō* 仏性) or *tathāgata-garbha* (Jp. *nyoraizō* 如来蔵).

3.4 On Buddha-nature (*busshō* 仏性)

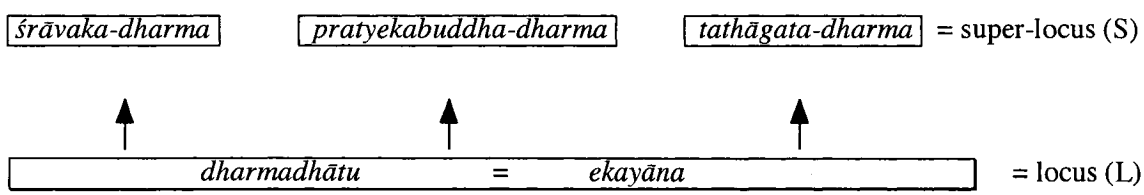
> For Zen, every man has the Buddha-nature and simply needs to realize it, to wake up to the enlightenment he potentially has. Then he has only to go on with his life, free and unafraid, appreciating the wonder of the world in the present moment, while doing what needs to be done, not for gain or profit but for itself. This calm and joyful wisdom is found in meditation, but carries over into daily activities, and brings compassion for all beings.
> (Van Meter Ames, *Zen and American Thought*, p. 6)

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dominated by immanentalist thought, but also in those whose political ideology has been transformed by very different sorts of doctrine, for example, transcendent monotheism. This is something rather difficult to explain in Critical Buddhist terms." While this point is well-taken, it is not so strong as the first 'error' Stone cites, for the simple reason that a worldwide critique, though sometimes implied, does not appear to be the task of CB. In non-Buddhist societies, and even among differing Buddhist societies, critical work may take various forms.

The main source for the CB argument against Buddha-nature is Matsumoto's provocatively entitled essay, "The Doctrine of *Tathâgata-garbha* is not Buddhist" (1997b). After laying out his vision of "true Buddhism''—one that conforms with the general CB understanding based largely on the doctrines of *anāman* and *pratītya-samutpāda* understood in temporal rather than Huayan/Kegon 華厳, i.e., spatial sense (165–66)—Matsumoto begins his argument by citing textual evidence against the claim that the doctrine of Buddha-nature is "a teaching of equality" (167–68). For example, both the *Mahāyānasūtrā-laṃkāra* (Jp. *Daijō sōgonkyō ron* 大乗荘厳經論) and the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra* (Jp. *Dai nehan kyō* 大般涅槃經) while suggesting that "all beings are/have the *tathāgata-garbha*," go on to assert that there remain those, the *icchantika* (Jp. *issendai* 一闡提), who lack the possibility of attaining *nirvāṇa*/Buddhahood. This seems to contradict the *Lotus Sutra*'s assertion that "all sentient beings will attain Buddhahood" (169).

At this stage, Matsumoto introduces the following diagram to explain his point, connecting Buddha-nature to the larger problem of substantialist thinking:



According to this structure, the "super-loci" cannot arise without the underlying "locus," which is "one," "real" and the "essential nature" of the super-loci, themselves

described in opposing terms as "many" and "unreal." Finally, the most important characteristic of this 'map' of *dhātu-vāda* is the notion that, "'Super-loci' are not ultimately real, but have some reality in that they have arisen from the 'locus' and share its nature" (1997b, 170). This last feature, according to Matsumoto, "provides the basic ideology for the establishment of social discrimination and separation. The doctrine of the fixed *gotras*... the caste system, social classes from kingship to slavery, and the like are all based on this structure" (170–71). Matsumoto goes on to refer to this highly topicalist structure of thinking as a "generative monism" or a "foundational realism" (172).

3.4.1 Various Views of Buddha-Nature

Does the doctrine of Buddha-nature contradict the doctrine of no-self (Skt. *anātman*; Jp. *muga* 無我) as understood by virtue of *pratītya-samutpāda* (Jp. *engi* 縁起), as Matsumoto claims? Is *tathāgata-garbha* little more than a euphemism for substantialist thinking—what the Critical Buddhists refer to as the 'pernicious view' (Skt. *ātma-dṛṣṭi*; Jp. *akken* 惡見) of *dhātu-vāda* (lit. 'grasping onto substance')? In response to the above essay, Sallie King (1997) claims that Matsumoto errs in reading Buddha-nature in a simplistic and 'ontological' fashion, and suggests that were we to understand the doctrine as primarily, if not wholly, soteriological, then the problem of essentialism raised by Matsumoto disappears. Thus, while Matsumoto may be quite right to oppose a certain reading of this idea, such that *tathāgata-garbha* becomes a 'womb', 'matrix', or 'seed' that is inherent in all sentient beings—he is wrong to assume that this is the way the doctrine must be

understood, or that such was its original 'intention'. Yet Matsumoto's complaint is not against the doctrine itself so much as against its historical use or effects. But if this is so, and if Matsumoto accepts that 'Buddhism' is not just what it has become in time but what it *can be* with regard to certain key doctrines that promote humanistic ethic and specifically causes of social justice, then there surely is room for re-reading or re-inscribing doctrines like *tathāgata-garbha.* One consequence of such an undertaking is that the criteria for evaluating such doctrines become largely empirical. Yet the constructive element is also important, since history is not only the place where doctrines are 'used'—it is also the place where doctrine develops and faces continual reinterpretation (see below, #4). King argues that in fact, far from promoting apathy or social passivity, the doctrines of *tathāgata-garbha* and Buddha-nature have been used to justify and inspire social criticism and engagement among Buddhists. In short, Buddha-nature need not be conceived as some kind of substitute self, but rather a 'self' that is ultimately 'empty' and thus distinct from the substantial 'self' that CB sees as a hindrance to liberation.

King's charge is pertinent, in that it can be extended beyond this single issue: the Critical Buddhists, in their attempt to be at all times rational and logical, are unwilling to understand certain doctrines in terms of rhetoric, topology, or eschatology/soteriology. In upholding the importance of language as a 'tool' towards the realization of wisdom (*bodhi*), they are unwilling to take the next necessary step, and thereby fall into the thoroughly 'modernist' trap of reifying the tool itself. Here Matsumoto and Hakamaya might do well to re-examine the Madhyamikan distinction between conventional and

ultimate truth, as one finds it in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* of Nāgārjuna.[38] The Critical Buddhists are correct in reading Nāgārjuna as an ally in the fight against the ever-present danger of lapsing into *svabhāva*, but they miss important nuances in Madhyamikan criticism, namely, the acceptance of language as a vehicle towards enlightenment, but not necessarily as a mode of designation or of mystical transformation (see MMK; Garfield 1995). No worshipper of silence, Nagarjuna "focuses on purifying one's thinking, one's cognitive actions, from any vestige of substrative, substantialistic, universalistic, essentialistic notions" (Lusthaus 1997, 43). This fits well with Hakamaya's (1997a, 74) vision of Buddhism as primarily *dharma-pravicaya* (Jp. *chakuhō* 擇法)—the clear discrimination of phenomena.

Indeed, a cursory glance at the roots and early development of this doctrine confirms King's point, or at least the view that Buddha-nature can be and has been interpreted in sometimes vastly diverging ways. Tao-sheng 道生 (Jp. Dōshō, c.360–434), the Chinese Buddhist scholar often considered to be the father of the doctrine, or at any rate the prime instigator of debates surrounding its significance, drew his own position from a reading of Chapter 12 of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, which begins: "'Self' means none other than Tathāgata-garbha (Womb of the Thus Come One). All sentient beings possess Buddha-nature and that is what 'Self' precisely means" (NS 12). From these lines,

[38] Nāgārjuna (Jp. Ryūju 龍樹, 150–250 CE), along with Dōgen and the *Lotus Sutra*, forms part of the 'holy trinity' of CB sources. "[A]n eminent Buddhist logician who was instrumental in the early establishment of Indian Mahāyāna, [he] was born in southern India, and was initially a scholar of brahmanistic texts, but later converted to Buddhism. He first studied the various Nikāya doctrines along with early Mahāyāna. He would end up leaning toward the latter, conducting extensive study on the various sutras. Based on his extensive study and ardent meditation practice he composed a number of influential texts. His writings were the basis for the formation of the Mādhyamika (Middle Way 中観派) school, which was transmitted to China under the name of the Three Treatise (Sanlun) School 三論宗." (Muller, DDB, 龍樹)

despite the element of 'thusness' in the root term *tathāgata*, Tao-sheng deduced that Buddha-nature can be understood as "what sentient beings are going to have (or realize as the fruit of cultivation and enlighthenment)" (Kim 1990, 65). This view, however, did not go unchallenged, and there soon arose at least two other prominent interpretations of Buddha-nature. Dharmakaśema (Ch. Tanwu-chen 曇無讖; Jp. Donmushin, c.385–433), Tao-sheng's contemporary and chief translator of the large version of the *Nirvana Sutra*, led a second 'school' maintaining that Buddha-nature is what beings originally have, thus presaging the most common understanding of the later Japanese doctrine of *hongaku* 本覚 or 'original enlightenment', while a third scholar, Ta-yao (c.400–475), took a 'middle path' in reading Buddha-nature as the "right cause" (Ch. *zhengyin* 正因; Jp. *shōin*) that consists of the *li* 理 (Jp. *ri*) for attaining Buddhahood, which all beings already possess. These three 'houses' later diversified into ten or eleven different viewpoints, which in turn helped provoke the explosion of Chinese Buddhist schools in the 6th and 7th centuries.

What becomes clear, if it were not already obvious, is that 'Buddha-nature' has no single meaning and is conditioned by its various interpretations, which are themselves contingent on historical, psychological, institutional, economic, and political factors, some or most of which are now impossible to ascertain. This should not lead us to despair or to the simple relativist answer that there is no truth to the matter—an argument that cannot be consistently maintained on relativist premises. Our task is not to add to a debate over which is the 'true' sense of Buddha-nature in the historical or ideal sense; rather, it is to examine the particular implications and effects of the various alternative readings, and to determine the 'truth' of Buddha-nature on the basis of other Buddhist—and perhaps, non-

Buddhist—doctrines and concerns. Let us go back to Matsumoto's assertion that Buddha-nature is a form—perhaps the most prominent form—of so-called *dhātu-vāda* thought, which in turn provides a basis for social discrimination within Buddhist tradition.

3.4.2 *Tathagāta-garbha* (*nyoraizō* 如来蔵): Sinitic Developments

Leaving aside for the moment Matsumoto's claim that what he calls the *dhâtu-vada* structure of thinking, based on the doctrine of *tathāgata-garbha* has been a direct cause of social discrimination throughout Asian Buddhist history, let us turn to examine the structure itself as it is presented in his essay (1989a, 1997b). It is hard to argue against his thesis that such a structure contradicts the Buddhist teachings of *pratītya-samutpāda* and emptiness in favour of something much more akin to the *atman* or *brahman* of Indian tradition. However, given the range of interpretations to be found in the sutras, it is also obvious that there is no single understanding of Buddha-nature in this way, leaving Matsumoto's charge open to critique on the basis of alternative texts. The Chinese theory of *t'i-yung* 體用 (Jp. *taiyū*)——which has played a large role in the development of virtually all streams of East Asian Buddhism—may help us to read Matsumoto's chart in a slightly different and less topicalist way.[39] Although often translated as 'essence', *t'i* 體implied something more like "the physical body as an assemblage of its parts,"[40] and eventually transformed into a philosophical term used to refer to "the deeper, more

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[39] See above, #3.2.3.

[40] In standard dictionaries of modern Japanese, the character 體 is conflated with the commonly used character 体 (*karada*), which literally means '(physical) body'.

fundamental or invisible aspect of things, the 'principle' of things, as opposed to their more outwardly manifest, phenomenal aspects" (Muller 2003, 3). There is no sense here of the *topos* or 'locus' being of a different or higher order than the 'function' itself; nor is there a strong sense of it being unchanging or any more 'real'.

Matsumoto clearly reads the 'locus' in the diagram (see #3.4) as a parallel to the *Upaniśad*-ic *brahman* or to the *logos* of Hellenic/Christian thought. Yet understanding it as *t'i* in the sense just described transforms the picture dramatically. The 'super-loci'/*y'ung* 用 of the 'locus'/*t'i* 體 are in turn not in any way less 'real'; they are simply the various 'ways' the locus 'functions' or becomes manifest. Moreover, as Muller (2003) notes, the particular manifestations themselves can and will 'penetrate' the 'essence' in turn, by virtue of the process of 'realization'. Thus, rather than being a 'basis' or ground for the super-loci, the locus itself is simply a name for what the phenomena share or aspire to produce: their 'essence' in the common-sensical rather than philosophical sense of the term. As such, the Chinese *t'i* 體 resembles, but does not quite replicate, the sense of the original Sanskrit *garbha*—referring, as Matsumoto notes, to something like 'womb', 'storehouse', 'empty space', 'pouch' or 'pocket' to be filled, but which also, in some way, acts upon all phenomena as a 'principle' or 'seed'. It is, we could say, a 'strong misreading' of the Indian term for Sinitic purposes.[41]

As Jacqueline Stone concludes, Chinese schools such as Tientai 天台 and Huayan 華厳 reflect an important shift away from the apophatic inclinations of Indian Madhyamika

[41] See Bloom 1973, 1975. 'Strong poets' make the history of poetry by misreading one another, through an act of what Bloom calls 'poetic misprision'. We might ask, with Richard Rorty (1999, 87–88), whether 'strong thinkers'—Western or Asian—do something similar, through their own series of misprisions—or what Rorty himself terms 'redescriptions'?

to a more kataphatic style. Yet, these new modes of expression "attempt neither to reimport into Buddhism notions of metaphysical essence nor to claim that there can be adequate verbal descriptions for truth, but to employ positive language in soteriologically effective ways" (Stone 1999, 10). Without extending this point further, it is of interest to note that, even in a modern dictionary, the Sino-Japanese character used to write *tatha*—Ch. *ru* 如; Jp. *nyo*, *jo*, *goto(ki)*, *goto(shi)*—has a number of non-substantialist connotations, including 'like,' 'such as', 'as if', and 'seem to be'. This understanding of the impact of Chinese categories and terms on understandings of *tathāgata-garbha* further complicates the readings of Buddha-nature presented by both Matsumoto and King.

In order to come to a clearer understanding of Buddha-nature, we must reflect upon the corollary Mahāyāna doctines of 'emptiness' and 'interpenetration'. As Blocker and Starling (2000, 30–31) note, the major Chinese Buddhists schools—Tientai, Huayan, and Chan—generally accepted the view that "the changing, dependent, phenomenal world is simply a false way of seeing the eternal, ultimate reality." This was indeed a logical extension of the doctrine of Buddha-nature: if Buddha-nature is everything, then *there is nothing other than* Buddha-nature. Yet Chinese Buddhists did not fall too readily into a form of quasi-Platonic essentialism in working out the meaning of Buddha-nature: in looking at, say, dried grass, they would conclude that though the 'real nature' of the grass is indeed nothing less than the Buddha; i.e., there is no corresponding Buddha-essence or ideal located somewhere *beyond*, *behind* or *in addition to* the grass. For Buddha-nature is, after all, 'empty'; or, we might more properly say, it *is* 'emptiness' or even, as predicate without subject, *is* 'emptying' itself. This was further radicalized in the Japanese context.

For Japanese Buddhists, the Buddha is *nothing but* this dried grass. According to Blocker and Starling, such a turn denotes the typically Japanese "reduction of unseen metaphysical entities to the sensual, aesthetic delight in ordinary sense perception."[42] If this tendency can be found in Japanese interpretations of Buddha-nature, then CB concerns in this regard are indeed exaggerated. Let us turn now to the work of Dōgen for further clues to this matter.

3.4.3 Dōgen 道元 on Buddha-nature

In his *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼蔵 (Treasury of the Eye of the True Dharma), perhaps the closest thing to a CB 'Bible', Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253) quotes a passage from the Nirvāṇa Sutra to the effect that "All sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature: *Tathāgata* (Buddha) is permanent with no change at all."[43] As scholars have long noted, Dōgen reads this famous passage in an unconventional—and grammatically incorrect—fashion, such that it becomes: "All are sentient beings, all beings are (all being is) the Buddha-Nature; *Thatāgata* is permanent, non-being, being, and change." This is a far more Nāgārjunian expression, including as it does a tetralemmic conclusion straight out of the MMK itself.

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[42] Blocker and Starling 2001, 31–32. — They add: "Should the Japanese feel guilty cherishing and ritualizing the aesthetic beauty of everyday objects as they had been doing for thousands of years? Not at all! The most profound Buddhist metaphysics says this everyday world of sense objects is identical to the most profound Buddhist metaphysical and spiritual entities...." Occasionally this perspective involves a certain profanation of the idea of the 'sacred'—exemplified in lines like "if you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him!" (or the more scatalogical "Zen is this shit stick!")—and renders the attempt by Imperial Way Zen apologists to uphold the sacred Imperial throne in Buddhist terms all the more ludicrous.

[43] Original reads: 釋迦牟尼佛言一切衆生有佛性如来常住無有変易 (NS 12; see Eido and Vacher 2002, 29–31, for a detailed explanation of Dōgen's interpretation). Abe Masao suggests that this statement encapsulates the fundamental standpoint of Mahāyāna (Abe 1985, 27). No doubt the Critical Buddhists would disagree, pointing to the formulation "form is emptiness...nirvana is samsara," as being the more fundamental insight for the Mahāyāna 'critical' revolution against lingering Brahmanic and Abidharmin 'essentialism'.

Clearly, Dōgen felt uneasy with the permanence of the original line, and none-too-subtly rewrote it to suit his doctrinal vision, as it was "more important for him to rightly and correctly convey the Buddhist truth than to be grammatically correct" (Blocker and Starling 2001, 32).

Elsewhere, Dōgen writes that "Although [enlightenment] is abundantly inherent in everyone, as long as one does not practice it, it is not manifest, and as long as one has not experienced it, there is no attainment" (cited in Cleary 1993, 31). This passage is commonly cited to point to the need for practical cultivation or ethical 'works' precisely *because* of the inherence of buddha-nature and not at all *in spite* of such. Dōgen's understanding of Buddha-nature conflates two Buddhist doctrines into one: "Impermanence," he proclaims, "is Buddha-nature" (*mujō busshō* 無常仏性).[44] Important here is the element of equiprimordiality: Buddha-nature, Dōgen insists, is not merely incorporated prior to enlightenment but is incorporated or instantiated *along with* the attainment of Buddhahood. Dōgen calls this "the truth of Buddha-nature" (G. 22). This notion of "simultaneous attainment of the Way" is called *dōji-jōdō* 同時成道, and refers to the idea that *everything* in the universe attains enlightenment at the moment of one's own enlightenment. Abe adds that this concept of enlightenment "opens up the universal horizon of Buddha-nature" (Abe 1992, 50). Dōgen effectively eliminates the conventional notion of 'Buddha-nature' as an independent doctrine, collapsing it into doctrines of impermanence, emptiness, and awakening—its only distinction lying in its rhetorical power as a form of 'skillful means'.

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[44] See G. 22; Abe 1981 108; 1992, 28; Eidō and Vacher 2002, 211–23. Dōgen cites the Sixth Patriarch as being the teacher of this notion, which clearly contradicts the Nirvāṇa Sutra's teaching that Buddha-nature is permanence. See Eidō and Vachon 2002, 210 n.74.

Elsewhere in the *busshō* fascicle, Dōgen makes the additional extraordinary claim:

> Shakyamuni preaches that 'all sentient beings without exception have the Buddha-nature'. Ta-kuei (Jp. Isan Reiyū, 771–853) preaches that 'all sentient beings have no Buddha-nature'. The words 'have' and 'have not' are totally different in principle. Doubts will understandably arise as to which utterance is correct. However, in the Buddha Way, 'all sentient beings have no Buddha-nature is alone pre-eminent. You must without fail devote yourself to the truth of 'no Buddha-nature,' never remitting your efforts.[45]

Thus, "[f]ollowing Nagārjuna...and Aryadeva...Dōgen adopts a radical Buddhism, not one of any negative ontology, but one negating all ontology" (Eidō and Vacher 2002, 46). Abe Masao remarks on this passage in an more 'orthodox' fashion, that by 'no Buddha-nature' Dôgen does *not* indicate the *opposite* of Buddha-nature, but rather an *absolute* no-Buddha-nature which is free from both 'Buddha-nature' and 'no-Buddha-nature (Abe 1992, 52). This corresponds with Dōgen's own citation of the following words of Chinese master Baizhang Huaihai 百丈懷海 (Jp. Hyakujo Ekai, 749-814): "To preach that sentient beings have Buddha-nature is to disparage Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha. To preach that sentient beings have no Buddha-nature is to disparage Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha."[46]

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[45] G. 22; trans. by Abe Masao (1992, 52); see Eidō and Vacher 2002, 367–71 for an alternative translation.

[46] G. 22; trans. by Abe Masao (1992, 96).

We must return to Dōgen's emphasis on *mujō-busshō* 無常仏性—impermanence-as-Buddha-nature. Not only is "[t]he very impermanence of men and things, body and mind...the Buddha-nature," even "Supreme and complete enlightenment, because it is the Buddha-nature, is impermanent. Great nirvana, because it is impermanent, is the Buddha-nature."[47] What is most significant in Dōgen's willful misreading of the doctrine of Buddha-nature is not even so much the tetralemmic evasion of permanence, but the implication that Buddha-nature is *not* a potentiality—a seed waiting to flower—within sentient beings; rather it is *another name for sentience itself.* In other words, Buddha-nature is not a quality, not something that people or things *have*; it is the condition of existence.[48] Something of the same idea can be seen in the following passage from the *gyōji* 行持 fascicle, which relates to the idea of 'continous practice': "By virtue of this continuous practice (*gyōji*) there are sun, moon, and stars. By virtue of this continuous practice, there are earth, sky, and heat within the body and without, the four elements and the five skandhas." (quoted in Maraldo 1981, 30)

In any case, in Dōgen's re-interpretation of Buddha-nature, any lingering implications of substance are cut away by: a) an emphasis on Buddha-nature as a

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[47] G. 22; trans. by Abe Masao (1992, 96).

[48] Abe concludes: "In Dōgen, the Buddha-nature, the ultimate Reality, is realized precisely in this infinite and ontological dimension in which all things can exist respectively as they are" (1985, 36). — Abe overstresses the ontological aspect vis-à-vis the soteriological. After all, Dōgen wants at all costs to avoid the idea that Buddha-nature is prior to or 'causes' enlightenment; rather, he argues that they 'occur' simultaneously, for the simple reason that they are one and the same. Also see Waddell and Abe (1973, 118) for an acknowledgement that Dōgen, in his 1243 version of the *Fukanzazengi* 普勧坐禪儀, shifted emphasis such that, "the idea of dhyana or samadhi as a means to enlightenment has totally disappeared, and in its place there is a corresponding accentuation of the oneness of practice and realization." In any event, such a reading of Dōgen fits with what some scholars believe was the original sense of the term Buddha-nature as derived from the Indian term *buddhatva* or 'Buddhahood' (see *Routledge On-line Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, www.rep. routledge.com/philosophy/articles/entry/G/G002/g002SECT3.html).

condition—*the* condition?—of sentient being; b) an explicit conflation of Buddha-nature and impermanence; c) a radical refomulation of Buddha-nature as nothing more or less than 'practice' itself. The last aspect is particularly important for CB, because it gives Buddha-nature not only soteriological but also ethical import. Indeed, one of the most common criticisms of Buddha-nature is precisely the seeming passivity of the notion—the idea that if one is already 'awakened', then practice or cultivation—religious, ethical, or otherwise—falls by the wayside.[49]

3.4.4 Ichikawa Hakugen 市川白弦 on Buddha-nature

Though himself one of the main prophets of CB, Ichikawa Hakugen agrees with Sallie King and against Matsumoto that the doctrine of Buddha-nature can be a theoretical basis for social equality. After all, the *Nirvana Sutra* itself states quite strongly that not only great evildoers (Skt. *icchantika*), even women (!) are capable of enlightenment if they work for it—though in the case of the latter not through regular religious channels, which were closed to them. This issue was to become, of course, a matter of great debate within Chinese Mahāyāna, a debate sparked by Tao-Sheng's criticism of the prevailing wisdom in his espousal of the 'universalist' version of Buddha-nature.

Turning again to Japan: in 816 CE, still somewhat embittered by his falling out with Kūkai 空海 (774–835), Saichō 最澄(767–822) traveled to eastern Honshū where he met and engaged in a vigorous debate with a Hossō 法相 (Yogācara) sect priest named

[49] Japanese Confucian reformer Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁斎 (1627–1705) similarly rejected the (neo-Confucian) notion that the virtues were already 'fully-formed' in each person and only need be recognized. This, Itō felt, worked against the Confucian imperative of virtue cultivation (Blocker and Starling 2001, 94–95).

Tokuichi 徳一 (or Tokuitsu, d. 841). The debate concerned the doctrine of Buddha-nature. Tokuichi, following traditional Yogacara views, held that there are five distinct classes of beings, each of which follows a distinct path: 1) bodhisattva; 2) *pratyeka-buddha* (Jp. *dokugaku* 獨覺); 3) *śrāvaka* (Jp. *deshi* 弟子); 4) those of indeterminate nature; and 5) *icchantika.* Of these, the last category of beings lack potentiality for enlightenment; they are doomed to wander forever in delusion. Saichō famously would have none of this, teaching rather, in the footsteps of Tao-sheng, that all sentient beings are capable of buddhahood. At any rate, the idea that Buddha-nature can be a foundation for equality has clear precedent, and cannot be simply dismissed as modern liberal wish-fulfillment or projection at work. "When interpreted with a mind ready to understand its meaning, we can state that the thesis that 'the common worldling is the essential Buddha' has uncovered a deep value in the condition of being a common worldling, who in pain and sorrow struggles to live through factual reality" (Tamura 1984, 246). Without going so far as to accept the notion of the true liberatory meaning of Buddha-nature, Tamura's remark is a gentle reminder to CB, that doctrines are not so easily dismissed on the basis of specific interpretations and uses.

If, however, the notion of universal Buddha-nature has such liberatory potential, why does it not appear to have had such actual effects within Asian Buddhist history? Ichikawa argues that the reason Buddha-nature has not generally been used in such a socially liberating way is that it has been trumped in Buddhist tradition by the persistence of the ancient Indian notion of *karma* (Jp. *gō* 業): "The theory that individual distinctiveness due to the law of cause and effect spanning past, present and future

constitutes true equality and justice came into being, and this theory provided a foundation for social orders with people in proper places" (Ichikawa in Ives 1992, 92). Indeed, using *karma* to justify social inequality is not confined to the Indian caste-system: Shimaji Mokurai 島地黙雷 (1838–1911), a Meiji-era leader of the Jōdo Shin 浄土真 sect, published an essay entitled "Differentiation [Is] Equality" (*Sabetsu byōdō* 差別平等), which managed to combine Zen antinomian logic ('a is not a') with *karma* to suggest that a person's social standing was obviously the result of past actions—and thus could not be changed through the "evil equality" (*aku byōdō* 悪平等) preached in the West. (Victoria 2002, 9)

Ironically, this heavy reliance of historical determinism through the unfolding of *karma* renders such a Buddhist view completely ahistorical in the sense that it fails to account for the actual social, economic, political and psychological factors which shape human action and behaviour.[50] Thus, we might say, a deterministic reading of *karma* effectively subverts the Buddhist doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda.* As Dale Wright has argued, scholars have for the most part been blind to the historical dimensions of enlightenment as described especially within Zen tradition: "Beyond the Zen rhetoric of timelessness, we find historical contextualization to be central to their self-understanding" (Wright 1997, 106).[51]

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[50] Victoria (2003, 158-59) suggests that this fatalistic rendering of *karma* plays a role in postwar Japan's unwillingness to discuss wartime responsibilities. Buddhists and Buddhist scholars today continue to debate the meaning and relevance of this ancient Indian doctrine for Buddhism, past and present. Whatever the answer, it does seem evident, as Damien Keown (2001, 37–39) has argued, that early Buddhist writers and scholars had a more nuanced and flexible view of *karma* than was present in the orthodox Indian traditions. At any rate, fatalism and determinism do not seem to fit with other Buddhist goals like compassion and awakening.

[51] A glaring example of such blindness is Bernard Phillips who maintains that, unlike all other world religions which have falsely promoted "an absolute form or absolute creed," Zen is the only truly "universal religion" unbound by "the time, place and character of the region [in which it has flourished]" (quoted in

Ichikawa argues that besides *karma* another factor working against a proper understanding of Buddha-nature is the particularly Japanese 'philosophy of debt' (*on* 恩), which he relates directly to *engi* 縁起 (Skt. *pratītya-samutpāda*). *On* refers to the debt of obligation one faces with respect to something received from another. "With the perspective of dependent co-arising [*engi* 縁起] as its backdrop, the philosophy of debt was the center of Buddhist ethics." Here too however historical and political developments led to a subtle but significant shift in the way *on* came to be understood: "out of the four types of debt (to parents, ruler, sentient beings, and either heaven/earth or the three treasures...) the debt to one's parents changed into the debt to the emperor in the context of Japanese patriarchal theocracy, and the debt to sentient beings became less important" (Ichikawa in Ives 1992, 93, n.100). For Ichikawa, then, *tathāgata-garbha* has definite liberatory potential and may be used to combat a vision of Buddhist social order based on *karma* and an attenuated reading of *on*.

3.5 *Hongaku shisō* 本学思想: Original Enlightenment Thought

> Some people say that, because the enlightenment of the Buddha and Tathāgatas encompasses the whole world, even a speck of dust manifests that enlightenment... To see a speck of dust is to see the *dharma-dhātu* and each spontaneous act is a manifestation of supreme enlightenment. They say this is the great understanding and call it a Patriarchal transmission... Their [religious] lineage is unknown, but it is clear that they do not understand Buddhism.
> (Dōgen, *Shōbōgenzō*, *shizen biku* 四禪比丘 fascicle)

Victoria 2003, 62–63). Victoria also notes, in another example of the so-called 'pizza-effect', that this claim was later picked up by Rinzai Zen master (and 'Imperial Way Zen' apologist) Ōmori Sōgen as proof that even Westerners have recognized the universal salvific power of Zen.

Wedded to the traditional understandings of the doctrine of Buddha-nature is the more particularly Japanese idea of *hongaku* 本覚 or 'original enlightenment'. Early on in the history of Japanese Tendai 天台 Buddhism we see the development of the theory of *hongaku hōmon* 本覚法門—the idea that enlightenment is not something to be achieved through gradual elimination of attachement to illusory phenomena, but is rather something to be discovered as innately given:

> Elaborating the concept of "emptiness" propounded by Nagarjuna, the *hh* [*hongaku hōmon* 本覚法門] theory involves an ontology of absolute monism or nondualism. In brief, this way of looking at things maintains that while one cannot avoid dualistic antitheses such as those between life and death, deluded blindness and spiritual understanding...etc., he can, if he will but open his eyes, discover the ineradicable, naturally given enlightenment that transcends all those polarities. More fundamentally, this original enlightenment (*hongaku*) cannot be found if one adheres either to the seeming reality of the dualistic realm or even to ontological nondualism. (Hori et al. 1972, 57)

Tientai/Tendai Buddhism is generally considered to be the main source of *hongaku* ideas within medieval Sino-Japanese Buddhism, though some contemporary scholars argue that original enlightenment results from an early fusion or accommodation between insurgent Buddhism and the ancient Shintō belief that everything is filled with *kami* (spirits, gods). While Nara schools such as Kegon 華厳 placed emphasis on the

interrelation of things, Tendai understood Buddha-nature to imply that since the Buddha reality includes everything in the world, and thus every thing includes within itself the Buddha reality, it follows that everything in the world *contains* everything else. In other words, in a line resembling the flights of English Romantic poets, the whole world is contained in a grain of sand. In this teaching we see some of Tendai's esoteric flavor. It was through Tendai that the more particularly Japanese notion of original enlightenment (*hongaku*) became connected with the idea of Buddha-nature. What this implied is that all beings not only have a Buddha-seed or spark but are *in fact already enlightened.* They only have to 'realize' or be shown that this is true. According to Hakamaya (1997b, 344),

> The idea of "original enlightenment" refers to a fundamental enlightenment that transcends the phenomenal world. All people are by nature primordially endowed with this enlightenment, which exists eternally. Since the doctrine implies that, at a level preceding awareness, the phenomenal transformations of samsara remain, it is of a single piece with the idea of "eternal mind and perishable phenomena."

Hakamaya goes on to suggest that this was not only the dominant understanding of original enlightenment in the Tendai tradition, but that it has become—or, at any rate, has come to be understood as—"*the* central philosophy of [Japanese] Buddhism."[52] Moreover,

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[52] Hakamaya 1997b, 344. See Stone's criticism of the notion of original enlightenment thought as being distinctively or quintessentially "Japanese," as suggested by numerous scholars including Tamura Yoshirō 田村芳朗. Not only does this serve to introduce problematic notions of cultural—and at times borderline racial) essentialism—it also ignores movements such as Amidism, which departs from the assumed phenomenality of what Tamura calls "Japanese thinking patterns." (Stone 1999, 52–53)

he suggests that far from being, as has been suggested by Umehara Takeshi 梅原猛 (1985) among others, an egalitarian notion that served as the basis for social harmony, it became the "dominant force behind the perpetuation of social discrimination" in Japan. (Hakamaya 1997b, 344) Such a criticism is not new. Taishō and Shōwa-era scholars Shimaji Daitō 島地大等 (1875–1927)[53] and Shigyō Kaishū 執行海秀 (1907–1968) made similar claims about the moral destructiveness of Tendai original enlightenment thought, siding, as many scholars have done to this day, with the so-called reformers of the Kamakura period in their quest to eliminate such distorted and dangerous teachings in order to return to a 'practical' and 'humane' Buddhism. (Stone 1999, 64–65, 71)

Against Hakamaya's view, Jacqueline Stone develops a more nuanced view of the subject of original enlightenment in her monumental study on *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism* (1999). Stone argues that it is a mistake to assume, as many scholars do, that *hongaku* 本覚 is a coherent system of thought or philosophical school (i.e., *shisō* 思想), rather than an extraordinarily complex paradigm or matrix—she uses the term 'mode of discourse'—interpreted in various ways over time and across sects. To cite several examples, the emergence in China of Huayan 華厳 and Tientai 天台 was a period beset with varying and competing understandings of *tathāgata-garbha* vis-à-vis notions of 'suchness' and the 'originally pure mind'. Zhiyi 智顗 (Jp. Chigi, 538–597), the founder of Tientai, emphasized the mutual inclusiveness of all dharmas and the mind, over against existing Yogacara and emergent Huayan notions of the

[53] Credited by Jacqueline Stone (1999, 3) as having introduced the concept of "original enlightenment thought" (*hongaku shisō* 本覚思想) to the Japanese academic world.

priority of the mind in its 'primal purity.' Somewhat later, the sixth Tientai patriarch Chanjan 湛然 (Jp. Tanzen, 711–782) appropriated Huayan terms in order to make a case against the "one-sided [notion] of a clean and pure suchness" (Stone 1999, 9).

A century later, in Japan, Saichō and Kūkai, founders of the Japanese Tendai and Shingon schools respectively, become the first major Japanese thinkers to interpret and develop the concept of original enlightenment. The former developed his interpretation largely in the context of his famous debate with Hossō scholar Tokuitsu over the inclusivity of Buddha-nature and the notion of *icchantika*s (see above #3.4.4). Once again, like his Chinese forebears, Saichō adopted the terms of his rivals to develop a unique stance on these matters, one which accepts the twofold nature of suchness—quiescent and dynamic—while prioritizing the latter over the former, a move which re-asserts the general Sinitic tendency to concretize Indian metaphysical concepts. "Saichō's understanding of 'suchness according with conditions'... represents a crucial step toward the profound valorization of empirical reality found in medieval Tendai original enlightenment thought" (Stone 1999, 14). On the other hand, borrowing even more directly from Huayan/Kegon than from Tientai, Kūkai developed his own unique reading of the doctrine in terms of a distinction between two forms of original enlightenment: "both tainted and pure", and "clean and pure." While the former reflects earlier Chinese versions such as that found in the *Awakening of Faith* (Skt. *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda-śāstra*, Ch. *Dasheng qixinlun* 大乘起信論 Jp. *Daijōkishinron*), the latter indicates a more strongly mystical, transformative experience by which one realizes buddhahood "in this very body." "In the latter sense...it is given a more absolute reading, much closer to suchness itself, or to the

ontological basis of the nonduality of beings and the Buddha." (Stone 1999, 11; see Shimaji 1916)

Besides noting the complexity in the development of the doctrine, which, as with Buddha-nature, makes any blanket rejection of it difficult if not impossible to sustain, Stone also rejects the common picture of the leaders of the various 'new' Kamakura Buddhism inculcating a successful 'reform' of a corrupt, morally bankrupt institutionalized Buddhism dominated by the Tendai sect, a central part of which consisted of throwing away the Tendai *hongaku* doctrine. There is no clear evidence that the monks of the 'new' Buddhisms were any less 'corrupt' or morally deficient than those of Tendai, Shingon or the Nara schools for that matter, nor that they rid themselves of *hongaku* entirely. Rather, Stone avers, Original Enlightenment was carried over, though generally reinterpreted, to suit the needs of the new sects. Stone's tome is largely a detailed analysis of the many and various ways in which this process took place.[54]

Although Stone does not have much to say about CB in her 1999 work on original enlightenment, elsewhere she confronts the CB analysis of *hongaku* only to conclude that it misses the mark for several reasons. First, as noted above, it is not easy to clarify even what *hongaku* refers to in the early Chinese and Japanese contexts. Second, even assuming that one can make a broad category definition of 'original enlightenment thought', it is even less clear that the doctrine was used in any systematic fashion to support injustice during the period of its development in the two countries. What Stone does allow, and this is a significant point, is that there is more evidence for the ideological usage of *hongaku* in

[54] See her "Conclusion" (Stone 1999, 356–67) for a brief but illuminating summary of this process.

the early modern and modern periods in Japan, from Tokugawa though Meiji to Shōwa, than from the medieval Heian and Kamakura periods (1999, 359). There is no way to judge *hongaku*—at least in its earlier forms—as being outrightly topicalist and hence non-Buddhist. This does not mean that we must simply accept all versions as equally beneficial or persuasive. What is required is a) detailed investigation of the various forms or readings of *hongaku* as they emerged in medieval Japan, and b) further analysis of the development of *hongaku shisō*—in particular the apparently topicalist versions of such—into the modern period, as Japan developed a modern society and, ultimately, a nationalist ideology. Stone's *Original Enlightenment* provides much in the way of the first, and includes a call for the second.

While Hakamaya is surely correct, in one sense, to say that "Prince Shōtoku's constitutional mandate to 'value harmony'—usually lauded as a Buddhist sentiment—is, in fact, political" (1997b, 341), the sense in which he is correct renders the statement banal. Indeed, such can be said about virtually any public statement of religious relevance or ideals. It is difficult to imagine what a *purely* religious—i.e., non-political or non-ideological—public statement would be. No matter what the author or speaker's original intention, such utterances are continually transforming and expressing social meaning as they spread though time and space. The task is not to dismiss such statements as being political, but rather to understand their specific implications and effects, and, if we take up the mantle of criticism, to work out which particular readings best fit with the clearly delineated (Buddhist) purposes we are trying to achieve.

3.5 Karma and Fatalism

> In general, the principle of cause and effect is clear: without any doubt those who do evil fall and those who cultivate virtue ascend; if cause and effect ceased to exist or were invalid, there would be no appearance of the Buddhas in the world, and the Patriarch would not have come from the West.
> (*Shushōgi* 修証義, as cited in Hakamaya 1997b, 345)

Hakamaya's argument needs to be fleshed out more clearly as to the "obvious harm" of the doctrine of original enlightenment. Rather than dwell upon the case of Dōgen and his attempt—via criticism of the Senika heresy[55]—to reverse the topicalist undercurrents of his day, Hakamaya extends the discussion to parallel currents within Meiji and Taishō Sōtō Zen. Most significant are Hakamaya's citation and comments on an extended passage (a small portion of which is cited above) from a Taishō era sermon on the *Shushōgi* 修証義, a Meiji-era compilation of Sōtō teachings based on the *Shōbōgenzō*. The *Shushōgi* provides a rather standard explanation of karma within most forms of Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition. However, on what would appear a rather straightforward rendering of karmic causality, the Taishō-era sermon erects a distinctive framework.

> The original foundation of the cosmos is one reality, the same and equal, with no separation between even the most minute particles; however, within the true essence of that one reality, same and equal, a single great spiritual force exists of its own power. That spiritual power manifests a wondrous function based upon the

[55] The Senika or 'naturalistic' heresy is based on the teachings of Senika, reputedly a brahmin contemporary of Śākyamuni who preached the existence of an eternal soul, separate from the impermanent body. He became a favourite target of Dōgen's criticism (see, e.g., G. 22; Eidō and Vacher 2002, 69–71).

> law of the universe that has not changed from past to present; that law is called the principle of cause and effect. From the great universe above to a single blade of grass or tree below, all things are born and nurtured according to this rule of cause and effect. Likewise with our physical bodies and minds, our sufferings and joys—nothing exists that is not according to this law. Actions in the past become the root cause that invites the fruits of the present; manifold causes and manifold effects flow continuously and without pause, without beginning or end. However, there are various differences in the fruits because there are myriad disparities in the root causes; hence those who do evil fall and those who cultivate virtue ascend. The environment of those who give rise to an evil mind and practice evil gradually degenerates, their position falls, and the nation becomes defiled; in contrast, the position of those who give rise to virtuous mind and cultivate virtue ascends and the world becomes pure. Thus we must resign ourselves to the fact that the reason we are born into this world and experience various and myriad punishments and rewards is entirely due to the causes and conditions of past lives. (cited in Hakamaya 1997b, 345)

There are many ways, Buddhist or otherwise, by which we might criticize this sermon. Hakamaya himself tackles a number of what appear to be, from his perspective, its most egregious failings, for instance, what he calls the "deceptive logic" or sleight-of-hand that moves from a statement of original harmony to an affirmation of the inevitable disparities among human beings. While it is certainly true, contra Hakamaya, that a 'logic'

of emanation from original unity to multiplicity has been worked out in the West via Plotinus and the Neoplatonist tradition,[56] his point relates more strongly to the fact that the narrative in the above sermon moves so quickly and without justification—other than the invocation of *karma*—from unity to multiplicity to a kind of fatalistic differentialism. Most significant, though, is the initial assumption of what is elsewhere referred to as an "ocean of true being," which is the source and foundation of the cosmos, and from which causality itself 'arises'. This notion appears to contradict the very section of the *Shōbōgenzō* that it is meant to uphold. While Dōgen in this fascicle does indeed point to the importance of belief in causality, he does not make the threefold leap by which a) causality emerges from a single undifferentiated ground; b) causality is 'exhausted by' karma; b) causality/karma is determinative of our position in life. (G. 89, *jinshin inga* 深信因果)

Hakamaya is quite right to level his CB guns against the above sermon. Indeed, it would be hard for anyone to argue that this vision fits with the work of Dōgen, Nagarjuna, or the mainstream of Mahāyāna thought on emptiness and *pratītya-samutpāda*. However, this does not make the idea particularly new or confined to the Sōtō sect. Indeed, such usage of the doctrine of *karma* to justify and explain social differences and discrimination has broad appeal not only in the past but also in contemporary Buddhist societies. In fact, deterministic understandings of *karma* have had a deeper and more devastating impact on Buddhist social ethics than any other notion, including Buddha-nature and original enlightenment, the two main foils of CB. The above-cited sermon, for all its topicalist overtones, relies most heavily upon the notion of karma as being "the wondrous function

[56] See Boutin 1983a, 253–79, 479.

based upon the law of the universe." In a sense, Hakamaya is barking up the wrong tree. Topicalism itself, the 'non-Buddhist' idea of a ground or locus beneath or beyond or before all phenomenal reality as expressed in some versions of Buddha-nature and original enlightenment, is less of a threat than the law of karma, or at any rate a certain very common reading of karma as a justification for injustice and social discrimination.[57]

Although the history of Buddhist interpretations and uses of the doctrine of *karma* is too complicated to be tackled here, a few comments regarding the place of *karma* vis-à-vis critical thinking and 'topicalism' are in order. While *karma* is a fundamental idea that pervades Buddhism from its very beginnings, many scholars have noted that, at least at the doctrinal level, Buddhist notions of *karma* are not identical to those of other Indian religions such as Jainism or Hinduism (Keown 2001, 37–39; Burton 2004, 13; Abe 1985, 214). Although the difference has been explained in various ways, one conclusion often reached is that Buddhism, while taking *karma* very seriously as a fact about existence, does not privilege karmic causality over the workings of causality as a whole. In other words, the more fundamental Buddhist understanding of the universe is that *everything* is causally conditioned and arises in equiprimordiality—*karma* is simply the moral aspect of this more general condition.

Furthermore, the Buddhist notion of *karma* is complicated by another fundamental Buddhist idea: *anatman* or no-self. Although the belief in the effects of *karma* on future lives did not disappear in Buddhism, the very idea of a stable and continuing self, as

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[57] See Stone 1999b, 184: "Hakamaya seems to believe that the doctrine of moral causality has pernicious potential only when linked to the notion that karmic differences express the same fundamental ground, so that social distinctions become rationalized as expressions of true reality... But the doctrine of karmic causality has been enlisted in legitimating some very nasty forms of oppressions and discrimination even without this refinement."

anything other than a fictive illusion, is put into serious question. "The Buddhist idea of no-self and dependent origination [*pratītya-samutpāda*] is a complete rejection of such a reincarnating permanent essence. Rebirth is about process and a continuing stream of events rather than an eternal soul which takes on new bodies."[58] This means that Buddhist understandings of *karma* shift the focus away from the 'baggage' gained by a continually-reborn self to what might be called the moral conditioning side of the more fundamental idea of *pratītya-samutpāda.* In this sense, the notion of personal fate or destiny, the tendency to read backwards from karmic consequences to karmic causes—in short, *karma* as *determinative* of one's social, political, economic and moral destiny, loses its explanatory power and its doctrinal footing within Buddhist contexts. While *karma* acquired in past lives will have an effect on a person's circumstances and actions, and thus will condition them, this cannot be seen as a simple cause-effect scenario, because a) the self is not a simple constant, b) causes are manifold and extend beyond moral actions to include various other conditions—social, political, economic—over which an individual person has very little control (a contemporary social theorist or Marxist might speak here of structural factors), and c) according to most Buddhist traditions, only a Buddha or

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[58] Burton 2004, 14. — See also p. 13: "The good or bad actions (*karman*) performed in this life are causally connected with the sentient being that arises in the future life, influencing its personality and circumstances, just as good or bad actions in past lives influence one's personality and circumstances. Thus, the present always-changing sentient being is neither identical nor entirely unconnected with the sentient being of the past lives and of future lives, just as any middle-aged self is neither identical with nor entirely different from myself as a young child or old man."

about-to-become-a-Buddha is able to correctly and clearly see the past results of *karma* in successive rebirths.[59] As Damien Keown (1996, 39) notes, the doctrine of *karma*,

> does not claim that everything is karmically determined. Many of the things that happen in life—like winning the lottery or breaking a leg—may simply be accidents. Karma does not determine precisely what will happen or how anyone will react to what happens. Individuals are free to resist previous conditioning and establish new patterns of behaviour: such, indeed, is the point of becoming a Buddhist.

Once again, it would be a mistake to assume that *karma* can be easily dropped or dismissed as irrelevant to Buddhist goals, for several reasons. First, it has been continually cited and utilized within virtually all strands of historical Buddhist thought and teachings, although in ways frequently at odds with the way Buddhism 'is supposed' to view karma.[60] Just to cite one example, Buddhist cosmology rests on the so-called Wheel of Life (Skt. *bhavacakra*, Jp. *shōjirin* 生死輪), which includes various—generally six—spheres or levels in which one may be reborn, based largely if not entirely on the accumulation of merit

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[59] Cf. *Majjhima Nikaya* 1, 22–23, where the Buddha, at the moment before reaching enlightenment, perceives in full detail all of his past lives, as well as the past lives and karmic consequences of all beings; also *Moliyasivaka Sutta* (*Samyutta Nikaya* 36.21): "Now when these ascetics and brahmans have such a doctrine and view that 'whatever a person experiences, be it pleasure, pain or neither-pain-nor-pleasure', then they go beyond what they know by themselves and what is accepted as true by the world. Therefore I say that this is wrong on the part of these ascetics and brahmans."

[60] Hans W. Gruenig has listed what he sees as the six main 'versions' of the doctrine of *karma* as it has been interpolated at various times by various people: 1) psychological conditioning; 2) worldly relations; 3) intrapsychic life-to-life; 4) cosmic life-to-life; 5) cosmic just deserts; 6) cosmic score-keeping (Hans W. Gruenig, *Buddha-l*, 27 May 2004).

(Skt. *punya*), which is in turn based on one's karmic activities.[61] *Karma* seems to be intrinsic to most if not all Asian Buddhist cosmologies. Second, and more significantly, *karma* is one of the most widely understood ideas among Buddhist lay-practitioners, even though popular interpretations generally fail to reflect attempts by Buddhist thinkers to clarify and nuance the idea in properly Buddhist terms. Melford Spiro (1982), in a way that seems to prefigure the Critical Buddhists, distinguished between two forms of Theravada Buddhist tradition: the 'kammatic' tradition—which focuses on a foundational belief in *karma* and emphasizes ethical conduct undertaken for the benefit of a 'better' rebirth; and the 'nibbanic' tradition—which looks to the achievement of awakening or liberation from craving and suffering.[62] This argument, while interesting, is ultimately too simplistic in suggesting that the two spheres are distinct paths, rather than intricately interwoven within most Buddhist traditions. Moreover, Spiro (1982, 69) goes on to claim that whereas those following the 'kammatic' path will engage primarily in ethical activity (*śīla*), those on the 'nibbanic' side deny the worth of such in favour of the practice of meditation. Again, while this strict discontinuity does not reflect the reality of the way the majority of Buddhist live (Keown 1992, 22), the suggestion that awakening or enlightenment is occasionally viewed as being above or beyond ethics and moral conduct cannot be so easily gainsaid.

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[61] In the *Lam rim chen mo* (2000, 281–87), Tibetan master and Gelukpa sect founder Tsongkhapa (1355–1417) notes the suffering of "repeatedly descending from high to low" in the spheres of existence, as a result of karma is one of the six types of Buddhist suffering; while all-too-common, it is something which, like all forms of suffering, can be 'extinguished'. On the other hand, an apocryphal but widely circulated Chinese text entitled *Yingluo jing* 瓔珞經 (Sutra on Cause and Fruits, Jp. *Yōrakukyō*) explicitly propagates the view that, if a person is born blind or deaf, it is because he or she "maligned the Dharma" in a past existence. There are precedents for this in the Pali Canon (e.g., *Saleyyaka Sutta* section of the *Majjhima Nikaya* 41), though there are also statements that come closer to Dōgen's view as presented by Hakamaya (e.g., *Moliyasivaka Sutta* section of the *Samyutta Sutta* 36.21).

[62] Since he is speaking about Theravada, Spiro uses the Pali forms of *karma* and *nirvāṇa*.

In Japanese Buddhist thought the connection between doctrines of original enlightenment and *karma* renders the whole issue more complicated still. A number of medieval Tendai texts conflate the two notions in the motto: "*karma* is precisely liberation" (*gō soku gedatsu* 業即解脱)—which means that, because of the originally nondual 'pure' essence of all actions, even deluded actions ultimately manifest the constant interpenetration of *dharma*s. This formulation renders *karma* a subset of the more encompassing doctrines of emptiness, impermanence, and original enlightenment. As such the statement, "*karma* is liberation," is, according to Stone, meant to be an ontological, and not a moral statement; even those advocating it were aware of the potential danger of this idea and warned that it should be taught only to those at a very advanced level of training, or else it could be taken as an excuse for license. (Stone 1999, 218–19) On the one hand, this displacement or dissolving of *karma* into emptiness and impermanence has the potential benefit of taking away the use of *karma* as a post-facto justification for discrimination or the blithe acceptance of social/ethnic hierarchies. On the other hand, this boon is balanced by the antinomian implications inherent to the doctrine of original enlightenment, such that the strength of *karma* as a source for moral responsibility also dissolves. The past is erased, but so too is the future. Finally, Stone's comment to the effect that the medieval Tendai texts cited above must be read in a strictly ontological fashion strikes me as rather naïve, given Stone's own frequent warnings about over-intellectualizing the doctrine of original enlightenment. Can the ontological element be separated from the moral?

The task of a truly Critical Buddhism in this case is to work out, by looking critically at the traditions, a version of *karma* that may best fit with the most important Buddhist ideas and ethical teachings. The first stage in this task is to look to the various ways that the doctrine has been used within Buddhist societies, past and present, particularly those cases where *karma* has been used to explain or justify violence, warfare or—most frequently—social discrimination.[63] In particular, the main focus should be on the usages, teachings and interpretations of *karma* in modern societies, where ideological components become more recognizable and pertinent to our present situation. The second stage—making positive and critical proposals—is somewhat more difficult, but equally crucial. Hakamaya's (1997b) work on Dōgen's understanding of *karma* in terms of the '*Jishin inga*' fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō* is one important step in this direction; but Hakamaya's criticism may be missing the main target, namely, not *hongaku* or 'eternal mind and perishable phenomena' but *karma* itself. A broader understanding of Buddhist criticism may help to provide an understanding of *karma* that neither denies its historical usages nor runs up against teachings of *pratītya-samutpāda*, emptiness, and compassion.

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[63] Stone (1999b, 184) provides a few generalized historical examples of the various ways *karma* has been used as a means of justification for social and gender inequality across Asian countries, while Collins (1998) gives a more detailed analysis of such within premodern South Asian Buddhism. But this is not simply a matter of history. One need only travel to Buddhist countries like Thailand today to hear such justifications used to explain and justify the position of, for example, teenage prostitutes who are victims of sexual slavery. Moreover, rather surprisingly, even a 'socially engaged' Buddhist like Tenzin Gyatso, the XIVth Dalai Lama, entertains the 'fatalistic' view that "every event is due to one's *karma*." When asked, in a recent interview, whether disabled children are in fact reaping the fruits of past sins, he replied "Oh yes. Of course"—at which point, the interviewer claims, one of his entourage leapt up to declare that "This is for Buddhists! Only for Buddhists! Last Question now, please" (*Independent* http:/news.independent.co.uk/people/profiles/story.jsp?story=528911).

Chapter 4

NEW BUDDHISMS: PROBLEMS IN MODERN ZEN THOUGHT

> Every religion seeks to proclaim a truth which transcends the world, but is enmeshed in the very world it desires to transcend. Every religion seeks to remake the world in its own image, but it is always to some extent remade in the image of the world. This is the tragedy of religion.
> (Robert Bellah, *Tokugawa Religion*)

4.1 Meiji 'New Buddhism' (*shin Bukkyō* 新仏教) and the Demythological Turn

In constructing a modern genealogy for CB, it is necessary to confront the so-called New Buddhist (*shin Bukkyō* 新仏教) movement of the mid to late-Meiji era, which encapsulates many of the tensions found within CB itself. In what follows, these tensions and problems will be explored, in particular the connection between the desire for reform and the quest for harmony in modern Japanese Buddhism, through a focus on one of the prominent Buddhist schlolars of the day: Murakami Senshō 村上専精 (1851–1929).

Shin Bukkyō is a catch-all term that includes the various writings and activities of Inoue Enryō,[1] Shaku Sōen,[2] and Kiyozawa Manshi,[3] as well as Murakami and the so-called *Daijō hi-bussetsuron* 大乗非仏説論. As modern Western culture and values,

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[1] Inoue Enryō (井上圓了 1858–1919), perhaps the most influential of all these Buddhist reformers, published *Bukkyō katsuron joron* 仏教活論序論 (Revitalization of Buddhism) in 1887. Like Shaku and the delegates to the Columbian Exposition, and against the *Daijō hibusseturon*, Inoue combined a strong sense of Japanese nationalism and a faith in the universal message of (Mahāyāna) Buddhism with a commitment to presenting Buddhism as the most modern and 'scientific' of all the world's religions (see Staggs 1980, Snodgrass 1998).

[2] Shaku Sōen (釋宗演 1859–1919), Rinzai 臨濟 Zen master, abbot of Engakuji 円覚寺 in Kamakura and teacher of D. T. Suzuki, led the Japanese delegation at the first World Parliament of Religions held at the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, 1893 (see Snodgrass 1998, 2003). Shaku, who sought Buddhist unity (in his collaborative multivolume project, *Essentials of Buddhist Teachings*) as well as hegemony (he proclaimed Japanese Mahāyāna the 'universal' religion of the modern world), is targeted by Brian Victoria (1997) for his complicity in the early development of 'Imperial Way Zen'.

[3] Kiyozawa Manshi (清沢満之 1863–1903) was a central figure in the Higashi Honganji (Shin) sect reform movement 東本願寺改革運動 of the 1890s. More than the other figures mentioned here, but akin to the later members of the Kyoto School, Kiyozawa was interested not simply in Buddhism but in coming to understand religion more generally. Also, like Nishida, Nishitani and Tanabe after him, he would come to understand the core of Buddhism (and religion) in terms of a kind of deep or pure experience. In his "Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion 酒興哲学骸骨" (1892), distributed at the Columbian Exposition in 1893, he explains the core of religion as being, "more than just the activity of the infinite power, it is the process by which the finite becomes the infinite. Of this side of the finite, we might say that it is the way that the finite reaches out towards the infinite. Moreover, among the innumerable forms of the finite, it is through our individual souls, or we might say the evolution of consciousness, that we attain to the infinite—this is the essence of religion" (The Skeleton of a Philosophy of Religion," translated by Noguchi Zenshirō 野口善四郎, in *Collected Works of Kiyozawa Manshi*, vol.1, p. 141; original vol. 2, p. 12; see Fujita 2004).

including models and methods of Western scholarship on religion, began to make themselves felt in Japan during the Meiji period, a movement towards a demythologized,[4] rational, ethical and historicist understanding of Buddhism developed under the broad rubric of *Daijō hi-bussetsuron*, which may be literally if awkwardly translated as the "theory that the Mahāyāna teachings are not true Buddhism." This movement began in the 1890s via the writings of Murakami and several others such as Anezaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949), who was named the first professor of Religious Studies at Tokyo Imperial University in 1905. Inspired by Western notions of empiricism and scientific method, but also by a liberal and humanistic vision of Buddhism, DJHB sought to clarify and demarcate the limits of what should be included under the rubric 'Buddhism'.[5] Their conclusion—or we might say their starting assumptions—indicated that the so-called Great Vehicle was a repository for supernaturalism, mysticism, deformities or corruptions of the original, pure teachings, better preserved in the 'Hināyāna' and latter-day Theravada streams of southeast Asia. Controversy of course ensued, unsurprisingly most of which

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[4] This drive towards demythologization of a religious tradition finds a parallel in Western scholarship on religion of the same period, particularly the drive towards uncovering the "historical Jesus," as well as the slightly later work of German theologian Rudolf Bültmann (1884–1976). As with such Western Christian scholars, the scholars of DJHB were generally working to preserve some pure essence of their tradition by opening the gates to historical critical method, in the sincere belief that science could provide religious answers that mythology and even centuries of doctrinal development could not. It is important to note the fact that, in both cases, there was a distinct 'theological' undercurrent at work.

[5] It should be recalled that this was only a few scant years after the brief but brutal state-sponsored persecution of Buddhism under the slogan *haibutsu kishaku* 廃仏毀釈—lit. "Throw away Buddha and abolish Śākyamuni!" Though the program of disestablishment was soon reversed, it was to leave an important imprint on late 19th-century Buddhism. In fact, virtually all permutations of *shin Bukkyō* can be traced back to the after-effects of *haibutsu kishaku*.

came from the Buddhist establishment, those still powerful institutions unwilling to serve up their longstanding beliefs on the altar of 'modern' (and Western-inspired) sensibilities.

Although the movement's name indicates a sharp criticism of Mahāyāna traditions as being 'deviations' from the true Buddhism taught by Śākyamuni, Murakami himself did not take such an extreme line. In his magnum opus, *On the Unification of Buddhism* (*Bukkyō tōitsuron* 仏教統一論), Murakami employed the tools of modern critical scholarship to discern a clear historical and doctrinal foundation for Buddhism.[6] Yet Murakami also called for the emergence of a *universal, non-sectarian* Buddhism based on a set of unified and undisputed doctrines. In other words, Murakami's vision was more constructive than critical—or, at least, was meant to be both. As a result, he was much less dismissive than some of his peers of the Mahāyāna teachings, coming to see these as possibly belated but nonetheless significant adaptations and permutations of the core Buddhist truths taught by Śākyamuni himself.

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[6] Along with philosophy and the application of 'discriminating wisdom', history plays an important role within CB, since a clear knowledge of the history of Buddhist doctrines in relation to Buddhist ethics and politics helps us to understand and take measures to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past. Here CB would laud Murakami's own commitment to history and historical research, but also his recognition, which one can find in the early work of the journal *Bukkyō Shirin*, that the 'facts' of history alone, shriven of doctrine or faith, cannot take us much further along the path of reform and reconstruction. Moreover, despite superficial resemblances, Murakami and the Critical Buddhists ultimately part company with DJHB's all-too modernist assumptions regarding the pure origins of Buddhism before the Mahāyāna—even while retaining its strong criticism of the Mahāyāna streams, Hakamaya and Matsumoto do not argue that the only true Buddhism is original Buddhism, but rather that the only true Buddhism is *critical* Buddhism, which means something entirely different. It must be admitted, as Sueki Fumihiko has pointed out in his recent essay, that Murakami was inconsistent in his attitudes to the relative importance between history and doctrine, as well as the status of Mahayana within the larger Buddhist tradition (Sueki 2004, 96–99). However, although Murakami's commitment to history appears to weaken over the decades, it never entirely disappears, and serves to keep him apart from the growing trend towards the non-historical, existential brand of modernist Buddhism developed in the early and mid-twentieth century by the likes of D. T. Suzuki, the Kyoto School, and sundry Western Buddhist popularizers.

4.1.1 The Case of Murakami Senshō 村上専精

On the Unification of Buddhism is at once an original, impressive, and yet deeply flawed piece of Buddhist scholarship—a 'gorgeous failure' whose grand aspiration to bring about a "scheme for the amalgamation of all Buddhist sects" was bound to end in disappointment.[7] Written in fits and starts over a period of more than twenty years, its argument is, on the face of it, deceptively simple: Buddhism can and should be unified, because, whether Buddhists themselves recognize it or not, underlying all the manifold teachings (*kyōsō* 教相) is a common, fundamental core or essence of doctrine (*kyōri* 教理), which provides not only the historical trunk but also the life-giving sap of the great Buddhist tree.[8]

One thing becomes obvious right away: though Murakami was a self-consciously modern scholar dedicated to rigorous historical scholarship, he was not so quick to follow the path of complete demythologization—that is, he clearly states his commitment to uncovering not only the bare facts of Buddhist history, but also to the more elusive religious or doctrinal dimensions that bind Buddhists of all stripes together. In other words,

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[7] As Murakami himself, by the time of writing the final chapter on "Practice," came to acknowledge: "At the time of its first publication, theoretically and also practically, there was a possibility of Buddhist unity, as well as the thought that such was necessary." However, after this time, he could not help but acknowledge that while, "the theoretical possibility remained, the practical possibility did not." Sueki argues, correctly, I think, that the failure of *Unification* has as much if not more to do with inherent problems in Murakami's approach as it does with changing social and religious circumstances (Sueki 2004, 101, my translation).

[8] Murakami 1997, 10. — In Murakami's argument regarding *kyōsō* 教相, one is reminded of the traditional Buddhist teaching of *upāya kausālya* (Jp. *hōben* 方便)—expedient means or 'beneficent deception', used especially by Chinese Buddhists "to help deal with the hermeneutical problem of reconciling the disparities among the different teachings attributed to the Buddha—to explain that the differences in the teachings of the Buddha delivered in his forty-nine year ministry were the result of the different audiences he addressed" (Muller, DDB, *upāya kausālya*).

Murakami employs what he refers to as a 'Buddhistic' (*Bukkyō shugi* 仏教主義) approach to history, whereby the faith dimension retains a central place. This is a point where there appears to be a glaring difference between the method of Murakami and the writings of CB, famous for Hakamaya's pithy conclusion that "only criticism is Buddhism"—in other words, that the core of Buddhism can be found only within rational, critical, processes of analysis and empirical discrimination. Yet, in looking beyond the rhetoric of rationalism and their love of René Descartes, we see that in fact both Matsumoto and Hakamaya also admit that there is a core of fundamental doctrines to which all Buddhist must adhere—a ground or bedrock that cannot be further reduced. To take the best example, the 12-link chain of *pratītya-samutpāda* (*engi* 縁起), the single most basic and important Buddhist doctrine according to Critical Buddhism, is one that, while it may be rationally *understood*, must ultimately be *accepted* on what amounts to unwavering faith. Murakami also places *pratītya-samutpāda* among the very core teachings of Buddhism in all its forms, and remarks, in a very similar fashion, that while faith should not be completely irrational, it does and must come into play. "As a rule," asks Murakami,

> are there not two main forms to what is referred to as religious faith? One, which does not require an appeal to common sense, is belief beyond or outside anything rational, while the other is faith obtained through approval of an appeal to reason or common sense. In these two types of faith, the first cannot help but block the advance of society and progress, while the second cannot help but accompany social progress. In our humble opinion, the function of training based on a

> rejection of the irrational, and adjudication in terms of common sense, is all the more important among the present generation of thinkers.[9]

Moreover, in discussing more specifically the foundations of Buddhism, Murakami comes up with three general principles, all of which seem to coalesce well with CB: 1) the priority of reason over revelation; 2) the priority of subjectivity over objectivity; and 3) the ultimate goal of liberation from ignorance.[10]

Another important issue to ponder when considering Murakami's work is the problem of what the philosopher Foucault called the 'ideality of origins', itself a modernist version of the genetic fallacy, understood here as the notion that 'true Buddhism' can *only* be found in the words and teachings of the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. Such a belief characterizes much of Buddhist writing from ancient times up to and including the *shin Bukkyō* scholars of the Meiji era; in fact, it is hard to find any Buddhist writer prior to the 20th century who did not make this claim, and believe correspondingly that their own sect's teachings were the ones actually taught by Śākyamuni himself (or, in the case of latter-day traditions like Zen, if not actually taught then at least 'thought' by Śākyamuni). Murakami comes across as ambiguous on this issue. While he clearly does believe that the core doctrines of Buddhism date back to the original teachings of Śākyamuni, he also allows that later doctrinal forms, of the Mahayana in particular, are 'constructions'. At any rate, the very ambiguity of Murakami on this matter opens up the possibility that his work

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[9] Murakami 1997, 464 (my translation). See also Sueki 2004, 104.

[10] Murakami 1997, 53 (my translation).

towards Buddhist reform and unification need not rely on what most would recognize today as a flawed and untenable premise.

This point requires further elaboration. Most of Murakami's *shin Bukkyō* peers, including Shaku Sōen and Inoue Enryō, dealt with the problem of Mahāyāna's inescapable historical belatedness in a very traditional way, by accepting the medieval Tendai teaching of the *goji* 五時 or "Five Periods (of the Buddha's teachings),"[11] whereby "not only were the Mahāyāna sutras indisputably the Buddha's teachings, directly transmitted to the world by Śākyamuni, but they were his first teaching, his last teaching, and the only complete teaching of his Truth."[12] Though in earlier works Murakami took a more uncompromising approach in denying the authenticity of the Mahāyāna, in *Unification* he proposes a dynamic "circulation" of Buddhist doctrine. He represents this process schematically by way of a number of revolving circles, each of which is meant to indicate the flow between poles of some of the most tendencies within Mahāyāna doctrine.

With a nod to DJHB, Murakami acknowledges that seminal Mahāyāna works such as the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokke-kyō* 法華經) and *Flower Garland* or *Kegon Sutra* (*Kegon-kyō* 華厳經) are, in fact, belated developments rather than pure replications of the original

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[11] Though this particular Tendai version seems to be based on a teaching from the *Lotus Sutra* (*Hokke-kyō* 法華経), one can find very similar ideas in the *Awakening of Faith*—a text roundly criticized by Critical Buddhism as one of the founding documents of topicalism—as well as the teachings of Kūkai, who produced his own Ten Stages of the progression of religious consciousness (*jūjū shinron* 十住心論), including not simply the main Buddhist schools but even, on the very botton, Confucianism and Taoism. Kūkai's own 'esoteric' Shingon sect, it goes without saying, finds itself at the pinnacle.

[12] Snodgrass 1998, 328; see Inoue 1887, Ketelaar 1990. In 1895, Shaku Sōen would declare, with unconcealed satisfaction, that "the mistaken idea that Mahāyāna Buddhism was not actually the Buddha's teaching had been put to rest" (Shaku 1895b, 6; Snodgrass 329); and that, in fact, the specifically Japanese versions of Mahāyāna could be considered the core truth for the whole world, thus eclipsing the other great religions such as Christianity and Islam—doing, in effect, to the world religions what Mahayanists had long done to earlier Buddhist traditions —supercession in the name of both authenticity *and* 'modernity'.

teachings. However, he does not let this take away from their power or their ability to convey key Buddhist truths—in particular, the truth of Suchness or Absolute Reality, which Murakami refers to as the "Fourth Seal of the Dharma." In fact, though he does not take this nearly so far as his peers Inoue and Shaku or Kūkai long before, Murakami does remark, almost in passing, that these belated works, based as they are on the standpoint of the absolute (*hontai no chii* 本体の地立), are able to convey their message on the problems of human life and the cosmos more clearly, and without the 'roughness' that one finds in the earlier, 'Hinayana' writings, which are based on the standpoint of the phenomenal world (*genshōkai no chii* 現象界の地立). More important, however, is the shape that Murakami introduces in this discussion—large, all-encompassing spheres, around which the various sects hover between two poles at opposite ends. Essentially, Murakami wants to show that, while each sect takes a distinct and sometimes unique path, which is most evident in the external forms of their practice (including ritual, but also variations in doctrine), they ultimately share a common source, home and foundation in the core teachings of causality, no-self, and *nirvāṇa*—which, as he argues elsewhere, arise from the Four Noble Truths, Eightfold Path, and doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda*. It is thus at the level of fundamental doctrine that the unity of Buddhism lies. As with Mahayana teachings about Buddha-nature and original enlightenment themselves, the unity of Buddhism according to Murakami is in fact already *real*, but only needs to be *realized* by Buddhists.

Fig. 1 The Circulation of Buddhism from Abhidharma to the Pure Land Sect[13]

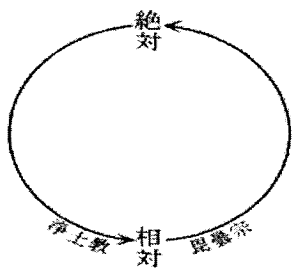


FIG. 15 Circulation of Relative & Absolute

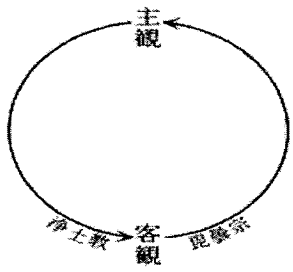


FIG. 16 Circulation of Objectivity & Subjectivity

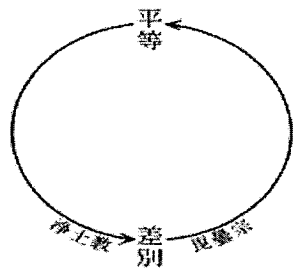


FIG. 17 Circulation of Discrimination & Non-discrimination (Equality)

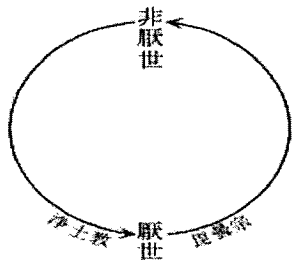


FIG. 18 Circulation of (World) Renunciation & Non-renunciation

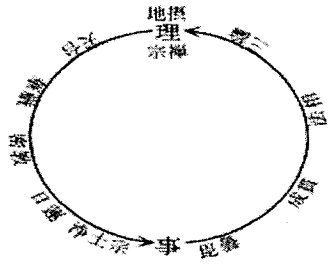


FIG. 19 Circulation of Real ('Thing') & Ideal ('Principle')

Examining the above figures, it is hard to ignore their decidedly Hegelian flavor—thesis and antithesis working together to create a higher synthesis or sublation (*Aufhebung*) of differences. The question may then be raised, however, whether Murakami's Hegelian vision of Buddhist unification requires Hegel's commitment to Absolute Reality "as the supersensible whole in which everything forms an integral and organic part."[14] Against this rosy scenario of harmonization, Matsumoto and Hakamaya see the same history as one that is rife with stasis, conflict, and degeneration—the only bright spots being the

[13] These figures are taken directly from Murakami 1997, 392–99, with my translations.

[14] Blocker and Starling 2001, 134. — Blocker and Starling, along with Piovesana, cite Inoue Enryō as being the modern Japanese thinker most strongly influenced and committed to a Hegelian vision of Buddhism, the author of *Bukkyō katsuron* going so far as to suggest that "[t]he position of Buddhism, as manifested in Kegon-Tendai, does not differ in the slightest from that of Hegel [because] matter and mind both become the one reason, the Tathagata" (Inoue in Piovesana 1981, 230).

rearguard efforts of heroes like Dōgen to stem the tide constantly rushing away from True Buddhism. Critical Buddhism would point out that, while Murakami may be right about the basic beliefs underlying True Buddhism, he is far too tolerant in allowing for all the "84 000 sects" to have a home within the all-enveloping Buddhist sphere, without discrimination on the basis of their specific teachings or practices.

Moreover, in the name of 'harmony' Murakami here effectively strips away the 'external forms' of Buddhist diversity in favor of a denuded, underlying essence. When he says, of his own sect, *Jōdo* or Pure Land Buddhism, that its beliefs in salvation via Amida's Western paradise are simply a mythological cover for the ancient doctrine of *nirvāṇa*, one cannot help but feel that more is lost than gained in the conclusion. Indeed, in his essay on "Scholarship as Criticism," Hakamaya reacts with discomfort to an identical admission by Fujiyoshi Jikai[15]; namely, that "the Paradise of the Western Pure Land is an *upāya*" (Hakamaya 1997b, 125; 1990, 113). Fujiyoshi, apparently inspired by Rinzai Zen master Hisamatsu Shin'ichi, reversed his youthful belief in the Pure Land because he felt it was unscientific. Hakamaya reads the motivation behind such a transformation of belief on the part of Fujiyoshi as part of a general modern tendency to seek harmony or espouse tolerance by glossing over so-called surface distinctions. What results, however, is a little more than a veneer of harmony, which effectively supports the status quo, including existent social discrimination. Moreover, Hakamaya remarks that upon considering the words of Fujiyoshi (and Hisamatsu), he came to the realization that "a truly critical attitude

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[15] Fujiyoshi Jikai 藤吉慈海, professor emeritus at Hanazono University and abbot of Kōmyōji 光明寺, a Jōdo sect temple in Kamakura, made the above remark in a talk given at Komazawa University in June of 1987.

towards the Buddhist tradition is impossible from a standpoint outside of it" (Hakamaya 1997b, 125; 1990, 113). Here we can see quite clearly that CB—at least, in Hakamaya's eyes—does not follow a positivist or demythological track.

Turning back to Murakami, his own growing ambivalence towards DJHB emerges even more strongly in a late article entitled "Mahayana Buddhism" (1922), where he says: "My contention is, the Buddha did not necessarily teach the Hināyāna nor the Māhāyana, as these are designations invented later; what was really preached by the Buddha himself was primitive Buddhism in which there was yet no differentiation" (Murakami 1922, 95). Yet Murakami follows this by allowing that some forms of early Buddhism do come close to the original teachings—particularly those reliant on the Āgamas (Jp. *Agon-gyō* 阿含經), as well as the tradition known as Sarvāstivāda (Jp. *Setsu issai ubu* 説一切有部), an early Indian school well-known for their insistence on the reality of *dharma*s past, present, and future, and thus of the phenomenal world—doctrines that would come to be heavily criticized by Nāgārjuna, Asanga and the emerging Mahāyāna schools.[16] As Murakami puts it, the Sarvāstivādins "were satisfied with a logical, intellectual, and moral explanation of life, they took the world as it appears to the senses, they neglected to pay attention to the deepest yearnings of the soul, in fact they regarded these as not concerning our ethical and

[16] In many respects, the Sarvāstivādins are the closest historical sect or school to CB in their strategies and aims. They are a scholarly movement, one committed to a form of realism, but not to the extent of development what we might call a deep essentialism: the non-reality of the forms we interact with are no less significant or useful for being 'non-real', and even the fully-existent *dharma*s of which all things are composed do not appear to rest on an overarching foundation or Reality (see Williams 2000, 112–15). Ironically, it was the Mahāyāna tradition, with its development of *tathāgatha-garbha*, Suchness, and original enlightenment, that seems to have relapsed more strongly into the very ways of thinking that the early Mahāyānists fought so hard against.

logical life. It was these assumptions... that Nagarjuna fiercely attacked" (Murakami 1922, 97–98).

On the one hand, we might expect Murakami to praise the Sarvastivadins, not only for their adherence to the early Buddhist teachings, but also for their attention to rational analysis and the ideal of 'discriminating wisdom'—which aligns well with Murakami's early commitment to rationalism and critical, historical studies. Yet it is impossible to read the remark that the Sarvāstivādins dismissed the "deepest yearnings of the soul" without hearing a note of approbation. In fact, Murakami goes on in this paper to develop his thesis that Nāgārjuna helped establish a more authentic expression of Buddhist teaching by adding a fouth Seal to the Hināyāna's "Three Seals of Dharma" (Jp. *sanbōin* 三法印): Suchness or Absolute Reality (Jp. *shinnyo* 眞如). As in *On the Unification of Buddhism*, but in much more succinct and cursory fashion, Murakami goes on to provide a genealogy of the development of Mahāyāna after the rise of Sarvāstivāda: from Nāgārjuna, Asanga, and the *Awakening of Faith*, through Aśvagoṣa, to the Chinese schools—divided, somewhat imperfectly, into four categories: "Perfect Doctrine" (i.e., Tientai/Tendai, Kegon); "Extra-Scriptural" (i.e., Chan/Zen); "Esoteric" (i.e., Shingon); and finally the Pure Land schools. Though the tone of this short essay on Mahāyāna Buddhism is largely descriptive, the brief conclusion betrays the fact that there is more at work here than a mere attempt to lay out the objective facts of history:

> The Idea of Amitabha Buddha taught by the Jōdo school seems at first sight to contradict all the dogmas of Buddhism, *but we know that it is the moral and*

> *religious culmination* of the Mahayana Buddhology which unfolded itself after the passing of the Buddha in conjunction with the development of Suchness (眞如) as the ultimate reality of existence. (Murakami 1922, 108).

Murakami echoes a longstanding tendency within the Mahāyāna towards a form of Buddhist supersessionism, by virtue of which each successive sect of Buddhist tradition replaces and in fact supersedes, in turn, the earlier sects. Not only is the Mahāyāna upheld as an "unfolding" of Buddhist truth (in clear contrast to DJHB, CB, and even some of Murakami's earlier statements), but now the very sect that, by the author's own admission, seems to diverge widest from the early Buddhist path, is in fact the one that is lauded as the very "culmination" of a long and arduous but progressive development.

Second, and more pertinent to the concerns of CB, Murakami here connects the 'obvious' superiority of the Pure Land way with the development of the so-called Fourth Seal of the Dharma—Absolute Reality, Suchness or *dharmadhātu*—which came to be considered in the Mahāyāna as the essential ground or locus of *pratītya-samutpāda* and thus of all phenomena.[17] Moreover, such a doctrine cannot, says Murakami, possibly be explained or understood on a logical, rational basis—"it is beyond our analytical

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[17] See Soothill (DDB) entries on *dharmadhātu*/法界緣起: "The *dharmadhātu* as the environmental cause of all phenomena, everything being dependent on everything else, therefore one is in all and all in one"; 如来藏緣起 and 眞如緣起: "Production from *tathatā* (眞如) through the action of causation." Such doctrines have their locus classicus in the *Awakening of Faith,* but find opposition in the writings of Faxian 法顯 (Jp. Hokken, c.337–422) and the *ālaya-vijñāna* doctrine of the Hossō sect.

understanding."[18] This line of thought, and the mode of expressing it, could hardly be more opposed to CB, which argues that it is in fact the very development of essentialist doctrines like Suchness—whether found in earlier Mahayana *tathāgatha-garbha* (*nyoraizō* 如来蔵) and Buddha-nature (*busshō* 仏性) or the later and more specifically Japanese notion of original enlightenment (*hongaku* 本覚)—that has most corrupted the true spirit of Buddhism, and that this has led to the mistaken belief that Buddhist truth is somehow beyond language and reason. Furthermore, Murakami here makes the claim, though without supporting evidence, that this gradual progress of the Mahāyāna, by way of Suchness, to the Pure Land sects, is one that is not only religious but also *moral.* Here too, the contrast with CB could hardly be sharper, since both Hakamaya and Matsumoto insist that it is precisely within the realm of ethics (and politics) that *dharmadhātu*-based doctrines wreak havoc upon modern forms of Mahāyāna.

To conclude this discursus on the tensions within Meiji era *shin Bukkyō*, we might say that in the work of Murakami Senshō—this early champion of historical scholarship and non-sectarianism—we can see the emergence of a form of scholarhip that has lately come to be known as "Buddhist theology." (see Jackson and Makransky 2000) Despite their differences with Murakami, both Hakamaya and Matsumoto also fall within this category, based on the fact that, despite their affection for Descartes and sometimes

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[18] Murakami 1922, 99. — Besides suggesting a move from Kant to Hegel, it also appears that in focusing here on the foundation of *dharmadhātu*, Murakami has moved away from the late 19th-century 'science of religion' or *Religionswissenschaft* and closer to the so-called 'phenomenology of religion' found in the early 20th-century works of Rudolf Otto (1869–1937) and Mircea Eliade (1907–1986), a path that, in its insistence on a common, non-rational 'ground' to religion, corresponds in many ways with the work of D. T. Suzuki, Hatano Seiichi 波多野精一 (1877–1955), and the Kyoto School (see Tsuchiya 2000, 17). In the case of Otto, Eliade, Suzuki, et al., the non-verbal ground was located in a kind of immediate experience—a line of argument not really developed in Murakami.

positivist-sounding rhetoric, they make no secret of the fact that the aim of their work is less to discover the Truth—indeed, they deride the particularly Weberian method of objectivity that undergirds much modern scholarship (Hakamaya 1997b; 1990, 93–154)—than to promote a particular agenda, although one that seems to fit well with many of the aims of the European Enlightenment itself. In other words, CB has the explicit purpose of criticizing, developing, and promoting a superior form of the Buddhist religion. Indeed, of late Matsumoto has moved away from the term Critical Buddhism and begun to proclaim his recent work an exercise in "Critical Theology" (Jp. *hihan shūkyō* 批判宗学).[19]

4.2 Zen Modernism and the Aesthetic Turn

> The doctrine of ascetic aestheticism is not so fundamental as that of Zen aestheticism. Art impulses are more primitive or more innate than those of morality. The appeal of art goes more directly into human nature. Morality is regulative, art is creative. One is an imposition from without, the other is an irrepressible expression from within. Zen finds its inevitable association with art not with morality.
> (D. T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture*, p. 27)

Turning to the 20th century, we can see the continuance of *hongaku* inspirations in modernist readings of Zen—particularly those that emphasize enlightenment as a form of non-conceptual, aesthetic or 'pure' experience. In a essay entitled "A Theory of Oriental Aesthetics: A Prolegomenon" (1997), Kenneth Inada sets out to centralise aesthetics as the legitimate and true center of Eastern thought and culture. He goes so far as to suggest that

[19] See Matsumoto 2000, 1–12. — Steven Heine (2001), discusses the "transition" in the more recent work of Matsumoto, away from Critical Buddhism towards Critical Theology. I am more inclined to see a development in a more specific 'theological' direction, rather than a turn away from 'criticism' towards 'theology'—since I would lump Critical Buddhism itself within a broad theological framework.

"The heights of cultural achievement in many respects reflect directly on the profundity of a philosophy of life based on the aesthetic nature of things."[20] Similarly, F. C. S. Northrop in his classic comparative study, *The Meeting of East and West* (1946), lionized the Japanese-"Oriental" apprehension of "the undifferentiated continuum in and through the immediately apprehended differentiated continuum"—in other words, the supposed religio-aesthetic mode of experiencing peculiar to the East (Northrop 1946, 315–58, 394–404). For Richard Pilgrim, what this amounts to is a distinctively Eastern—and more particularly Japanese—appreciation of direct experience not only of the various objects of the world, however seemingly small and insignificant, but of the greater "sacred unity that empowers and is the ground for everything" (Pilgrim 1996, 138). In other words, "Time, space, and the world of differentiated things are not discrete, frozen entities but constitute and immediately experienced continuum rich with the fullness of Being" (139). In terms of artistic creation, as well as apprehension and knowledge in a more general sense including the religious one, the discrete objects or particularities are occurences of the larger flow of what Western metaphysics calls 'Being'.

Such a vision of 'Eastern thought' in general and the Japanese Buddhist tradition more specifically falls squarely within the sights of Ichikawa Hakugen and CB, both of

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[20] Inada 1997a, 177. — Inada claims to redress the balance against the view that aesthetics is inferior to philosophical or religious thought, but he misses the fact that much of modern Western thought, extending from the Romantics through Idealism, has a strong 'aesthetic' flavour. Moreover, the notion of aesthetics he presents is highly simplified as a kind of unitive, intuition-based monism. See Hori et al., 1972, 66: "In a development that is perhaps typical of Japan...the themes of transience, evanescence, impermanence, and the like tend to be used to express aesthetic more than religious feelings." In similar terms, Kishimoto Hideo 岸本英夫 asserts, "the aesthetics value and religious value...are regarded as having a close relationship in Japanese cultural tradition" (Kishimoto 1951, 27). This close relationship is based on how a human being "accepts the given environment. Religion tries to emancipate man from worries and anxieties. Art tries to grasp beauty and represent it. But both religion and art try to achieve tranquility of mind and to grasp objects as they are" (117–18).

whom lament the 'aesthetic mysticism' latent within Japanese Buddhist tradition. Their reasons hardly need rehashing here, as they are intrinsically tied into the more general critique of *dhātu-vāda* or topicalist thinking discussed above. What makes the aesthetic element of specific interest is how commonly it has been employed as an explanatory paradigm for modern interpretations of Zen. On one level, the CB critique Japanese Buddhism as a form of 'aesthetic mysticism' pertains also to the emphasis on harmony, totality or the foundation underlying phenomenal reality. This aesthetic vision has distinct implications in realms of knowledge and practice. According to D. T. Suzuki, "Buddhism does not try to find meaning outside of life, for living itself is meaning. Meaning is not added to life from the outside... How to live, however, is an art... We are each and all born artists. We are creators of the *myō* [妙]" (Suzuki 1998, 170). This could have been taken from the pages of modern Western thinkers such as Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) or Michel Foucault (1926–1984). Taking this idea in a somewhat more specific doctrinal direction, Inada reports that,

> To a Buddhist, the very terms *empirical* and *rational* are subject to come under strong indictment. To elaborate, the Buddha's insightful perception told him that the initial passionate nature (*tṛṣṇā*) relies on the dichotomy created between the perceiver and the perceived, and consequently attaches to the dichotomized elements of the passions themselves... The epistemic consequence of this phenomenon is the alleged postulation of the concept of a self (*ātman*) in perception, which in turn is the basis for continued suffering. The profound

> instruction of the Buddha, however, turned our attention to the fluid, unimpeded, non-static nature of experience, pointing to the pure, unclouded nature of existence (*Dharma*) otherwise known as nirvana. (Inada 1997, 118)

The above statement is not untypical of contemporary readings of Zen, particularly those following on the heels of D.T. Suzuki. Indeed, there are precedents for such interpretations within the tradition itself, and such readings call for closer examination.

Inada begins by denying the relevance of terms such as 'empirical' and 'rational'. He explicitly conflates Buddhist and Taoist thought: "For all intents and purposes, we may group emptiness and nothingness together as depicting nonbeing" (Inada 1997, 120), and contrasts these two "philosophies of process or becoming" with traditional Western (Platonic-Christian) philosophies of being. Inada also cites Nāgārjuna, who, he says, "affirmed the coexistent and co-evolving nature of the conventional and nonconventional (ignorant and enlightened or limited and unlimited) nature of things. He clearly stated: 'Without relying on everyday common practices (i.e., relative truths), the absolute truth of existence, nirvana, cannot be attained'" (120). In the very next paragraph, Inada asserts that "the empirical and rational functions are quite necessary for the realization of truth in the penetrating sense (*prajña*), that is, one that collapses both functions in the emptiness of things (*sunyata*)" (120). Moreover, the Sino-Japanese term *kong/kū* 空, which Pilgrim employs in his article, grew, as he correctly notes, out of early Indian Buddhist notions of the importance of realizing the equiprimordiality of all things (*pratītya-samutpāda*), Pilgrim's attempts to conflate *kū* 空 and *mu* 無 notwithstanding. (Pilgrim 1996, 145)

In the work of the Kyoto School philosophers, we see a similiar tension. Robert Carter (1997, 89) elaborates Nishida's concept of nothingness in terms of a "poetry of Self-transformation," suggesting that to speak of nothingness is inevitably to transform philosophy into poetry.[21] By virtue of the transformative power of nothingness, "poetry becomes a way of living, of acting, of viewing all things as the cosmos."[22] The question raised by Tanabe Hajime, one that would be echoed by Matsumoto and Hakamaya, is whether there can be a sense of aesthetic experience that is non-totalizing[23] and which does not fall into the "solipsism"[24] of the relationship between self and the 'beyond'— whether such is conceived as God/Being/Nature/Art or even Buddhist 'Emptiness'. Carter, with Suzukian gusto, claims that Nishida's sense of religious awareness transcends the merely ethical in the way that a virtuoso's performance is of a different order than that of

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[21] The longing to conflate philosophy and poetry has deep roots in the Western tradition, surviving Plato's separation of the two realms. Aristotle claimed poetry a more useful tool than history in coming to know truth, and this notion re-emerged in the late Renaissance with Vico, who passed it down to Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803), the Romantics and Friedrich von Schelling (1755–1854), and through them to Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the Frankfurt School neo-Marxists.

[22] Carter 1997, 90. — This sentiment, seemingly borrowed from Keats or Wordsworth, is also reminiscent of the language of Martin Heidegger (1889–1976), whose later works offered "a more searching reflection on ontological *Angst* and on 'nothingness' has shown us that the world exists in a more absolute and nonpragmatic sense. It has shown us that the presentness of things has its own internal, 'ecstatic' authority. To identify this nonpragmatic, nonutilitarian presence and ecstasy, Heidegger coins the verb *zu welten.* In and through the work of art, with its disinterestedly creative yet dependent relationship to wood, stone, or pigment, with its total presentness in yet also out of historical time, the world *weltet*... And it is just this mode of existentiality which turns out to be fundamental" (Steiner 1991, 133).

[23] In explicating Nishida's "action-intuition," Carter suggests that in action-intuition, there is a merger of "subject and object," such that, as with a master painter, swordsman, or archer, "all calculation is absent, all goal-oriented desire, all concern about the future, or about the nature of the results to be achieved—there is only the smooth and seamless seeing-as-acting, action-as-correct in the here-and-now of the moment" (1997, 126).

[24] Carter (1997, 127): "We are, we see and we act from the center of the world, as though from the center of an empty circle, as though an expression of the self-determination of nothingness itself." Is this the true meaning of Zen "centering," acting as though one were the center of the universe?

an amateur who follows rules and a method. Ethical virtuosity is thus "akin to *kokoro* [心], the non-calculating welling up of spontaneous artistic feeling and enactment, expressed and given for no other reason than that, at least for this moment, it is one's nature, one's interpretive gestalt."[25] However well this may describe the situation of artistic virtuosity, the parallel with ethical spontaneity is not so clear. In the case of ethics, the situation is more interpersonal: right action often emerges in face-to-face encounters with individual beings, not with the plurality of an audience expecting a performance.

This type of nondiscriminating intuitonism reflects strongly the following remarks by Ishihara Shummyō 石原俊明, Sōtō Zen priest and president of the Buddhist magazine *Daihōrin* 大法輪:

> Zen is very particular about the need not to stop one's mind. As soon as flintstone is struck, a spark bursts forth. There is not even the most momentary lapse of time between these two events. If ordered to face right, one simply faces right as quickly as a flash of lightning. This is proof that one's mind has not stopped. I believe that if one is called upon to die, one should not be the least bit agitated. On the contrary, one should be in a realm where something called "oneself" does not intrude even slightly. Such a realm is no different from that derived from the practice of Zen. (cited in Victoria 1997, 102–3)

[25] Carter 1997, 146; see also Suzuki 1998, 175.

The appeal to aesthetics as contrasted to philosophy among scholars of Japanese culture and religion—Zen, in particular—invariably involves an appeal to intuition and an implicit critique of abstract thinking and rational thought. A number of writers have tried to show that this non-rational approach to existence is distinctively Japanese. Perhaps the most significant and influential of these was, once again, Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801), whose *kokugaku* movement was based on precisely such a direct, nonrational, poetic, intuitive understanding or apprehension of reality.[26] "The nativist claim to the status of a hermeneutic lay in its rejection of abstract reason and principle (*ri*) and its devaluation of written language (Chinese) for the immediacy of speech" (Harootunian 1988, 329)—more specifically, the kind of speech associated with poetry. D. T. Suzuki speaks in numerous writings about the "intuitive nature" that "is a pronounced characteristic of Zen," while acknowledging its pre-Zen existence in the "pure and clear spirit" of the Japanese (quoted in Victoria 2003, 120). For Abe Masao:

> A Japanese appreciates synthesis rather than analysis, harmony more than logical consistency. This character of the Japanese people is also related to another of their characteristics. Whereas the Japanese are always eager to introduce foreign cultures, they carefully maintain the traditional one and gradually create a new form of culture through synthesis. (Abe 1997, 223)

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[26] See above #3.2.3, n.33. Of course, the very use of 'reality' here is rife with ideological import. As Habermas has noted, reality "is constituted in a framework that is the form of life-communicating groups and is organized through ordinary language. What is real is experienced according to the interpretations of a prevailing symbolic system" (cited in Harootunian 1988, 329).

Though this 'characteristic' has usually been taken positively, as in Motoori, it has also sometimes been taken as a flaw or potential problem. Nakamura Hajime 中村元, for one, lamented the "Japanese inclination" to emphasize "particular facts and specific phases" at the expense of theory, such that what results is a "contempt of rational thinking and the worship of controlled intuitionism and activism".[27] Even Abe admits that we should not "overlook that in the characteristics just described there exists an underlying laxity in critical thinking and an easy obedience to authority" (Abe 1997, 223). Yukawa Hideki 湯川秀樹 goes much further and claims that "[t]he unconcious recognition of their own defect in abstraction seems to drive the Japanese to the uncritical adoption of the religious and philosophical systems brought in from outside." (Yukawa 1982, 547)

On the other hand, in response to Yukuwa, Miyamoto Shōsen 宮本正宣 counters that "the Japanese mind has been trained and developed, consciously and unconsciously—we may say, existentially—by the streams of Buddhist rationalistic ways of thinking." (Miyamoto 1982, 61). Miyamoto goes on to introduce "one of the most important terms in Japanese Buddhist thought": *dōri* 道理, indicating 'rational', 'reason', or 'principle', derived from the Sino-Japanese characters *michi/dō* 道 (path, way, Ch. *dao*) and *ri* 理 (reason, Ch. *li*). (61) Furthermore, Marxist writers such as Tōsaka Jun 戸坂潤 (1900–1945) and Kozai Yoshishige 古在由重 (1901–1990) were quick to identify the political and ideological elements in this aesthetic interpretation of the Japanese spirit. In *Nihon*

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[27] Nakamura 1964, 400. — Nakamura's solution to this problem is also instructive: "In order not to repeat the same failure, we ought from now on to learn to seek universal 'reason' through specific 'facts'" (Nakamura 1964, 400). At least in terms of a Buddhist response to this matter, a turn to "universal reason" would only make matters worse. This mistake haunts the critical work of CB.

ideorogiron (1977 [1935]), Tōsaka showed how culture posing as nature is in fact a product of a particular type of cultural hermeneutic.

Two Sanskrit terms, *prajñā*[28] and *vijñana*,[29] have long been utilized in Buddhist metaphysics to explore the relation of intuition to reason or discursive understanding. The latter is known as one of the five aggregates (Skt. *skandha*, Ch. *yun* 蘊, Jp. *un*)—the components or constituents of all intelligent beings—and is frequently translated as 'consciousness' or, more broadly, the mental faculty in regard to perception, cognition, and experience. *Prajñā* or 'wisdom', on the other hand, is included as one of the Six *pāramitā*—or 'perfections' as means to reach *nirvāṇa*—that became especially central to Mahāyāna understanding of salvation. There are thought to be three types of *prajñā*: 1) *prajñā* of languages; 2) *prajñā* of contemplative illumination; 3) *prajñā* of the characteristics of actuality. The third is the highest form of wisdom and is essentially the wisdom of a Buddha or awakened one. Although there is no universal agreement as to the precise relation between the two terms, one prevalent interpretation of their relation is that ultimately *prajñā* goes beyond *vijñāna*. According to D. T. Suzuki—in this as in many other areas the most influential, if not the most circumspect, interpreter of Buddhism for the West—"Vijñana cannot work without having *prajña* behind it:

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[28] *Prajñā*, Ch. *miaohui* 妙慧 , Jp. *myōe*, or Ch. *hui* 慧, Jp. *e*, is defined as "wisdom, cognitive acuity, know-how" (DDB, *prajñā*). Another explanation of the term suggests "wisdom, as opposed to phenomenal knowledge." Also: "The mental function of discriminating the relative and the absolute, cutting off doubt. The mental function of penetrating the relative and the absolute" (C. Muller, DDB, *prajñā*).

[29] *Vijñāna*, Ch. *shi* 識, Jp. *shiki*: "to know, be aware of, cognize, discern" (C. Muller, DDB, *vijñāna*). One of the five aggregates, it is also the third of the twelve aspects of *pratītya-samutpāda*. According to Soothill (DDB), *vijñāna* is "interpreted by 心 the mind, mental discernment, perception, in contrast with the object discerned; also by 了別 understanding and discrimination. The esoterics add that all phenomena are mental and all things are the one mind, hence the one mind is 無量識 unlimited mind or knowledge, every kind of knowledge, or omniscience."

> Mere aggregates have no significance, and this is why in Buddhist philosophy all *dharmas* (elements), when they are regarded as individual existences, are declared to have no *atman*. The *atman* is a unifying principle, and the idea is that, as long as all *dharmas* are conceived without any reference to that which unifies tham, they are just disconnected parts, that is, they are non-existent. *Prajña* is needed to make them coherent, articulate, significant... *Vijñana* without *prajña* kills; it works for individualization, and, by making each individual disconnected with others, *vijñana* makes them all impermanent and subject to the law of karma. It is by *prajña* that all *dharmas* are observable from a unitive point-of-view and acquire a new life and significance. (Suzuki 1982, 66–67)

But why, we might ask Suzuki, this desire for 'significance'—why replace *atman* with something which seems like *atman* under another name, but smelling just as *dhātu*? While Suzuki allows that, "*prajña*-intuition and *vijñana*-intuition are equally important and indispensable in the eastablishment of a synthetic philosophy," it is clear which one he thinks should hold precedence. As a result, despite Buddhist teachings of impermanence and conditioned arising, he presents what amounts to a monistic vision of knowledge and truth. It is important to note that, while this critique of Suzuki might appear simply a 'Western' perspective—i.e., one based on Western conceptions of logic and rationality—it is a one that has strong precedent within mainstream Buddhist traditions, as Wright (1997) and others have shown.

A recent example of an argument similar to Suzuki's may be found in a recent article writtem by American Zen master Bernie Glassman: after blithely excusing the militarism and antisemitism of Yasutani Haku'un, he argues that "If your definition of enlightenment is that there's no nationalism, or militarism, or bigotry in the state of enlightenment, you better change your definition of enlightenment. For the state of enlightenment is *maha*, the circle with no inside and no outside, not even a circle, just pulsating of life everywhere" (Glassman 1999, 74). In response, Vishvapavi, editor of *Dharma Life,* claims that while, "To some, such sentiments will seem profound[, but] I think they are transcendental platitudes, confusion raised to the level of metaphysics. Glassman's way of seeing the mundane in terms of the absolute flattens all distinctions and erodes values. What is missing is ethics, and Glassman's inclusivity seems to me to culminate in moral failure" (Vishvapani 2000, 36). While Vishvapani, along with Victoria, is right to be dismissive of Glassman's 'transcendental platitudes' offered in the name of Buddhism, he fails to note that Glassman is hardly the first to make such claims for the nature of enlightenment. Perhaps the problem is not with the 'platitudinousness' of such antinomian rhetoric but the fact that it can be doctrinally sustained using elements within Buddhist (especially Chan/Zen) tradition itself. Stuart Lachs raises an important question related to this issue, when he asks, regarding the seeming abuses of authority within American and Japanese Zen: Might the problem

> have something to do with the descripton and view of enlightenment as static, in the sense of seeing only what is, rather than a more dynamic view which also

involves that which functions? A view of Buddhist attainment that also focuses on function, rather than objectifying an experience, would also place primary emphasis on context and connection, i.e., relationships with other people and society as a whole.[30]

Can the highly aesthetic reading of Zen proffered by Suzuki and other Zen modernists be fruitfully conceived, and criticized, as variations on the problem of 'knowledge by acquaintance' versus 'knowledge by description'? Knowledge of 'the way the world is' is generally given high priority within forms of early Buddhism; indeed, destruction of ignorance is in most readings *the* key to enlightenment or awakening and leads some scholars to claim that Buddhism is at root a gnostic soteriology. Yet there are, as we have seen, numerous ways of categorizing and prioritizing different sorts of knowledge. Buddhist sources seem to allow that it is possible, for example, to have a superficial 'understanding' of the truth of impermanence or emptiness without becoming thereby 'enlightened' to these truths.[31] Using terms employed in modern epistemology, it would appear that the crucial difference lies in the distinction between 'first-hand' or immediate knowledge—knowledge by aquaintance ("to know p")—and second-hand or derivative knowledge—knowledge by description ("to know *of* p"). Whereas some

[30] Lachs 1994, 5. — For support, Lachs cites Victor Hori's remarks to the effect that, within the Rinzai Zen curriculum, *kenshō* 見性 is best understood as a verb—that is, "something that one does [rather than] something that one has" (Lachs 1994, 8, n.22). Interestingly, the same might be said about Buddha-nature as derived by Chinese Buddhists from the earlier Indian term *buddhatva* or 'buddhahood'—which is of course an accomplishment or 'way', and not an ontological ground or essence.

[31] See, e.g., Nāgārjuna's *Yuktisastikārikā* 41; *Theragāthā* 187–88.

European languages allow for this distinction in having two separate words for 'to know'—e.g., Fr. *savoir* and *connaître*; Gr. *wissen* and *kennen*[32]—English uses a single term to describe both. In the ancient Indian epistemological tradition out of which Buddhism was born, knowledge by perception (*pratyakṣa*) is distinct from other forms of knowledge, such as knowledge through inference (*anumāna*) or knowledge through testimony (*śabda*). In both Indian and Western thought, including most religious traditions, knowledge by aquaintance generally holds epistemic primacy largely "because it is a foundational form upon which a string of knowledge by description can be established" (Burton 2004, 33). Richard King notes, "Perception is considered by most schools to be the *pramāna* par excellence... For instance in the case of the Nyāya school, inferential knowledge (*anumāna*) follows on perceptual knowledge and lacks its immediacy (*aporoksatva*)" (King 1999, 147).[33] It would appear, then, that the priority given to unitive over discrimative knowledge by Suzuki and sundry modern Zen interpreters has deep roots not only in Western thought but also within Indian Buddhist tradition. The question is, is it truly Buddhist—in the CB sense of being not merely *compatible* but *supportive* of the principles of the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* and the principle of compassion? What might be some of the weaknesses in such an understanding?

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[32] This distinction can also be found in the Japanese verbs *shiru* 知る (knowledge by acquaintance) and *wakaru* 分かる (discriminative understanding).

[33] King 1999, 147. — Here perceptual knowledge comes close to the important classical Indian notion of *darśana*—a vision or direct observation. This term was later used to refer to one of the six orthodox philosophical schools or systems, and thus came to connote something more along the lines of 'interpretation' or 'viewpoint'.

In recent decades serious doubts have been raised as to the very possibility of knowledge by aquaintance. Such doubts usually rely on the seeming impossibility to verify whether any perception is pristine in the sense of being an unmediated exposure to the way things really are. This line of critique can be traced in modern philosophy back to Kant, if not to the ancient skeptics long before him. One modern version suggests that what is considered to be knowledge by acquaintance is simply perception or sensation itself, and that such 'raw feels' cannot be classified as a form of knowledge, which requires some concept of truth and falsity (see Hospers 1997). Yet, even with this a coherent case could be made for the foundation of knowledge as perception or sensation of the *facts* of reality itself. Moreover, although there is little question that the main line of Buddhist thought on this matter colludes with the early Indian privileging of perceptual awareness, this line of critique has roots within Buddhist tradition as well. Early Buddhists were critical of the so–called 'common sense realism' of the Nyāya-Vaisesika school, in which it was taught that everyday objects in the world exist independent of our minds—in themselves—and yet can be apprehended as they really are. Both Dignāga (480–540 CE) and Dharmakīrti (600–660 CE) were wary of this idea, not only because of the Buddhist teachings of emptiness and impermanence, but also because it was assumed that the bare perceptions of ordinary people are hopelessly distorted by mental activity, and thus only one who has reached enlightenment, or is close to it, can achieve the undistorted knowledge of the way things are. (see Klein 1998, 91; King 1999, 178–79) To Dharmakīrti is often attributed the remark, "reason itself is ignorance." However, as Richard Hayes notes, the term Dharmakīrti employs here, *vikalpa*, does not in fact imply 'reason' or 'logic', but rather

"imagination that is not grounded in some way in *pratyakṣa* (sense experience)" (Hayes 2004). In such a case, the criticism turns away from 'discursive knowledge' or 'logic' and towards unfounded or extravagant claims about direct perception.

In the eyes of CB, however, all of this might be holding on to one topical illusion—the very idea of omniscience—in order to combat another.[34] Indeed, for Kant and much of the Western epistemological tradition that followed in his wake, the idea is simply that our human faculties cannot quite 'reach' reality itself; modern philosophers did not make the further conclusion that perhaps there is no 'reality in itself' to be reached or not reached, or that, given the impossibility of coming to any kind of conclusion about the matter, it might be more fruitfully shunted aside. Inspired by the so-called 'linguistic turn', these further steps have been taken more recently in the Anglo-American philosophical tradition by philosophers such as Nelson Goodman (1906–1998), Donald Davidson (1917–2003), and Richard Rorty.[35] Moreover, it is a form of critique that can also be developed along traditional Buddhist lines, using, in particular, what might be called the Buddhist 'anti-realist' tradition found in the work of Nāgārjuna and continued through the Sino-Japanese heritage of Madhyamika and Zen. A truly Critical Buddhism must rely on a more fully developed hermeneutic, while remaining engaged with modern ethical and social concerns.

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[34] Though the notion of a Buddha's omniscience (*sarvākarā-jñatā*), with slight variations, has clear precedence within both Mahāyāna (see Griffiths 1994, 170–72) and Theravada traditions (see *Majjhima Nikāya* 1995, 1273, 1292).

[35] Some Japanese writers have offered a similar critique, from as far back as Fujiwara no Shunzei 藤原俊成 (1114–1204) to modern thinker Karatani Kōjin 柄谷行人. The former, in particular, claims that, without poetry, one could not know the color or scent of blossoms—in other words, that experience of the world relies at least partly upon our concepts and metaphors (for a Western equivalent, see the 9th *Duinese Elegie* of Rainer Maria Rilke [1875–1926]).

4.3 The Appeal to Experience

Having now examined some specific cases of topicalist interpretations of modern Zen, and having lifted up the possibility of a (Critical) Buddhist critique of the very idea of knowledge by acquaintance, which seems to be the root of these topical interpretations, let us now turn to the critique of the Kyoto School provided by Hakamaya in the first section of his *Critical Buddhism* (*Hihan Bukkyō* 批判仏教, 1990). Hakamaya pinpoints in particular the centrality of *basho* 場所 (L. *topos*) in Nishida-philosophy and argues that this extension of the distinctly non-Buddhist *hongaku shisō* (see above #3.5) bespeaks a capitulation to topicalism, a surrender which in turn had something to do with Nishida's own nationalism. In Nishida's work, especially the early writings, *basho* indicates the significance of pure experience before and beyond the intellect, and thus, before and beyond ethics or politics. Hakamaya certainly hits upon some areas of great concern in the study of Nishida and KSP, yet it must be noted that his critique is not sufficiently developed, remaining largely at the level of rhetoric. Remarkably, the 40-page chapter entitled "A Critique of the Kyoto School"[36] does not even mention Nishida or KSP until its twenty-fifth page, after a long digression into German Idealism, among other matters. In order to understand and develop a more adequate critique of *basho*, we must begin with an analysis of pure experience as a more specific, modern extension of some of the trends and ideas discussed above.

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[36] "Kyōto gakuha hihan 京都学派批判" (Hakamaya 1990a, 47–92).

In *Bukkyōsha no sensō sekinin*, his 1970 work on the war responsibility of Japanese Buddhists, Ichikawa Hakugen remarks on the Zen 'seeing the universal in the particular', an idea which, he argues, was transplanted in the modern Japanese context onto the relationship between households and the Emperor, which became connected as an organism and its cells. Combined with Mahāyāna notions like 'discrimination is sameness', the employment and actualization of such organic metaphors leads to blithe acceptance and even support of fascist or imperialist systems, which rely upon similar metaphors to sustain absolute control over their subjects, part of the process German critic Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) called the "aestheticization of the political"—much criticized by Benjamin and the other Frankfurt School thinkers. Ichikawa further implicates Suzuki's logic of *soku-hi* (*soku-hi no ronri* 即非の論理) as well as Nishida's logic of 'absolutely contradictory self-identity' (*zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu* 絶対矛盾的自己同一) in the collapsing of Zen and fascist ideals. Ichikawa claims that *soku* ultimately falls prey to suchness and monism, becoming "a static, aesthetic perspective, a detached subjective harmony with things rather than a dynamic theoretical framework from which to confront actuality. In this way 'it weakens interest in political and social liberation for people'" (cited in Ives 1992, 94). In short, Ichikawa's claims fit well with those of CB as well as modern Western scholars like Sharf, and with the argument against topicalism more generally. In particular, the emphasis placed by Ichikawa on the importance of a "dynamic theoretical framework from which to confront actuality" contains the strongest basis for a constructive critical Buddhist analysis of topical thinking and its effects.

Roots for an explicit rejection of the relevance of history and social forces in favour of direct experience through language itself can be found in the writings of Motoori Norinaga. Motoori sought a "language without history" through which man, like his ancient forbears, could confront "the world of objects" in a direct and immediate fashion. "Here, too, is the meaning of *mono no aware* [もののあわれ] and its promise to close the distance between past and present in order to secure an empathic community, unbound by the constraints of history or social forms..." (Harootunian 1988, 49). In developing this theory, Motoori was led to criticize foreign imports, especially Confucian rationalism but also Buddhism, for their "noisy debates about good and evil, right and wrong"—debates which had no place in the archaic, and highly aesthetic way of Japan.[37] Despite Motoori's rejection of Buddhism, modernist interpretations of Zen adopt many of his arguments and rhetorical tropes, particularly with respect to the notion of the possibility and significance of direct and immediate experience with reality, in the process of transcending not only society but language and history itself.

In many respects, the modernist vision of Zen based on the priority of pure experience echoes, *mutatis mutandis*, the conventional understanding of mysticism in the Western religions. "The center of mystical religion is the mystical experience, which at its highest development dominates the consciousness, excluding all awareness of words, nature, even of the mystic's own self" (EncRel, "Religion"). While it is true that the language of Western mysticism is generally assertive of the fullness of union with divine,

[37] According to Motoori, the way of Japan "has had the same goal as poetry." Ironically, while Motoori lumped Buddhism with Confucianism as being overly rational, Tokugawa Confucianists frequently accused their Buddhist compatriots of fomenting irrational mysticism.

as opposed to the espousal of emptiness by Zen thinkers, this distinction appears to matter little to the general expression of the mystical, unmediated, or pure experience of reality *as it really is*. Particularly interesting in the above quote by Blocker and Starling is the notion that Zen focuses on "single, unconnected concepts." This has linguistic, doctrinal, and epistemological implications.

This 'mystical' reading of Zen has been criticized by a number of scholars, such as Robert Sharf and James Whitehall. Sharf notes that in modern Zen, the "heart" of Zen does not lie "in its ethical principles, its communal and ritual practices, or its doctrinal teachings, but rather in a private, veridical, often momentary 'state of consciousness'" (Sharf 1994, 45); he goes on to trace the roots of such in the influence of modern Western thought, especially the work of American psychologist and philosopher William James (1842–1910). Sharf's explanation for the strength and necessity of such a revision of Zen in terms of experience is that it arose largely out of a defensive posture: with Zen 'purified' as experience, it becomes safe from the intrusive and destructive forces of historical and scientific—not to mention social or ethical—criticism: "In privileging experience the Japanese, like their Western mentors, sought to naturalize the category 'religion'—if religious traditions were predicated upon an ineffable, noetic, mystical state of consciousness, then they could not be rejected as mere superstition, infantile wish-fulfillment, or collective hysteria."[38] Whitehall (2000, 21) suggests that such an

[38] Sharf 1994, 45. — As Sharf goes on to explain, such a vision appealed to many in the West because it fit so well with a strong current of European Romanticism, which had been reacting against 'cold reason' since the Enlightenment. "The notion of a 'pure Zen'—a pan-cultural religious experience unsullied by institutional, social, and historical contingencies—would be attractive [to Westerners] precisely because it held out the possibility of an alternative to the godless and indifferent anomic universe bequeathed by the Western Enlightenment, yet demanded neither blind faith nor institutional allegiance. This reconstructed Zen offered

understanding of Buddhism and Zen in particular can be explained by what he refers to as the "transcendental trap"—i.e., the idea that Buddhist enlightenment or awakening is at root a non-rational realization and one in which, by extension, transcends or supersedes not only rational thought but morality and ethics as well. In short, all is thrown over in an overwhelming, mystical and highly affective or aesthetic experience of 'things as they truly are'. While this experience is often characterized in cognitive terms, it is not to be construed as rational or discriminative. Whitehall criticizes such a view as being 'un-Buddhist' in the sense that it does not appear to have much if any precedent in premodern Buddhism, but more importantly because the priority placed on ethics and moral conduct within all forms of Buddhist tradition seems to be neglected or radically demoted in emphasis. As Burton (2004, 76–77) notes, the idea here is distinct from the suggestion to be found in many Buddhist texts that a Bodhisattva or Buddha can and will employ skillful means—often implying the breaking of ethical precepts—in certain exceptional cases. The difference here is that said enlightened or near-enlightened beings possess the knowledge and awareness that allows them to make judgements—have ethical priorities—that are not available to the vast majority of folks; such skillful actions "are though to occur not out of disregard for ethical action but as an expression of it" (cf. Williams 1989, 144–45).

To a certain extent, the critique offered by Sharf and Whitehall is sweeping and overgeneralized. Obviously this modern reading of Zen cannot be applied across the board.

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an intellectually reputable escape from the epistemological anxiety of historicism and pluralism" (Sharf 1994, 50). See Ames 1960, 4, for a clear statement of the meaning of Zen in such terms: "The striking thing about Zen, to an American, is that it is a religion, or a way of life in place of a religion, which denies the dualism associated with religion in the West, and is entirely naturalistic." Further, Ames declares, Zen can help "heal the cleavage in Western culture" (Ames 1960, 4–5).

Indeed, there were reactions against such interpretations, arising mainly from within the traditional Buddhist institutions themselves. Moreover, it raises the question of intentionality: were Zen and Buddhist thinkers really so aware of this reshaping or reconfiguring of Zen tradition? A recent study by Judith Snodgrass (2003) goes some way in supporting the view that, for a number of Buddhist leaders and thinkers of the late Meiji and Taisho periods, there was indeed a conscious attempt to present a 'modern' form of Buddhism, out of a need not only to compete with the West, but also to reaffirm the significance and power of Buddhism vis-à-vis State Shinto and the legacy of Tokugawa Confucianist criticism of Buddhism. In particular, Snodgrass outlines in some detail the efforts of the so-called New Buddhist leaders to reconstruct forms of Buddhism more appropriate to 'modern' ideas. Beyond the historical data uncovered in *Presenting Japanese Buddhism to the West*, the author's most persuasive argument is her assertion that the theory of orientalism, fashionable since Edward Said's pioneering work of the same name, contains within itself a germ of the very paternalism it seeks to uncover, i.e., the assumption that non-Western cultures lack agency in the process by which they are (mis-)interpreted in, by and for the West.

4.3.1 Buddhism as Mystical Gnosis

Before turning towards a critique of Nishida's *basho* and pure experience, let us examine some of the ways in which Buddhists have dealt with the notion of what we might refer to as mystical awareness. Once again, at the outset it must be admitted that there are

numerous Buddhist versions of the truth of this matter; it behooves us to examine the most salient interpretations vis-à-vis other doctrines and the goals presented by CB.

There is a long tradition of skepticism within Buddhism (the Mahāyāna Mādhyamika in particular) that suggests that the character of 'things in themselves' cannot be known, and that truly awakened followers of the Dharma realize this and give up their attachment to such an idea. On the other hand, an alternative understanding suggests that such a reality behind or beyond the phenomenal world can indeed be known or experienced, if only by awakened beings (primarily Buddhas, but possibly Arhats or Bodhisattvas). Indeed, this latter understanding is probably the more common of the two. David Burton has referred to this line of thinking as "skepticism with a mystical twist," in that it claims that while 'things in themselves' are veiled from ordinary minds, they are not in fact totally unknowable, though, it is often adduced, they are still ineffable, due to the dualistic and falsifying character of language. (Burton 2004, 130)

The main source of such ideas appears to be the Yogācāra tradition, although one can certainly find precedents in the Mādhayamika as well, and even within the writings of Nāgārjuna himself. Although Yogācāra is frequently read by modern buddhologists as a form of ontological idealism, positing the mind-as-flow-of-consciousness as the sole 'reality', some, such as Harris (1991, 83) and Kochmutton (1982, 213), have indicated that Yogācāra writers sometimes suggest that there 'is' a reality 'out there', the only problem being that it is *indescribable* (at least, by unawakened beings). One can find this line of thought in the writings of Asaṅga (c. 4th-century CE), Vasubandhu (c. 4th-century CE), and the 3rd-century CE *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra*—particularly as understood by its Tibetan

interpreters.[39] Asaṅga asserts that "Having discerned that [objects which are] different from consciousness do not exist, one thus understands the non-existence of consciousness. Having understood the non-existence of duality, the wise man abides in the sphere of reality (*dharmadhātu*) which is not the domain of that [duality]" (cited in Burton 2004, 132). One might also cite statements from the MMK (§18, 9) in which reality (*tattva*[40]) is seen to be an ultimate beyond concepts and words, and 'not dependent on another'. One result of this interpretation is that the truth about reality cannot be taught, but must be directly experienced. Whether or not the above implies that Yogācāra and Mādhyamika were actually saying the same thing—a notion no doubt appealing to syncretists wishing to resolve the antagonism between these two foundational Asian Buddhist schools[41]—such statements have clear antecedents in the Chan/Zen streams, and within modern Zen in particular. Moreover, the doctrine of 'no-mind' (*mushin* 無心), which developed particularly within Chinese Chan and Japanese Zen, is clearly correlated with the notion of pure awareness. Of all the above-mentioned doctrines, this is no doubt the one most heavily invoked in modern Zen, both in Japan and in the West—a situation due in large part, once again, to the work of D. T. Suzuki. According to the theory of 'no-mind', once one has attained a certain stage of Zen training, one becomes fully 'in' the moment, erasing subject-object distinctions and enabling one to act in a pure, spontaneous manner. In fact,

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[39] See *Bodhisattvabhūmi-sūtra* (Asaṅga 1996, 26, 32); *Madhānta-vibhāga* (Asanga, Vasubandhu 1998); *Saṃdhinirmocana-sūtra* (Powers 1995, 20); also Tom Tillemans, REP, "Tibetan Philosophy I: Issues in Madhyamika Philosophy."

[40] Skt. *Tatha* (Jp. *nyonyo* 如如 or *shinnyo* 眞如), translated by Charles Muller (DDB) as 'suchness', 'just as it is-ness' or 'the disclosedness of something'.

[41] See, e.g., Anacker 1998, 184–85.

acting in the condition of no-mind allows one to transcend all dualisms, including the false distinctions of life and death and good and evil.[42]

In such interpretations, a level of transcendence—or transcendence-in-immanence[43]—has been assumed in, or applied to, Buddhist soteriology. In fact, instead of understanding awakening in terms of apprehension of the three marks of existence, these are supplanted by a direct, non-conceptual insight into a mysterious reality that transcends all conditions, causes, and interdependent relations—and is, by somewhat paradoxical definition, 'beyond words and letters'.

As Burton (2004, 143) notes, besides the commonly-held Buddhist understanding of *nirvāṇa/nibbāna* as the psychological state of an awakened being characterized by the extinguishing of craving (Skt. *tṛṣnā*, Jp. *katsu* 渇, lit. thirst) and ignorance (Skt. *avidyā*, Jp. *mumyō* 無明), another understanding of *nirvāṇa/nibbāna* emphasizes that it is something known, an object of consciousness. Whether such an understanding is inherent to the original teachings of Buddhism is beside the point. While it can be argued that discussion of this issue in the Pali texts generally revolves around the matter of the non-conceptual fourth *dhyāna*—which may be seen to be only a temporary and provisional state to be ultimately relinquished in favour of the first *dhyāna*, which may be conceptual—it is true that other texts from the Pali Canon claim that "*nibbāna* is a 'deathless' (*amata*) reality that transcends the conditioned world of transitory, time-bound entities. It is timeless. It is described metaphorically as a place quite apart from the impermanent world. That is, it is

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[42] See Victoria 2002, 17, for remarks on the role of no-mind and no-self in military Zen.

[43] See Tremblay 2000, 137–46, for more on Nishida's concept of 'transcendence-in-immanence'.

transcendent (*lokuttara*). It is a separate ontological realm... the Unconditioned Reality."[44] Moreover, this version of Buddhist awakening gained even stronger hold within the Mahāyāna.

The psychological and religious appeal of such a non-conceptual realm is readily understandable. For one, it provides a strong sense of surety and solid ground, especially in contrast to the unstable and constantly changing conventional reality. This point alone would serve well as a boost to those undertaking the Buddhist path, in what might be considered a functional parallel to the Islamic Paradise (*Jannat*) or Amida's Pure Land of Bliss. If the cash-value of *karma* is to keep people in line, the cash-value of this understanding of *nirvāṇa* is to keep them going. In addition, the appeal to authority by way of a privileged yet unexpressible experience adds a corollary dimension to this understanding, one that opens the door to power and the possibility of abuse. Yet, as with *karma*, we are still compelled to question the matter further, both in terms of its philosophical logic and in terms of its viability vis-à-vis other Buddhist goals.

4.3.2 Nishida's 'Pure Experience' (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験): Exposition and Critique

In order to draw this issue into the modern context, let us turn to some of the ideas of Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945), the founder of the so-called Kyoto School (*Kyōto gaku-ha* 京都学派), the most prominent philosophical school of 20th-century Japan. Though not affiliated or grounded in religion per se, the philosophy developed by Nishida,

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[44] Burton 2004, 143. — See also Collins 1998, 188, and Williams 2000, 50–52.

Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 (1900–1990), and Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 (1885–1962) was deeply indebted to Buddhism, and at least for the former two, to Zen in particular. Robert Sharf has argued that the Kyoto School effectively created a new form of Zen, a "pure Zen," based on the primacy of a kind of mystical experience ultimately beyond ethics, reason, and language. According to this Zen understanding, to experience things in this way is to know things "just as they are"—that is to say, beyond the fabrications of the mind. In Nishida's earliest work, the groundbreaking *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 (An Inquiry into the Good, 1911) we can find the origin of a term that would later come to dominate Nishida's work: *basho* 場所—usually translated as *topos*, locus or "place"[45]; yet here it is not *basho* but rather 'pure experience' (*junsui keiken* 純粋経験) that plays the central role.

As Jacynthe Tremblay notes (2000, 13–14), Western thinkers such as William James and Josiah Royce (1855–1916) clearly influenced Nishida's *Inquiry into the Good.* Among other things, this essay brought about the end of the direct and often uncritical import of Western philosophy characteristic of the Meiji period (1868–1912) and prompted the beginnings of a genuine Japanese philosophy. During the later period of his life, Nishida openly acknowledged that his *Inquiry into the Good* was too psychological and mystical.[46]

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[45] See Tremblay 2000, 16 n.5.

[46] "As I look at it now, the standpoint of this book is that of consciousness, and it might be thought of as a kind of psychologism." These remarks can be found in a preface to the 1936 edition entitled "Upon Resetting the Type." See Abe 1987, xxi. See also Tremblay 2000, 14–15, for a discussion of the various periods of Nishida's life and thought.

James spoke of 'pure experience' as a fundamental concept.[47] He remarks in the *Varieties of Religious Experience*, "It is as if there were in the human consciousness a sense of reality, a feeling of objective presence, a perception of what we may call 'something there,' more deep and more general than any of the particular 'senses' by which current psychology supposes existent realities to be originally revealed" (James 1985, 55). James discusses the root of all experience in terms of an "instantaneous field of present" in which all experience is "pure" (James 1912, 23–24). Important here is the element of a deep presence felt by the subject, which comes before cognition and ordinary perception. There is a sense of absorption here, whereby normal subjectivity and even consciousness of activity is suspended.[48] As Tremblay notes (2000, 13), "Pure experience is thus the primary form for Nishida's basic intuition. Until the last period of his life [i.e., 1930–1945] it will remain—albeit in various ways—the inspiring source."

Nishida did not follow precisely along the lines of James or fellow radical empiricists Ernst Mach (1838–1916), with his 'critique of experience', or Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), with his emphasis on 'immediate experience'; he saw their work as hopelessly flawed by inherent dualist and subjectivist assumptions.[49] And yet, Nishida's

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[47] Dilworth (1987, 18) has argued that Nishida's "world of human-historical existence is precisely the fluent world of consciousness described...positively in W. James's *Essays in Radical Empiricism.*"

[48] One might, again, refer to an aesthetic way. See Suzuki, Inada, and Carter on Zen aestheticism and its critique (#3.8). — "Artistic experiences are often 'pre-conceptual' in the sense that they are not mastered by a conceptualizing intellect. In a way, these experiences give the impression of unfolding themselves 'all alone', that is of taking place without any conscious effort from the part of the subject" (Botz-Bernstein 2004, 11); cf. Suzuki, Inada and Carter on Zen aestheticism, above.

[49] See Feenberg and Arisaka 1990.

work clearly continues many of the same themes, which can be found in the metaphors and images used to describe the condition of pure experience.

> To experience means to know facts just as they are, to know in accordance with facts by completely relinquishing one's own fabrications. What we usually refer to as experience is adulterated with some sort of thought, so by *pure* I am referring to experience just as it is without the least addition of deliberative discrimination.... In this regard, pure experience is identical with direct experience. When one experiences one's own state of consciousness, there is not yet a subject or an object, and knowing and its object are completely unified. This is the most refined type of experience. (Nishida 1987a, 3–4)

As critics have noted, since the emphasis here is on a recognition of nondual reality rather than a discrimination of truth or falsity, the philosophy of pure experience effectively collapses 'ought' into 'is' and thus appears to subvert ethical practice entirely. Indeed, although a commonly-used analogy to describe the state of 'pure experience' is artistic experience or performance—such as playing the piano—another telling analogy has been offered by Arisaka and Feenberg (1990, 181), who liken Nishida's 'pure experience' to "group actions" which are shared in activities such as sports—or, we might add, mob-mentality or warfare.

> Nishida sees a fundamental contradiction of form and content at the heart of the moral self. On the one hand, we have the moral self to be strived for—the form—and on the other, the reality of one's own imperfection—the content. The more one is aware of one's own imperfection, the more brightly does the ideal glow. This prompts a kind of rapture in the self that opens up into religious consciousness. In Nishida's thought, this contradiction is relativized by seeing the moral anguish, and the self that suffers it, caught up in an absolute where there is no good or evil, no sin or ideal—only nothingness. This is for Nishida the core of the experience of 'salvation.' In this way, the core of morality is shifted away from evil in the world to the consciousness of evil in the self. And with it, the imperfections of the world are left to history to sort out. (Heisig 2000, 71)

Against Immanuel Kant (1724–1804), both the second *Critique*[50] and "Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone,"[51] Nishida contends, "religion does not gain adequate definition from the moral standpoint. The religious form of life does not even arise from that standpoint. Even if such a thing were to be imagined, it would not be true religion" (1987b, 82). In these words one hears echoes of Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855), particularly his three 'stages on life's way': aesthetic, ethical, religious.[52] Religious experience, says Nishida, is not about "ethical progression" of any sort, but it is grounded in the realization of the problematic nature of one's very existence. Religion, as well as the

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[50] *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* (Critique of Practical Reason, 1788). See Kant 1997.

[51] Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft," 1793. See Kant 1960.

[52] *Stadier paa Livets Vei*, 1845. See Kierkegaard 1998.

truly conscious self, ultimately emerges from Anxiety or *Angst*, not from a desire to be better or to do good. Paradoxically, the self requires a recognition of the emptiness or "eternal death" of the self. In short, Nishida conceives of religion as the ultimate 'transvaluation' of morality. "To speak of religion in moral terms," he concludes, "is to set up social existence as the basis of the self's own existential condition." Robert Carter, summing up Nishida's critique of Kant, says "Clearly, the ultimate goal of Buddhism, and of Zen, is not morality, but spirituality" (Carter 1997, 129). For Heisig, "the consequences of [Nishida's] position come to this: the non-I that emerges from the self-awareness of absolute nothingness looks for all the world to be a highly cultivated form of *ataraxia*, a self-transcendence of which the highest good consists of its inability to be moved by either good or evil" (Heisig 2001, 86).

In *An Inquiry into the Good*, Nishida avers, "It is not that experience exists because there is an individual, but that an individual exists because there is experience" (1987a, xv)—a conclusion that, he claims, allows for an avoidance of the trap of solipsism. Also, by taking experience as prior to subjectivity and consciousness itself, Nishida attempts to avoid as well the distinction between subject and object that has bedeviled so much of modern Western thought. Speaking repeatedly of pure experience in terms of 'undifferentiation' of knowledge, feeling and volition, it becomes for Nishida a mode of contacting 'ultimate reality', which appears to be internal rather than external: "Experience means to know reality exactly as it is"(1); "our true self is not separate from the universe but rather is the very unifier of universal reality" (xix). Once again, this process is assumed by Nishida to have moral implications, in that through this merger of self and

universe the subjective self is forgotten (as is the object), and one thereby reaches "the quintessence of good." How this actually takes place, however, remains a mystery wrapped in an enigma; perhaps it is ineffable.

Beyond the question of whether such a 'pure' or 'pre-conceptual' experience is even possible—though questionable, such a matter is as hard to disprove as to prove—the questions here are a) whether pure experience can have a meaning, and b) Nishida's assumptions that pure experience will lead to or enhance good conduct. With regard to the first of these two questions, Nishida avers that "True pure experience is not meaning in any sense" (1987a, 1). This does not mean that it has no meaning, but that "Meaning is never the *subject matter* of understanding," as Heidegger puts it.[53] While giving the benefit of the doubt to those who claim to have experienced ultimate reality in some direct, non-conceptual way, we might question whether the experience attained is of 'reality' or whether it arises from conditions such as education, training, indoctrination, prior experience, or physiological state. This is not to claim that the experience is not 'real', but that it is conditioned in such a way that it lacks validity beyond the case of that person's experience at that moment in time. In other words, what can be called in question quite easily is the 'pureness' of the experience—and therefore the higher-level description of it

[53] Martin Heidegger, *Gesamtausgabe*, 34: *Vom Wesen der Wahrheit: Zu Platons Höhlengleichnis und Theätet.* Frankfurt-Main: V. Klostermann, 1988, p. 18. — Or, as Emmanuel Levinas put it: "It is necessary to put experience into question as the source of meaning. One cannot show that meaning, as knowledge [*savoir*], has its motivation in a meaning that, at the outset, has nothing of knowledge" (Levinas 1998, 198, n.8). See Boutin 2001, 435.

as being unmediated apprehension of ultimate reality or contact with 'the way things really are'.[54]

Despite the unquestioned originality of a number of his most important ideas, subsequent 20th-century Western philosophy has raised various criticisms against a number of assumptions inherent in Nishida's writings. While Nishida attempts to resolve the subject-object dualism by way of asserting an a priori, pre-cognitive awareness out of which subject and object arise, he fails to call into question the deeper metaphysical dualisms implicit in the contrast between mediated or cognitive thought and unmediated or pure experience, which can be seen as a subset of the greater (Indo-Greek) dualism of appearance and reality or—one is tempted to add—the dualism of *samsara* and *nirvāṇa*. Richard Rorty's reflections on the fate of some pre-eminent modern Western philosophers applies as well to Nishida's case:

> Kant was a turning point in the history of Western philosophy because he was a *reductio ad absurdum* of the attempt to distinguish between the role of the subject and the role of the object in constituting knowledge. Hegel realized this, and realized that the distinctions between the subjective and the objective have to be transcended. Unfortunately, Hegel himself used the terms 'subjective' and 'objective' to describe the sequence of successive descriptions which successive social needs made necessary as moral and intellectual progress continued, and used

[54] Steven Katz (1978, 1983) is one scholar of mysticism who takes such an approach to his subject, rejecting the very idea of pure experience.

> the term 'union of subject and object' to describe the end of history. This was a mistake, because it took an outdated dualism too seriously. (Rorty 1999a, 49)

In similar fashion, it would seem as though Nishida, in his struggle with these inherited dualisms, took them too seriously. Indeed, given the long tradition of Buddhist deconstruction of such, Nishida may have ended up grappling with problems that the Buddhist traditions he claimed to be utilizing had already, however erratically and unsystematically, set aside. For Rorty, Hegel might have done better to take the pragmatist turn, as did John Dewey (1859–1952), describing intellectual and moral progress in terms of the growth of freedom, rather than as a quest for or realization of Absolute Knowledge. Given Nishida's remarks in the opening pages of *An Inquiry into the Good*, that his task was to "investigate what we ought to do and where we ought to find peace of mind"[55]—the latent pragmatic side of his philosophical work might have gained through this shift.

A similar notion of pure experience is central to Christian mysticism as well as modern European Romantic traditions, where "we find the image of the unschooled poetic genius who, lacking the obstructions of culture and training, penetrates to the very heart of the matter, whether in music, art, or philosophy."[56] In recent years, one of the strongest critiques of the Romantic legacy within Western thought has come from Donald Davidson

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[55] Such, however, "calls first for clarification of the nature of the universe, human life, and true reality" (1987a, 37–38). — See Tremblay 2000, 16.

[56] Wright 1997, 23. — He adds, "Modern romantics still express considerable anxiety over the possibility that their own creativity might have been influenced and conditioned by others. Insight that is dependent on, or conditioned by, the insight of others is considered to be marginal and inauthentic" (Wright 1997, 23).

(1917–2003), particularly his essay "On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme," where Davidson challenges what he refers to as the "third dogma" of empiricism.

> The dualism of scheme and content, of organizing system and something waiting to be organized, cannot be made intelligible or defensible. It is itself a dogma of empiricism, the third dogma. A third, and perhaps last, for if we give it up, then it is not clear that there is anything distinctive left to be called empiricism. (Davidson 2001, 49)

Taken together with the earlier work of Willard Van Orman Quine (1908–2000) who developed a critique of the first two 'dogmas of empiricism', Davidson's thesis amounts to a denial that, prior to cognitive interpretation, sensation has qualities which can be experienced 'non-cognitively'—"it is to deny that experience has what Rorty calls 'raw feels' in terms of which we can access, or get some phenomenological handle on, our sensory experience" (O'Donovan-Anderson 2001, 3). A similar argument can be found in the work of French philoopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961), who similarly asserts that nothing in the realm of our actual experience fits with the empiricist notion of pure experience. Davidson's criticism can be read as being coincident with a long tradition of Buddhist thought on this matter, and thus provides a useful buttress to the CB critique of KSP—though it is a two-edged sword that may also turn back on CB itself.

4.3.3 *Basho no ronri* 場所の論理: The Logic of 'Place'

Pure experience as developed by Nishida in *An Iniquiry into the Good* clearly falls under the critique of topicalism presented by CB, in its appeal to a hypothetical unifying, monistic ground that transcends all conditions and contingencies. Takahashi Satomi 高橋里美 (1886–1964) argued that Nishida's approach sets up a more robust dualism than that of subject and object, which the idea of pure experience was meant to overcome. The critical, or what Nishida's earliest critic Tanabe more precisely called the 'thetic' faculty[57] by which one is able to posit an other outside of one's self (*jiko ni tai shite* 自己に対して), is rendered inert. Yet, we must take this issue further, since in his later writings Nishida, while not abandoning the idea, turned away from speaking of pure experience in the terms described in *An Inquiry into the Good*, replacing such with a more nuanced and, in his understanding, more clearly Buddhist concept of *basho*. Indeed, the main problem Hakamaya has with with the philosophy of Nishida centers more on the notion of the 'logic of place' (*basho*, *topos*), which they assume is another variation of the topicalist legacy in Japanese Zen. While connected with *Zen no kenkyû*'s pure experience, the logic of place is a more sophisticated and complex theory that became central to virtually all of Nishida's later writings.[58]

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[57] For Tanabe, *thetic* judgement is the basis of one's common-sense relation to phenomena (see Adams 1991, 55).

[58] As Dilworth (1973, 463) notes, Nishida's "nine successive volumes of purely philosophical writing during 1911 and his death in 1945 were a continuous process of articulation of a central insight concerning 'the immediacy of experience' in Buddhistic terms." — Here, Dilworth refers to the series of volumes, 11 in total, published between 1911 and 1945. Nishida's complete works in 19 volumes was published by Iwanami Shoten in 1965.

In the works written between 1926 and 1930, Nishida is mainly concerned with the epistemological implications of *basho*, whereas the subsequent period, his final works written in the period leading up to and through the Pacific War (1930–1945), deal more extensively with *basho* vis-à-vis 'the world of action' and historical reality.[59] Throughout all of these works, a continuing theme is that "the religious horizon of concrete immediacy is the deepest a priori of the self, underlying the a priori of cognitive intellect, moral will, and aesthetic feeling" (Dilworth 1973, 469). In the 1920s Nishida developed his ideas of *topos/basho* along lines borrowed from Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), the neo-Kantians and Johann Gottlieb Fichte (1762–1814), and placed emphasis in particular on pure feeling as the basic condition or ground for 'true subjectivity' and as "a more profound level of consciousness than intellectual cognition" (Dilworth 1973, 471). However, this emphasis, though never disappearing entirely, was replaced in the final works, beginning with *From the Acting to the Seeing* (1927), with a self-consciously Eastern or Buddhistic understanding of *basho* based on the notion of 'Absolute Nothingness' (*zettai no mu* 絶対の無). Indeed, the "logic of place" becomes virtually interchangeable with the "logic of nothingness." In the chapter on 'Basho', Nishida argues that the knower and known are always in relation, and thus involve the unifying whole in which they both exist. As a result, the self, conceived as the "pure unity of mental acts," which includes non-ego, "can in turn be regarded as the 'topos' (*basho*) in which the subject-object intentionality has emerged" (Dilworth 1973, 477). Feenberg (1990, 156) has noted the parallels in Nishida's description with the Zen doctrine of 'no-mind' (*mushin* 無心). Though stated as 'Absolute

[59] This late turn has been called Nishida's *Kehre* from a philosophy of self-consciousness to one of history-politics, possibly as a response to the writings of Tanabe (see Huh 1990, 357).

Nothingness,' this condition is not 'negative', but, as with the Buddhist *śūnyatā*, this negative space opens up into limitless possibility.

> It is precisely by virtue of its emptiness and all-inclusiveness that the noetic "non-being" of consciousness in general transcends all noematic "being." And for this reason the "world of meaning," in which objects can be abstracted and analyzed in various ways, and the "world of judgment," which is the reflection of these objects and their relations, always emerge within the field of consciousness in general. (Dilworth 1973, 479–80)

One thing that emerges from this argument is that reality or things-in-themselves are not in fact known through cognition, but rather can be known in the sense of "being disclosed ontologically by the 'self-awakening' that takes place only on this trans-cognitive level" (480). Here, with the transplanting of ontology over epistemology, some of the gravest problems of *topos* arise. Despite the explicit attempt to render his logic of experience along Mahāyāna Buddhist lines, Nishida's use of Emptiness (or Absolute Nothingness) lacks a firm connection to *pratītya-samutpāda*. That is to say, it takes on a quality that transcends time if not space, and neglects the significance of conditions and causality in bringing about the situation of self-awakening. Despite the more direct Buddhist inspiration and the use of Buddhist terms, the 'logic of place' remains troubled by topicalist limits.

In Nishida's final writings, the 'logic of place,' along with the philosophy of 'active intuition' and religious awakening, come to be more closely related to ethics and political behaviour: "Religiously awakened people," writes Nishida, "become 'master of every situation' as the self-determination of the absolute present. In all respects these people are active. For each, 'the place in which one stands is truth'... From a true religious awakening one can submit to the state" (cited in Ives 1994, 23). This idea is repeated in an essay written in 1944: "True obedience to the nation should be derived from the standpoint of true religious self-awareness. Mere seeking one's own peace of mind is selfish" (Nishida 1970a, 45). Even more significant, Nishida—borrowing a line from Kegon Buddhism—emphasized the importance of "See[ing] the universal in the particular thing." This notion may be fairly innocuous in itself (one finds an identical notion in Western Romantics such as William Blake and Johann Wolfgang von Goethe), but Nishida situated it in concrete terms by locating the universal principle in the particular 'locus' called the *Tennō* 天皇—the Japanese Emperor. Ironically, in his attempt to give a more concrete and socio-historical understanding of *basho*, Nishida ends up creating, however unwittingly, a highly abstract and de-historicized ideological basis for the imperialist vision of the day. As Christopher Ives puts it, "Nishida helped provide a philosophical foundation for the 'holy war' being waged in the name of the emperor."[60]

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[60] Ives 1994, 25. — It should be noted that, particularly in his personal letters, Nishida feels some obvious discomfort as to the way ultranationalism was sweeping the country in the 1930s and 1940s. Some commentators have suggested that, in fact, Nishida was mimicking the language of the militarists in order to bring it up from the concrete reality of war and into some higher philosophico-religious sphere. This is not a very strong claim, even when coupled with the fact that Nishida did come under suspicion by some rightists for some of his moderate writings.

4.3.4 *Topos* and Kyoto School Thinking

Whatever Nishida may have meant his concept of *basho* to involve, it is without question that others in the Kyoto School politicized it, transforming what began as an ontological concept of space into "the 'world stage' where all human and social problems will be resolved under Japan's leadership role." (Najita and Harootunian 1998, 239).[61] It is important to note that the politicization of 'emptiness'—or at least its application to the martial spirit and violence—has precedents within Zen tradition. Sixteenth-century Rinzai master Takuan spoke of the 'uplifted sword' having no will of its own, but being "all of emptiness."[62] Much earlier, a 7th-century Chan text entitled "Treatise on Absolute Contemplation" suggests that "as long as one sees a 'person' or 'living being' standing out from emptiness, one should not kill even an ant. One who overcomes these perceptions can kill, though; in a way similar to natural events like a storm or collapsing cliff bringing death."[63] Harvey rejects this line of thinking as being "implausible"; he does so by utilizing the antinomina logic of the text he criticizes: "Such people should also know that they themselves and their 'side' are empty too!" Harvey is right to be indignant, but is his response an adequate Buddhist response? As Victoria notes, "it is unclear from [Harvey's]

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[61] Najita and Harootunian 1998, 239. — They add: "Thus, despite their use of abstract philosophical language, the Kyoto philosophers unashamedly spoke on behalf of Japanese imperial expansion as the creation moment of a vast historical movement to a new level of human excellence." See also Blocker and Starling 2001, 153–54, on KSP nationalism.

[62] Harvey 2000, 268. — As Victoria (2001, 16) notes, after citing this remark, Harvey goes on to defend Takuan on the grounds that he "was adapting teachings to those who were already committed by birth to fighting, and he also emphasized the virtues of sympathy and human-heartedness."

[63] Harvey 2000, 267. — See Victoria 2001, 17. This citation is an interpretation of the text by Paul Demiéville.

remarks whether [he] intends to deny the antinomian thought underlying this treatise altogether" (2001, 17). One must say rather that Harvey does not want to abandon this type of Zen logic; he wants to retain it and bypass some thornier issues by simply extending it to include the enlightened sword-wielder himself. What happens, then, to the vow of the bodhisattva or the Buddhist precepts against killing?

Nishitani Keiji follows Nishida in his own work, in which he dispels the notion that religion must or can be about 'utility'. Such, he declaims, would be a faith ready to "bear witness to its own degeneration" (Nishitani 1990, 2). Religion's 'use' stands well beyond the mundane needs of existence. For Nishitani, the key concept is what he calls the "field of *śūnyatā*," which is a standpoint (*topos*) upon which "we become manifest in our suchness as concrete human beings... and at the same time, it is the point at which everything around us becomes manifest in its own suchness" (90). Here we can see, once again, the tendency within KSP to sacralize both a primary existential condition as well as the world as it is, combined with an odd reworking of history and the notion of historicism, whereby these terms are abstracted from real events in time and made into elements of pure experience:

> Historicity is able to realize itself radically only on the standpoint of *śūnyatā* (emptiness), the standpoint of the bottomlessness of each moment. Each individual moment of unending time possesses the very same solemnity that is thought in Christianity to be possessed by the special moments of the creation, fall, redemption and second coming. In bottomlessly embracing the endless past and

endless future, we bring to fullness each and every moment of time. (cited in Maraldo 1994, 361)

Yet here the pupil Nishitani goes beyond the master Nishida. Taking an uncompromisingly existential-phenomenological stance, Nishitani insists that religion, unlike culture, is "at all times the individual affair of each individual" and thus can only be understood through "the religious quest alone" (1990, 2). Langdon Gilkey (1989) notes—but passes over until the very end of his article, merely suggesting it as a problem for consideration—the "radically individualistic" aspect of Nishitani's stance, as well as his seeming unconcern with history and social renewal or politics. Clearly, these things were of secondary importance to Nishitani's project. The actual historical effects of such a stance bypass the question of the necessity of making such a distinction at all and remain a matter of intense debate.

Nishitani's opposition of religion and culture is interesting, not least in that it seems to contradict his teacher Nishida's final words regarding culture as the "content of the paradox of God, of God's own self-affirmation through self-negation" (Nishida 1987b, 118), in other words, as the locus of true religion. Nishitani suggests that, whereas with the things of the world, we can and do ask: "What is the purpose for us?" with religion we are faced with the opposite inquiry: "What is our purpose?" Religion effectively *decenters* us; it annihilates solipsism. Religion is beyond questions of utility—a vision which contrasts rather starkly with Hakamaya's CB claim that true religion *is criticism.* Nishitani goes on to argue that in fact, "If silence is golden, then Zen may be called an alchemy that

transforms all things into gold by purifying them in the fire of the negation of all words and letters, names and concepts, logical methods and theoretical systems. Zen is, so to speak, an anti-ontological alchemy" (cited in Heisig 2001, 249). But is this truly anti-ontological? The emphasis on purifying things seems decidedly ontological.

Tanabe Hajime, who attempted to bring his analysis into history, and who was one of the first to criticize Nishida's writings as being limited by their aesthetic undercurrents, can also be accused of abstracting religion from the entire realm of ritual and symbolic expression as well as dogmatic constructions based on faith in special revelation (see Heisig 1986, xxii). Though he makes an explicit connection between ethics and religion, even suggesting that "[p]ursued to its final end, ethics is transformed into the absolute nothingness of religion," (Tanabe 1986, 81), Tanabe similarly treats religion in terms of its existential effects and implications.

More recently, the work of Abe Masao has continued many of the themes of KSP, but with more emphasis on interreligious dialogue and comparativism. Regarding the place of ethics, Ives suggests that Abe falls into the same gaps as his master Hisamatsu Shin'ichi and the main figures of KSP. Specifically, Abe maintains, "ethical issues are to be grappled with on the basis of an Awakening to one's 'Original Nature', which is beyond good and evil... To distinguish good and evil and to think of matters on the basis of this discrimination is itself evil or illusory thinking." In short, "The priority of good over evil is an ethical imperative but not an actual human situation." This last sentence gives away the game: what is an actual human situation? Is this not, once again, to privilege some sort of ontological reality beyond the call to charity, the vow of compassion and the face-to-face

encounters which make up much of human experience itself? That the distinction between good and evil is a product of discourse, culture, rationality, and emotion does not make it "evil or illusory," simply contingent.

Following Nishitani, Abe waxes Kierkegaardian with respect to the privileging of religion over ethics: "Human nature cannot be completely controlled and regulated by ethics, which is why we must go beyond the realm of ethics and enter that of religion." Abe follows the by now standard modern Zen line that Awakening involves seeing the illusory dualities of good/evil, self/other, human/nature, flesh/reason. Even accepting that 'awakening' might be better conceived or interpreted, does one have to conclude that, because these dualities are 'empty', they have no meaning or use? Precisely because they—like everything else—are 'empty', just words, may they not matter all the more? The failure here lies in the desire to posit the ultimate reality of something like "the original purity of one's nature." The metaphysical critique implied in Abe means rather that one may not require some sort of heightened experience in order to realize the suchness of good and evil. Perhaps a reformed way of thinking and talking of these matters is enough.

Connecting ethics with emptiness, Abe writes: "*sunyata* 'must' empty itself, giving rise to the vow and act." Ives wonders, quite rightly, whether this 'must' implies a normative 'ought' or a descriptive 'will'. "Given that to Hisamatsu and Abe the social involvement of Zen Buddhists traditionally has been rather limited—which might indicate the lack of a necessary connection between *sunyata* and acts—this question demands attention" (Ives 1992, 88). Indeed, the specific political implications of the doctrine of

emptiness need to be explored in some detail.[64] Ichikawa argues that, in many respects, the doctrine of emptiness has blunted Buddhist social activity, because it provides very little basis on which to build a viable ethic to face the problems of the world and focuses instead on the quest for "peace of mind."[65] One modern Western proponent of Zen has written, contrariwise, that "what the Buddha taught was not something to *believe in* but something *to do*" (Batchelor 1997, 17). Nishida—and Carter to a lesser extent—exhibit a rather narrow perspective on morality, which seems to be confined to a rigid, Decalogue-like code of rules binding one and all universally. On the other hand, existentially or ethically minded modern Zen writers such as Batchelor tend to caricature belief as something akin to medieval Roman Catholic obsessions with the size and shape of angels. Though Batchelor tries hard to mark a line between actions and beliefs—separating, for example, the act of understanding anguish from the belief "Life is suffering"—one wonders why he bothers. Indeed, any challenge to act must work with and out of language, and language itself is replete with ideas and beliefs. Yet, Batchelor rightly points out that Buddhists should be focused less on gaining enlightenment as some sort of salvation or higher state of existence than on working towards the elimination of suffering and injustice in the world, along with, but not simply as a addendum to, whatever benefits this may have to

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[64] Victor Koschmann, in his *Revolution and Subjectivity in Postwar Japan* (1996), makes the claim that, despite their differences from the outright Japanist rhetoric of the day—notably their emphasis on individual autonomy vis-à-vis dependence to the absolute—the Kyoto thinkers came to define authentic subjectivity in terms of deterministic historical structures, and were thus partly responsible for deferring the possibility of radical change in postwar Japan. In short, they lacked a sense of *historicity*. Tanabe certainly goes further than Nishida and Nishitani in allowing for subjectivity, but even he falls under this general critique.

[65] See Ives 1992, 94, n.102.

personal 'well-being'. The Zen emphasis on practice as a mode of awakening makes it always responsive to the development of human awareness manifested in human activity.

Chapter 5

CRITICISM AS ANAMNESIS: *DEMPŌ* 伝法 / *DAMPŌ* 談法

> Critical Buddhism must therefore come to terms with history—especially its own history, its own historical context, and its own historical position within the history of Buddhism. Such awareness is part and parcel of what it means to be critical.
> (Peter N. Gregory, "Is Critical Buddhism Really Critical?" p. 297)

> Understanding is essentially a historically-effected event.
> (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 300)

5.1 Critical Buddhism and History

> Since Buddhism is not a monotheistic religion... in Buddhism the active refusal of allowing others to have beliefs different from one's own is absent, while the positive recognition and approval of others' beliefs in the different modes is clearly present... In Buddhism, deep faith and true tolerance do not exclude one another but go together... The basic Buddhist attitude toward different beliefs within Buddhism is not to reject, denounce, or punish them as heresy, but rather to evaluate them critically as different views and to subsume them into its own doctrinal system.
> (Abe Masao, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, pp. 203–4)

> Overcoming the tradition, 'going beyond' it, differing from it—these are the [Buddhist] tradition's own demands, not something counter to it or outside its parameters. Simply to agree with the tradition, to obey its current form, is to fail to receive the 'transmission'. It is to be 'ungrateful' as the *Transmission of the Lamp* put it. This form of reflection can only derive from a deep sense of historicity; it implies the radically temporal thesis that who we are as human beings is historical through and through. History is conceived here not so much as a force that acts upon our human existence but rather as something closer at hand, something beyond which we will not go. It is true that only a few exceptional Buddhists were ever willing to face this realization in a thorough-going way. Most preferred to apply it to things of "this world" but not of the transcendent realm of Buddhas, nirvanas, and mind-to-mind transmission.
> (Dale Wright, *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism*, pp. 155–56)

These two quotations come to the same general conclusion about Buddhist attitudes towards tradition. And yet, they are instructive as points of contrast in that they address the issue from radically different perspectives and with markedly different intent. In reading Abe's remarks on how Buddhism has no problem fusing "deep belief and complete tolerance," one wonders about the fulminations of past masters like Dōgen and Nichiren, who were quick to pronounce upon the evil doctrines of the various "dog-heretics" who

shared not even "one speck of the Dharma" with true believers.[1] One might also note the condescension in Abe's following claim: "Different views of the Dharma have been regarded as *upāya*, skillful means to lead immature Buddhists to the ultimate truth of Buddha-nature" (1997, 204). Certainly, Buddhist writings often emphasize the dangers of contention (Skt. *vivāda*) and controversy (Skt. *raṇa*); Śākyamuni himself is often called the "one who cast aside contention" (Skt. *raṇamjaha*).[2] Yet the rhetoric of inclusion belies a significant legacy of division and contention, not all of it amicable, within Buddhist traditions. Cheerful talk about Buddhist tolerance to other religious creeds also manifests itself in the contention (of Abe, for instance) that, unlike virtually all other world religions—and especially Christianity and Islam—the history of Buddhism is clean of the taint of 'holy war'. At the same time, ironically, the moralistic element behind such disputes, and even the occurrence of Buddhist 'holy war', arises from the same ground that undergirds criticism—hope, faith or conviction that there is a true, or at any rate, a 'better' way of following the Buddhist path. Thus, while Victoria rightly criticizes Buddhists who came to support Imperial Way Zen, he misses the basic point of connection between such Buddhists and his own vision of Buddhist pacifism.

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[1] See Dōgen's harsh words describing the people of Japan in the "Keisei sanshoku" 溪聲山色 (Sounds of the Valley Streams, Colours of the Mountains) section of *Shōbōgenzō* (G. 9). In response to this passage, Cleary remarks that such disparaging remarks "indicate that [Dōgen] was conscious of working in a milieu in which unconventional and extreme statements might be necessary in order to produce specific impressions capable of promoting desirable effects under adverse conditions" (Cleary 1993, 29). — This could well apply to the work of CB; but it remains highly speculative. In their translation of the "Busshō" fascicle, Eidō and Vachon compare Dōgen to one the wrathful Buddhist 'kings of light': Dōgen's wisdom is "not a gracious wisdom, but a fierce wisdom, the irascible wisdom of Gōzanze" (Eidō 2002, 527).

[2] Also, in the *Man'yōshū* 万葉集, an ancient collection of Japanese poetry, Japan is referred to as "a country where people following implicitly the way of the gods, are not argumentative" (Abe 1997, 246). — Obviously, their gods were not the Olympians.

In contrast to the vision proferred by Abe, Dale Wright's remarks on this matter raise a dilemma that must be more clearly acknowledged. If this realization of historicity on the part of Buddhists is, indeed, a 'Buddhist truth, and if, as Wright notes, very few, indeed, only 'exceptional' ones—a telling adjective, to be sure—can ever attain this truth, then how or why should we consider this turn to historical consciousness a 'truth' at all? Certainly, it could be justified as properly Buddhist with reference to certain classical texts such as the writings of Huang Po 黃檗 (Jp. Ōbaku, ?–849), the subject of Wright's own work. Yet, as Wright admits, the bulk of the tradition extending up to, and perhaps culminating in, modern Zen points to a quite different understanding—one which seems to pull back from the void to which this radical historicity leads.

The problem of Zen interpretations of history and readings of Buddhist tradition has a number of levels. At one level is the question of syncretism and borrowing (see above #3.2). Despite the claims that Japanese Buddhists have always accepted other religious elements, absorbing them into a seamless web, one can find much criticism of the foreign elements that seeped into, and possibly deformed, Buddhism in China and Japan. One finds this idea clearly stated in the writings of Dōgen himself:

> Careless people claim that Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism are ultimately one, only the entrances are different. Or they say that those teachings are like a tripod. That kind of view is often heard among the monks of the Great Sung China. If they hold such opinions the Buddha Dharma has already disappeared from the earth for them. Even a speck of dust of the Buddha Dharma cannot be found among that type of stupid people. (G. 24, "Bukkyō")

At another more abstract but more significant level, what is at stake here is the very conception of tradition itself and what such means in contemporary world. As Gadamer has noted, moderns, following the tradition or prejudice of the Enlightenment, usually contrast tradition with reason and human freedom, giving tradition the pejorative sense of a ratification of what has been, and the demise of any opening to what is new. As Muramoto Shōji 村本詔司 argues:

> it is also important to know the original meaning of "tradition". The English word "tradition" comes from the Latin *tradere* which means "to hand over". Tradition includes thus something that is handed over as well as the activity of handing it over. Both these connotations of tradition are related and form a hermeneutic circle. A tradition is transmitted from one generation that gives to a generation that receives. (Muramoto 1986, 17)

Muramoto goes on to argue that this process of handing over can only take place where there is an acceptance on the part of both givers and receivers, and that in Buddhism tradition is not absolutely immutable.

> There is a concept not only of *dempō* [伝法], the transmission of the Buddha dharma, but also of *dampō* [談法], its interruption. A Zen master sees his historical mission in the transmission of the Buddhist truth.... [Yet,

> i]n case he cannot find a suitable successor he might prefer *dampō* to *dempō*, the authenticity of which would be not questionable. Tradition is thus essentially a historical process and presupposes man's reason and responsibility to choose freely... Even a refusal of the tradition remains partly dependent on historical reality which in itself is constituted by the tradition. (Muramoto 1986, 17)

For Muramoto, as for Wright along with Gadamer and even, to some degree, Habermas, awakening to historical consciousness involves a thoroughgoing commitment to truly understanding the tradition in its particular historical, social and political context, as well as an attempt to relate the tradition to present-day realities.[3]

> A successful text must be just as impermanent over time and place as its readers. To regret this impermanence and the 'dependent origination' of Huang Po over time is to miss the Buddhist point. Indeed, the entire Buddhist tradition councils explicitly against this regret. Since all grounds are fluid and all priorities already dependent, grasping for secure foundations and stable originals can only be misguided—and painful. (Wright 1999, 13–14).

Griffith Foulk makes a similar point with respect to Chan/Zen and the *kōan* tradition: "The authority of the commenting voice in the kōan literature derives from the

[3] See Arendt 1961, where the present is conceived as in a state of suspended animation between the remembrance of past tragedy and the hope of a more humane future. See also Carroll 2002, 62–63.

dialectic of negation, according to which even the words of the patriarchs are fundamentally flawed and in need of rebuttal lest someone cling to them as ultimately meaningful expressions of truth" (Foulk 2000, 35). In short, CB's outright rejection of authority betrays an Enlightenment prejudice that should be nuanced by a particular reading of the meaning of authority within Zen and Buddhist tradition.[4]

Rather than being opposed to the truth of a tradition, this existential-critical process may be conceived in terms of Foucault's notion of genealogy or even, as Muramoto prefers, in terms of 'apology':

> An apology is not always a sign of stagnation or rigidity. Sometimes it may prove to be a highly self-critical and promising act which revives the tradition and helps man's [*sic*] commitment.... Apology is *anamnesis*, i.e., the recollection of what a tradition may have forgotten in the long course of its history. This is why traditional religions now, while taking a critical stance to modernity, have to integrate findings offered by philological, historical, psychological and sociological research instead of merely ignoring them in defense. For traditional religions, in as much as they still claim fundamental rights in the contemporary world, it is of extraordinary importance to show that problems posed by the critical modern mind can be appropriately resolved on the basis of their own understanding. (Muramoto 1986, 18)

[4] See Hori 2002, 190–93. See also Dreyfus 2003, for an extended discussion of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism in terms of a dynamic relation between authority and interpretation.

The very gap between a particular tradition and the contemporary world can be a source for progressive critique. However, as Ackermann rightly adds, it can also be, and perhaps more often is, a source for "conservative hysteresis," namely when tradition "is not a reflection" (Ackermann 1985, 86). A truly radical historicism accepts the historical embeddness of all our thoughts, including our semantic and interpretive frameworks. Such a post-Romantic hermeneutics may be considered as being true to Buddhist practice on a number of levels. As Wright notes, just as Karl Barth (1886–1968) argued for Christianity, so too must a Zen master "read the 'times', a set of historical developments and circumstances—political, economic, and cultural—within which the transmission of mind and dharma must be performed."[5] Any attempt to disclose a 'pure' meaning in ancient texts must be given up as both illusory and contrary to transmission.

We are faced with the seemingly intractable problem that, historically speaking, it would seem that very few Zen or other Buddhist historians have actually utilized such a method or revealed such consciousness. Wright alludes to the "weakness of Zen historical consciousness," which lies largely in its ready acceptance and promotion of continuity based on an idealized vision of the past. "The Zen historian has no perspective from which the present can be criticized, other than that of the present itself, which can only take the

[5] Wright 1997, 39. — Leonard Swidler remarks that such a critical awareness is in fact at the root of all the major religious traditions of the world: "[A] moment's reflection will recall that Moses, Jesus, and Mohammad were extremely 'critical' thinkers in the religious sphere vis-a-vis what existed up until their time. In fact, it was the very radicalness of their 'critical thinking' that made them the fountainheads of new religious streams. For such critical thinkers language needs to be found that will effectively communicate the authentic insights of religious tradition in ways that will find resonance in understanding and life" (Swidler 1994, 20).

form of chastisement for a failure to live up to the current ideals."[6] Much of this can be attributed to simple politics: those in power will always prefer the status quo. But it would be too simplistic to take power as the sole factor in such conservativeness. Another element is authority in a more general sense, which also, *pace* Wright's vision of a constantly reforming Zen line, tends to prefer stability and continuity to renewal and transformation. Whatever the reasons, the upshot has been that Zen has tended to lack a historical consciousness in precisely the sense that the transformations and disruptions that actually did occur tended to be glossed over or forgotten entirely. As Bernard Faure puts it, "The ideological work of the tradition has been to hide the diversity and contingeny of its origins behind an apparent consensus of orthodoxy" (Faure 1991, 16). Thus the problem of a lack of Zen historicity is not simply a matter of Zen writers distorting the facts—since the notion of non-interpretive, objective, fact has come under serious criticism of late; it is a matter of forstalling a critical component related to overcoming injustice and promoting compassion, or other ideals emerging out of Buddhist tradition itself.

In the work of KSP (see above #4.3.4), we see both an attempt to give an important place to historical reality and a persistent drive towards the abstraction of history and

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[6] Wright 1997, 114. — Wright convincingly argues that the Zen tradition of historiography can add to the classical Western model in precisely its sense of 1) the self-consciousness of belonging to a tradition, which in fact identifies the self as part and parcel of an ongong stream; and 2) what might be called the 'projectability' or simply the 'usefulness' of texts and tradition vis-à-vis the contemporary context (Wright 1997, 116–17). Both of these Zen addendums to contemporary historical scholarship may be equally, if not more adequately, provided by certain currents in hermeneutics and other contemporary thought, especially the work of Gadamer, Foucault and Rorty.

historicity—the reduction of history to some larger, transcendent category, such as absolute nothingness or emptiness.[7] Nishitani remarks:

> Historicity is able to realize itself radically only on the standpoint of *śūnyatā* [emptiness], the standpoint of the bottomlessness of each moment. Each individual moment of unending time possesses the very same solemnity that is thought in Christianity to be possessed by the special moments of the creation, fall, redemption, and second coming.[8]

Here time itself is brought to its fullness only in what we might call the eternal now,[9] the Real Present of an epoch or a moment. The sense of history and the past as mediation of the present and future, by way of *pratītya-samutpāda*, as well as the potential for critical engagment on the basis of such, is lost in Nishitani's all-enveloping "bottomless embrace" (see #2.4.1).

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[7] See Heisig 2001, 85–86, for a critique of Nishida's attempt to concretize his thought in history and society ("For all his attempts to insist that he is talking in concrete terms, the concreteness is located not in a call to reform one's values or to exercise them in action, but in an increase of self-awareness"). — Not to talk here of the fact that concreteness—as a recourse deemed obvious by common sense—is true abstraction (see Laruelle 1981, 40, and Boutin 1983, 273).

[8] Maraldo 1994, 361; original, Nishitani 1986, 10:299. See also Nishitani 1990, 272, for an alternative translation.

[9] See Huh 1990, 354. — As Huh puts it, "Nishida's turn to philosophy of history in essence means that [his] earlier terms are historicized and at the same time given full reality by application of the forms of self-consciousness. Self-consciousness is changed into historical self-consciousness, individual becomes historical individual, activity becomes historical activity, and place becomes historical or public place. In this manner, history itself becomes divine" (357)—and thus, we might conclude, effectively de-historicized. Yet, there is potential in Nishida's turn towards a truly temporal or historicized *basho/topos*.

Often the attempt to historicize a religious tradition involves a consequent demythologizing, which sometimes corresponds to a certain rationalist 'fundamentalist' impulse. Indeed, there is a demythologizing intent on the part of CB, a sense that Buddhism needs to be purified of cultural accretions, particularly those of the topicalist variety, whether they come from Indian, Chinese, Japanese, or European sources. However, this may simply be reflective of religious reformism more generally or, as Wright has argued, even a particular characteristic of Zen.[10] More important is a deep historical (here, including political) consciousness among the participants of a religious tradition. Among other things, Buddhism—as any religion—must be evaluated in terms of its historical effects (*Wirkungsgeschichte*). In short, the development of a truly critical historiography may require, as Wright (1997, 117) suggests, that we heave off the attempt to make one dimension of time exempt from the negativity of historical limit[11] that have affixed themselves to both Buddhist and modern Western methods.

Gadamer, in invoking Vico and the Romantics against the Enlightenment rationalists, upholds tradition as a legitimate and binding form of authority, which lies behind and provides the foundation for morals. His thesis rests on the notion that, in fact, the Romantic rejection of Enlightenment objectivity is actually a flipside of the Enlightenment: "Where the Enlightenment emphasizes a perfection of rational knowledge, Romanticism focuses on perfect mythical consciousness that is prior to all human thought.

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[10] "There is indeed a 'fundamentalist' urge written into the basic tenets of the Zen tradition...[which] can be defined loosely as the tendency to select a limited set of basic doctrines—'sudden enlightenment,' 'no dependence of language and text', 'everyday mind is the Way', and so on—that are literally and narrowly interpreted, and taken to be a timeless essence of the tradition" (Wright 1997).

[11] See Boutin 2002, 341–55, for discussion of the frequent confusion of human 'limit' with finitude.

Both Romanticism and the Enlightenment are based on a break with tradition... Both approaches require that understanding must overcome all prejudices" (Johnson 2000, 28). What needs to be explained is the possibility of a ground for ethics which lies neither with tradition alone nor with reason alone. This is precisely the path opened by Vico and re-opened, however unconsciously and unwittingly, by CB. Gadamer comes close to articulating this when he says: "*Understanding is to be thought of less as a subjective act than as participating in an event of tradition*, a process of transmission in which past and present are constantly mediated" (Gadamer 1988, 296). This aspect of mediation in the "event" is the locus of the present study, and a bridge between the religio-cultural divide.

5.2 Roots of Criticalism

5.2.1 A Buddhist "History of Heresy"

> [T]hroughout its long history in India, China, and Japan, Buddhism produced many divergent forms that differed radically from the original form of Buddhism preached by Shakyamuni. Nevertheless, these novel forms were not purged from the Buddhist world, and indeed became the spiritual fountainheads from which new energy entered the Buddhist world... [Therefore] the history of Buddhism may be regarded as a history of heresy.
> (Masao Abe, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, p. 18)

At first glance, it might appear that the brand of criticism or 'criticalism' endorsed by Hakamaya and Matsumoto is little more than a thinly-disguised liberal humanism based on Enlightenment rationality, the acceptance of a modern Western ideal of human rights, and the priority of individual agency. Thus CB might be seen as a belated pro-Western reaction to the perceived irrationalism and nationalism of the early 20th century. Hakamaya in

particular is quite clear as to the depth of his commitment to models of European Enlightenment. But the issue is not so geographically polarized as it may first appear. In attempting to lay the groundwork for what it means to be critical, Hakamaya sets up an opposition with a 300-year legacy in Western thought, that between Cartesian criticalism and the topicalism of Giambattista Vico, the 17th-century Neapolitan jurist and philosopher. As he explains in "Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy": "The heart of the intellectual question... lies not in the different ways of thought of East and West, but rather in the confrontation between topica and critica."[12] This simple assertion is key to a deeper understanding of the movement. The comparison and fundamental distinctions run cross-traditionally to a much greater degree than in the philosophy practiced by the Kyoto School. Hakamaya and Matsumoto insist that they are not simply importing Western rationalism as the new way of 'doing' Buddhism; they claim that their assault on topicalism is one with which the Buddha himself would be in sympathy.[13] They go so far as to suggest that Buddhism began as a revolt against topicalism in Indian thinking and has had ever since to perform rearguard battle against topical encroachments, with varied

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[12] Hakamaya 1997a, 58; orginal, 1990, 7. — Regarding the temptation to see differences in terms of East vs. West, John Dower makes a point regarding the struggle to recreate a postwar constitution for Japan: though the Kiplingesque trump card was played on more than one occasion by Japanese legal scholars, in fact the whole debate was really centred on a conflict between "two Western systems of legal thinking"—one German and one Anglo-American (Dower 1999, 353). The point made by CB is the same: the rhetoric of the chasm between East and West, whether on metaphysical, ethical or psychological grounds, is more often than not a mask covering deeper, more fundamental issues. It is, one might say, a 'political' exploitation of 'difference.'

[13] Hakamaya (1997a, 64) calls Śākyamuni Buddha "the first such criticalist in India," though he goes on to laud Confucius ("China's Christ") over Lao-tzu and Śākyamuni himself (67), since he sees the former as more of a humanist than the other two: "It is humankind that can broaden the tao, not the tao that broadens humankind" (L. 15:28; see Gospel of Mark 2:27).

success.[14] "[E]ven more quickly than Vico followed on the heels of Descartes, advocates of a topical philosophy reappeared throughout Indian Buddhism and eviscerated Śākyamuni's true criticism" (Hakamaya 1997a, 64). Before turning to the work of Descartes as a foundation for criticalism, let us now turn to a brief history of criticism within Buddhism and Zen.

Nolan Pliny Jacobsen points to the power of Buddhism to "shift the conduct of life away from established beliefs, however reliable and legitimate, over to the self-corrective mode of behaviour"—being alert to what Wittgenstein called "the bewitchment of the intellect by language" (1983, 133). Such a picture certainly gives Buddhism a critical edge by which alone the CB conflation of Buddhism with criticism and reason seems to stand. Christmas Humphreys, in a similar vein, suggests a strong parallel between the Buddhist attitude towards all phenomena and that of the modern scientist: "Let all things be examined dispassionately, objectively, assuming nothing, testing all, for such was the Buddha's own injunction to his followers."[15] The notion that Buddhism began as a type of

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[14] A long battle conceived by Hakamaya in terms of the contrasting Sanskrit terms *pratyakṣa* (Jp. *genken* 現見, 'direct perception') and *anumāna* (Jp. *hiryō* 比量, 'deductive reasoning', 'inference', recognition of causes) and waged by, for example, Madhyamika vs. Yogacarin essentialism, Dōgen, and the Critical Buddhists themselves against Japanese "postmodernists" (their term) and the heirs of KSP. See Yamaguchi 1997, 224, for a discussion of the meaning of 'wisdom' vis-à-vis the "confirmation of truth" (*pratyavekṣa*).

[15] Humphreys 1951, 223. — However, even in works such as Fritjof's Capra's popular *Tao of Physics* (2000), the serendipitous collusion between Eastern wisdom and Western science does not disabuse, but effectively corroborates the orientalist vision of the mystical East, for an assumption is made of an 'organic' model of nature in which "all things are fluid and ever-changing" (Clarke 1997, 170). In other words, Eastern 'rationality' is really Eastern topicality given renewed credibility in the face of Einstein, Gödel, and Heisenberg. Though the Critical Buddhists might accept the emphasis on interdependence and the non-substantive aspects of Capra's view of nature, they would shrink away from his reliance on the language of wholeness, harmony, and complementarity, fearing a lapse into non-discrimination.

critical philosophical movement, akin to that begun by "Axis Age"[16] thinkers Socrates and Plato, has been around for some time. Over seventy years ago Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan (1888–1975) wrote the following about the beginnings of Indian philosophy:

> The age of Buddha (596–483 BC) [sic] represents the great springtide of philosophical spirit in India. The progress of philosophy is generally due to a powerful attack on a historical tradition when men feel themselves compelled to go back on their steps and raise once more the fundamental questions which their fathers had disposed of by the older schemes. The revolt of Buddhism and Jainism... forms an era in the history of Indian thought, since it finally exploded the method of dogmatism and helped to bring about the critical point-of-view. For the great Buddhist thinkers, logic was the main arsenal where were forged the weapons of universal destructive criticism... The conservative schools were compelled to codify their views and set forth logical defenses of them. The critical side of philosophy became as important as the speculative. (Radhakrishnan 1931, 17)

While it is of course impossible to know precisely what early Buddhism really was, contemporary buddhologists would be skeptical of Radhakrishnan's claims; for the most part they have accepted that originary Buddhism was not, at least in the very beginning, a highly philosophical movement, but rather seems to have been more concerned with ascetic renunciation and the worship of *stūpa*s. It has been suggested that the turn from

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[16] See Karl Jaspers 1953, 51fl; German original 1949.

Pali to Sanskrit as the dominant linguistic medium involved a turn towards philosophical speculation, heightened by the writings of philosophers such as Nāgārjuna (see Hayes 2000). Whatever the case, it does seem that Buddhism, dating back if not to the beginning at least to an early period, has frequently been engaged in a kind of critical—often overtly philosophical—analysis of the beliefs, practices and ideas which came before.[17] It is also clear that this critical dimension remained with Buddhism even as it crossed the Sea of Japan.

Certainly—*pace* scholars such as Earhart (1982, 70) who insist rather too strongly on the harmony of Japanese religions—there has been a long tradition of disharmony and outright criticism within Chinese and Japanese Buddhism,[18] which was even given a formal name: whenever a new sect arose in China and Japan, the practice of *kyōsō-hanjaku* 教相判択 (Ch. *jiaoxiang panzhai*)—'the judgement and interpretation of the various facets of Buddhist teachings'—was applied. According to Abe (1997, 16), this practice was

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[17] "Philosophy... arises precisely at that point when, for various reasons... traditional outlook[s are] are called into question. 'We have always been taught to see the world in this way, but how can we be sure that it is really correct?'" (Blocker and Starling 2001, 16). -- There is also a strongly iconoclastic tradition within Chinese and Japanese forms of Buddhism. As recorded in the 11th-cenury *Dentōroku* 傳燈錄 (Record of the Transmission of the Lamp), Tan-hsia T'ien-jan 丹霞子淳 (Jp. Tanka Tennen) burned a wooden statue of a Buddha to warm himself on a cold winter night, though this may point less to an iconoclastic spirit than to a pragmatic humanism in line with Jesus' words in Mark 2:27. If stirring up trouble is the main criteria, then one might also point to the now-legendary Zen figure Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394–1481) as a proto-Critical Buddhist. Indeed, if one follows Jon Carter Covell's hagiographical treatment of Ikkyū, he appears as *the* single-most radical figure within Japanese Buddhist history, a veritable Byronic hero. "Ikkyū attacked his contemporary Zen world wrapped in conformity, in follow-the-herd security. He exhorted the individual to be free, to hold his head high and walk unashamed in the past of Rinzai's natural man" (Covell 1981, 10).

[18] See Moore 1982, 302: "[E]ven in the realm of thought, historically speaking, as well as in the area of religions, there has not been nearly so much harmony or lack of intellectual investigation and acumen, as ordinarily maintained. But this lack of harmony is of value—to human knowledge... there have also been almost throughout Japanese history...constant intellectual conflicts and numerous intellectual efforts at synthesis which were not merely eclectic but actually much more argumentative and mutually critical and apparently much more intellectual in their methods than many seem to realize."

highly beneficial to Buddhist development: it allowed for the application of new standards to various sutras and interpretations of texts and traditions. Thus the emergence of Chan/Zen 禪, highlighting meditation over teaching, can be seen as a prominent instance of a critical Buddhist movement which sought, through emphasis of one aspect of received tradition at the expense of all others, to go straight to the heart (not necessarily the historical origins) of Buddhism. Not only was a new form of Buddhism established, all other existing forms were immediately rendered suspect. Zen is, of course, just one example; one might also note the Zhenyan/Shingon 真言 differentiation of esoteric (*mikkyō* 密教) and exoteric (*kenkyō* 顕教) Buddhism as well as the Jingtu/Jōdo/Pure Land 浄土 privileging of the self-power gate (*jiriki-mon* 自力門) vs. the other-power gate (*tariki-mon* 他力門).

The search for true Buddhism has a long and storied pedigree in Japan. Only a critical, reformist spirit could have prompted such as Kūkai and Saichō to undertake the arduous journey to China in search of the true path to supplant what was in their eyes the decrepitude of the Six Schools of Nara Buddhism. As Earhart notes, both of these men as well as later Buddhist reformers sought not only 'true' Buddhism but also 'truly Japanese' Buddhism, indeed conflating the two. All this being said, it comes as little surprise to find that the major Buddhist figure to which CB points for precedence is Dōgen (1200–1253), the historical founder of the Sōtō Zen sect, to which both Hakamaya and Matsumoto belong. Thomas Cleary has argued that "Dōgen exploded the myth, popular then as now, that Zen awakening is an irrational process, thus laying a foundation for a more balanced and complete understanding of Buddhism" (Cleary 1993, 36). Certainly Dōgen stands out

as one of the great reformers in Japanese Buddhist tradition: he attempted to introduce into Japan what he believed to be true Buddhism, knowledge of which he gained while studying under Chinese Chan master Ju-ching 如淨 (Jp. Nyojō, 1163–1228). The paradox, if we might call it so, of Dōgen's achievement is the following: he was, methodologically at least, a philosopher, works like his *Shōbōgenzō* (Treasury of the Right Dharma Eye) are replete with rational and critical speculation of a sophistication unrivaled in Japanese thought until the Meiji Era. Yet on another level his religious message was Occamite, fideistic, one might say, at root: all that is truly required is *zazen* 座禅—'just sitting in meditation'—in order to effect the "dropping off of body and mind."

Can we call Dōgen a Critical Buddhist? Hakamaya and Matsumoto have no hesitation in doing so, based largely on his work as a critic and reformer, especially with respect to a number of streams of recently imported schools and ideas from China. For Dōgen,

> written documentation of... personal, individual achievements of the past (including that of Śākyamuni himself), are not only possible but, as Dōgen insists, highly useful for those seeking instruction in the way. Although Dōgen stressed the need to go beyond intellectual theory in achieving enlightenment, he nonetheless differed from the Rinzai sect's concentration on the kōan to the exclusion of studying the sutras... he argued for the integration of theory (study of the sutras) and practice (mainly sitting in meditation). (Blocker and Starling 2001, 59).

Also significant are a) Abe and Waddell's assertion that, in writing the *Fukanzazengi* 普勧坐禪儀, Dōgen appears to have changed his emphasis: he moved away from the notion of *dhyāna* or *samadhi* as means to enlightenment and replaced it with an "accentuation of the oneness of practice and realization"[19]; and b) the fact that "it is obvious from the connotations of the very titles *Bendōwa* ('Discourse on negotiating the Way,' or on 'Making endeavors to practice the Way') and *Gyōji* (maintaing one's course in 'perpetual practice') that Dōgen does not lapse into the view, popular during this time in Japan, that since man is inherently enlightened (*hongaku*) there is no need for practice" (Maraldo 1981, 43). Indeed, one could argue that in Dōgen we find a Zen writer who, *mutatis mutandis*, utilizes a hermeneutic akin to that employed by contemporary historians and thinkers who are willing to admit the interplay that inevitably occurs between texts and the interpreters of those texts. Furthermore, unlike both the fundamentalist literalist and the objectivist historian, such a hermeneutical stance recognizes that "only when the past can legitimately make a claim to truth upon the present is it worth knowing."[20]

Given the overt critical stances of Kamakura reformers[21] such as Dōgen, Hōnen 法然 (1132–1212), Eisai 栄西 (1141–1215), Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1263), Nichiren 日蓮

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[19] Waddell and Abe 1973, 117–18. See also Maraldo 1981, 30 n.19.

[20] Wright 1997, 113–14. — Wright claims that true Zen historians are always open and responsive to the claims of the text: "Their ideal is that the language and character of the text have been imprinted upon and joined to their own language and character. Writing the historical text and trasmitting it to future generations are acts of Zen practice; they activate the powers of 'dependent origination; both in themselves and in others." See Paul Griffiths critique of 'Buddhist theology' on the grounds that such does not adequately reflect the claims of authority—i.e., the weight of Zen tradition. Yet Griffiths's remarks themselves depend upon a certain limited and even modern Western understanding of authority (see #5.1 n.4).

[21] Though still commonly asserted, the notion of a general Kamakura Buddhist 'Reformation' (e.g., Moore 1982, 11) along the lines of the Protestant Reformation in Christianity—including a bias towards the

(1222–1282),[22] and Ippen 一遍 (1239–1289), the periodic quest for a true Buddhism is clearly strong within Japanese Buddhist traditions. Yet despite the strong evidence of self-critical reformism within Buddhist tradition, the centrality of criticism in Japanese culture more generally up until the present remains a matter of some debate.[23] Even the critical legacy of influential Heian Buddhist leaders Saichō and Kūkai was unable to combat the rise of so-called secular Buddhism based partly on an ideology of harmony between Buddhism and the state: "although the two new sects had reacted against the state Buddhism of Nara, eventually both the ritualism of Shingon and the ecclesiastical authority of Tendai were used to protect and bless the state"[24] In modern times, after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the short but psychologically effective period of Buddhist persecution, a few Buddhist scholars working under the rubric *Daijō Hibussetsuron* attempted to rediscover true Buddhism through a method influenced by Western historical-critical studies.[25] Their 'search for the historical Buddha' set a tone for late-Meiji Buddhist studies, and might be seen as a precedent of sorts for CB.[26] *Daijō hi-bussetsuron* differs in

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previous Tendai establishment as being worldly and corrupt—has lately come under critique (see e.g., Stone 1999, 66–85).

[22] See Stone 1999, 327, for discussion of the Nichiren sect's penchant for *shakubaku*, criticizing the wrong views of other sects, as well as the more dangerous *kokka kangyô*, "admonishing the state" for not accepting the Lotus Sutra as the exclusive foundation for Buddhist teaching.

[23] Blocker and Starling (2000, 178) suggest that "On the whole... [contemporary] Japan appears to be behind the West (if the word *behind* is allowed to have any meaning), not in the sense that it evidences worse injustices, but in the sense that the critique of those injustices is less developed."

[24] Earhart 1982, 86. See also #2.2.1.1.

[25] As discussed in detail above, #4.1.

[26] Mid-20th century Chinese philosopher and essayist (and student of John Dewey) Hu Shih (1891–1963) developed a similar argument—that most forms of Chinese Buddhism, Chan in particular, are actually "anti-

most respects from the later understanding of Buddhism developed in KSP, although the two movements share a similar trait in presenting Buddhism or Zen in a decontextualized fashion, whether in the form of a 'pure' original set of teachings, or as a 'pure' experience transcending cultural and historical limitations.[27]

The issue of critique applied to Buddhism is further complicated by the innate conservatism of institutions and the power of a longstanding Confucian ideal of harmony and the rhetoric of compliance.[28] John Dower makes a point of reiterating that the "myth of Japanese obedience," though an effective rhetorical and ideological weapon wielded by late Meiji, Taishō and Shōwa militarists, is belied by a strong if vastly under-represented indigenous tradition of criticism and revolution in modern Japan. Rather than mouthing the tired stereotypes about Japanese willingness to accept whatever reigning ideology happens to say, Dower accounts for the readiness on the part of so many postwar editors and writers to embrace the Allied victory as a "victory for Japan and democracy" by pointing to the "eclectic prewar intellectual tradition that had accomodated serious engagement with Marxist as well as liberal discourse. For them, defeat amounted to the resumption of an

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Buddhistic." Yet, in opposition to scholars of *Daijō hi-bussetsuron*, Hu sees this change as a boon, in that it "simplified" and "naturalized" Buddhism, turning it away from the metaphysical abstractions and other-worldliness of the Indian traditions. Moreover, Hu criticizes Suzuki and his ilk for missing these Sinitic gains and sliding backwards into a morass of illogic and irrationality. See Hu 1931, 1953; also Ames 1960, 7.

[27] Indeed, Sharf (1993) would relate these two successive movements to the first two stages in the construction of Zen modernism: where the *Daijo-hi-Bussetsuron* scholars attempted to establish an essence of Buddhism in its historical origins, the Kyoto School (along with Suzuki) took the next step in identifying such an essence not in teachings per se but rather in a pristine, noetic experience. Moreover, they also probe Sharf's third and fourth stages, whereby Buddhism (or Zen) is universalized beyond the category 'religion', and finally (somewhat paradoxically) is asserted to be the ground or foundation of virtually all Japanese cultural and ethical activities.

[28] See above #3.2.2.

interrupted critical tradition that, in a few instances, had continued for longer than most of Japan's antagonists realized" (Dower 1999, 185). What we can say is that the critical tradition in Japan seems to have experienced vast swings; in the modern era, the Meiji Restoration (1868), the Imperial Rescript (1890), and the Allied Occupation (1945–52), as with so many other aspects of modern Japan, are the most significant transitional events. Many would argue that the present 'post-bubble' period is an ideal time for a revival of criticism and a turn towards a greater sense of historicity. Though there are signs of this in some quarters,[29] the outlook at the beginning of the 21st century is far from bright. Let us look more closely at the work of that CB hero Descartes, in order to construct a more solid basis for *critica.*

5.2.2 A Buddhist Descartes?

> The First [principle of logic] was never to accept anything for true (*vrai*) which I did not clearly (*évidemment*) know to be such; that is to say, carefully to avoid precipitancy (*précipitation*) and prejudice (*prévention*), and to comprise nothing more in my judgement than what was presented to my mind (*mon esprit*) so clearly (*clairement*) and distinctly (*distinctement*) as to exclude all ground of doubt.
> (René Descartes, *Method,* p. 161)

> The 'modern' Western philosophical tradition was developed through the key contributions of... Hobbes,... Locke...[and] Hume. These philosophers rejected the particular Cartesian metaphysics underlying Descartes' view of self, and they disagreed with each other, even to the extent that a Humean critique raised doubt as to whether 'the self' had any objective status. But they all assumed a general, shared orientation, expressing highly atomistic, individualistic, essentially nonsocial, egoistic views of the self—an orientation that has defined most of 'modern philosophy'.

[29] See, e.g., Fujii Tadatoshi's 藤井忠俊 recent work, *Hei-tachi no Senso* 兵たちの戦争 (2001).

(Douglas Allen, "Social Constructions of Self: Some Asian, Marxist, and Feminist Critiques of Dominant Western Views of Self," p.51)

The work of René Descartes (1596–1650) has had a monumental impact on Western philosophy. In many ways the modern age of the Western world can be viewed as Cartesianism writ large—though recent scholars such as Jean-Luc Marion (1981, 1992) amd Geneviève Rodis-Lewis (1998) have tried to distentangle Cartesianism from the work of Descartes himself. Even those who have most forcefully and bitterly attacked the post-Cartesian paradigm of the disengaged self and critical objectivity have done so in recognition of its power and influence. Douglas Allen writes that "(m)ost of our modern Western concepts of self have had Cartesian epistemological roots" (1992a, 7). Allen goes on to delimit the main aspects of the modern Cartesian self:

1) what is true is only what is 'clear and distinct' to the rational mind—this results in a privileging of mind over body; the self is exhausted by the thinking mind;

2) self is isolated, not social or relational; one comes to know the self independently of others; all relations to others are subjected to methodological doubt;

3) the thinking mind can be more certain of its own existence than the existence of anything else—this is the foundation of philosophy (and thinking, knowledge) as well as the ground of existence;

4) since certainty is so closely connected to doubt, the self is threatened by a profound skepticism and the prospect of a self-imprisoned solipsism;

5) knowledge of the self as a separate, autonomous thinking thing is *not* historically and culturally constructed.

Allen's conclusion, which sums up much of contemporary reactions to the Cartesian paradigm, is that "such a modern, Western self-claim to ahistoric rationality and universal objectivity not only is philosophically inadequate but also serves neo-colonial and imperial goals of domination" (1992a, 9). Indeed, long before the advent of feminism and post-colonial criticism, 20th-century philosophy spent many pots of ink in battling the spectre of Descartes. Edmund Husserl (1859–1938), in his famous 1935 lectures in Vienna and Prague on the "Crisis of European Sciences and the Transcendental Phenomenology," found the roots of the crisis in the person of Descartes, as well as Galileo. Under their guidance, Husserl intoned, the European sciences were able to reduce the world to a mere object of technical and mathematical investigation. The concrete world of life, *die Lebenswelt*, was pushed out of sight, beyond the horizon of knowledge, forgotten. Tunnel-vision set into the European mind, and the real world was lost.[30] Elided along with the world was the self, which was, unbeknownst to the Cartesian subject, in-the-world all along. Europeans and their American offspring had plunged headlong into what Husserl's erstwhile pupil Heidegger felicitously called the "oblivion of being" (*Seinsvergessenheit*). Kenneth Inada (1992, 92–93) wonders whether the 20th-century philosophical reaction to and rejection of Cartesianism might have something to do with the influence of Eastern thought. In the case of Husserl, this is unlikely; in Heidegger, more plausible, though he

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[30] Of course, before we make Husserl into a father of interreligious dialogue, we must note that besides his critique of Western rationalism he also claimed that "the Europeanization of all foreign parts" is the "destiny of the Earth," and that Western philosophy could encompass, but could never be encompassed by, the thinking of the East (Husserl 1970, 273–75).

denied it.[31] What Inada and so many others miss is the long tradition of anti-Cartesianism within Western tradition itself, dating back Vico and Blaise Pascal (16623–1662).

One of the reasons that it is impossible to fully forget about Descartes is the very innovative and critical aspect that lies at the foundation of his work. Attempting, quite consciously, to restart philosophy in a fresh and new direction, Descartes rejected the Aristotelian and scholastic traditions that had been the foundations of Western thought for centuries. Like Vico after him, Descartes was particularly concerned to make philosophy come to terms with the burgeoning 'new sciences', in part by breaking its reliance on Christian theology. The revolutionary character of these actions accounts for much of his continuing appeal, even today, among such as the Criticial Buddhists. Descartes founded his method on the basic principle of "hyperbolic doubt"—he found that he was able to doubt everything, until he came to what he believed was the only undoubtable—the very thing doing the doubting, i.e., the self. From here, Descartes went on to construct a basis for knowledge, once doubting had showed itself to be radically illogical. Eventually, he would prove the existence of thinking, the mind (as distinct entity from the body), God, and the external world. He believed that this method was able to refute the skeptics, who believed knowledge was not possible, while allowing for a truly mathematical and scientific knowledge of the material world.

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[31] Heidegger's *On the Way to Language* (1971) begins with "A Dialogue on Language (between a Japanese and an Inquirer)." Yet in remarks made in his famous 1966 interview with the German magazine, *Der Spiegel*, Heidegger remarked: "I am convinced that a change can only be prepared from the same place in the world where the modern technological world originated. It cannot come about by the adoption of Zen Buddhism or other Eastern experiences of the world. The help of the European tradition and a new appropriation of that tradition are needed for a change in thinking. Thinking will only be transformed by a thinking that has the same origin and destiny" (quoted in Neske and Kettering 1990, 62–63). Heidegger also frequently expressed doubts about whether thinkers in very different cultures were in a position to understand one another (see "A Dialogue on Language," in *On the Way to Language*, p. 3).

A quick summary of Descartes' four methodological rules will help us to understand further the reason that Critical Buddhists find his work amenable:

1) Never to accept anything as true if I did not have evident knowledge of its truth; that is, carefully to avoid precipitate conclusions and preconceptions, and to include nothing more in my judgements than what presented itself to my mind so clearly that I had no occasion to doubt it.[32]

2) Divide each of the difficulties I examined into as many parts as possible and as may be required in order to resolve them better.

3) Direct my thoughts in an orderly manner, by beginning with the simplest and most easily known objects in order to ascend little by little, step by step, to knowledge of the most complex, and by supposing some order even among objects that have no natural order of precedence.

4) Last, throughout to make enumerations so complete, and reviews so comprehensive, that I could be sure of leaving nothing out.[33]

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[32] The Buddha advised his followers not to accept particular views simply on the basis of tradition, text, or authority, but to investigate as fully as possible the validity of views for themselves (*Kālāma Sutta* 1959).

[33] Adapted from Descartes' *Method* I.120.

These four rules of the Cartesian method can be expressed in terms of three basic mental operations: intuition, deduction, and enumeration, which together make up human reason. Intuition implies the 'direct apprehension' of the 'simple natures' of any subject matter; deduction is a process of inferring necessary relations between these simple natures; and finally, enumeration is a review process by which we are able to correct for the shortcomings of human memory.

Let us look more closely at the notion of intuition at work here, since it relates to a concept also held dear by Vico and KSP but questioned by many contemporary thinkers as well as CB. For Descartes, coming to be enlightened about the world involves coming to realize (e.g., through meditation) that in fact, "bodies are not properly speaking known by the senses or by the faculty of the imagination, but by the understanding only, and... they are not known from the fact that they are seen or touched, but only because they are understood" (cited in Taylor 1989, 145). Descartes addresses the problem of clarity and distinctiveness in a number of works, including the *Principia Philosophiae* (Principles of Philosophy, 1644).[34] Clarity refers to an openness or presentation of the object for full inspection by the thinker; an analogy used by Descartes is viewing a material object in good light. Distinctness refers to the process of coming to an understanding of the relationships between the idea or object and everything else, in order to distinguish what belongs to the object and what does not, i.e., what makes up its relations. The former aspect, clarity, sounds very much like the Buddhist notions of *saṃjñā*, one of the five *skandha*s that refers to conceptual thinking and forms, as in Descartes, a basis for the idea

[34] See *Principia Philosophiae* I.45. See also Leibniz, "Meditations on Knowledge, Truth and Ideas" (1684).

of self, or perhaps, in a more positive sense for Buddhism, *dharma pravicaya* or discriminating wisdom. The latter aspect, distinctness, echoes the Buddhist understanding of the mutual interdependence of phenomena, though it leans more strongly towards the possibility of independent, unrelated entities. In any case, intution in this sense shares little in common with the more mystical understanding of some sort of pre-discursive illumination of reality itself. Throughout the *Meditations*, however, the key concern is with the first rule stated by Descartes: never to accept anything as true *without evidence.*

There is a Zen saying which suggests that there are 'three essentials' in the practice of Zen: 1) Great Faith, 2) Great Tenacity of Purpose, and 3) Great Doubt. According to Hisamatsu it is the last that is the necessary moment for self-awakening. Is this the "doubt" of Descartes—of the famous *de omnibus dubitandum*? Abe Masao says no, since the Buddhist Doubt is 'total' and involves not only "intellectual doubting" but also "emotional anguish" and "volitional dilemma" such that in the Great Doubt "what is being doubted is the doubter himself" (Abe 1995, 170–71).

In both the *Discourse on Method* and the *Meditations,* Descartes proposes to follow a process of doubt as a 'first principle' of thought. It is important to understand that Descartes's doubt is here not simply a skepticism of traditional myths or beliefs held on the basis of faith or authority—it is a somewhat deeper, 'hyperbolic' doubt, in which all sorts of knowledge, indeed, the very process of knowing and being itself, are put in question. The goal, however, is not to rest within doubt but to find a bedrock of 'truths' that cannot be themselves doubted. The most obvious class of knowledge brought into question by the Cartesian method is knowledge gained from the senses. By following this method,

Descartes eventually came to the conclusion that the only thing that cannot be doubted, the only true certainty, is the 'thinking thing': "this proposition, *I am, I exist,* is necessarily true whenever it is put forward by me or conceived by my mind" (*Meditations* II.17). This of course led him to state, in the famous summary, *cogito ergo sum.*[35]

A few points need to be made here. First, Descartes does not suggest that thinking is the only attribute that he has, but rather the weaker claim that it is the only attribute about which he can be certain. As one commentator has put it: "I am, then, at least a thing that thinks."[36] Second, Descartes 'thinking thing' is not simply or purely a 'rational being': it is "a thing which doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels." These last two are particularly important, as they serve to undermine the common notion that Descartes was presenting a purely rational ego. Probably the biggest stumbling block for anti-Cartesians is the so-called "mind-body" dualism that he is said to have brought into not only Western thought but also the Western psyche. To begin, in the *Meditations*, Descartes employs different words for 'body': in the sense of *res extensa*, and the physical body itself. Further, much of what makes us human, according to Descartes, are things like imagination, sensation, purposeful movement, appetites and emotions—which fall somewhere between 'pure mind' and 'pure body'. In fact, Descartes makes a strong point on this: the immaterial mind or soul is not a "ghost in

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[35] It is worth noting here that Descartes borrowed his strategy partly from St. Augustine, who developed his own 'refutation' of the skeptics in *City of God:* "On none of these points do I fear the arguments of the skeptics of the Academy who say: what if you are deceived? For if I am deceived, I am. For he who does not exist cannot be deceived. And if I am deceived, by this same token I am (*City of God* 11:26). This rather extraordinary passage can be read as a rebuke against the skeptics for not going further to question the whole prospect of 'deception' versus 'true understanding.'

[36] Int.Exc www.edu/research/iep/d/descarte.htm.

the machine"; though mind and body may be separable in principle, they are in fact "a close and intimate union." (*Principles* §48, I:208–9)

As Stuart Lachs has noted in his critique of "modernist" versions of Zen, "Perhaps the greatest attraction of [this] Zen for Americans of [the postwar] period was the notion of pure, enlightened experience with its promise of epistemological certainty, attainable through systematic meditation training" (Lachs 1994, 1). The prospect of certainty found in standard interpretations of Descartes slides imperceptibly into the modernist Zen quest for enlightenment as a pre-conceptual grasp of reality-as-it-is. Within Indian Buddhism (as well as Nyāya thought), a contrast was frequently made between two types of reason/thinking, *tarka* and *vāda*. Whereas the former refers to a kind of speculative thinking in which a) there is no ground for certainty, or b) one is content with a priori assumptions and hearsay, the latter denotes the opposite; thinking which both has the potential for certainty and proceeds without reliance on assumptions or hearsay. Of the two *vāda*, sounding suspiciously like Cartesian or perhaps scientific rationality, is overwhelmingly favoured, while *tarka* is rejected. Ironically, many modern commentators have taken the rejection of *tarka* to refer to a blanket rejection of reason and logic, when one might argue that it is precisely the opposite—a blanket critique of dogmatic and unsubstantiated thinking.

Yet the principle that we might best adopt from Descartes is less the certainty of the *cogito* than the primacy of doubt, *dubito*, in thinking and understanding.[37] Indeed, the

[37] See Lévinas 1947, 80: "In the end it is the act of doubting, that is, the negative act, that is privileged situation in which the existence of the present and the 'I' is irresistibly accomplished. The 'present', the 'I' and an 'instant' are moments of one and the same event."

notion that certainty will eventually emerge from thinking and discussion is perhaps best left as an open question, not least because of the long tradition, beginning with the Madhaymika (and Nāgārjuna in particular) of questioning any sort of 'certainty' (Skt. *niścaya*) whatsoever. This is of course to reject a central element of Descartes's method, which, unlike the skeptics, seeks to eliminate doubt in order to stand on the firm ground of certainty. Yet, taking a cue from Descartes's wish to push doubt as far as possible, we might suggest that a further implication of radical doubt involves applying doubt to certainty itself, in order to find out that doubting one's own doubt amounts to sheer contradiction and documents therefore that the 'route' called doubting is thus a logical dead end for thinking itself. As Cottingham (1998, 20) puts it: "the purpose is to see whether there is anything at all that *survives* the doubt." Indeed, in the famous story of the demon, Descartes comes very close to making assertions of a highly Buddhistic nature regarding the possibility that everything is, in fact, illusory, or empty of substantial existence: "I shall think that the sky, the air, the earth, shapes, sounds and all eternal things are merely the delusions of dreams which [the demon] has devised to ensnare my judgement" (AT VII.22–23). Yet, the certainty Descartes eventually arrives at and upon which all knowledge and existence is to be henceforth grounded also has a theological basis: "I see plainly that the certainty and truth of all knowledge depends uniquely on my awareness of the true God, to such an extent that I was inescapable of perfect knowledge about anything else until I become aware of him" (AT VII.71). As Taylor remarks, "it is sheer anachronism to read back into [Descartes's] mind what later Deists and unbelievers did with his concept of reason" (Taylor 1989, 151). This Christian element is clearly an

aspect of Descartes' thought that does not fit well with any form of Buddhist thought, whether Critical or Topical.[38]

We might say that a true *vāda* must strive to eliminate, as much as possible, the *tarka* elements ("dogmas, unexamined faith claims and untested speculations"[39]) in understanding, while being aware and responsive to the conditionality of all knowledge and understanding, thereby reaching a cognitive stage to which we might apply another Sanskrit term, *adhimukti*.[40] The strong points of the Cartesian paradigm for CB are the questioning of authority as a basis for wisdom, the turn 'inwards' for the locus of human dignity, a move towards the disenchantment of reality, such that matter is devoid of any spiritual essence or expressive dimension (one might say, 'empty'), and the notion that, through practice and attunement, one can gain control over the passions without eliminating them (as per the Stoics), to the extent that they are addictive and hence damaging to our life and spiritual progress. Yet, the weaknesses of the paradigm are just as clear. First are the dualistic implications, though—as some recent scholars such as Baker and Morris (1996) have argued—this is both overblown and frequently misunderstood by critics. Second is the disengagement that is presumed to be part and parcel of Cartesian epistemology, and that, for all its strengths in helping to overcome the lure of dogma and authority, does not adequately reflect the way that we experience the world in our everyday

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[38] Lévinas goes so far as to suggest that in Descartes, "Like extension, thought, which is a created existence, would risk falling into nothingness if God, the sole being whose essence implies existence, would withdraw from it" (Lévinas 1947, 80).

[39] Richard P. Hayes, *buddha-l* discussion list (buddha-l@listserv.louisville.edu), 19 April 2004. See also remarks by Dan Lusthaus in the same thread, 19 April 2004.

[40] "Believing and understanding the teachings. Having both faith and understanding in the Buddhist teaching. Correct faith, complete understanding" (DDB, 'adhimukti'). See T 262.9.7c08.

existence. Here as well, it must be said, recent scholars such as Rodis-Lewis (1998) have questioned whether this is truly the case. Third, and most damning from a Buddhist perspective, is the assumption that knowledge must have a deep foundation, in this case within a sort of illumination arising from certainty. Here arises a point at which the work of Descartes's critics—especially Vico—may help to provide a better understanding of *critica* as a basis for CB.

5.3 Reclaiming *Topos*

5.3.1 Hermeneutics and the Problem of Mediation

In *Truth and Method*, Hans-Georg Gadamer sets up his hermeneutical task with regard to the relation between the immediate and natural realm and the intellectual and rational aspect of human being. Though natural to humanity, the latter is however distinct from the former. Alienating distanciation is bridged by *Bildung* or what Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) called a "rising up to humanity through culture," i.e., for Gadamer an ability to affirm and appreciate difference on the road to a universalizing viewpoint, free from all grasping and self-interest (TaM 10–14). We need to be careful not to conflate hermeneutical *Bildung* with scientific objectivity, however—this is not entirely a matter of ridding oneself of all assumptions and prejudices (a task Gadamer believes is, at any rate, impossible). What Gadamer elsewhere terms "Faktizität" (factualness) is strongly related to the notion of language as the medium of human historical being—medium here

implying not the instrumental sense of tool or instrument but rather the 'place' where being 'occurs':

> Just as things, those units of our experience of the world that are constituted by their suitability and their significance, are brought into language, so the tradition that had come down to us is again brought to speak in our understanding and interpretation of it. The linguistic nature of this bringing into language is the same as that of the human experience of the world in general.[41] (Gadamer 1982, 456)

In his discussion of the 'aesthetic' element in hermeneutics, Gadamer distinguishes the modern (post-Romantic) concept of aesthetic consciousness based on a false division of 'pure feeling' from knowledge and truth whereby art is understood as contributing to the life of feeling, but not to human knowledge or truth (see Johnson 2000, 18). Such aesthetic differentiation effectively de-historicizes and de-politicizes art, and belies the fact that "The pantheon of art is not a timeless present that presents itself to a pure aesthetic consciousness, but the act of a mind and spirit that has collected and gathered itself historically." (Gadamer 1992, 97)

In "The Universality of the Hermeneutical Problem," Gadamer's primary intention is to 'rehabilitate' the tainted term 'prejudice' (*Vorurteil*).[42] Following what Gadamer calls

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[41] TaM 456. See also TaM 350 and Alan M. Olson (1979, 175): "Being appears only within the meditative context of the primordial possibility that language itself represents and within which the subject is already both a hearer and a speaker of the word."

[42] "There is one prejudice of the Enlightenment that defines its essence: the fundamental prejudice of the Enlightenment is the prejudice against prejudice itself, which denies tradition its power" (TaM, 270).

our post-Enlightenment prejudices, judgement is *taking a position* or a stand, while prejudice is *limiting* one's position on the basis of prior, and often misconceived or incoherent notions. In fact, Gadamer understands *Vorurteil* in terms of *Vorverständnis*, which has per se no negative or even pejorative meaning, but is constantly part of understanding in terms of 'questioning'. Thus, prejudices "are simply conditions whereby we experience something—whereby what we encounter says something to us" (Gadamer 1980, 133). Prejudices are conditions for experience and are intimately connected with our capacity for imagination (*Phantasie*); both involve an opening up to and by that which is "worthy of questioning" (*fragwürdig*). In short, "[i]f we want to do justice to man's finite, historical mode of being, it is necessary to fundamentally rehabilitate the concept of prejudice and acknowledge the fact that there are legitimate prejudices" (TaM 277).

In terms of historiography, the hermeneutic task is an attempt not to unearth the originary meaning of a text, but rather to overcome the gap between the text as past and the reader as present. For Gadamer, the *Wirkungsgeschichte* of texts, the "historical effectivity," shapes meaning and interpretation. As Harry Harootunian remarks in his discussion of Tokugawa Nativism:

> The principal criterion of analysis can no longer insist on a symmetrical relationship between discourses and a 'reality' that is external to them, because discourse can only be grasped as instances of an interdiscursive construction, as mosaics of utterances crisscrossing one another and establishing their own

> categories of adequacy... Such a view also rejects the received distinction between a 'symbolic' order and the 'real' as ontologically given in favour of a view of these claims as effects of historical and social forces. (Harootunian 1988, 5)

The critique raised by Jürgen Habermas against Gadamer's claim to the universality of the hermeneutical quest allows for a convergence between Critical Theory and philosophical hermeneutics, a connection which enlivens the strategies of CB, for as Lin Chen-kuo (1997, 305) remarks: "Like Habermas, the Critical Buddhists choose to carry out the project of modernity because they see that both the West and Buddhism share the same idea of enlightenment, namely as a quest for liberation from ignorance and domination." Habermas emphasizes the reflexive nature of philosophical hermeneutics, and, to a point, reiterates Gadamer's justification for its universality. This is more than simply a philosophical strategy: philosophical hermeneutics is and must be self-exploratory, it must take place and develop within the "simultaneously unlimited and restricted nature of intersubjectivity," it "brings to consciousness experiences of our language which we gain in the course of exercising our communicative competence, that is, by moving within language." (Habermas 1980, 182)

Habermas diverges from the Heideggerian/Gadamerian path and into what he will later call "critical hermeneutics," which might be summed up by the following query: By what criteria are we to judge the truth of pre-judgment or pre-understanding, given that this, too, is always already "distorted" by social, psychological, political, and ideological forces beyond our immediate awareness and control? Habermas outlines two possible

paths we might follow in attempting to solve this problem: 1) psychoanalysis and critique of ideology—where the subject is unaware of the hidden intentions guiding and distorting her expressive activity; and 2) a "general theory of natural languages"—which provides "a rational reconstruction of a regulating system that adequately defines general linguistic competence" (Habermas 1980, 190). Let us examine the first possibility. Both psychoanalysis and the critique of ideology provide us with examples of the prominence of cases of "systematically distorted communication"—where "incomprehensibility is...the result of a defective organization of speech itself" (191). Moreover, as Sigmund Freud has shown, such distortions are not by any means confined to madmen and the pathological, but both inhabit and inhibit the lives and speech of so-called normal folks. From an extended analysis of the basic insights of psychoanalysis, Habermas concludes that: "The implicit knowledge of the conditions of systematically distorted communication is sufficient for the questioning of the ontological self-understanding of the philosophical hermeneutic" (203).

For Habermas, the problem with Gadamer's formulation of the universality of hermeneutics lies in his confidence in the reliability of the so-called 'preceding consensus'. In fact, a consensus achieved by seemingly reasonable means may be the result of pseudo-communication. This, Habermas explains, is not at all a new insight: it was well known by Enlightenment thinkers. In the wake of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) and the Frankfurt School, Enlightenment suspicion of pre-understood consensus arises as a necessity. What is required, Habermas concludes, is a "critically enlightened hermeneutics" that is aware of the difference between "insight" and "delusion" and seeks to distinguish between them

through psychoanalysis and critical theory in order to avoid the danger of "the ontologization of language and... the hypostatization of the content of a tradition" (Habermas 1980, 205).

A truly critical hermeneutics must take seriously Habermas's addenda to the Gadamerian understanding of philosophical hermeneutics. It must also reflect Gadamer's important distinction between two types of human experience: *Erlebnis* and *Erfahrung*. The former is experience as it is more commonly used to imply an instantaneous moment, something that one *has*, and thus is connected with a strong sense of the self as subject. *Erfahrung*, on the other hand, is an ongoing process of the continual expansion of one's horizons; it is something one *undergoes*, and as such is somewhat distanced from subjectivity, which is drawn into the event (*Geschehen*) of meaning: the subject becomes part of the process, not a privileged locus or executor of meaning.

Gadamer's vision of hermeneutics helps us to read and interpret the CB critique of topicalism vis-à-vis criticalism. Next we must turn to the work of Vico, who plays such a central part in the CB analysis of *topica.*

5.3.2 Hakamaya's Rejection of Vico

> Vico was deliberately reacting against Descartes, who had laid the foundations for the tradition of "philosophy as criticism." But since he disparaged the very notion of criticism and logical proof, all he could do was to make the defiant claim that philosophy was not solely the domain of the critical, but included the topical as well. Vico's argument, based as it is on rhetorical method, was no match for Descartes.
> (Hakamaya Noriaki, "Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy," p. 57)

Giambattista Vico is best known for his monumental work, *Scienza Nuova* (New Science, 1725), in which he covers a breadth of philosophical issues, some of which would not be further developed until centuries after his death in 1744. This breadth of vision, coupled with a certain vagueness in style, has allowed Vico to be championed as father to countless modern philosophical movements, including structuralism, psycho-analysis, existentialism, pragmatism and historicism. He has also been embraced by both positivists and anti-positivists (Burke 1985). As Matsumoto and Hakayamaya note—and lament—Vico has enjoyed a renaissance of sorts in the past few decades, partly as a result of the very thing which, according to Bizzel and Herzberg (1990), contributed to his lack of fame in the centuries following his death: an anti-Cartesianism first developed in the short work, *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione* (On the Method of Studies of Our Time, 1700).

Vico's main criticism of Descartes and the Cartesian philosophical system is its attempt to mimic mathematics and the so-called hard sciences. He emphasizes the ways in which Cartesian rationalism, and the critical method in particular, debilitates human thinking by obscuring the significance of imagery and fantasy, as well as undermining the element of uncertainty as an inevitable and necessary element in knowledge construction.[43] Vico posited his own alternative, "topical philosophy," based on the Latin term *topica* (L. place, field, locus; from Gk. *topos*). *Topos*, a concept which has roots in both Plato and Aristotle as well as the Latin rhetorical and humanist tradition that came after them, connotes a sense of intuition and holism, and leads to "a different sort of knowledge

[43] Bizzel and Herzberg 1990; also see Ernesto Grassi, "Critical Philosophy or Topical Philosophy? Meditations on the *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*," in *Giambattista Vico: An International Symposium*, G. Tagliacozzo and H.V. White, eds. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins Press, 1969).

altogether, a knowledge that includes multiple approaches to concrete problems, a plurality of probable truths, the art of discovery, and the like." (Nakamura Yūjirō 中村雄二郎 in Hakamaya 1997a, 61)

Hakamaya (1997a, 64) suggests that Vico misreads Descartes in developing his topicalist critique, as if Descartes wanted the seeker to "remain satisfied with the appearance of truth (*la vraisemblance*) rather than seeking after the truth itself (*la vérité*)." Vico, says Hakamaya, opposes the "odd or arrogant behaviour" of Cartesian criticalism with the "common sense" of the imagination and the "topical" approach to problems. "[G]ranting *topica* superiority simply on the basis of precedence," Hakamaya counters, "leaves little recourse other than the realist affirmation of the topical as the self-evident original ground...(thus) the essential point can be only to 'discover' the truly existent *topos*." However, an alternative reading of Vico connects him in some ways with the work of his foe Descartes. Robert Hoopes, in a work entitled *Right Reason in the Renaissance* (1962), speaks of the transformation of the notion of reason in Europe during the 17th century: "The intellectual history of the seventeenth century is marked by the gradual dissociation of knowledge and virtue as accepted and indivisible elements in the ideal structure of human reason, a shift from the tradition of right reason to the new tradition of scientific reasoning" (Hoopes 1962, 161). This previous form of right reason, itself largely a product of Enlightenment humanism, but with roots in Greek and Christian modes of thinking, posited reason as being very much "a way of doing and a condition of being." (Wiebe 2000, 358)

According to Hoopes (1962, 161), right reason may be thought of as, "a faculty which fuses in dynamic interactivity the function of knowing and being, which stands finally as something more than a proximate means of rational discovery or 'a nonmoral' instrument of inquiry, and which affirms that what a man knows depends on what, as a moral being, he chooses to make himself." Consider the following remark of Descartes in a letter written in 1645: "The function of reason in the conduct of life is to examine and consider without passion the value of the perfections, both of the body and the soul, which can be acquired by our conduct, so that since we are commonly obliged to deprive ourselves of some goods in order to acquire others, we shall always choose the better" (cited in Cottingham 1998, 56). Here we get a sense of the practical element of reason, as well as the connection between knowledge and 'good conduct'. Rather than beginning out of a prior illumination of certainty, knowledge and wisdom appears to be a sort of 'finding one's way' (*se débrouiller*), a virtue to be practiced and perfected over time (Botz-Bornstein 2004, 73). This vision emerges more strongly in the work and legacy of Vico, as well as seeds for the later understandings of Herder and the Romantic expressivists (Taylor 1989, 368–92)—a view in which "truth is a matter not only of the intellect but of virtue, and [thus reason] involves not only the discovery of truth but the doing of good" (Wiebe 2000, 358). Yet, at least according to the standard view, such an understanding of reason was eventually trumped by the objectivist view proffered in different ways by Vico's forebears Francis Bacon (1561–1626),[44] Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), and Descartes.

[44] Though see Rorty for an alternative reading of Bacon as an exponent of self-assertion without self-grounding. Along with Plato and Tacitus, Bacon was one of the strongest influences on Vico.

The anti-Cartesian work of Vico—particularly *De nostri temporis studiorum ratione*—plays an important role in the construction of Gadamer's *Wahrheit und Methode:*

> Like his outline of a 'new science'... Vico's pedagogical manifesto is based on old truths. He appeals to the *sensus communis*, common sense, and to the humanistic ideal of *eloquentia*—elements already present in the classical concept of wisdom. 'Talking well' (*eu legein*) has always had two meanings; it is not merely a rhetorical ideal. It also means saying the right things—i.e., the truth—and is not just the art of speaking—of saying something well. (TaM 19)

Like Herder and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767–1835) after him, Vico sensed that the world of human existence is in some fundamental sense *linguistic*. The truths of a linguistic-cultural community are shaped, though not necessarily determined, by its own particular language and culture. In several important aspects, this reconceptualization brings Vico into contact with the CB emphasis of the importance of language/speech in *dharma-pravicaya* or discriminating wisdom, central to the practice of *critica*.

"As God's truth is what God comes to know when he creates and assembles it, so human truth is what man comes to know as he builds it, shaping it by his actions" (Vico, cited in Berlin 1995, 49). According to Isaiah Berlin (1909–1997), in writing the above lines Vico proved himself well ahead of his time: "This was a revolutionary idea, as was his subsequent proposition that there really wasn't any objective way to stand outside of all cultures and say that one society's art and poetry was better than another's." Thus Vico

might rightly be called—as he is by Berlin—"the true father of both the modern concept of culture and of what we might call cultural pluralism" (Berlin 1995, 47). Of course, one might then reasonably go on to charge Vico with unleashing a potentially pernicious moral relativism on the Western world, of the sort decried by Critical Buddhists and sundry others. Yet Berlin goes to some length in distinguishing relativism from the more aptly-termed 'pluralism' that can be attributed to Vico and his legacy:

> Members of one culture, by the force of imaginative insight, understand (what Vico calls *entrare*) the values, the ideals, the forms of life of another culture or society, even those remote in time or space. They may find these values unacceptable, but if they open their minds sufficiently they can grasp how one might be a full human being, with whom one can communicate, and at the same time live in the light of values different from one's own, but which nevertheless one can see as values, ends of life, by the realization of which men could be fulfilled. (Berlin 1995, 51–52)

True pluralism involves the view that there are many different ends that men may seek and still be fully human, able to engage thoughtfully and critically with others. John Cobb comments further on the type of pluralism implicit in the work or Vico and his heirs:

> I have often understood relativism to be the affirmation that every event, every assertion, every belief is conditioned by a multitude of factors: physical, social,

> historical, psychological, biographical, and so forth. This is almost self-evidently true. I have understood relativism to mean further that I need to recognize and acknowledge that my own assertions and beliefs... are conditioned, and I take this to be no more than the correct existential implication of the general statement. (Cobb 1990, 595)

This is, of course, also a plausible reading of a basic Buddhist understanding of the relation between reality, understanding and action. Moreover, Cobb waxes Nietzschean about the implications of this stance: "I do not reluctantly acknowledge relativity of this sort. I affirm it as one of my deepest conviction... It can free us *from* the quest for certainty and *for* a far less inhibited and more imaginative search for insight and understanding." (Cobb 1990, 596)

5.4 Turning Words, Turning Worlds: *Topos* without 'Place' (*locus/basho*)

> [A]ll philosophizing originates from the situation of finding oneself in a world, it is not just the *idea* of a world but finding oneself in a worded-world. (Alan M. Olson, *Transcendence and Hermeneutics: An Interpretation of the Philosophy of Karl Jaspers*, p. 170)

> Word changes are concept changes and concept changes are behavioural changes. (Julian Jaynes, *The Origin of Consciousness and the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*, p. 292)

Accusing Vico of rhetorical overstatement is certainly a plausible line, at least to the extent in which the topical can be viewed as a breaking up of the sectoral and the reach of something really comprehensible that has the ambition of providing a route map of culture

at any given time.[45] However, the conclusion reached by Hakamaya does not necessarily follow. Transcendental realism is not the only alternative here. By reading Vico through what amounts to a realist and essentialist lens, Hakamaya misses the critical-constructive point that is the key to Vico's work on the critical and the topical. For Vico, *critica* and *topica* are not mutually exclusive; rather they can be seen to complement one another. Vico is concerned with the arrogance and hypocrisy of the type of criticism that will not accept that common sense takes its inspiration not from the 'true' but from the 'probable' (TaM 20). Moreover, perhaps the biggest flaw in the work of Descartes is the element of radical disengagement that appears to accompany the faculty of reason. This runs against the principle of mediation—which in a Buddhist context emerges from the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda*—and supports in its stead a de-historicized and falsely universalized epistemology.

As Gadamer argues, Vico "does not deny the merits of modern critical science but rather aims to show its limits. Even within this new science and its mathematical methodology, one still cannot do without the wisdom of the ancients and their cultivation of *prudentia* and *eloquentia*" (TaM 20). Gadamer notes that the key to Vico's reformed methodology is in fact what he calls the *sensus communis*—and that we should not translate this as the banal "common sense" but rather as the more social "sense that founds community."[46] Since all knowledge, and all experience and interpretation, is thoroughly embedded in or conditioned by language and culture, the notion of a pre-conditioned

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[45] See Agamben 1991, 120–25; Marion 1992, 171–77. See also Apel 1963; Grassi 1983.

[46] See Gadamer, *Kleine Schiften* IV.22, cited in Boutin 1979, 382.

experience as the ground of knowledge (and being) can no longer stand. Indeed, "instead of holding that we must initially know something in order to think (with it and about it)... it is impossible to know anything except by thinking."[47]

In short, Vico's concern with language and history, which led, through Herder, to the development of Romantic aesthetics and epistemology, created a tradition as "modern" as that of Descartes, a *counter*-rationalism[48]—not, as Hakamaya asserts, an anti-rationalism. In this light, *pace* Hakamaya, Vico's topicalism has a significant role in the issue of Buddhist ethics and religious criticism, a role beyond that of foil for Cartesian *critica*. The Latin humanists and the Critical Buddhists, like Vico, see the power of language to shape thought and history itself. However, Hakamaya's distinction between language and facts does not do justice to Vico's dictum: *verbum et factum conventuntur*. As Grassi points out: "Humanistic thought was constantly concerned with the unity of *res* and *verba*, content and form, which once disjoined could never be reunited. If the rational element be admitted as the sole possible content of our speech, it will no longer be possible to give it a 'form' capable of moving souls..." (Hakamaya 1997a, 65). This applies to poetry as well as prayer, and even apply to religious doctrine and philosophy. Vico's alternative vision of the place of language provides a useful criticism to the Cartesian tradition. Though Vico provides a ready foil for Hakamaya's Cartesian *critica*, Hakamaya

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[47] Van Meter Ames 1960, 170, with reference to Charles Sanders Peirce's criticism of Descartes. Within Chinese Buddhist tradition, Hui-neng's understanding of *wuxin* 無心 (Jp. *mushin*, 'no mind') suggests, in similar fashion, that concepts are the very nature of mind, and only become obstacles when one becomes 'attached' to them, that is, loses the sense of their impermanence as heuristic 'tools' (see Hayes, *buddha-l*, 02-04-2004).

[48] Though, as Ernesto Grassi states in the conclusion to his article on Vico, "the true history of the humanistic tradition in its anti-Cartesian role has yet to be written" (cited in Hakamaya 1997a, 66). See also Grasssi 1983, 38–39.

grossly simplifies Vico's thought, turning him into the mentor of "reactionary irrationalism" and periodic revolts against critical philosophy (1997a, 57). Yet from Vico sprang a significant counter-tradition which, in recognizing the limits of criticism, the limits of reason, and the limits of designative language not only in purely philosophical but also and particularly in ethical-political terms, can add much to the CB attempt to forge a truly critical Buddhism. As Jamie Hubbard (1997, 83) puts it with regard to Vico, "there is much about [Vico's] position that resonates well with Critical Buddhism, just as there is much about Descartes's criticism that seems rather odd in the Buddhist context."

A major critique of KSP—and Nishida's pure experience and logic of place in particular—is the tendency towards a dehistoricized noetic ground for awareness and subjectivity (see #4.3) which "makes it impossible in the end to consider the 'contradictions' of this world as tragic contradictions; it slants one in the direction of esthetic contemplation."[49] In speaking of Nishida's later move towards understanding *basho* in light of absolute nothingness, Jan van Bragt argues that it "seems to wipe away every imperfection of actual human life by proclaiming a higher standard from which all such things are seen to be non-existent or illusory."[50] According to Huh (1990, 360):

> In adjusting the concept of place (*basho*) after the turn, Nishida employs the notion 'historical space' (*rekishiteki kūkan*), which is called public place (*ōyake no basho*)

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[49] Kitamori Kazuo 北森嘉蔵, cited in Bragt 1994, 252.

[50] Van Bragt 1994, 253. — Van Bragt adds: "I do not wish to challenge the value, the incalculable value, of such a standpoint for religion—*provided that* it opens a path back to a heightened awareness of the actual contradictions, beautiful or tragic as they may be, *provided that* it elaborates this path in sufficient detail to consitutue a norm for our imperfect attempts at being fully human."

> and which has social-historical determination. Nishida also argues that the self-determination of place has a creative significance, and must have the meaning of social and historical determination.

In similar manner, David Little has accused Nishitani's approach to the "*sunyata*-field" in *Religion and Nothingness* of failing to "step down far enough from the lofty heights of emptiness to reach the human condition in its concrete actuality" (Little 1990, 23). What is missing here, in particular, is a sense of the mediating activity of history and culture, and the effects and implications of such in terms of human action, including most crucially the sphere of ethics and social justice. More specifically, both Van Bragt and Little worry about the place of the 'Other' in KSP. Nishida and Nishitani appear to see the very idea of an I-Thou split as being another manifestation of the subject-object dualism common to Western thought traditions since Descartes. Against this notion, Van Bragt cites Emmanual Lévinas (1906–1995), to the effect that "the relation with the Other does not have the same status as the relations given to objectifying thought, where the distinction of terms also reflects their union" (Van Bragt 1994, 254).

Let us consider this matter by returning once again to Nishida's later writings, where the author consciously turns away from the 'psychologism' of *An Inquiry into the Good*, and towards a logic of place that he begins to consider as actualized in the historical realm: "My theology of the logic of place (*bashoteki ronriteki shingaku*) is neither theistic nor deistic, neither spiritual nor natural. It is historical (*rekishiteki*)" (cited in Huh 1990, 361). Although we have reasons (see #4.3) to doubt the success with which Nishida was

able to actually render this notion fully meaningful, it does allow for an opening—a possible extension or strong misreading—of his later thought towards a truly historical and hermeneutical *topos*. Whereas Nishida goes on to conflate a historical epoch with the 'present moment'—a turn which feeds directly into his more nationalistic sentiments regarding the "*kokutai* as the self-determination of the absolute present" (362)—we might better reverse the equation, so that the de-historicized present dissolves under the pressure of historical contingency. Such a suggestion is supported by some remarks of Tanabe, Nishida's earliest and still one of his strongest critics. In contrast to Nishida and Nishitani, Tanabe found the fundamental ground of existence in the world in something he called "thetic judgment"—which he presents as a *media res* between the immediate intuitionism of pure experience and the subject-object dualism of most post-Cartesian epistemology. Thetic judgement, Tanabe explains, emerges out of the "idyll of pure experience" by way of action: "One begins to act, first by paying attention, and then by making images of reality" (Adams n.d., 182–83).

We may also find support for this sense of *topos* by looking more closely at the term itself. Although it is often directly translated from the Greek into English as 'place', the term has a much richer meaning. One of its connotations, picked up by Vico, is 'common ground' or 'place of meeting', and it also contains overtones of "rhetorical theme, community, and common sense" (Lin 1997, 310). Indeed, some translators of Nishida's *basho* have preferred to use the less familiar but also less substantive term 'locus', which implies both a) 'the set of all point or lines that satisfy or are determined by specific conditions', and b) 'the scene of any event or action (especially the place of a meeting)'.

Others, such as David Dilworth,[51] have employed the term 'horizon', 'the range of interest or activity that can be anticipated', which hearkens to Gadamer, or even 'matrix', 'an enclosure within which something originates or develops (from the Latin for womb),' which reintroduces a number of important Buddhist tropes.

Several writers (Botz-Bornstein 2004, 74; Ohashi 1997, 39; Berque 1997) have noted the similarity between *basho* as used by Nishida and another Greek philosophical term, *chōra*. Ohashi Ryōsuke 大橋良介 argues that, as employed by Nishida, *basho* stands diametrically opposed to the Aristotelian substance (*ousia*) (Ohashi 1997, 39). One way to understand this would be to think of *basho*/*topos* as emptiness, understood in spatial terms as a complete lack of substance. Indeed, both Yuasa (1987) and Arisaka (1996) suggest that Nishida, like Watsuji, followed "a general oriental preference for spatial thinking, unlike the western preference for the temporal" (Yuasa 1987, 42). As Heisig (1999, 300) notes, while this is not an uncommon view among Japanese scholars, it runs against comments made by Nishida himself, who at one point claims that the Greeks were themselves oriented towards space, and the Japanese, in contrast, towards time, such that "whereas the Greeks subsumed time within space, the Japanese subsumed space within time" (Nishida 1970, 248–29). Bypassing the presumed dichotomy in modes of thinking, this latter comment helps us to construct a properly temporal ground for *topos* as *chōra* or event-horizon. An 'event-horizon' occurs on the outer edge of a black hole in space, and is thus the point at which time and space verge between existence and nihility. Beyond the

[51] Dilworth uses 'horizon' in his translation of Nishida's Art and Morality (1973) and both 'matrix' and 'place' in his translation of Nishida's last essay (1987); he speaks of the logic of *basho* as a "matrix ontology" in Dilworth 1987, 14–20. See Heisig 1999, 299.

event-horizon, within the black hole, there is literally nothing. As such, "no knowldge of events beyond it can ever be passed to the outside world."[52]

Indeed, the term *chōra* has received favourable treatment in the lexicon of several modern western philosophical giants. Heidegger gave attention to *chōra* (Gr. *Ort*) not as a point in space but rather as a place of convergence, while Derrida suggests that "[t]he ordinary sense of *chōra*, meaning land or country... presents a coherent picture of how the many things may be organized by nature or by law, into a unity that does not abolish the individual differences of the thing it embraces. Given some common measure, the composite deserves a name that shows the bond joining its component parts." Thus, for Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), *chōra,* rather than being a spatial term in itself, refers to a "gathered plurality" that "instantiates what spatiality effects" (cited in Ulmer 1994, 74). A similar notion of place appears in the work of Lévinas. In *Existence and Existents*, he notes that,

> Place, then, before being a geometric space, and before being the concrete setting of the Heidegerrian world, is a base. This is what makes the body the very advent of consciousness. It is nowise a thing... because its being belongs to the order of events and not to that of substantives. It is not posited; it is a position. It is not situated in a space given beforehand; it is the irruption in anonymous being of localization itself. (Lévinas 1947, 71)

[52] Lindsay 1993, 1. — A revised version of Plato's Cave analogy might be developed along these lines.

Elsewhere, Lévinas (1947, 87) says: "The I is not a substance endowed with thought; it is a substance because it is endowed with thought." The priority of the event of 'thinking' or consciousness over the substantial self is a plausible reading of the Cartesian *cogito*, and even fits to some degree with Nishida's insistence on the logical priority of *basho*, from which subject and object emerge. "[B]ehind the *cogito*, or rather in the fact that the *cogito* leads back to 'a thinking thing', we discern a situation which precedes the scission of being into an 'inside' and an 'outside'. Transcendence is not the fundamental movement of the ontological adventure; it is founded in the non-transcendence of position" (100).

Chapter 6

RADICAL CONTINGENCY AND COMPASSION

> In its 'golden age' and today, Zen has been best known for its unique instrumental rhetoric, its own counterclaims notwithstanding... [in the Zen of Huang Po's time, a]ny word or phrase was potentially a 'turning word', a word or phrase capable of turning the mind so decisively that awakening would result... Although language 'lulled us to sleep' in the first place, it can also wake us up.
>
> (Dale Wright, *Philosophical Meditations on Zen Buddhism*, pp. 82, 85, 99)

> Given the various social stances and political actions that have been taken in the name of compassion, perhaps we are compelled to conclude that while the construct of compassion may convey the message that Zen Buddhists should help others, it offers few specifics. ...Without critical reflection on, for example, self-interest, conflicts of interest, power, ideology, and socio-political suffering in light of core Buddhist moral values—that is to say, unless Zen Buddhists were to construct a systemic and rigorous social ethic—self-interest or moral systems not necessarily congruent with Buddhist values can fill the void and grant compassion the specificity it lacks.
>
> (Christopher Ives, "What's Compassion Got to Do with It? Determinants of Zen Social Ethics in Japan," p. 52)

If we consider religion itself as synonymous with understanding in the wider, Gadamerian sense—encompassing experience, reflection, tradition, and aesthetic awareness—all grounded in the single reality that we have, that is, language, culture and the world of meaning created and expressed through such, then we might approach the vision of religion being outlined here.[1] As Martin Jaffee, reflecting on the work of Gadamer, has put it, "Human acts of understanding bear an ontological weight sustainable only by those which come to know themselves in the midst of a meaning-laden (i.e., linguistic) universe." Thus religion conceived here is "nothing less than an awakening to language."[2] Further, Hisamatsu Shin'ichi speaks of his own "great concern" as being "neither the objective pursuit of reality nor even the objective realization of [my] own way of being, but ontological self-transformation through practice" (cited in Abe 1981, 31). Here we see a move away from the desire for self-knowledge towards self-expression, fed through action and experience as much as through introspection. The Vow of Compassion and the actions that flow from such are themselves the foundations of a Buddhist 'subjectivity'. In order to give more specificity to this vision, we need to look more closely at the more specific relation between language, *topica* and *critica.*

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[1] For one, there is a danger that religion (as well as scholarship) becomes here little more than simply being a reflective human being. As Jaffee admits, without seeming to note this danger, "I am not sure what, in principle, the 'religious world' as such *cannot* include" (Jaffee 1997, 332; cf. Fitzgerald 1997 for critique).

[2] Jaffee 1997, 330. -- This point reflects well with Victor Hori's recent work *Zen Sand* (2003), in which the author claims that much of the obscurity or paradox to be found within Zen *kōans* can be attributed to allusions to earlier texts from Sino-Japanese traditions. In short, the modern view that *kōans* are paradoxical puzzles meant to shock the system into sudden awakening is given greater nuance by the fact that such 'puzzles' are in fact deeply embedded in, and gain their meaning from, a quite specific, however complex, literary-cultural tradition.

6.1 The Linguistic Turn: Western Roots

Much of the present concern with language to be found across the board in contemporary scholarship in the humanities and social sciences comes from the so-called 'linguistic turn' of the early and mid-20th century. A recognition of the significance of language for knowledge and existence itself first emerged out of the work of Western philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche, Ludwig Wittgenstein (1889–1951), and Martin Heidegger, and found full flower in postwar developments such as Gadamer's hermeneutics, Derrida's deconstruction and Richard Rorty's neo-pragmatism. As one contemporary scholar has put it, "The turn towards language, the most recognizable turn of [the 20th] century, emerges clearly enough in repudiation of both empty formalist reason and of utterly inward experience" (Gibbs 1992, 57). Nietzsche made an early move towards language when he defined truth as "a mobile army of metaphors," and Wittgenstein took this further with his basic idea of philosophy as a kind of 'linguistic therapy', designed to search and correct the muddles created (largely by philosophers themselves) in the search for 'truth'. A. J. Ayer (1963, 7) has summed this up well:

> For Wittgenstein...the idea that there could be a stock of philosophical truths was dangerously naïve. He thought that people made difficulties for themselves by failing to understand how their language worked. This led them to raise problems to which they could see no issue, to construct dilemmas which they could not resolve. In their efforts to escape form these perplexities they relapsed into talking

> nonsense. The remedy was to trace the muddle to its source by exposing the linguistic misconception from which it arose: and this was the role assigned to the enlightened philosopher. Thus, the success of a philosophical inquiry would consist, not in the acquisition of a fresh piece of knowledge, but rather in the disappearance of the problem on which it was directed.

More specifically, with respect to the relation between language and 'the world', we might say that Wittgenstein helps us to clarify a dilemma regarding the post-Kantian anxiety over whether our concepts (now considered as linguistic rather than mental entities) can ever really fit the world 'as it is'. This is the origin of the (continuing) realist-antirealist debate in philosophy.

> We must rightly understand the fundamental priority of language asserted here. Indeed, language often seems ill-suited to express what we feel[3]... The fact that our desire and capacity to understand always go beyond any statement that we can make seems like a critique of language. But this does not alter the fundamental priority of language...[for] the critical superiority which we claim over language pertains not to the conventions of verbal expression but to *the conventions of*

[3] With respect to the specifically romantic (and one might add, phenomenological) approaches to the study of religion that dominated much 20th-century scholarship in religion, we might note here Wilhelm Dilthey's insistence on "a gap between our inner and outer modes of existence," and his correspondent emphasis on "the dimensions of inner life which cannot find expression in language." In short, '[w]hile expression may be natural, it is partial and wanting in comparison to the ineffable fullness of lived experience" (Penner 2000, 60; see Ermath 1978, 281). Of course, Dilthey here is hardly inventing anything new; his line follows the Kantian "gap" between noumenon and phenomenon, itself a restatement of the Cartesian "mind-body" problem. As Rorty and others now argue, this whole line of thinking is based on what might be called a philosophical mistake.

> *meaning that have become sedimented in language.*[4] Thus that understanding says nothing against the essential connection between understanding and language. In fact it confirms this connection. (Gadamer 1990, 401)

For his part, Wittgenstein suggested that such a question is based on a dubious premise (or, perhaps, a dubious metaphor): that of a solitary (Cartesian) knower who views a 'reality' that is draped by a 'veil of language'—a veil which, depending on one's commitment to 'realism', is either transparent, opaque or solid. In response, Wittgenstein conceived of language as *internally related* to the world, which is to say three things: "First, to deny the intelligibility of speaking about language as if it were externally related to the world. Second, it is to say that neither language nor world is conceivable by human beings prior to, or independently of, the other. Third, it is to say that language-users are not spectators of the world but performers in it..." (Kallenberg 2001, 190).

The last point is especially germane to the development of CB. Language-users are inevitably, and should always conceive of themselves as, actors in the world. One of the main stumbling-blocks, however, to such a conception of the active role of language and

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[4] I am aware of a possible paradox or problem here. For if, as Rorty and Gadamer and Wright want to claim, the distinction between language and experience is itself a linguistically-based distinction, it is not thereby any worse than any other such assertion—thus it is not, it would seem, "wrong," for it may prove to be a useful "mark or noise" to direct (religious) people towards a certain way of belief or pattern of activity. For instance, consider the following remarks of Richard Hayes: "[W]hen a Buddhist parades that tired old cliché about how one should look at the moon instead of the finger pointing at the moon...we should give the Buddhist the finger. Merely pointing at the moon does not give the moon any meaning. It simply shows us where a big thing in the sky is located. What gives the moon its meaning is talking about it, whether in a poetic rapture or in a scientific disquisition." (Hayes 1999). Though Hayes is correct to criticize the activity of a Zen master pointing to the moon by way of explanation, he may be missing the point when he criticizes not the activity but rather the "tired cliché" itself—for this cliché is of course a linguistic, and thus potentially rhetorical, expressive, creative, persuasive 'mark'. To his credit, Rorty has recognized this problem, to some extent, in his more recent writings.

knowledge is the representational model which has such a deep place in Western, and, by extension, modern thought. Rorty argues that many thinkers, even today, view the linguistic turn with some skepticism, for the main reason that it seems to lead to the view that there can be no 'knowledge', 'truth' or 'meaning'—in short, that it opens the floodgates to epistemological (and perhaps moral) relativism. But this, says Rorty, is simply because these critics continue to accept a representational paradigm, which is itself built upon ocular metaphors that have been driven into Western thought since Plato.[5] To say that language maintains an internal relation to the world does not mean that language 'creates' things (in themselves), but rather that language plays a pivotal role in the construction and elaboration of 'meaning'.

The centrality of language to the hermeneutical project extends back from Gadamer through Dilthey to Friedrich Schleiermacher himself. For Gadamer, language provides the *Mitte*—'medium', 'middle ground', or 'place'—where understanding literally "takes place" (TaM 3, 3.B). In short, language is the *Vermittlung*, the communicative medium that establishes a pre-dialogical common ground. Essentially, this *topos* (or *basho*) of linguistic agreement amounts to a shared commitment to the subject at hand; it is, in some respects, faith or hope in dialogical engagement *leading* somewhere. It is not, it must be stressed, an agreement on any kind of answer or truth itself (though it may, of course, become this). As with participants in a game or sport, *a priori* commitment to an

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[5] See, especially, Rorty 1979. — "In giving up dependence on the concept of an uninterpreted reality, something outside of all schemes and science, we do not relinquish the notion of objective truth—quite the contrary. Given the dogma of a dualism of scheme and reality, we get conceptual relativism, and truth relative to a scheme. Without the dogma, this kind of relativity goes by the board. Of course truth of sentences remains relative, relative to language, but that is as objective as can be" (Davidson 1984, 198).

engagement, based on certain fundamental rules (of communicability) is necessary, but does not exhaust the meaning of the encounter itself, which must remain open-ended.[6]

Paul Ricoeur agrees that heremeneutics seeks its first locality in language. However, in order to understand the hermeneutical relation to language, he also insists we reflect upon the implications of *polysemy*, "the feature by which our words have more than one meaning when considered outside of their use in a determinate context" (Ricoeur 1981a, 44). Polysemy calls forth the role of contexts in determining the meaning of specific utterances; context involves an "activity of discernment" by which the interlocutors engage in an interplay of question and answer—similar, perhaps to the Zen tradition of *mondō*. This process (which differs little from Gadamer's *Erfahrung*) Ricoeur calls interpretation in its most elementary form.[7]

The above relates directly to Gadamer's investigation of the sort of alienating distanciation (*Verfremdung*) that is not only the ontological presupposition of the human sciences, but also the precondition for objectivity. Alienation, Gadamer concludes, destroys the primordial relation of belonging (*Zugehörigkeit*[8]), without which there can be no real relation to the historical. Ricoeur argues that, in order to retain the balance between the Romantic and critical, the ontological and epistemological aspects of hermeneutics, we

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[6] In comparing true meeting with 'play', Gadamer is quick to desubjectivize this notion— "the mode of being of play not such that, for the game to be played, there must be a subject who is behaving playfully. Rather, the primordial sense of playing is the medial one" (1988, 103–4).

[7] Ricoeur goes on to note that this dialogical interplay cannot exist (at least in the same fashion) when a reader is faced with a text rather than a person. Thus, the hermeneutical encounter with writing requires "specific techniques" in order to "raise the chain of written signs to discourse and to discern the message through the superimposed codifications peculiar to the realisation of discourse as a text" (45). Unlike meeting, textual interpretation involves a *reproduction* or *representation* of meaning.

[8] This word also implies "affiliation" and, literally, "hearing together."

must ask, with, or perhaps against, Gadamer: "how is it possible to introduce a critical instance into a consciousness of belonging which is expressly defined by the rejection of distanciation?" (Ricoeur 1981a, 61). Ricoeur's answer is that such is only possible "insofar as historical consciousness seeks not simply to repudiate distanciation but to assume it" (61). Returning once again to the fertile term *topos*, we can find within its multivalence the meaning of "a relation between linguistic terms (usually words), which is acceptable for making an inference" about the relation between these terms. *Topos* appears to be one of the most useful 'techniques' that help raise linguitic relations 'into reality', mainly by establish fruitful connections and relations (here the word comes remarkably close to a sister word, *tropos*, which indicates the 'manner' or 'way' in which metaphors or symbols coaslesce into meaning).

Here we arrive—with this hermeneutical *felix culpa*—at the heart of what Ricoeur calls "the matter of the text." We tend to think of understanding or interpretation as a *closing* of distance—a merging of inquiring subject and object of inquiry (even when, as Ricoeur points out, this process of appropriation always involves self-interpretation).[9] Yet, as Habermas has noted, and as we have seen above in the discussion of 'pure experience,' this urge to merge can betray a lack of critical awareness. Ricoeur extends this, suggesting that we *require* distanciation or disruption in order to properly know something. Moreoever, this 'alienating distanciation', begins to seem less like Weber's 'objectivity' and more like Rorty's 'irony'—especially when we discover that the term *Verfremdung*

[9] "[T]he interpretation of a text culminates in self-interpretation of a subject who thenceforth understands himself better, differently, or simply begins to understand himself"—this is "concrete reflection" (Ricouer 1981b, 158).

implies "using familiar forms in an unfamiliar way." In ironic repetition familiar, perhaps even dead forms are lifted into new life not by virtue of being purified, but by recognition of a pact of lost innocence on the part of the dialogue partners. *Pace* Gadamer, then, we must allow for the possibility of a 'happy alienation'. Perhaps understanding *requires* alienation, as a result of the fusion/clash of the 'immediate truth-claim' of the text and the 'lost innocence' of the context. And this applies as much to Zen and Buddhism as to the West; for as Dale Wright argues, "The [Zen] text acts to evoke a disorientation, and then reorientation, of the reader's subjectivity. This is clearly the 'otherness' of Zen language and Zen experience. To be in accord with this language, one must allow it to transport the self out of the posture of subjectivity—out of the ordinary and into an open space where one's prior socialization is rendered dysfunctional" (Wright 1997, 97).

In a similar vein, Wright notes the crucial issue of what "openness to the text" impies not only to Buddhism but to any hermeneutical, here we might even say, topical encounter:

> Openness to the possibility that truth may be disclosed in one's encounter with the text is quite different from an *a priori* commitment to its doctrinal position. 'Commitment' is a form of closure and stands in sharp contrast to the 'openness' of Zen awakening. Many passages in Zen texts ridicule naive beliefs, and insist that one's encounter with the 'dharma' be fully critical. This tradition of critical appropriation goes all the way back to the early sutras where the Buddha

> encourages personal experimentation to test the truth of Buddhist doctrine. (Wright 1998, 38)

This 'openness' is less a relinquishing of all desire than a kind of radicalization of desire in the form of an open-ended, critical faith.

History's claims—in the form of the ultimate authority of written words or forms that stand before us—can neither be rejected totally (such would banish all speech and thus hinder the development of intersubjectivity) nor accepted as authentic by virtue of its 'pastness' (such would require an innocence that would itself be inauthentic, if not disingenuous). History—whether inscribed in memory, oral tales, texts, vows, pledges—can only be taken with irony. Martin Jaffee insists that though "it may be possible to theorize from within irony and even to theologize about irony... it is less possible to bring ironic distance—the simple-minded sense of 'objectivity'—into the center of one's existence. Whatever one *thinks*, one still wants to *live* in a world that is rooted in the real, even if that reality if as thoroughly disenchanted as any Weberian model of modernity might imply" (Jaffee 1997, 330). But this is to mistake the meaning of irony—at least as developed by Rorty in the pragmatist sense. Irony does not involve an idealist disbelief in reality—but rather a refusal to take the notion of reality too seriously as a metaphysical ground for action or meaning. In fact, ironists may be more likely to accept the world, precisely because they are not burdened with the problem of figuring out exactly what it is 'in itself'. Moreover, ironists "realize that anything can be made to look good or bad by being redescribed [and are] always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves

are subject to change, always aware of the contingency of and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus of their selves" (Rorty, cited in Anderson 1995, 172). Here we see a path opening up to take us from irony towards the related but more decidedly Buddhist notion of contingency.

6.1.1 "Beyond Words and Letters": Zen Language as Liberation

> Hence, language is the real medium of human being, if we only see it in the realm that it alone fills out, the realm of human being-together, the realm of common understanding, and ever-replenished common agreement – a realm as indispensable as the air we breathe.
> (Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Philosophical Hermeneutics*, p.68)

Let us return to our analysis of Japanese Buddhist doctrine, and Zen doctrine more particularly, by reflecting on the CB critique of the idea that Zen 'truth' is "beyond words and letters." In direct response to traditional understandings of the essence of Zen, Matsumoto writes that if indeed, "[t]he essence of Zen thought is the denial of conceptual thinking, or, perhaps better, the cessation of conceptual thinking," then "it is clear that any 'Zen thought' that teaches the 'cessation of thinking' is anti-Buddhist" (Matsumoto 1997c, 250). Thus, Matsumoto does not deny the accuracy of the common portrayal of Zen. Rather, he argues that Zen, as it has developed over eight centuries in Japan, has become profoundly 'anti-Buddhist'.

The significance of language within Zen and Buddhist tradition more generally has been a vexed issue virtually since an early period—perhaps going back to the time of Śākyamuni himself. One story in the Pali Canon has the Buddha explaining various kinds

of self to Citta, concluding with the words: "But, Citta, these are merely names, expressions, turns of speech, designations in common use in the world, which the Tathagaata uses without misapprehending them" (*Potthapaada Sutta, Digha Nikaya* 9.53). Somewhat later, the *Diamond Sutra* says "The Tathagaatha explains that X is [in fact] not X. He [just] calls it X"—suggesting that the Buddha uses words, but does not 'cling' to them.[10] Contemporary theories of language, though developed out of (and, it should be noted, largely in opposition to) traditional Western understandings, can help us to see other possibilities and nuances in Buddhist theories of language. It is undeniable that there are very strong apophatic tendencies within the Chan/Zen stream; often, it seems, the most positive evaluation of language renders it something of a necessary evil—merely a 'skillful means' towards something other, perhaps even its opposite, silence (but usually described as 'pure experience' or 'intuition' or 'emptiness'). Dale Wright notes the strange irony in the Chan/Zen admonitions against language use, and reading more specifically: "like many generations of Zen monks, we inherit it for contemplation primarily in *the act of reading*" (Wright 1999, 21, my emphasis). This could be extended: the Zen doctrine of *fūryu moji* 不立文字 is, of course, itself a doctrine that can only be expressed, formulated, amended and propounded via language—and moreover via a language and concepts familiar to the acolyte.[11] After all, "One cannot transcend language; that is, one cannot find a point of

[10] Richard Hayes notes the errors of Edward Conze in translating this particular passage as "The Tathagatha declares that X is not X, therefore it's called X"—striking a chord of 'paradox' so favoured by modernist interpreters of Zen (Hayes, *buddha-l*, 02/15/2004).

[11] "[I]n spite of Zen rhetoric on the matter, and in spite of our own modern romantic and utilitarian views of language, the link between what the Zen master said and his enlightened mind was assumed to be very close. When Huang Po spoke, everyone in the monastery listened. Nor was listening enough. Huang Po's utterances

view outside of all linguistic frameworks from which the world will appear 'as it is'. One cannot think without thinking in a language" (Rorty 1962, 310). As Wright is suggesting, however, the main point at issue here is not thinking in a strictly cognitive sense but rather communication in a fuller, hermeneutical sense.

In trying to establish the basis for hermeneutic universality, Gadamer notes the common experience underlying all human meeting, particularly the dialogical interaction of 'I and Thou'. "We all know that to say 'thou' to someone presupposes a deep common accord [*tiefes Einverständnis*]. Something enduring is already present when this word is spoken" (Gadamer 1980, 132). It is this very presentation of community that makes conversation a worthy model for hermeneutical investigation of any sort. "[T]he way understanding occurs—whether in the case of a text or a dialogue with another person who raises an issue with us—is the coming-into-language of the thing itself" (TaM 378). The I-Thou encounter is a prime example of experience as *Erfahrung* rather than *Erlebnis*. However, we must reflect upon Gadamer's claim about the "deep common accord" underlying *Erfahrung*. Often in cases of human interaction it is only in the *moment of declaration* that the "common experience" is instantiated or realized; only the speaking gives duration to the experience, both the promise of futurity and the awakening of historicity. Proust built an entire edifice of love out of the fragments of "lost time," without the surety of Gadamer's "common accord." Though he notes a distinction here, when he says, "[e]very conversation presupposes a common language, or better, creates a common language" (TaM 379), Gadamer does not seem to realize that these may be radically

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literally evoked memorization, mental repetition and reflection. Those were enlightened words, words which bear repeating over and over in one's own mind" (Wright 1999, 9).

different scenarios; he neglects the *creative* or *performative* function of words in favour of an understanding of language as fulfilling some sort of extra-linguistic promise. One detects a certain transcendental naiveté in the conclusion that in a "successful conversation" both interlocutors "come under the influence of the truth of the object and are thus bound to one another in a new community" (379). Here again, even with the introduction of *Erfahrung* and the dismissal of *Erlebnis*, the distinction between prejudice and judgment collapses once more into the problem of immediacy.

Moreover, "If we look closely... we will see that the very opposition between the literary world and the world of immediate experience is itself a literary construct, one which functions to bolster the reality of immediate experience by tilting the antithesis against its own textual form. In this sense, Zen texts work on their readers to make the 'real world' more real than it was before the act of reading" (Wright 1999, 21). In Wright's reading of language in Zen, language is much more than 'merely' a skillful means towards extra-linguistic reality—language, in its very self-denial, *creates* and *shapes* the world in which we dwell. Let us turn to some traditional Zen understandings of language vis-à-vis enlightenment and ethics, as well as CB responses to such.

We must now return to the well-known Zen claim that Zen is, in fact, somehow "beyond words and letters" (*furyū moji*). This is itself a highly ambiguous doctrine, perhaps better called an epithet, warning or 'performative utterance'. The expression, usually translated as "no dependence on language and texts," was thought to have come directly from the lips of Bodhidharma himself. By the time of the flourishing of Chan in late Tang Dynasty China (ca. 9th century, i.e., the period of Huang Po) its use was

widespread, even becoming in some cases the central defining characteristic of Zen as distinguished from other forms of Buddhism. Griffith Foulk notes that, at least from the 9th century, most channists accepted the slogan as orthodox, but could not agree on what it meant (see Foulk 1987). Wright concurs: "Clearly, no unanimity on the meaning of the mandate against 'words and letters' existed" (Wright 1999, 26).

Moreover, there were at least occasional critiques of such a notion, particularly emerging out of the practitioners of so-called "mind discernment" (Jp. *kanjin* 観心) interpretation of the Tendai school. One text, the *Kankō ruijū* 漢光類聚, goes so far as to suggest that "written words are not [merely] written words; language is liberation" (Stone 1999, 174), and goes on to criticize both the rigid attachment to, as well as the denial of the validity of written texts. The development of the Rinzai *kōan* tradition can be thought of in similar terms—as an attempt to use language to open up new 'ways of seeing' without either denying or assuming it can lead to a 'non-linguistic' experience or reality (see Sueki 1997, 331). Bernard Faure notes that we would do better to understand the *furyū moji* doctrine as a rejection not of texts themselves or language *in toto* but rather as a critique of particular textual or interpretive practices. In this reading, *furyū moji* indicates a hermeneutical reformation more than an outbreak of anti-intellectualism. Yet ('alas', both Wright and CB would surely add) the latter is what it seems to have become, at least in most modern readings of Zen. "This tendency is no doubt at least partially responsible for the eventual marginalization of Zen in China and elsewhere. Inability or unwillingness to reflect on what you do eventually leads to naive and narrow practices" (Wright 1999, 33). The connection here may be somewhat forced; while it is likely true that lack of critical

reflection will lead to narrow practices, it is a further leap to suggest that such will doom a religion to marginality; in fact, a more cynical approach, one for which modern world history would provide countless examples, might suggest the opposite: it is precisely lack of critical reflection which bolsters faith and, ultimately, the popularity of a doctrine or set of beliefs.

According to Abe Masao, "not relying on words or letters" implies a "return to the source *prior to* words and letters, that is a return to Buddha's Mind as the source of the Buddhist Scripture" (Abe 1995, 174). Hakamaya and Matsumoto and perhaps even Abe's mentor, Hisamatsu, who roundly criticized the "evil Zen of silent illumination" (see #2.4), would wince at Abe's attempt to nuance this injunction: "Since the Buddhist scripture is nothing but an outcome of Buddha's Mind, that is, Buddha's enlightenment, Zen requires us to go beyond the scripture and return to the Buddha Mind directly... [yet t]he Buddha Mind can be attained only through our own attainment of our own Buddha Mind, that is, our original nature" (1995, 174). Here, as if confirming the argument of Matsumoto, Abe invokes *tathāgata-garbha* in support of *furyū-moji.*

Elsewhere in the same collection of essays, Abe turns to the Mādhyamika doctrine of the two truths—*saṃvṛti-satya* (Jp. *seizokutai* 世俗諦) and *paramātha-satya* (Jp. *shōgitai* 勝義諦)—in order to further explicate his notion of Zen apophatism. *Saṃvṛti-satya* or conventional truth involes "common sense, ethical judgement, and scientific knowledge, all of which are based on conceptual distinction and are constructed verbally." *Paramātha-satya* or ultimate truth, however, being nothing less than *śūnyatā* itself, is "completely free from conceptual distinction and beyond verbal expression" (Abe 1995, 200). Moreover,

these two realms, according to Abe, are not simply separate but equal: "From the point of view of ultimate truth, conventional or mundane truth, however true it may be in its own right, is nothing but ignorance and falsehood" (200). What seems to have happened here is a virtual coalescence of the Buddhist doctrine of two truths with what Western Christians call the two kingdoms theory, extending from Augustine to Luther. Is this an accurate representation of the Buddhist idea? Or is it flawed, emphasizing as it does the 'real reality' of ultimate truth over the 'illusionary reality' of conventional truth?

Abe remains enough of a Mādhyamikan to be able to admit that ultimate truth, in one sense, *relies* upon conventional truth (citing the specific Sautrantikā doctrine of *vyavasthāpanā*), as it is only in the conventional world that ultimate truth can be expressed. Abe goes on to relate this to ethics: "In order to reach Emptiness, ethics must be realized as 'ignorance' and be turned over completely. However... [i]n its positive and affirmative aspect, in which Emptiness empties itself, ultimate truth expresses itself in the form of ethics and ethics is therefore re-established in the light of Emptiness" (Abe 1995, 201). And elsewhere: "We can reach Zen only by transcending speech and silence, affirmation and negation. But what is beyond speech and silence, beyond affirmation and negation? *That* is the question" (Abe 1997, 24). That is the question indeed. As Wittgenstein would have phrased it: all that is beyond speech is quite literally 'nonsense'. But Wittgenstein also asked: Should we pay attention to our nonsense?

The answer for Buddhists should be no. Hidden within the main trunk of the tradition are a number of the same metaphysical dualisms (between thought and feeling, noumena and phenomena) that the West has been struggling with for over a century. Yet,

as Wright notes, the idea of the limits of knowledge and language to really get to things-in-themselves was a staple of modernist and romantic understandings of religious experience. As a way out of this trap, he sketches the following alternative:

> When we speak of experience that is beyond description, we have already described it. Its distinguishing feature or characteristic is this negative dimension, its being 'beyond'. This feature is nevertheless constituted and structured by language... From this point of view, the only sense in which experience goes beyond language is the extent to which they are not the same—there is more to experience than language. The point here, however, is they are never sufficiently separable that, from the side of experience, we could see how language has run up against its limits, without language already being there in the construction of those limits... One reason that this problem has been so recalcitrant to modern thinking is that language has come to be conceived in too limited a domain. (1997, 70)

6.2 'I and Thou': *Topos* as Dialogical Space

> Stoic logic speaks of incorporeal meanings by means of which talk about things occurs (*to lekton*). It is highly significant that these meanings are put on the same level as *topos*—i.e., space. Just as empty space is first given to thought only by mentally removing the objects related to each other within it, so 'meanings' as such are now conceived by themselves for the first time, and a concept is created for them by mentally removing the things that are named by the meaning of words. Meanings, too, are like a space in which things are related to one another.
> (Hans-George Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 433)

In response to concerns over the place of reason in reaching true awareness, Zen writers took several different paths. One group, which may be most representative, sought an alternative to reason and language in pre-linguistic immediacy, while others, setting off in another direction, "sought instead some form of non-objectifying language through which the experience of immediacy might be mediated. They sought a transformed rhetoric of 'live words' or 'turning words' through which awakening might be evoked. This understanding of Zen rhetoric best accounts for the focus on language in Zen texts" (Wright 1997, 105).[12] This point is also noted by Maraldo, who notes that "[h]owever parsimonious Zen masters may be with words, it is not the case that language is always rejected in favor of non-linguistic action. The point is that, if practice supplies the

[12] See J. L. Austin (1975, 2): "[I]n recent years, many things which would once have been accepted without question as 'statements' by both philosophers and grammarians have been scrutinized with new care. This scrutiny arose somewhat indirectly—at least in philosophy. First came the view, not always formulated without unfortunate dogmatism, that a statement (of fact) ought to be 'verifiable', and this led to the view that many 'statements' are only what may be called pseudo-statements. First and most obviously, many 'statements' were shown to be, as Kant perhaps first argued systematically, strictly nonsense, despite an unexceptional grammatical form: and the continual discovery of fresh types of nonsense, unsystematic though their classification is too often allowed to remain has done on the whole nothing but good. Yet we, even philosophers, set some limits to the amount of nonsense that we are prepared to admit we talk: so that it was natural to go on to ask, as a second stage, whether many apparent pseudo-statements really set out to be 'statements' at all. It has come to be commonly held that many utterances which look like statements are either not intended at all, or only intended in part, to record or impart straightforward information about the facts: for example, 'ethical propositions' are perhaps intended, solely or partly, to evince emotion or to precribe conduct as to influence it in special ways. Here too Kant was among the pioneers. We very often also use utterances in ways beyond the scope at least of traditional grammar. It has come to be seen that many specially perplexing words embedded in apparently descriptive statements do not serve to indicate some specially odd additional feature in the reality reported, but to indicate (not to report) the circumstances in which the statement is made as reservations to which it is subject or the way in which it is to be taken and the like. To overlook these possibilities in the way once common is called the 'descriptive' fallacy; but perhaps this is not a good name, as 'descriptive' itself is special. Not all true or false statements are descriptive, and for this reason I prefer to use the word 'Constative.' Along these lines it has by now been shown piecemeal, or at least made to look likely, that many traditional philosophical perplexities have arsien through a mistake—the mistake of taking as straightforward statements of fact utterances which are either (in interesting non-grammatical ways) nonsensical or else intended as something quite different."

foundation of the meaning of the linguistic expression, then *the linguistic expression must be carried out* to be 'understood'" (Maraldo 1981, 33, my emphasis).

Thus we are led back to the issue of *topos* as a 'ground' for experience—now understood, however, no longer as a spatially-oriented 'pure experience' but rather in terms of emptiness, temporality, language and dialogue. Here *topos* may be redescribed along the lines of the 'social self' introduced by G. H. Mead, an idea more fully developed in linguistic terms by Jürgen Habermas. In *The Theory of Communicative Action* (1989), Habermas, following Mead and Martin Buber, asserts that intersubjective communication—meeting or encounter in Gadamer's sense—is in fact the very basis of selfhood: selfhood is itself constructed and mediated vis-à-vis language, myths, metaphors and symbols. The work of Mead, Buber and Habermas represents an important and significant break with the Cartesian paradigm of the solitary ego in contemplation; it is, in effect, "a *linguistic turn* away from Carteisan subjectivist theories of consciousness, which situate the locus [*basho*/*topos*] of personhood in an isolated ego-self, towards an *intersubjective* model based on the notion of symbolically mediated communicative interaction between individuals in a society (Odin 1992, 489).

Such a notion of selfhood has clear and obvious parallels in Buddhist thought, and in fact a similar notion of the self as 'betweenness' (*aidagara* 間柄) has been developed by Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889–1961), a modern Japanese philosopher who worked on the margins of KSP. Watsuji employs the Mahāyāna doctrines of emptiness and *pratītya-samutpāda*, in particular, to undermine the substantialism of the Cartesian self (see LaFleur 1978, 245). The emphasis shifts away from the self as subject-against-the-other/world to

the actual ties or connections that mediate between self and other/world. More importantly, the underlying point here is that the self is always contextual—mediated not only by relations to the world, but made meaningful, grounded, we might say, in language and communication.

Unfortunately, Watsuji himself, as with Nishida and others of the Kyoto School, was compelled to give this notion explicit relation to the Imperial system of wartime Japan, effectively collapsing the tension between self and other into a merging of self with the 'absolute totality' of the nation-family.[13] Nishida developed a similar notion in terms of the 'I-Thou' relationship, through which "having encountered the other and returned to oneself, one no longer describes oneself by negating the other, but reaches the awareness that both self and other are 'located' together." At that moment, Ueda Shizutera explains, "one ceases to think of the 'I' as a fixed substance and realizes it as a unique perspective from which to describe a given context" (Ueda 1994, 105 n.63). Yet, like Watsuji, Nishida pushed the 'I-Thou' further such that what in effect results is a *merging* of identities, whereby "At the botton of the I there stands a Thou, and at the bottom of the Thou the I." In both cases of Watsuji and Nishida, there is little recognition of the 'radical otherness' of the other, which would allow for the possibility of contingency within intersubjective relations. "This is to say that the chiasm with others can never be reduced to a transparent mutuality of intersubjectivity" (Sakai 1991, 184).

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[13] See Odin 1992, 491; Dale 1986; Piovesana 1969. — Naoki Sakai 酒井直樹 sees the culmination of Watsuji's turn towards totalism in the phrase *ichioku gyokusai* 一億玉砕 ('the total suicidal death of one hundred million')—a slogan propagated all over Japan towards the end of the war. "To use Watsuji's vocablulary, the absolute negativity (= absolute totality) was internalized into the finite totality of a nation-state" (Sakai 1991, 189–90).

6.2.1 *Topos* as Subjectivity

> Self and substance were certainly not unknown in ancient India, however, and many of the early discourses of the Buddha, as far as we can tell, strongly criticized these notions in their contemporary Hindu and Jain forms... Buddhist authors devised various linguistic methods to overcome these assumptions of substance and selves that seem so embedded in ordinary language, and these methods arguably 'inform' the form and structure of many Buddhist texts, beginning with the Buddha's discourses themselves. That is, the discourses or texts were composed in such a way as to evoke a distinctive Buddhist' way of seeing the world. They were designed to effect the reader in 'Buddhistically' salutary ways. Hence, the form, style and use of many Buddhist texts are part and parcel of the 'meaning' of those texts, for example, the Vimalakirti-sutra or Zen koans... [Early Buddhist writers] attempted to put into 'literary' form, that is, the early Buddhist view of the world as radically decentered, selfless, and wholly conditioned, a view known as *idappacayataa* and commonly expressed in variants of the phrase 'when X is, Y arises.' This 'reader-response' view of texts... is commensurate both with the Buddhist notion that teachings are a raft to the other shore, and are thus a skillful means whose pragmatic purposes supersede their referential content, and Wittgenstein's notion that, roughly, language is as language does, that linguistic practices are better understood in terms of their pragmatic and ameliorative applications than as 'true pictures' of the world.
> (William Waldron, *buddha-l* 2002).

Buddhist tradition, *pudgalavadin*s aside, has generally held quite strongly to the doctrine of *anātman* or 'no-self' (Jp. *muga* 無我). Despite a range of understandings within and without the tradition, this is generally accepted not to mean that persons do not exist, or that there can be no such thing as a Buddhist person, but that the notions of human and person, as well as that of agency, rest on decidedly different, non-substantial, perhaps topological, grounds. Along these lines, in Heideggerian fashion, Matsumoto uses etymology to argue that the real meaning—or at least a latent meaning—of *nirvāṇa* is not,

as many would assert, 'extinction' (*nir√vā*) (i.e., of *ātman*) but rather 'uncover' (*nir√vṛ*).[14] What is 'uncovered' in his view is not a cosmic oneness or unchanging selfhood but simply that the self is actually empty. Thus *nirvāṇa* is another name for the awakening that occurs once *pratītya-samutpāda* is fully realized.

Despite Matsumoto's reading of no-self, it is clear that the doctrine may provide problems in developing a sort of humanistic Buddhism coincident with contemporary understanding of human rights, freedom and social justice. Ichikawa Hakugen states that, contrary to the long development of natural law tradition in the West, Buddhist ideas of no-self and *pratītya-samutpāda* seem to work against the above-named liberal principles (see Ives 1992, 93). Ichikawa argues that the emphasis on the inner, subjective dimension within Buddhist understanding led to the development of an "ethic of emotions" (*shinjō no rinri* 心情の倫理) as opposed to an "ethic of responsibility" focused on the results of one's actions in the world. Thus, Buddhist doctrines combined to create an apolitical subject without a coherent or viable subjectivity.

I am in full agreement with Mara Miller (1997) on this matter—namely, that the differences between Eastern (specifically Japanese) conceptions of self and those of the modern West have been greatly exaggerated to great exegetical misrepresentation and error.[15] Most notable is the common charge that the Japanese self is not autonomous—either ideally or actually—a charge as common among Japanese scholars themselves as

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[14] Matsumoto 1997e, 399. — Matsumoto's reinterpretation of *nirvana* comes remarkably reflective of Heidegger's own etymological "discovery" of the sense of truth as *aletheia*. Yet one could make the case that Heidegger's was the supreme case of *dhatu-vada* philosophy, in his attempt to uncover Being.)

[15] See, as a *locus classicus*, Ruth Benedict's *Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946).

among outside observers. Miller follows Thomas Kasulis and Robert Bellah (and, to a degree, Patrick Smith) in suggesting that rather than a polarity of selves, what we see here is a difference in respective emphases—in Kasulis's words, differential "foregrounding and backgrounding." Miller points to the life of Śākyamuni, specifically the breaking away from home, family, and expected social roles for the sake of an individual 'solution' dependent upon the individual's own actions and mental states. These seem to indicate not only a willful self but also, because they require courage and personal conviction, presuppose a strong *experience* of autonomous selfhood (1992, 150)—a self capable and willing to become engaged with others and the world. French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) developed an understanding of selfhood based less on an ontological ground than upon experience itself, in particular one's experience with others:

> The phenomenological world is not pure being, but the sense which is revealed where the paths of my various experiences intersect, and also where my own and other people's intersect and engage each other like gears. It is thus inseparable from subjectivity and intersubjectivity, which find their unity when I either take up my past experiences in those of the present, or other peoples' in my own. (Merleau-Ponty 2002, xx)

The 'self' that is constructed, shaped, reformed, through our encounters with the past, present, and especially, in the face of others—this "dymanic system of opportunities and constraints" (Melucci 1996, 43), may be nothing more or less than what has elsewhere

been called Buddha-nature, or perhaps, *kuśala dharma*. Melucci calls this the 'inner planet': "the point where body and language meet between behaviour and reflexivity" (1996, 69). In a similiar vein, Dale Wright applies Alasdair MacIntryre's notion of 'narrative selfhood'[16] (within a broader discussion of 'virtue ethics') to his rethinking of the place of narratives and stories within Zen tradition, and the impact of such upon the development of self-identity among Zen adherents.

Also at issue here is the vexed notion of agency: if the self is constructed by discourse and contingency, can there be any basis for agency? In response to this issue, Charles Taylor has made the following comments:

> We are selves only in that certain issues matter for us. What I am as a self, my identity, is essentially defined as the way things have significance for me, and the issues of my identity are worked out, only through a language of interpretation which I have come to accept as a valid articulation of the issues. To ask of a person what a person is, in abstraction from his or her self-interpretations, is to ask a fundamentally misguided question. (cited in Ames 1994, 275)

Here Taylor manages to foreground the matter of agency, without resorting to the traditional substantialist notions of selfhood. Though not identical with the 'constructive' social self of Habermas, or the 'narrative self' of MacIntyre, there is a significant

[16] "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'of what stories do I find myself a part'?" (MacIntyre 1984, 216). Heisig argues that, in the work of Tanabe and especially in his criticism of Nishida we find a similar sense of selfhood as a "a moral *ideal* to be brought into being and not as a 'deep reality' that needs to be awakened to" (Heisig 2001, 167).

correlation between these notions, since in each case it is the linguistic medium that serves as the basis for identity and, perhaps awareness.

Emmanuel Lévinas provides us with aother version of intersubjective *topos* that may be best suited specifically to the task of Critical Buddhism—in that it insists upon the priority of ethics over 'being' or 'totality' in the foundation of selfhood and knowledge. Central to Lévinas's thesis is, once again, the element of distance or separation that was discussed above in relation to Gadamer:

> Without separation there would not have been truth; there would have been only being. Truth, a lesser contact than tangency, in the risk of ignorance, illusion, and error, does not undo 'distance', does not result in the union of the knower and the known, does not issue in totality. Despite the thesis of the philosophy of existence, this contact is not nourished from a prior enrootedness in being. The quest for truth unfolds in the opposition of forms. The distinctive character of forms is precisely the epiphany of a distance. (Lévinas 1969, 60–61)

Moreover, the 'situation' (or *topos*) which grounds the possibility of relations between self and the other is language itself. Morover, as John Wild notes, the sense of self and other developed by Lévinas, "means less interest in conceptual constructions and a greater readiness to listen and learn from experience. It will not think of knowing, in the sense of gathering, as the primary aim of man from which action will follow as a matter of course, but rather of action and of the achievement of justice and peace as prior to speaking

and thinking (Levinas 1969, 16). "To speak is to make the world common, to create commonplaces" (76)—a phrase strikingly reminiscent of Vico.

6.2.2 Karma, Redescribed

> The notion that conduct may have a worth which is eternal and independent of consequences is a dangerous one. To realize this we have only to think of the many fanatics in power who have ruined the lives of thousands or millions of their fellows in pursuit of some alleged 'higher' value than human welfare... The notion of having an eternal, extra-human perception on human life has functioned, in this guise, as a buttress to the most absurd and obscene egos in human history.
> (Peter Byrne, *The Moral Interpretation of Religion*, p. 134)

Another way of solidifying the significance of agency and responsibility within Buddhist tradition is to invoke, once again, the all-important notion of *karma.* We have already spent some time above (#3.6) discussing the dangers inherent in the doctrine—in particular the tendency to read *karma* as a determistic explanation for the way things are (*karma* as 'cosmic justice'), rather than a heuristic—and always forward-looking—foundation for ethical responsibility. Roger Ames connects karma explicitly with agency: "What the law of *karma* does is explain the complex ways in which certain consequences arise from certain moral actions performed by the agent. It not only underlines the importance of human agency but also offers a moral framework within which it could be purposefully understood" (Ames 1994, 274–75). Moreover, *karma* must be understood in a social or collective sense, without thereby negating the culpability or responsibility of the individual (see Payutto 1995, 68). Perhaps the fullest expression of the sense of *karma* that is best applicable to a contemporary Buddhist ethics along the lines of CB is that of Dale Wright

(2003), who argues for a "naturalized concept of karma"—one which, he suggests, might be better off disconnected from the doctrine of rebirth. Wright notes that *karma*,

> tells practitioners that it matters what they do throughout their lives, and how they do it. It articulates a close relationship between what one chooses to do and who or what that person becomes over time. The extraordinary sophistication of this early concept should, in fact, be counted as one of the most significant achievements of south Asian culture, and an impressive gift to contemporary ethical thinking globally. (Wright 2003, 79)

In Wright's naturalized karma, "choice and character are mutually determining," or equiprimordial, and thus choices that one makes stay with you, and in fact constrain and condition your future possibilities. This leads to a radically temporal, yet non-deterministic, understanding of *karma*: "The past, on this view, is never something that once happened to you and is now over; instead, it is the network of causes and conditions that has already shaped you and that is right now setting conditions for every choice and move you make" (89). Peter Hershock (2003, 7) has added the following felicitous explanation of *karma*, in which "every event is at once an *outcome* and an *opportunity*."[17] Thus *karma*, as an important subsidiary of *pratītya-samutpāda*, becomes the ground not

[17] In a slightly different vein, but consistent with the above reference to the power of narrative and myths in shaping experience and in self-construction, Richard Hayes has remarked that we might perhaps do better to think of *karma* "as a mythological category that we as human beings use when we wish to focus on a moral dimension to causal relationships. Like all myths, when one tries to give it a precise shape, or when one tries to mix it with science, the results range from comical to intellectually disastrous" (Hayes, *buddha-l* 01/31/2004).

only of ethical agency and social responsibility but, in a strong and significant sense, of Buddhist subjectivity itself.

6.3 Ox-Herding: From 'Pure Experience' to Language to Practice

> To Nāgārjuna, *prapañca* implies verbal pluralism or fiction of language. Vikalpa arises from *prapañca* because human thinking is nothing but a fiction unrelated to reality. The process of human knowledge based on language is a perversion. It is necessary for us to retrogress from attachment to thinking and judgement to the realm of non-discursive intuition. In doing so we face reality prior to language. This is the realm of 'emptiness'.
> (Abe Masao, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, pp. 45–46)

Following the above interpretation of Nāgārjuna, Abe goes on to conclude that, since emptiness is true reality beyond language and thought, it is itself "emancipation from suffering caused by attachment to discrimination" (Abe 1997, 46), and as such is more than simply a philosophical idea—it is a religious and soteriological one. However, he is also quick to point out that emptiness, though expressed in terms of a noun, should be understood as a verb—"true emptiness is *pure activity of emptying* which empties everything, including itself" (Abe 1997, 108). Abe has here fallen prey to the same 'bewitchment' that struck John Blofeld (1913–1987) before him. In Blofeld's reading of Chan Buddhism: "language is continually hidden from [his] view, even when he is talking about it. When, for instance, Blofeld criticizes those who have tried to clothe the Ultimate in words, 'the Ultimate'—Blofeld's own 'clothing'—is not noticed as language" (Wright 1999, 68–9).

Contra Abe, the notion of 'two-truths' that emerges in the Mādhyamika and more specifically in the work of Nāgārjuna has been interpreted in a vastly different light by Jay Garfield (1995). Conventional truth is, it is often said, the day-to-day use of words, ideas, logic, and reason. On the other hand, ultimate truth is the reality beyond these things. Yet, as we know, that reality is empty, so we are pretty much stuck with our conventions. This does *not* mean that anything goes, but rather that we have to take Buddhist doctrines—all doctrines—as primarily heuristic, as skillful means in a strong sense. The question is: means towards what? Liberation of suffering of all sentient beings is a standard Mahāyānist (and CB) conclusion: the Vow of the Bodhisattva taking center stage. It is a mistake (though one looming large within the tradition) to privilege Buddhist ontology and epistemology—even the 'soteriology' of the Eightfold Path—over socio-ethical priorities such as the vow to eliminate the suffering of others.

The above discussion leads us to reflect upon the meaning of the Zen maxim regarding the "emptiness of emptiness" (Jp. *kū ga kū* 空が空, Skt. *śūnyāta śūnyāta*). This apothegm can be interpreted in a number of ways. Abe (1975, 187–88) reads it as indicating, "true Emptiness is wondrous Being, absolute *u*, fullness and suchness of everything, *tathāgata*, ultimate reality," a paean to the plenitude of vacuity that must be countered by an alternative reading whereby what is implied is *the emptiness of the realization of emptiness* itself. In short, emptiness upheld (realized) as a doctrine or an element of cognition must be further *real*-ized in the experience of emptiness in the physical/phenomenal world. Frits Staal explains this with regard to the distinction between the doctrine of emptiness (*śūnyāta-drsti*) and concentration on emptiness (*śūnyāta-*

samādhi), citing a Chinese text in which the Buddha says to Ānanda: "I regard a person who adheres to the doctrine of emptiness as incurable. If someone believes that there is a personality, be it as large as Mount Sumeru, I am not surprised and I do not blame him. But if some idiot believes in the doctrine of emptiness, be it as small as the sixteenth part of a single hair, I cannot tolerate it."[18] This practice or experience of emptiness is not beyond language or conception, nor does it lead to anywhere. "Not only is there no ontological end as such but even the very concept of *śūnyāta* is empty... [it is] simply a designation, a means of communication" (Richards 1978, 254).

By way of illustration, let us turn briefly to the well-known 12th-century Zen parable of the Ox and His Herdsman (Jp. *jūgyūzu* 十牛図). In this story, after a gradual progression through the first seven stages of enlightenment comes stages eight and nine, where there is an oscillation of nothingness and being. According to Ueda Shizuteru 上田閑照, the "direction of seeing through form as nothingness [stage 8] is designated Great Understanding, while the direction of seeing nothingness immediately concretized as form [stage 9] is designated Great Compassion" (cited in Carter 1997, 75). These are two distinct perspectives, even if both are necessary "if one is to climb toward an adequate epistemological grasp of the world" (76).

The parable does not, however, end with these stages. In the tenth and final picture, we see the herdsman (i.e., the awakened self) return to the world, "teaching those who wish to hear that realization is not an otherworldly act, but a renewed and deliciously self-

[18] Staal 1993, 63. — See also the Zen phrases "Kū ni shizumi jaku ni taisu" 空に沈み寂に滞す ('Sunk in emptiness and caught in tranquility; erroneously attached o the meditation on emptiness') and "Kū ni shitagae ba kū ni somoku" 空に従えば空に背く ('Seeking to accord with voidness, one contradicts it') (Inagaki 1991, 213).

contradictory plunging into the world of everyday experience." As Carter (1997, 128) puts it: "Because reality is ultimately without distinction, all distinctions have now become ultimately real in and of themselves" (128). Precisely. But this seems rather different from the merger in pure experience that most modern readings of Zen, including Nishida's 'action-intuition'. It is rather a stepping out of intuition directly into action itself.

Here 'letting be' (Gr. *Seinlassen*) does not imply passivity, contemplative serenity, or an intuitionist/topical merger of subject-object but rather a kind of (critical, non-instrumental) distancing that still upholds the fundamental betweenness of living forms in intersubjective space (Gr. *Öffentlichkeit*); one that refuses the tendency of emptiness or nothingness to collapse upon itself.[19] As Watsuji (1996, 161-2) concludes: "Society can arise only between one subject and another in and through practical communication and, hence, through dialogue, communication, and transportation."

6.4 Ethics in Light of Radical Contingency

> A philosophy that forces itself to see contingency behind necessity also distinguishes nothingness behind reality. A philosophy of contingency does not simply see "what there is" but forces itself to be surprised at what it can trace back to nothing other than contingency... Reality is no static phenomenon that appears inside a present "actuality": it is dynamized through the negation of time as a necessary consecution of past, present and future elements.... [Moreover, within Buddhism] we have the possibility of being liberated from karma through an act of personal choice. However, this idea of "liberation" is strictly linked to the realization of time and history (thus the karma itself) as a dynamic quality that is composed of past, present, and future.
>
> (Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, *Place and Dream: Japan and the Virtual*, p. 56)

[19] See Habermas 1991, for a extended discussion of the meaning of *Öffentlichkeit.*

Dale Wright locates the radicality of Buddhism not in the concepts of emptiness or *nirvāṇa* but rather in *pratītya-samutapāda*. Along with a reinterpretation of *karma*, and adherence to the bodhisattva vow of compassion, it is in *pratītya-samutapāda* and the implications of contingency where a truly critical Buddhism must find its home. Wright argues that unlike the modern European focus on epistemological concerns, Buddhists envision "a systematic distortion that pervades all human understanding. Rather than establishing a framework for the discrimination of truth and falsity, Buddhists entertain the possibility that the frameworks we employ for the process of securing truth are themselves subject to the distorting impacts of desire and ignorance" (Wright 1999, 137).

Huayan (Jp. Kegon) Buddhism has developed this idea in a fruitful fashion. According to Kegon teachings, there are four principal stages of interpretation: 1) *ji* 事 or 'thing' perspective; the so-called common-sense point of view, where each thing exists independently; 2) *ri* 理 or 'principle' perspective, which grasps the underlying reality or principle behind the changing multiplicity of everyday phenomena; 3) *ri-ji* 理事 or 'relation of principle to thing' perspective, which involves the awareness of an underlying principle in each individual thing, i.e., that each thing is a manifestation of the underling reality/principle; 4) *ji-ji* 事事 or 'thing to thing' perspective, wherin one sees the whole universe as the interrelatedness of individuals and not as some underlying substratum or unperceived principle (Blocker and Starling 2001, 44–45). It is the final stage here that is unique to the Kegon view,[20] and which connects it most strongly with the traditional

[20] Blocker and Starling try to draw a parallel between this fourth stage of Kegon and the third stage of Tendai, in which "the *ji* lead us to the *ri*, and because we know that all is one, we can equally be led back

Japanese tendency to concretize metaphysics as much as possible. For here we have a frank admission of the reality of what lies before us—a reality in which we are enmeshed, but from which we should not try to escape by resorting to some kind of 'beyond' principle.

Yet, as many critics were aware at the time, the Kegon system is not without flaws, not least of which was a tendency to get wrapped up in arcane metaphysical matters to the detriment of practice. In this regard, it may be best to forego an attempt to construct an old or new metaphysical foundation stone for the goal of Buddhism as it appears within CB: ethics and social justice. While critical or deconstructive analysis helps us to see through the delusions and problems of metaphysical constructs, we would do best to state frankly that, while the matter is not simply 'beyond words and letters', it may be one that falls somewhat outside of the traditional domain of metaphysics, whether of the Greek or Indian variety. Here, again, Lévinas provides fertile soil, for one of the main conclusions of his own work on ethics is that, while siding with contemporary critiques of traditional metaphysics (e.g., that of Heidegger), we should come to understand that,

> The ethical question does not merely contrast with the question of essence, as if onto-theological and ethical questions operated on the same horizon...; they are not on the same plane. Moreover, the question of essence—"What is ethics?"—positively and precisely *excludes* the force of the ethical question. It collapses the 'what ought to be' of ethics into the 'what is' of ontology.

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again from the *ri* to the *ji* (the fourth stage in Kegon)" (Blocker and Starling 2001, 32). But this connection is not convincing, since it seems that the fourth stage of Kegon is an implicit rejection of 'the beyond'.

In short, for Lévinas, ethics occurs prior to essence and being, conditioning them. This has nothing whatever to do with a transcendent God or Buddha-nature (which he would likely see as onto-theology pushed back to another degree), but because ethics "does not have an essence, its 'essence', so to speak, is precisely to unsettle essences. Its 'identity' is precisely not to have an identity, to undo identities. Its 'being' is not to be but to be *better than being*. Ethics is precisely ethics by disturbing the complacency of being (or of non-being, being's correlate)" (Lévinas 1969, 9). Here we have an understanding of ethics that begins to sound remarkably akin to the above redescription of Buddhist ethics as *topos*.

In similar fashion, Gadamer's elaboration of the heremenutical circle that prefigures not only our interpretation and understanding but is the very ground of human being mirrors the same redescription in important respects. "[O]ur understanding is always conditioned by a pre-understanding. Without this pre-conditionedness, no understanding is possible" (Johnson 2000, 56). Thus, as within Buddhism, recognition of the inescapable conditionedness of human existence is a first (or final?) step towards a 'better' fit with 'the way things are'. Moreover, the doctrine of *pratītya-samutpāda* emphasizes the inescapable relatedness of all things of the world, including individuals. For Wright, a recognition of this means that "Zen and Buddhist conceptions focus on ways in which human beings can be awakened to their relatedness... the Zen Buddhist envisions an awakening to this [finite] placement [in the world] and to its inconstancy and multiplicity" (Wright 1999, 137). While we may endorse Wright's conclusion that this "reverse image of freedom"—

whereby freedom is less "from the world" than "a kind of movement of relations within it"— could be "extremely valuable in providing an alternative set of images and points of departure for contemporary reflections on our own [i.e., Western] concepts of 'freedom'," we might go even further to say that such a vision would provide a useful counterpoint to Buddhist notions of 'freedom' as well.[21]

[21] One thinks here especially of the case of Engaged Buddhism, which, if it is ever to fulfill its potential as a creative re-interpretation of Buddhism for the modern age, will require a more fully developed notion of freedom, one that is both modern and Buddhist. For critiques of Engaged Buddhism, see Knabb 1999, Victoria 2001, Kraft 2002.

CONCLUSION – TRUTH IN METHOD

> It is essential that... scholars be particularly aware of the 'logical gap' between every description and explanation. To accomplish this awareness, historians of religions must clearly articulate the factors that influence the character of these logical gaps in academic work—the explicitly and the implicitly comparative alike. One such factor is the intellectual *purpose* behind conducting scholarly work. Whether it be presentation, prediction, exploration, or manipulation, each intent may call for a different degree of description as character of explanation.
>
> (Jeffrey R. Carter, "Description is not Explanation," p. 146)

Scholars of religion have to reflect on why they do what they do, and this reflexive process that can never be completed. There is a concomitant danger of allowing self-awareness or personal discovery to run roughshod over scholarship itself. Yet, to say that we must relinquish the notion of pure objectivity in scholarly work in religion or the humanities, and to acknowledge that personal elements will always intrude, is not to give up on the scholarly task or the pursuit of meaning. Rather, it is to recognize that meaning is not and can never be simply a 'theme' of understanding among other themes, and that meaning will emerge only at the point of contact between a scholar and her subject.

In a recent article entitled, "Fessing up in Theory: On Professing and Confessing in the Religious Studies Classroom," Martin Jaffee points to the necessity of foregrounding theoretical issues in any work of religious studies that claims to be interpretive.[1] This approach has been gaining favour in the past few years. And yet there is the further necessity of *pre-foregrounding* a number of issues prior to setting theoretical guidelines. Though explicit discussion of theoretical matters is indeed central to the interpretive task, a truly critical scholarly undertaking must involve an explicit and uncompromising reflection on more personal aspects of scholarship like objectives, motivations, goals, desires, or concerns. (Ahmed 2000; Kripal 2000, 14–19)

This study does not propose to uncover any fundamental 'truths' about Buddhism in general or Zen more particularly—the Critical Buddhists whose work is interpreted here

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[1] "I assume that one indispensable imperative that distinguishes thinking in university classrooms from thinking on bar stools or in living rooms is precisely the obligation to become aware of the interpretive commitments which shape the way we understand whatever it is we deem worth knowing" (Jaffee 1997, 327). This formulation might well stand as a basic motto for one of the main tasks of criticism itself—asking: How do we come to think what we think?

do not uncover any such truths about Buddhism either. What Hakamaya and Matsumoto do best in their own work on this matter is highlight the possible fruitfulness of using new combinatory lenses to view Buddhism and Zen. Of course, even the newness of the lenses is itself a debatable issue. Shaking the tree of modern Buddhist thought, and of CB more particularly, is important in order to see what falls, and whether it is edible.

A thorough investigation of criticalism in terms of scholarship and religion itself can benefit not only Zen and Japanese Buddhist understanding, it can also contribute to Western philosophy and comparative studies more generally. A new, reformulated vocabulary or way of speaking might help us to live in different and better ways. The vision of the Critical Buddhists is unabashedly critical in the broadest sense of serving to problematize our common-sense assumptions and cultural stereotypes about ourselves as well as others. Japan in the 20th century, especially after World War II, became a nation neither fully Eastern nor Western, and thus emerged as an early prototype for the shape of an increasing number of nations in the next century. Other nations have not experienced the same massive cultural transformations imposed partly from outside. In the cases of India, China, and much of the Middle East, the influx of modern Western culture has been tempered in a more rigid, often state-controlled, fashion.

Comparative scholars have come to an impasse in their field, forced to choose between universalists who attempt to establish a firm connection between cultures and faiths, often in order to combat the rising tide of the twin evils of fundamentalism and secular consumerism; and isolationists who insist that, given the cultural and linguistic boundaries separating the world's belief-systems, we can never hope to draw anything

fruitful out of comparative study and must be content with deeper and deeper analysis of specific traditions. As Ben-Ami Scharfstein's writes, "The whole discussion for and against the possibility of comparative philosophy flies in the face of the history of thought. For the truth is that actual contacts have been made and influences exerted by cultures that might have been supposed to be incompatible" (Scharfstein 1978, 35). Yet problems remain, not least concerning the danger of comparative studies lapsing into a "dialogue of accommodation." As Hakamaya puts it,

> The 'Kyoto School', which touts an indigenous East Asian ethos of original enlightenment tinged with German Idealism, is little more than another attempt to peddle a vision of Japanese uniqueness to the people of Japan. Nishitani Keiji, who sailed through the last great world war without a hint of self-reflection, became the dean of the Kyoto School and continued to extol a Buddhist 'satori' of direct experience. Christians have stood in constant awe of Nishitani and sought dialogue with him, usually resulting in [a] sort of 'East-West dialogue of accomodation'.[2]

If 21st-century scholarship is to have relevance, it has to take risks, and has to be up front about admitting these risks. This is especially true of comparative work, which always has something of the fictional about it. "We invent religious cultures rather than describing them. We are writing fiction—hopefully, true fiction" (Isischei 1998, 379–90). As Mario Bunge (cited in Krymbowski & Martin 2000, 195) puts it: "The best grasp of

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[2] Hakamaya 1997a, 78. See also Heidegger 1957.

reality is not obtained by respecting fact and avoiding fiction but by vexing fact and controlling fiction"—for the simple reason that 'fact' is often not so 'factual' as may first appear. Both Russell McCutcheon (for religious studies) and Richard Rorty (for philosophy) advocate the practice of 'redescription' on the part of the critical scholar. For McCutcheon (2000, 207), this is a way of attending to "all human efforts to construct a place beyond criticism, then to equate particular instances of human society and culture with the 'place beyond criticism'."

7.1 The Dismissal of Critical Buddhism

Critical Buddhism is now decidedly 'out of fashion,' even for Hakamaya and Matsumoto themselves—the latter having recently and very publically announced his 'divorce' from the former. Even in its brief heyday, the fuss was confined not only to the rarefied air of the academy, but to a very small part of such—Japanese and a handful of Western buddhologists, plus a few interested philosophers. This is all true. While a purely analytic undertaking would indeed be beside the point, one that is synthetic and constructive[3] can be fruitful, as it allows CB to touch upon a number of larger and living debates. As it stands, CB is, to employ a term used by David Burton (2004, 79) to describe other facets of Buddhist thought, "philosophically underdetermined"—in the sense that the arguments, even when reaching into textual minutiae, rest upon a number of philosophical

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[3] It has recently come to my attention that Amod Lele, a doctoral student at Harvard University, has proposed a new subfield entitled Constructive Buddhism. Lele's concerns overlap to a great extent with mine, though there are some differences. See Lele 2004.

assumptions that are neither argued for nor clearly stated. Other alternatives, further reconceptualizations, potentially fertile redescriptions—all this is a most important task today, and the issues have ramifications beyond the merely theoretical. The form of Buddhism presented by the Critical Buddhists privileges *praxis* while attempting to retain certain core doctrines like *anātman* (no-self) and *pratītya-samutpāda* (equiprimordiality). Thus, on one level, a familiar tension arises between might be loosely termed 'faith' and 'works'. This tension at the root of many attempts to provide foundation for a religious ethics can never be disconnected from the long-standing question of the place of reason and discrimination in religion and in the attempt to live the 'good life'. At the same time, with regard to recent movements in both West and East that go under the general label of Engaged Buddhism, I would like to suggest that the provision of a solid theoretical base, rooted in both Buddhist tradition and contemporary thought, is absolutely imperative if these movements are to survive and advance.

Far from being an unbroken tradition of Cartesian rationality, the various 'minority' traditions of the West, extending from Renaissance humanism[4] and romanticism, down to movements such as existentialism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and critical theory, have all questioned a steadfast reliance upon knowledge as *sola ratio*. As Gadamer puts it, "It has always been known that the possibilities of rational proof and abstraction do not fully exhaust the sphere of knowledge. Hence Vico's appeal to the *sensus communis* belongs... in a wider context that goes right back to antiquity and whose continued effect into the present day is our theme" (TaM 23–24). At the same time, there

have been a number of reform and counter-movements in the Chinese and Japanese Buddhist traditions as well, many of which have called for a redressing of what often appears to be a skewed imbalance of reason and intuition. Such a recognition of the counter-traditions of knowledge and faith in the West and the East allows for a less dichotomous understanding, and thus a deeper awareness of the complexity of such traditions, which will in turn contribute to a new paradigm for comparative studies.

The work of CB can be conceived in terms of an analysis of reason, language and the understanding of such as religious tools, specifically with respect to developing a critical basis for religious ethics. According to Matsumoto and Hakamaya, the Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition as a whole, and Japanese Zen in particular, has, by and large, forestalled the possibility of talking about truth: "The denigration of language and rational thought implicit in much of the Buddhist tradition has led to an erasure of the critical discrimination of truth that is the heart of Buddhist realization and of social justice" (Swanson 1997, vii). One important issue at stake in this assertion is whether Buddhist realization and social justice are necessarily correlative. If they are not, what exactly is the relation between Buddhist 'truth' and Buddhist 'ethics'? In Richard Rorty's terms,[5] what this boils down to is not so much a matter of discovering the truth of these terms but rather of trying to make clear what we mean when we use words like 'suffering', 'enlightenment'

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[4] See Ernesto Grassi, quoted #5.4 in footnote.

[5] The clearest statement of Rorty's ideas can be found in the essay entitled "A World without Substances and Essences" (1999). Rorty's 'neopragmatism' has a lot to say to CB, and not merely because of a striking cross-language coincidence of rhetorical styles, as noted by Thompson (1998, 232) in his review of Hubbard and Swanson 1997.

and 'liberation', words that are particularly prone to confusion in a cross-cultural and cross-religious context. This question haunts not only Buddhism but, to a certain extent, all of the world's major religious traditions. Much of the confusion and controversy that surrounds both the work of CB and a number of contemporary Western thinkers can be traced to a general inability or unwillingness, common to both Western and Eastern religious and philosophical traditions, to conceive of truth (or perhaps, meaning) as fully human, ungrounded by anything 'beyond'.

> Our inclination to assume that all sorts of entities in the world—people, ideas, objects, institutions—have a deep structural essence upon which various causal factors operate is deep-seated. This is true of many Buddhists as well, in spite of the fact that this tradition was initiated on premises that mitigate against this view and, moreover, in spite of the fact that forceful critiques of essentialism are found throughout the Buddhist canon. (Wright 1997, 144)

In this respect religion can be viewed, first and foremost, as an "open and fluid set of discursive, practical and social strategies for negotiating person and place in an intercultural world."[6] Such an approach allows us to focus on the specific historical and political ways by which human beings deal with and put into practice—both individually and socially—various expressions of things like transcendence, enlightenment, salvation, reality and 'the good'. Rather than see culture or religion as some sort of highly efficient

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[6] Chidester 2000, 433; see also Chidester 1991, 4–5.

and integrated mechanism for establishing meaning, order and legitimacy, we should always be aware of the fact that culture(s) and religion(s) are more akin to heaps of rubbish or a hotch-potch of multiform elements caught in an intricate feedback loop.[7] Interpreting religion vis-à-vis the twin poles of nominization and legitimation requires a recognition of what Robert Bellah refers to as the "tragedy of religion": "Every religion seeks to proclaim a truth which transcends the world, but is enmeshed in the very world it desires to transcend. Every religion seeks to re-make the world in its own image, but is always to some extent remade in the image of the world.... [Religion] seeks to transcend the human but it is human, all too human." (Bellah 1957, 197)

7.2 Comparativism as Cultural Critique

> I suspect that the most interesting results of comparative religion in the next generation will result from investigating the socially and politically embodied forms of religion which have been neglected by the classical religionists.
>
> (W. E. Paden, "Elements of a New Comparativism," p. 13)

Critical Buddhism and insights from modern Japanese thought traditions broaden and deepen the insights of Western hermeneutical theory. Given the debt owed by CB as well as their philosophical foes and forebears in KSP to Western thinkers like Descartes,

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[7] "Man is biologically predestined to construct and to inhabit a world with others. This world becomes for him the dominant and definitive reality. Its limits are set by nature, but once constructed, this world acts back upon nature. In the dialectic between nature and the socially constructed world the human organism itself is transformed. In this same dialectic man produces reality and thereby produces himself" (Berger 1966, 183). See also Talal Asad, whose critique of Clifford Geertz emphasizes the loose and unpredictable relationship between symbolic and social systems (Asad 1993, 27–54).

Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Heidegger, their attempt to borrow, reinterpret and utilize for their own purposes Western philosophical concepts like *critica* and *topica* provides a 'cross-platform' approach that is not only inevitable, but indeed necessary.

"Comparative philosophy is not really a comparison of philosophies... it is itself a kind of philosophy" (Bahm 1977, x)—better, a kind of *constructive hermeneutics.* While others (e.g., Paden 1996) have contrasted comparativism with socio-historical, cognitive, and hermeneutic approaches, comparativism emerges from the basic process of comparison as "a fundamental cognitive property" (Lawson 1996, 32). As such, comparativism is an essential and inescapable element in any descriptive, analytical, or interpretive study. But comparison, Thomas Lawson aptly remarks, can be better or worse, for comparison is only as good as its theoretical support: "There has never been anything wrong with the activity of comparing... What is at stake is the theoretical framework in which it occurs and which underwrites its specific operations" (Lawson 1996, 34–35). W. E. Paden develops the notion of 'loose' comparativism, in which "Comparative patterns are not fixed archetypes for carrying the connotation of timeless values or meanings which are simply replicated in historical material, but rather are refinable concepts for uncovering, sorting out, and testing selected commonalities and differences between religious expressions" (Paden 1996a, 7-8, 12-13). In this way comparative patterns are themselves always open to change and reformulation—just as are models within the natural sciences

Perhaps the single-most debilitating theoretical paradigm for past comparative studies and for the study of religion more generally has been the universalist-progressivist

model inherited from Eliadean premises. (Paden 1996a, 13) There is, at one level, a psychological-political aspect to this approach. "This move from the fact that any pair of the great Ways have commonalities to the affirmation of a single common ground of all of them is not supported by evidence. It expresses instead a deep need on the part of many people to believe that 'religion' has an essence such that all religious people can be seen to be engaged in a common enterprise."[8] But there is also a philosophical issue. The debate on whether a general and (thus) comparative study of religion is possible and how it could be pursued has been debilitated by ontological confusions of the positivist and inductivist sort, as a result of which "an unholy alliance was formed between the metaphysical realism of the religious religionists and the conceptual realism of positivist, historical scholars" (Jensen 1993, 115). Thus, the problem with comparative studies in the past is largely a problem of the theoretical framework for comparison, which has been and continues to be a 'realist' one. Archie Bahm, for instance, claims comparative philosophy's greatest boon will be the creation of "a world philosophy to which all can subscribe" (Bahm 1976, ix). Even leaving aside the massive assumption that non-academics—let alone non-philosophers within the academy—are in need of a philosophy by which to live, the notion that it would be better if we all shared a universal philosophy is highly questionable. There is perhaps no more depressing fate for humankind than for us all to believe in the same things. Much more important is that we have access to as many ways as possible to talk

[8] Cobb 1990, 606. — Cobb goes on to say that while such an approach is naive at best, it is "paternalistic" or "imperialistic" at worst: "For my part I fail to see the gain involved in offending everyone for the sake of an elusive mutuality" (1990, 607; see Hakamaya 1997a, 78; Heidegger 1957).

about and consider problems and issues. In his comprehensive study of KSP, James Heisig says:

> If we assume, at least for the sake of argument, that philosophy needs a world forum in which Europe and the Americas do not enjoy privilege of place; that the time has come for the west to accept as part of its philosophical inheritance ideas that have flourished in non-western cultures but foundered in the west; that the age of isolating traditional eastern thought from the full weight of western criticism is drawing to an end; and that these were precisely the assumptions of the Kyoto School thinkers; then one has to conclude that they belong to that tradition of philosophy in-the-making more properly than any leading movement in western or eastern philosophy of our day. Of course, having reviewed their achievement, one may also conclude that they have demonstrated that it is too early to think in terms of a world philosophy except as a general idea to be aimed at in the future. (Heisig 2001, 260-61)

Heisig's view is different from Abe Masao, who writes, "to cope with the human predicament we face in this global age, a new cosmology, not a new humanism, is needed. It is urgently necessary to clarify authentic religiosity within human existence, not only in order to overcome the anti-religious ideologies prevailing in our societies, but also in order to establish a spiritual foundation for the hoped-for unified world" (Abe 1985, xxii). Such

a drive for a universal cosmology cannot replace the need for new 'humanisms' culled from the various belief systems or cosmologies that we now possess.

Comparative studies should not be a process by which one erases or glosses over difference; rather, out of truly critical comparative work will emerge conflict, disagreement, and argument. After all, as Jonathan Z. Smith reminds us, "comparison is, at base, never identity. Comparison requires the postulation of difference as the grounds of its being interesting (rather than tautological) and a methodical manipulation of difference, a playing across the 'gap' in the service of some useful end."[9] It is time to look more closely at the gaps and fissures, as well as the constructive and symbiotic possibilities, not only *between* different traditions but also *within* each tradition. Comparative studies must work inter-traditionally as well as intra-traditionally. As with the work of CB, these two tasks do form a dynamic feedback loop. Past comparativists have often blithely assumed that there are coherent 'traditions' that can be compared *in toto*. This is simply not the case, despite the fact that apologists and critics of virtually all traditions have attempted to rewrite history so as to project a kind of monolithic voice.[10]

Archie Bahm (1977,8) notes what he calls the three "rewards" of the comparative philosopher:

1) Revelation of "evidences providing bases for feasible generalizations about prevailing tendencies within each major civilization." This approach is most clearly

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[9] J. Z. Smith 1982, 35. — See also Poole 1986, 417; Cobb 1990, 607; and Wilhelm Dilthey: "Interpretation would be impossible if the expressions of everyday life were totally foreign. It would be unnecessary if there was nothing foreign in them" (cited in Clarke 1997, 182).

[10] Faure 1991, 55; Wright 1997, 18 n.42.

evident in the work of two classic mid-century comparativists, D. T. Suzuki and F. C. S. Northrop;

2) Gaining "new understanding of the philosophies in his [the comparative philosopher] own civilization by seeing them contrasted with those in the other." One might see in this regard the work of John S. Dunne (1972) on "crossing over" from one religious tradition to another and then back to one's own;[11]

3) Discovering "that the philosophies in different civilizations have a complementary character and that mankind has engaged, even if unwittingly, in a division of philosophical labor on a large scale."

This third and final "reward"—which sounds more like an a priori assumption than a conclusion based on research or observation—might be called the Grand Design Theory of comparativism. While these three aspects certainly reflect the way comparative work has worked in the recent past, they all fail to sufficiently acknowledge the diversity within traditions themselves, to say nothing of an appreciation of the *uncomplementary* differences between traditions. The first, especially, runs the clear danger of

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[11] In terms of comparative religious ethics, Levine writes: "Recognizing the logical primacy of understanding a different cultural system (i.e., adequate description) over evaluative and normative concerns need not rule out the legitimacy and importance of these latter concerns. Examining the acceptability of one's own ethics, norms and values by juxtaposing them with other, vastly different and not so different ones may also be part of a comparative task" (Levine 1994, 142). See Moody-Adams 1994, 291–92; and Ames 1978, 3: "There is 'more' in the traditional religion and philosophy of the West, but this heritage must be re-interpreted to be adequate now. Wisdom cannot be simply hoarded and inherited. It must be sought afresh. Today, wise men of the East are stimulating the Western mind, apparently infusing it with something foreign, but, perhaps, by awakening it to resources of its own." See also anthropologist Richard Shweder's vision of "postmodern humanism" in which "Going native amounts to traveling abroad or across ethnic boundaries to find some suppressed aspect of the self valued and on public display in another land or neighborhood, which one can then bring back as theoretical or cultural critique. The unity of human beings is no longer to be found in that which makes us common and all the same, but rather in a universal original multiplicity which makes each of us so variegated that 'others' become fully accessible and imaginable to us though some aspect of our own complex self" (cited in Anderson, 1991, 157).

overgeneralization and stereotyping of traditions,[12] while the third evokes the idealistic vision of a united world where everyone thinks the same way. Of the three, the second gives room to specific questions and problems faced within one tradition that can help in dealing with similar issues raised in another. Yet, this stance must be balanced with the recognition that, while "societies or cultures can excel at developing a distinct set of virtues that can be admired even by outsiders to that society...that society will also, it seems, develop the political skills needed to twist or manipulate those same virtues into tools of oppression or dissolution" (Kasulis 1994a, 86). The following remarks of Dale Wright are important here:

> Signs now exist that some form of alteration has begun to occur in western historical thinking as a result, in part, of the twentieth century encounter with the rest of the world.... It would be a mistake, however... to regard this present activity of placing two traditions of historiography in critical relation to one another as itself occupying a position outside and 'beyond' these traditions.... What is possible, however, is that, through the encounter with other cultures and epochs, particular traditions of historical reflection will become in some way richer, more comprehensive, more self-critical, and more applicable to cultural ends which are themselves open to similar transformation.[13]

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[12] There are legions of examples of such stereotyping. One might even say that they form the basis of comparative studies from its inception in the 1940s until this very day.

[13] Wright 1997, 118. — See also Smart 1981 and 1992 for another version of this, and the following remark of Richard Rorty: "We cannot leap outside our Western social democratic skins when we encounter another culture, and we should not try. All we should try to do is to get inside the inhabitants of that culture long

Bahm's criticism of the tendency of comparativists to sacrifice internal divisions in the name of making broad cross-cultural links is well-taken: "The same ideal, even one which dominated a culture during some periods in its history, has been repudiated in other periods... The more intricately one studies the details of the life of particular persons or of particular times, the more likely, perhaps, is he to despair of ever finding bases for broad generalizations about persisting cultural traits" (1976, 46). The point here is quite simple, though generally overlooked: these vast cultural ideals are themselves, as often as not, products of discourse, and one cannot treat them as if they were 'real'; one must always wield a critical mirror at all turns when traversing the labyrinth of comparative work. Minotaurs lurk in the shadows, but they tend to present themselves as handsome princes, pure of the 'stain' of cross-breeding.

7.2.1 The 'Imparative' Imperative

> Strictly speaking, comparative religion, on its ultimate level, is not possible, because we do not have any neutral platform outside every tradition whence comparisons may be drawn.... We cannot compare (*comparare* – that is, to treat on an equal-par basis), for there is no fulcrum outside. We can only *imparare* – that is, learn from the other, opening ourselves from our standpoint to a dialogical

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enough to get some idea of how we look at them, and whether they have any ideas we can use. This is also all they can be expected to do on encountering us. If members of the other culture protest that this expectation of tolerant reciprocity is a provincially Western one, we can only shrug our shoulders and reply that we have to work by our own lights, even as they do, for there is no supercultural observation platform to which we might repair. The only common ground on which we can get together is that defined by the overlap between their communal beliefs and desires and our own" (Rorty 1991a, 212–13).

> dialogue that does not seek to win or to convince, but to search together from our different vantage points.... Each encounter creates a new language.[14]

Blocker and Starling claim that "Buddhism is not primarily philosophy... [but] a religion, and as such has a practical, not theoretical goal" (2001, 46). Yet, there is a trend within popular American Buddhism to disassociate Buddhism from 'religion' entirely—no doubt for some of the same reasons sundry 19th-century Western scholars like Gogerly, Beal, Müller, and Monier-Williams came to the same conclusion (see Almond 1998, 94). Quite often, and usually with no small amount of defensive pride, Buddhism—and especially Zen—is said to be not a religion per se but a way of life or a philosophy, or any other vague term deemed fit. This is made abundantly clear in Stephen Batchelor's *Buddhism Without Beliefs: A Contemporary Guide to Awakening* (1997), where even the title of the book betrays a clear assumption that belief-based religion is decidedly non-contemporary, dated, passé, irrelevant. Kenneth K. Inada notes that "original Buddhist thought was thoroughly philosophical, but in practical manifestation it turned quickly into an institutionalized phenomenon; i.e., the founding of the Buddhist order (*sangha*), which

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[14] Raimundo Panikkar, "The Invisible Harmony" (1988, 141). — In Panikkar's "imparative" method, the process of mutual learning has no end, and is counter-universalizing. "In a word, the dialogical character of being is a constitutional trait of reality" (Panikkar 1988, 142). Panikkar blames Descartes for being responsible for the notion that diversity of opinions is the cause of philosophical anguish (146). See Allen 1996a, 6: "When I try to compare and contrast alternative self-construction, I would agree that I am 'confusing' the issue by 'mixing' different perspectives, but only if I were to retain some inadequate, essentialist, ahistorical, absolute, de-contextualized interpretation of texts. What I am trying to do instead is to provide new creative readings, interpretations, and constructions of texts that are always to some extent contextualized."

gradually added all the trappings of a bona fide religion, especially in the Mahāyāna tradition."[15]

Be that as it may, it is—says Jonathan Z. Smith (1982, 62)—"far more important and interesting" to examine the way a group of people theorizes its ritual actions, than to focus simply on the actions themselves. Particularly important for Smith are the "gaps" which inevitably arise between theory and actual practice: the critical scholar "is obligated to find out how *they* resolve this discrepancy rather than to repeat, uncritically, what one has read. It is here, as they face the gap, that any society's genius and creativity, as well as its ordinary and understandable humanity, is to be located. It is its skill at rationalization, accommodation, and adjustment." The point here is that *there is no pure cultural 'fact'*—everything undergoes a process of theorization the moment it is expressed in language; particularly the highly loaded or over-determined acts which occur in religious life. Not to note this is the biggest failure of Eliadean and successive so-called phenomenological approaches to religion.

The Kyoto School philosophers were unwilling to accept the easy distinction between philosophy and religion. According to Takeuchi Yoshinori, one of Tanabe Hajime's students,

> The life of religion includes philosophical thought as its counterpart, a sort of centrifugal force to its own centripetal tendencies. Strictly speaking, Buddhism has

[15] Inada 1988, 111. — For a concise rebuttal of the notion that Buddhism is philosophy—in the sense of being traditionally non-superstitious and focusing on the goal of unfettered objective inquiry—see Jackson 2000, 2.

> nothing like what Saint Paul refers to as the 'folly of the cross'.... Philosophy has served Buddhism as an inner principle of religion, not as an outside critic.... That is to say, philosophy in Buddhism is not speculation or metaphysical contemplation, but rather a *metanoia* of thinking, a conversion within reflective thought that signals a return to the authentic self—the no-self of *anātman*.... It is a philosophy that transcends and overcomes the presuppositions of metaphysics. (quoted in Heisig 2001, 14)

Takeuchi is well aware of the difficulties faced in actually trying to elaborate such a "religious philosophy": "[H]ow is one to explain this way of doing religious philosophy and reconstruct it in terms suitable to the present world when the very idea of philosophy and metaphysics has been usurped by western models?" (quoted in Heisig 2001, 14). Indeed, this problem has haunted KSP, and of course, any attempt to render this a peculiarly Eastern or Buddhist vision could easily be deconstructed; the point is that philosophy thus conceived in its largest sense implies the kind of self-awareness, praxis orientation and conversion that are often at the core of religious practice. John Cobb complains that "The dominant traditions of philosophy in the twentieth century have undertaken to define themselves as an academic discipline alongside others. To do so is to eschew the task of critiquing the assumptions and work of other disciplines" (Cobb 1994, 129). But for him, if 'philosophy' sometimes refers to the name of an academic discipline,

it also should refer to critical thinking in a more general and wide-ranging, existential sense.[16] As Heisig notes,

> For the Kyoto philosophers, thinking either transforms the way we look at the things of life or it is not thinking in the fullest sense of the word. Whether current academic habits distinguish certain modes of thought as religious to distinguish them from the purely philosophical is beside the point. Thinking is, after all, *seeing*, and seeing *clearly* is the fulfillment of thinking. It is the transformation of awareness of the things of life that erases the need for the distinction between philosophy and religion as distinct modes of thought.[17]

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[16] For a contrary view, see Blocker and Starling (2001, 22) who openly support a distinction between religious and philosophical writings, at least within Hinduism, Jainism, Buddhism, and Christianity. In answer to the "large and difficult question" of how to separate the religious from the philosophical in these traditions, they reply that "religion is primarily a combination of personal faith (felt inner experience) and communal ritual activity... while the associated philosophy is the attempt to intellectually explain and systematize problems that arise in interpreting and defending religious texts." A number of problems are raised here. First, can we really say that ancient writers like Nāgārjuna or Augustine, not to mention modern writers like Nishida Kitarō or Teilhard de Chardin, were *not* writing out of personal faith? Second, while it is true that religion often involves communal ritual, this too is generally 'theorized' to some degree and cannot be so easily disconnected from ideas, beliefs and doctrine. Indeed, Blocker and Starling go on to note that, with the possible exception of modern Islam, all the major world religions show a complex intermingling of philosophical and religious strains: these religions "made an early decision that however different philosophy and religion were, and however much more important, from their point of view, religion was than philosophy, nonetheless philosophy was necessary to remove intellectual obstacles to religious progress, to justify faith to skeptics, and to defend the religion against attack" (2001, 22).

[17] Heisig 2001, 14. — See Hisamatsu Shin'ichi's commendation of the "unity of study and practice" (*gakugyō-ichinyo* [学業一如]) as the essence of scholarship (cited in Ives 1992, 71). See Abe 1981, 26, on Hisamatsu's "Philosophy of Awakening": "In Awakening, philosophy and religion are one, not two." See also Robert Bellah's working definition of religion as "man's attitude's toward his ultimate concern and his actions with respect to it" (Bellah 1957, 54).

Taken in this way, thinking becomes a form—perhaps *the* form—of what Richard Rorty (1979, 379) calls edification, which involves an ineluctably critical component.

Heisig (2001, 38) rightly recalls that the most compelling aspect of early 20th-century Japanese philosophy is precisely its counterculturalism in method, if not always in content.[18] The deliberate conflation of philosophy and religion, combined with the willingness to enter seriously into cross-cultural analysis, allowed KSP to approach old questions in highly original ways.[19] While attempting to work out a transformative philosophy, utilizing the many resources of a vibrant Mahāyāna Buddhist tradition as well as Christianity, they were at the same time free to use philosophy to analyze religious beliefs. And yet, there is a latent philosophical idealism in the KSP approach to religion (see #4.3). Nishida, Nishitani and Tanabe all fell into one or another version of the same isolationist fallacy that has bedeviled the Eliadean tradition of study of religion in the West: "the determination to preserve religion unsullied by the muck and mire of politics, of ideology."[20] That is, they tend to speak of religion (and, for that matter, culture) as if such were completely disconnected from the 'real world' of politics and society; as a

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[18] "On the one hand, the idea of using religious belief or practice as a foundation for philosophy is something the west has resisted vigoruously.... On the other, protagonists of Zen in the east had brandished their irrationalities and paradoxes around like a sword that cut through the presumption of rationalism and protected them from outside criticism" (Heisig 2001, 38).

[19] "Nishida's was from the start a world philosophy precisely because he believed he could understand the west, and the west him.... In his phrase, if the uniqueness of a culture is not seen as a part of a larger unity of the human community, if, in the face of pressures from dominant cultures, its simply sets itself up as something unique, it becomes merely idiosyncratic" (Heisig 2001, 88).

[20] McMullin 1989, 85. — McMullin provides many examples of this in his critique of the Eliadean *Encyclopedia of Religion*, for instance, its reading of modern Shinto without mention of any political or ideological agenda.

consequence, their works lack self-critical analysis.[21] Thus, though the existential aspect is central to KSP, the historical and critical dimensions are insufficiently developed.

What is sought in the method of 'critical comparativism' is the mode in which beliefs are understood in a particular text or context, the way these are expressed in practice, and the relation of such expressions to historical foundations, interpretations and living traditions. Such an approach reflects what has been called discourse theory, in which "discourse as ensembles of language, constitute the text (i.e., are inside it), but the text itself is made up of braids of discourse which both precede the text and lead out of it."[22] Similarly, religious criticism is concerned with *a critical understanding of the relations between beliefs, doctrines and historical actions in a particular religious tradition and/or between traditions, with reference to the larger socio-political and religious contexts and to the larger history of the tradition(s), combined with further reflection on the way in which scholarly analysis is itself made into and performed as discourse.* Religious criticism thus falls between the earlier movement towards comparative philosophy/religion

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[21] "The wider sociological and anthropological context of culture which embraces the genesis, transmission and transformation of the social order of human relationships, work, commerce, entertainment, political power, and so forth, is left out of the picture. As a result of this dimming of the connections between culture and the social order, the former is able to criticize the latter without itself becoming an object of criticism, and the harmony between religion and culture goes unquestioned. As a result, the tendency of the Kyoto philosophers to distance religious consciousness from social conscience, *a tendency it shares with much of Japanese Buddhism*, has helped to stifle the emergence of overriding principles critical of Japanese culture at the same times as they are free to call on their own traditional ascetic and moral values to abet critiques of western culture and society" (Heisig 2001, 15, my emphasis; see Blocker and Starling 2001, 120).

[22] Murphy 2000, 397. — Murphy provides a detailed overview of discourse theory, including its three main sources in a) the New Rhetoric school of I. A. Richards and Kenneth Burke, b) Russian formalism and Mikhail Bakhtin's writings in particular, and c) structuralism and its heirs (Murphy 2000, 396; see Tzvetan Todorov 1981, 3–6)). In terms of religious studies, Lincoln 1989 and Masuzawa 1993 are two recent, however distinct, examples of the application of discourse theory. Also to be considered are all four of Sumner Twiss's (1999) various methods of interpretive and comparative inquiry: 1) formal/conceptual, 2) historical/philological, 3) ethnographic, and 4) dialogical; emphasis has to be on the first and fourth of these.

on the one hand, and the more recent trend of 'purely' socio-historical studies on the other (see Heine 1997, 179). Whereas the former involves the danger of decontextualized and idealized readings of religious ideas and doctrines,[23] the latter all too often falls prey to philological or sociological reductionism, without giving due respect or attention to the wider application of the ideas themselves—beyond the texts and their immediate contexts.

As John James Clarke (1997, 12–13) suggests, here we might utilize hermeneutics to develop a paradigm for comparative interpretation,[24] specifically Hans-Georg Gadamer's insights on the significance and even necessity of "prejudice" or "foreunderstanding" (*Vorurteil*). Gadamer establishes three spheres from which we can best understand the nature of hermeneutics, as well as its claims to universality: art, history, and language. This corresponds to a discussion by Gerhard Ebeling (1912–2001) on three senses of the Greek word *hermeneuein*: expression (utterance/speaking); explication (interpretation/explanation); and translation (acting as interpreter) (Ebeling 1959, 243). All three senses refer to 'carrying across', which, incidentally, is the way Diotima describes the work of love in Plato's *Symposium*. As an embodiment or extension

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[23] Heine remarks that comparative studies frequently "give a misleading and idealized impression of Buddhist thought by conflating sectarian polemics with truth-claims, for example, or by mistaking bids for patronage and political power for metaphysical arguments shorn of historical contingencies." While the general point is well-taken, Heine seems to present here an idealized understanding of things like 'sectarian polemics' and 'truth claims'. Can such be so easily distinguished? Here, at least, the dichotomies are not so straightforward as Heine seems to assume. Who's to say that bids for 'political power' cannot also be 'metaphysical arguments'?

[24] Clarke notes three stages of East-West philosophical encounter: 1) universalism—characterized by the search, from Leibniz through Huxley to the 1949 East-West Philosophers' Conference in Hawai'i, for a *philosophia perennis*; 2) comparative; and 3) hermeneutical. The last, he says, "goes beyond the earlier goals of comparative studies by seeking more explicitly to engage the East in philosophical argument, and by developing a more reflective and self-critical stance, therefore drawing such studies into contemporary debates about language and the limits of philosophical discourse" (1997, 125).

of *metapherein*, hermeneutics, at least in classical understanding, reveals itself as more art (*technê*) than science (*epistêmê*). Yet the Greeks, for the most part, tended to view the work of the poet and hermeneut in terms of a 'translation' or carrying across of inner thoughts into externalized language, thus perpetuating and reaffirming a commitment to the duality of *dianoia—hermeneia.* As Jean Grondin (1994, 21) notes, this reached an apex in the Stoic distinction between the *logos prophorikos* and the *logos endiothetos* (between uttered and inward *logos*). Unsurprisingly, there is little conception here of the notion of speech, poetry, or language as *creating* thoughts and images.

7.2.2 Interpretation as Practice

> There is no data for religion. Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy. For this reason, the student of religion, and most particularly the historian of religion, must be relentlessly self-conscious. Indeed, this self-consciousness constitues his primary exercise, his foremost object of study.
> (Jonathan Z. Smith, *Imagining Religion*, p. xi)

Already in Plato we see echoes of the double role of the interpreter—as both *hermêneutikos* or *prophêtikos.* The former term designates the figure who *receives* direct inspiration from the divine and communicates it to others, in a sort of divine-demonic mania, and the latter he who *explains* the words of the divinely inspired person. As Grondin notes, in spite of some ambiguity, the sense of *mediation* is retained in both cases. "The mediatory function of the hermeneutic led antiquity to make an etymological linkage between the semantic family of *hermeneus* and the mediator-god Hermes. This connection

is probably more plausible than true, and philologists today regard it with almost universal skepticism. Yet a better etymology is till to be found, and none that has met with consensus."[25]

Communication is the *nec plus ultra* of hermeneutics, but we might be advised to reflect upon the German *Vermittlung* as a polysemic term, implying as it does 'mediation' as well as 'communication'—the sense of total human engagement that produces or in which is produced a 'new' reality. Externalization, one might say, becomes the means to 'truth', thus paving the way for a constructivist and potentially non-foundationalist metaphysics, or perhaps even a rejection of metaphysics in favour of ethics as the basis for critical philosophy. Thus, though the hermeneutical task is primarily one of interpretation, interpretation always already implies consideration of mediation and communication. In any work of interpretation, context is key, because concepts "are not part of free-floating philosophical discourse, but socially, historically, and locally rooted, and must be explained in terms of those realities" (Hobsbawm 1990, 9). More than anything, hermeneutics is 'embedded thinking' of a sort that is frequently, though not always correctly, contrasted with Cartesian rationalism based on a separated ego-consciousness. Moreover, a hermeneutically inclined religious criticism, while critical-analytical, is also creative-persuasive, partly as a result of the realization that true criticism must be world-

[25] Grondin 1994, 22. — Grondin displays unapologetic disdain with what he views as folk etymology at work. A better Heideggerian would be less skeptical on this matter. This signals the demythological impetus behind Grondin's own work, such that the striking poetic correlation leaves him cold and somewhat disconcerted.

building as well as world-destroying,[26] and partly out of a recognition that comparative work must be willing to take risks.[27] As Clifford Geertz put it, "Religion is sociologically interesting not because, as vulgar positivism would have it..., it describes the social order (which, in so far as it does, it does not only very obliquely but very incompletely), but because, like environment, political power, wealth, jural obligations, personal affection, and a sense of beauty, it shapes it."[28] This shaping is not, to be sure, confined to the *objects* of study, but very much comes into play with respect to the *practice* of scholarship itself.

A practice-oriented form of hermeneutics is not found simply in modern Western tradition, but has distinct parallels within East Asian and Buddhist scholarship prior to the modern period. Indeed, according to Charles Muller (2003, 2), along with "essence-function" and "interpenetration," "study-as-practice"—interpretive scholarship which must be fully absorbed and lived in order to be meaningful—is one of the key themes underlying East Asian religious and philosophical thought from a very early period, including Taoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism.

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[26] In terms of the biblical "destruction and edification" (*destruam et aedificabo*; see Deut. 32:39; Jeremiah 50, 51). See also Heidegger 1982, 29; Johnson 2000, 1.

[27] "We are ready to pursue new goals in comparative philosophy and to bring comparative philosophy into the mainstream of *creative* thought—East and West..." (Deutsch, 1968, ix).

[28] Geertz 1996, 35–36. — Geertz, however, locates this 'creative' aspect squarely within religion, as opposed to philosophy, whose task seems to be confined to 'interpretation' (1966,40). Contrariwise we find Gadamer's reiteration of Goethe's dictum that: "Difficult though it might be to detect it, a certain polemical

7.3 Critical Scholarship as a Vocation

> There is widespread agreement that doing religion is not the same as studying religion... study of religion... is not the giving or bearing of testimony to the truth of a particular religion, or of religion in the abstract: it is not an act of belief.
> (Gary Lease, "Ideology," in *Guide to the Study of Religion*, pp. 445–46)

> Let me begin by noting that the approach I take stands directly opposed to those who insist on objective and value-free scholarship. My standpoint is subjective and value-laden throughout. In "Science as a Profession," Max Weber argued for "freedom from values" (*Wertfreiheit*), and held up as the ideal an objective approach that eliminates subjective value judgments, an ideal in which technical scholarship is restricted to its own specialization and refrains from excursus into other fields. This runs directly counter to my own ideal of scholarship, which is fundamentally subjective and thus forever informed by values.
> (Matsumoto Shirō, "Buddhism and the Kami: Against Japanism," p. 356)

It may be surprising that 19th century German thinker Max Weber feels the brunt of Critical Buddhist ire, given their call for a recognition of reason's hegemony in religion, and given Weber's thesis regarding the progressive 'rationalization' of religion in the modern West. Weber, a comparative studies enthusiast and armchair orientalist, also makes the claim that the form of rationality manifested by Western capitalism has no analogue in the East, and thus it might seem that the Critical Buddhists are themselves Japanese Weberians, hoping to infuse their own tradition with a healthy dose of Weberian rationality. This is, however, not the case. If Vico's *topos* is the early modern foil for *critica* as the basis for religion, then Weberian 'objectivity' is the late modern foil for *critica* as the basis for scholarship.

As Habermas has put it, objectivism "deludes the sciences with the image of a self-subsistent world of facts structured in a lawlike manner; it thus conceals the *a priori*

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thread runs through any philosophical writing. He who philosophizes is not at one with the previous and contemporary world's ways of thinking of things" (quoted in Johnson 2000, 5).

constitution of these facts... and it prohibits discerning the *a priori* element of this system of reference and calling into question in any way its monopoly of knowledge" (cited in McCarthy, 1978, 41ff). The so-called scientific approach relates to what Pierre Bourdieu has referred to as "hagiographic hermeneutics"—a style of interpretation which, posing as scientific analysis, remains "superbly indifferent to the question of the social conditions in which words are produced and circulate" (Bourdieu 1977, 1).

The approach of Matsumoto is more reminiscent of Nietzsche, and even, more surprisingly, certain currents of contemporary criticism such as can be found in the writings of Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. While giving Weber credit for touching on "the heart of the matter"—namely, the significance of values and neutrality in scholarship—Matsumoto takes the German scholar to task for expecting scholars to be non-human, i.e., value-free. Again we see the political undercurrent to Critical Buddhism emerge: assuming scholarship is objective allows for a) an acceptance on the part of scholars of the socio-political status quo, and b) an acceptance on the part of the powers that be that scholars or scientists will stay out of socio-political concerns, thus eliminating an important avenue of social criticism, and resulting in the phenomenon of Japanism (see Matsumoto 1997e, 356).

Thus at one important level, CB is a critique of the entire modern academic system, particularly the division of knowledge into separate and independent disciplines. Hakamaya and Matsumoto would no doubt concur with John Cobb's remark that within the modern university: "The vast majority of faculty take the disciplinary origin for granted

and devote themselves to working within it, judging themselves and their colleagues by their contributions to the discipline rather than to human beings and the world... They are accustomed to thinking of themselves as critical thinkers, but this criticism is rarely directed to their own institution and the assumptions in which it operates" (Cobb 1994, 128–29). Regarding the issue of neutrality, phenomenologists, siding with the tradition objectivist paradigm, adamantly refuse to offer criticism of the beliefs, doctrines, or practices of the so-called insiders they study.[29] As Levine (1997, 385) remarks, however, "Neutrality in the study of religion should never be confused with some kind of politely principled but misguided refusal to critique the beliefs of others." However, what Levine and other secular-minded critics of phenomenology seem to forget is that the critical approach they frequently employ itself rests upon certain guiding moral and ethical principles, which may have parallels in the traditions they study but more often than not emerge from their own cultural traditions (i.e., Enlightenment liberal humanism). Though this does not render their criticism invalid, it is an issue that needs to be raised (see #2.4.2). In other words, a critical analysis must not only expose the metaphysical and ethical assumptions of the scholar but should also strive—if it is to be truly critical—to establish foundations for the critique within the tradition being interpreted.[30] In doing so, however,

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[29] Roger Corless, in article expounding a certain vision of Buddhist theology entitled "Hermeneutics and Dharmology ," (Corless 2000, 96) cites the case of a "prominent scholar of Tibetan Buddhism" who was denied tenure because "it was said, he *merely* translated the commentaries of the lamas...he did not criticize them." Corless uses this example to question the priorities of the "objective" study of religion in favour of a "dharmalogical" (i.e., insiders') one, but a critic could just as soon retort that a) the university system is based upon certain values, which include critcial inquiry and analysis rather than simply reiteration; b) as Dale Wright would argue, in many cases, criticism might actually be required as past of a real attempt to come to terms with a text, even—or especially—on the part of an 'insider'.

[30] In respect to this, Martin Jaffee has argued that, instead of "caring for" religion itself, as sundry AAR Presidents have suggested, the scholar of religion should rather "care for" her students, which seems to mean,

the scholar becomes something more than a distanced observer, neutrally weighing the 'data' before her gaze. Sutcliffe has argued that the true scholar of religion accepts that her work is "but a secondary order procedure dependent upon the primary phenomenon... what is at stake is not the truth and its operationalization, but more modestly, knowledge" (Sutcliffe 2000, 267). Such an approach only works, however, if we cling to the kind of objectivist epistemology such has been under attack for well over a century.

Sutcliffe writes about a "realistic" study of religion that "is not interested in which epistemological system most clearly conforms to the religion as it really or essentially is, but in the coherence, consistency and subsequent etic usefulness of the representations it seeks to construct, which it naturally wants to test in as wide an area—the local, the regional, the national, the international—as possible" (Sutcliffe 2000, 268). This is the goal of religious criticism as has been presented in this study. Religious criticism is, in the final analysis, an engaged, critical hermeneutics whose focus is the relation between religious texts, ideas, doctrines, beliefs, and history—including the lived practice of believers.[31]

Finally, the political nature of critical comparative work in religion cannot be denied. On one level, this can be explained simply as the facililty of making choices,

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for Jaffee, making them into Rortyan liberal ironists—"cultivating their awareness of the contingency of all perspectives—including that of 'religion'" (Jaffee 1997, 336). Perhaps this is, itself, a "religious" goal; it certainly is a "political" one.

[31] See Heidegger's remarks on Schleiermacher's (1838) "Hermeneutics and Criticism": "Hermeneutics and criticism, both philological disciplines, both methodologies, belong together, because the practice of each presupposes the other. The first is in general the art of understanding rightly another man's language, particularly his written language; the second, the art of judging rightly the genuineness of written works and passages, and to establish it on the strength of adequate evidence and data" (Heidegger 1982, 10). See also Maraldo's (1981, 43) plea for a new form of hermeneutics of practice, in which "application is not a separate moment of interpretation, and appropriation does not follow upon but forms truth," as well as Jeffrey Stout's understanding of philosophy as "conceptual archaeology" (Stout 1981, 2).

which is essential to any theoretical work. As Jeffrey Carter notes, "Theory is the organizing principle that stipulates boundaries and defines, not just similarities, but any number of possible relations between description. Furthermore, like all logical types, a particular purpose or intentionality underlies the development of every explanation and explanatory comparison" (J. Carter 1998, 142). Similarly, with respect to the ideological role of theory, Harootunian writes that "[a]t bottom, all historical practice is an act of criticism. At the same time that theory enables us to imagine the framing operation involved in the formulation of any analytic program, it must teach us that our own perspectives possess no privilege over others, since its power lies precisely in the capacity to make visible the frames from which our categories for representation derive" (Harootunian 1988, 2). Jonathan Z. Smith has pointed to the relational or interactional aspect of any comparative work (and perhaps of any interpretive work at all), such that "otherness" becomes "preeminently a political category" (J. Z. Smith 1985, 10). Marsha Hewitt takes this further, arguing that comparativists must become conscious of the overtly political nature of their enterprise. Moreover, though this dimension of power "can never be abolished... it can be radically revised toward a consciously interrelated, intersubjective, and thus democratic relation between the theorist and her/his chosen object of knowledge" (Hewitt 1996, 17).

In the study of religion, the phenomenological or religionist position has been undercut because it seems to rely on a version of transcendental realism that is itself a

Platonist hangover.[32] Within philosophy and more specifically epistemology, a movement called Critical Realism has emerged in recent decades whose main impetus is to develop a form of 'realism' that does not fall prey to essentialism or substantialism. According to Roy Bhaskar, one of the principal proponents of CR, it is also a form of scholarship that is decidedly political:

> Whereas the non-human world in no way depends upon us thinking about it for its existence and is therefore to be understood as an 'intransitive' dimension of being, the human being and especially the social world is in large part so dependent and is therefore 'transitive' as well as 'intransitive'... [thus] because the thoughts and actions of social scientists can affect the nature of the social world in a way that they can not affect the nature of the non-human world, we ought to be comitted to the removal of the sources of social injustice. (cited in Pearce and Woodiwiss 2001, 52).

Behind CR lies an idea that has become something of a commonplace in conptemporary thought: philosophy or any other form of interpretive enquiry "does not consist solely of *a*

[32] "[Transcendental realism] may be said to be Platonic in the sense that the sacred essence is manifested in the phenomenon (*universale ante rem*) or Aristotelian in that it is intrinsic in the phenomenon (*universale in re*). The assumption is that behind the diversity of religion(s) in history, society, and culture there must be something universal—an essence or unity—which is ontologically real" (Jensen 1993, 115). Jensen proffers an alternative to transcendental realism that he calls "intuitive" or "commonsense" realism. "By this I mean that is a fair intuition that there is something real in this world but we also know that there is a very vexed epistemological problem to argue rationally in defense of this tradition" (Jensen 1993, 118). But to admit that there is "something out there" is not to admit to any form of "realism." Indeed, though Jensen criticizes Rorty's "relativist syllogisms" as being unable to defend the "purpose of critcial scholarship" against "religionist obscurantism and existentialist mysticism," his blithe acceptance of "realism" seems to be itself a form of "realist obscurantism."

priori thinking. Rather we utilize knowledge of the world even as we reflect upon it" (Pearce and Woodiwiss 2001, 52).

One of the most significant tasks for CR is examining the relationship between language and the social world. As Lopez and Potter (2001, 19-20) put it, though CR admits, with many contemporary thinkers, that the social world is "concept-dependent (made up of discursive structures)," it also holds, against many of those same thinkers, that the social world "is also made up of non-discursive structures" which may or may not have causal power. The question of the relative power of "social structures"—especially in terms of their causal efficacy, which is, really, just another way of saying their "reality"—is hotly debated among Critical Realists.[33] Rom Harré takes a particularly Rortyan stand on the matter of language and political change:

> It is only a change of discursive conventions that changes the lived narrative that is a social order. Where does political action start? It starts in the everyday stories that you tell, it starts in the ways in which people tell each other what sort of persons they are, how they live their lives, but not in terms of grand taxonomic concepts. Real change, that is permanent amelioration of the conditions of life, occurs on a very small scale.[34]

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[33] Rom Harré and Roy Bhaskar being the two most prominent CR who take opposite stands on this issue; Harré rejects what he sees as Bhaskar and others' "reification of categories"; Bhaskar retorts that Harré is guilty of "social reductionism" and wonders, if causal agency is located solely in human beings, why it is so difficult to create a better world (see Harré and Bhaskar 2001).

[34] Rorty would add that this kind of "local" change often occurs, or at least can occur, from reading books in the manner of a "sentimental education."

Important here is the fundamental constructive element which connects CR and CB. Neither of these approaches can be reduced to empiricism—or at least naive empiricism—since they are committed to reshaping the world as much or more so than to discovering it (see Cobb 1994, 13).

Within Buddhist studies, Gregory Schopen has emphasized an "on the ground" approach to tradition, wherein "texts would be judged significant only if they could be should to be related to what religious people actually did" (Schopen 1997, 114). While this may be a laudable step away from earlier forms of scholarship in religion based on Eliadean or purely philological grounds, it denudes religious and Buddhist studies of any constructive or engaged element, and in fact may fall prey to the problems of Weberian-inspired objective studies. As Lele (2004, 2) notes, "This increasingly influential position investigates solely 'what religious people actually did' in the past—not what they might have to offer in the future," in addition to ignoring the possibility that "many ideas advocated by historical Buddhists... are profound and worthy of serious consideration" in their own right. On the other hand, the work of scholars such as Rita M. Gross (1993)—which self-consciously attempts not only to understand, but to critically evaluate and in some cases even modify Buddhist ideas about gender and women—clearly emulates the type of constructive religious criticism presented here. Whereas Gross describes her task in terms of a dialogue between the three enlivening perspectives of Buddhism, feminism, and the cross-cultural study of religions, the present study replace philosophical ethics for feminism within this dialectical framework.

CB unrepentently blurs the lines between religion and scholarship and also confounds the traditional polarity between 'outsiders' and 'insiders' in academic scholarship. Certainly there is something to be said for the way such an approach can be used against the "obscurantist" tendencies in religious studies (see Braun 2000, 4–5), whereby the category 'religion' gets sucked up into the ineffable realms of the holy and the sacred, untouchable and indefinable.[35] Yet unlike those reductionists who would choose to eliminate the category altogether, and collapse the study of religion into a larger "cultural studies," the CB approach makes religion istelf—or at least Buddhism so understood—into scholarship. In short, CB can be conceived as a form of engaged Buddhist theology.

A number of scholars have shown convincingly that the immensely influential writings of Eliade and Rudolf Otto have transported a "theological/metaphysical assumption" into "a theory of religion" (Fitzgerald 1997, 92, 96-98; see, e.g., Segal 1983, 98; Smart 1978, 176; Smith 1987, 52; McMullin 1989, 85). This assumption, while perhaps 'metaphysical', cannot be so easily labeled 'theological'—indeed, similar assumptions can be found in the very work of those who most vociferously oppose the phenonenological or religionist brand of scholarship. Moreover, the problem has little to do with theology or with the holding a priori metaphysical assumptions (even Fitzgerald admits that this may be inevitable), but simply that the *specific forms* of metaphysical bias

[35] Braun discusses these obscurantist tendencies by alluding to Derrida's "discourses of hauntology," which, for Braun, "subvert a reserach strategy whose aim is to enlist the study of religion as a contributing partner in the pursuit of a science of human life, an exercise that could be credible within the family of human and social sciences within the university" (Braun 2000, 5).

imported by phenonenologists (and many of those who call for a 'scientific study' of religion) are problematic for a number of reasons.

There are a number of levels to this debate, so it would be best to look at them one by one, while recognizing that they are deeply interconnected (and sometimes confused). At one level, this debate hinges on the longstanding tension between 'theology' and 'religious studies'—a tension that has been evident since the attempt to found a secular 'science of religion' over one hundred years ago, but which has become even more critical since the institutional separation of theology from religious studies in the academy in the 1960s and 1970s. Of course, in the Western academy this problem has been one largely confined to Christianity. But in recent times, with the proliferation of Buddhist studies and the simultaneous growth in the number of practicising Buddhists in the West (and among Buddhist studies scholars) it has become a more general concern about the nature of confessional and scientific scholarship. Though this issue has recently been a matter of some concern to religious studies scholars, it is still mired in confusions and often slipshod (frequently *ad hominen*) disputations.

Theology is generally deemed to be the study of a religion from a confessional or insider's point of view. There have been recent attempts to reconfigure theology as a scholarly practice. In *Toward a Universal Theology of Religion*, Leonard Swidler suggests that theology is "simply a systematic reasoned reflection upon the convictions—'religious' or 'ideological'—that are held by one or more human beings" (Swidler rejects "philosophy" as being too loaded towards "ratiocination"). Such an understanding is echoed by the editors of a recent work on *Buddhist Theology*, who assert that theology can

and should be understood as having as its purpose the attempt "to draw critically upon the resources of a tradition to help it communicate in a new and authentic voice with the contemporary world." In the case of Buddhist theology, this means that Buddhist theologians first

> take some particular Buddhist tradition to be normative for them, to constrain and order their intellectual work, and to provide a technical lexicon and a set of intellectual purposes or goals. Second, it means that Buddhist theologians understand their own work to be a contribution to the development of the tradition out of which they speak, think, and write: they want, perhaps, to offer tradition-specific interpretations of or judgments about contemporary phenomena; or they want to develop the tradition's understanding of itself; or they want to apply the tradition's claims and understandings in a critical fashion to lively opposed claims and understandings found outside any Buddhist tradition. (Griffiths 2001, 2; see Cabezón 2000)

The problem raised here, again, is the vexed notion of authenticity—what does it mean for theology to establish (or create?) something that is both new and authentic, both 'critical' and representative of a 'tradition'? Moreover, it is important to note Antony Fernando's criticism of Swidler usage of the term 'theology': "'Theology' is a tradition-backed word and we may have to respect its traditional sense. Aware of that fact, Swidler himself [on occasion] uses the term 'systematic reflection'. Perhaps a new word like

'religiology' could suit his purpose better. It certainly needs a new name, for it eventually could turn out to be a new science, or at least a new branch or new extension of theology" (Fernando 1988, 103).

For all this, much of the debate within the field of religious studies still revolves around more traditional understandings of theology as being the vehicle for the articulation and even proselytization of faith, rather than an attempt to gain 'knowledge' in the more properly academic (i.e., 'scientific') sense. However, to accept this simple division between confessional and scientific or naturalistic is to miss the actual gradations between these two, as well as to ignore the many 20th-century critiques of the concepts of objectivity. In an article entitled "The Study of Religion: Neutral, Scientific, or Neither?" (1997) Peter Byrne challenges this dichotomy, arguing that the study of religion can be neutral without having to rely on scientific objectivity as the ground for neutrality.[36] Neutrality, according to Byrne, while it does not pre-judge competing claims regarding a given subject-matter, does set parameters as to what 'fits' within the subject area itself. Byrne (1997, 343) criticizes the "naturalist" paradigms of scholars such as Preus and Wiebe as being "biased" in its assumption of the inherent "falsity and/or irrationality of religious thought and practice." But this argument itself assumes a distinction between a naturalist paradigm and a "confessional/religious/insider's" one. In the case of Buddhism, at least, this distinction fails to hold. The problem with a dogmatically naturalist approach to religion is simply that naturalism falls prey to the same critique scholars like Davidson

[36] What Byrne does not seem to recognize, or admit (unlike, say, Levine 1987b, 382), is that the very notions of "neutrality" and "tolerance" are themselves politicized—arising out of the same liberal Western cultural traditions that produced academic study itself. As Gadamer and Rorty would say, let's first acknowledge our ethnocentrisms, and then "work them out."

have levelled at its cousin, empiricism. In short, naturalism of this naive sort fails to give weight to interpretation and language as being the ground and fruit of meaning—while critical of realism, it accepts, as with empiricism, certain realist premises surrounding the dogma of scheme and content.

Alongside this, we must enquire as to what constitutes an 'insider'. Strangely, with all the debate surrounding the insider-outsider problem and the emic-etic modes of scholarship, there seems to have been astonishingly little written on this fundamental matter. Recent critics of the phenomenological approach to religion frequently fall back on the classic objectivist assumptions about the necessary distance gained by the scholar-observer vis-à-vis the believer-participant. Michael P. Levine claims that the privileging of the emic element in religious scholarship is often little more than a thinly-disguised "rationalization by the religious that allows them to think that *qua* religious they have something indispensable to offer in the classroom"; or, alternatively, and even more sinisterly, is "a basis for promulgating their religious views and values in the classroom, which many in religious studies think is proper and desirable" (Levine 1997b, 380). This charge, even if it may apply in a few cases, seems overblown. There does exist a widely-held assumption, on both sides of the divide, that criticism is somehow opposed to faith or belief, and thus beyond the ken of the insider, whether she be a scholar or lay-believer. But this, again, is a dubious claim. As Levine (1997b, 384) has argued, "It is not 'anti-religious' to criticize, morally or otherwise, various teachings and doctrines." Yet this critical burden is frequently laid at the feet of the so-called outsiders, perhaps under the

assumption that digging up dirt in one's own tradition is not something a believer—even a believer who is a scholar—would ever want to do. But who is better equipped to reflect on "the multiple connections and gaps between (religious) systems and the societies which deploy them" (Jaffee 1997, 330)?

Even scholars who are not always sure about the lines between religious studies and theology (e.g., Rita Gross), seem to assume a clear divide between an insider and outsider. Others, however, such as Dale Cannon[37], Jeffrey Kripal,[38] and Leila Ahmed (2000), have begun to question this split. One problem here is that, for whatever personal reasons, many scholars who talk about religion seem to assume that it is always and everywhere a deep and profound aspect of a believer's existence, colouring how they live and what they do twenty-four hours a day. As Sutcliffe (2000, 267) and Strenski (1994, 97) have noted, it is wrong (though common) for scholars of religion to assume that doctrine (let alone complex theological or philosophical ideas) are of interest to ordinary believers.

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[37] Cannon (1993, 174–75) develops a "critical phenomenological" program in which, "There would be less distance and less of a presumed opposition between people who are the informants and objects of such study—i.e., religious people—and the people who do the studying, whether scholars or students. There would be a clearer recogniton that both occupy the same world and that nothing in principle prevents them from assuming at times the same roles, without compromise to scholarship and to mature religious commitment." Though I agree with this statement, I am not sure whether Cannon has allowed the implications of such to reveal themselves in his article.

[38] Kripal 2000, 14–19. — In a reflection on his own controversial work on Radhakrishnan, *Kali's Child* (1998), Kripal argues that, as scholars in a postcolonial world, "it is no longer a matter of being either this or that but of being both *this* and that... it is now a truism of Indology that modern, global Hinduism is a creative synthesis of traditional Indic thought and Western, post-Enlightenment social, religious, and political philosophies. Seen in this historical light, I see no reason why the crosscultural dialogue between Bengali and American religious cultures must somehow stop in the 19th or early 20th century, and why we, as contemporary American scholars, living in what is essentially a global postmodern village, are not perfectly authorized, indeed *called*, to continue this important task of cultural criticism, self-understanding, religious transformation, and public debate. The cultural rivers flow on and into one another, and creatively so" (Kripal 2000, 15). Of course, if this applies to the case of India, it also does for that of Japan, which has been even more syncretic with Western culture in the past hundred and especially past fifty years. While not

But the main problem with whole notion of insiders and outsiders is that it relies upon the very assumptions about religion that many scholars today are trying to diivest themselves of. At work here is a reversal—based, however, on the same supposedly clear distinctions—of the traditional objectivist approach where the scholarly observer has a privileged view precisely because of the distance she has from the scholarly 'object'.[39]

Whereas the traditional image of objective scholarship involves a distancing as part of scholarly activity itself,[40] contrariwise, it is the very interest and commitment to one's subject that renders good scholarship an insider's activity. This is not particularly radical concept; as Gadamer and Michael Polanyi taught us several decades ago, there is a

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denying the realities of orientalism, this postmodern reflection certainly problematizes what often becomes a stilted and simplistic ideological critique of comparative schoalrship (see Clarke 1997).

[39] See Wilfred Cantwell Smith's (1981, 97) classic statement of this. Smith's view, which basically claims that insiders must be able to agree with any scholarly account of "their" faith, has been roundly criticized, on a number of levels. The contrary, classically "objectivist" approach is reiterated by Paden, in his otherwise exemplary and highly-nuanced account of comparative religious scholarship: "The crucial distinction here is that the comparativist sees patterns which the confined, culture-specific adherent/insider does not. The crab does not see its crustaceanness" (Paden 1994, 10). While this may be true (even if based on certain assumptions about education and worldview of the 'insider'), it still does say much about what 'seeing one's crustaceanness' implies. Is this a necessity? How 'real' is this 'second-order' category? Is it 'merely' the creation of the scholar? Perhaps it is the scholar who sees only the crustaceaness of the crab but misses the 'crabness', without which crustacenaness might be an empty category.

[40] See Sutcliffe (2000, 266, 269), who suggests "the pursuit or practice of 'religion' or 'religions' cannot be conflated with the study thereof; which inevitably reduces the former according to its own discrete terms and categories"; and that a "realistic" approach to religion, being both "reflexive and modest," does not (as opposed to the phenomenological approach, "confuse cartography with geography... If cartography and geography, whilst in relationship, are clearly and uncontroversially distinguishable, so should be the study and practice of religions." This 'argument' rests on the dubious conflation of the cartography-geography ('territory' is better, since geography is like cartography, an interpretation of territory) relationship and the interpretation of religion-being religion relationship. Though I have much to agree with in the work of J. Z. Smith, his own 'Map is not territory' trope is an unfortunate sop to realists and idealists alike. Moreover, the statement seems to me either untrue or banal. Jaffee, though critical of the classic model of objectivity, ultimately upholds the classic formulation: "no matter what religion or irreligion we personally pursue, and no matter what religious tradition we study, we are as scholars outsiders to the thing we are trying to grasp. We are therefore, potentially equal in our capacity to make informed judgments about it based upon disciplined study" (Jaffee 1997, 329). I am not convinced that there is anything meaningful in saying that scholars are "outsiders to the thing we are trying to grasp."

fiduciary dimension to all knowledge and understanding.[41] Perhaps the best solution to the problem is this: an insider is a scholar engaged in the study of a religious tradition whose work can be categorized as more *speculative* than *descriptive*, even while allowing that there can be no pure 'frameless' description. Moreover, speculative undertakings often involve, as a further criteria, a political and constructive element.[42] "[S]peculative thought responds to a real need of human beings to put the various parts of their lives together" (Cobb 1994, 132)—thus connecting it with religion itself, at least as viewed in the cognitive-symbolic light.

As Fitzgerald notes, even his own stance is not bereft of metaphysical assumptions—such as the clear valuation of cultural criticism as a preferable model or method of study, and the Marxian-Durkheimian belief that "society cannot be reduced to the sum total of interactions between individual human beings" (97). These two examples are important, I think, because together they set the framework that I would like to develop further in relation to Critical Buddhism. The first principle can be simply referred to as the

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[41] All theorists, whether theologians, philosophers, buddhologists, or scientists, resort to a certain core set of beliefs or irreduciable faith-statements. The difference may simply be one of quantity—generally natural scientists push or accept only a rudimentary and widely if not universally accepted set of core-beliefs. In this sense, there does not seem to be any way to clearly distinguish a number of so-called 'religious' beliefs from scientific or philosophical 'beliefs.' Why, for example, is 'belief' in *pratītya-samutpāda* any more or less religious or theological than belief in the basic atomic structure of matter, or the effect of DNA in human genetics (not to mention the far less concrete beliefs such as quarks or black holes)? Here, it would seem that these 'religious' beliefs are deemed 'religious' because they arise out of a religious tradition we know as Buddhism.

[42] For Cobb, such an emphasis on the "speculative temper"—itself rooted in radical empiricism—helps to curb the potential status-quoism of pragmatism. "One of the things that has given the word 'pragmatic' a bad name in many circles is this tendency to judge value and truth in terms of a context that is not istelf sufficiently comprehensive... The habit of speculation counters this danger...by locating the particular in wider horizons" (Cobb 1994, 131; cf. Kuhn 1962, on "revolutionary" vs. "normal" science).

critical drive, the second the *holistic* drive.[43] Fitzgerald is quite right to admit that these are fundamental beliefs, themselves the product of specific cultural, historical, ecomomic, political, and psychological processes. They are nonetheless central to the study of religion, and to scholarship in the humanities more generally. Contra Fitzgerald, however, these drives are not incompatible with theology in a general sense, only with other common metaphysical presuppositions of an essentialist or foundationalist sort. Criticism, as has been argued above, involes, at its root, a political dimension—one which might be otherwise expressed using the religious tropes of charity or care.[44]

Jeffrey Stout provides a succinct statement of the various forms of holism:

> *Semantic holism* is the view that sharp distinctions between the analytic and synthetic, theory and observation, and fact and value, cannot be justified, and that the semantic interpretation of an expression therefore depends upon the other expressions (of various types) we make it consort with. *Epistemological holism*, also called *contextualism,* is the view that in order to know or doubt the truth of an interpreted sentence one must know a great deal about a lot of different things beyond that sentence, and that epistemic justification is therefore a matter of

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[43] Regarding the "holistic, sociological view," Fitzgerald admits that, while it cannot be falsified, it "makes more sense of our overall experience" (1997, 97).

[44] See Rorty and Vattimo 2005, for an extended discussion on the central place of 'charity' in both contemporary theology and philosophy. Indeed, some recent remarks by those at the top levels of the AAR (e.g., Wendy Doniger, Robert L. Wilken) regarding the necessity on the part of scholar of religion to "care for" her subject might be interpreted in this sense—rather than, as some have read it, being a call for whitewashing or the glossing over the historical contingency and political-ideological elements of religions themselves.

> relations to dialectical context. Hermeneutical holism is the view that one cannot abstract sentences (or the propositional attitudes they are used to express) from the linguistic and dialectical context in which they appear without rendering them unintelligible, and that students of culture therefore ought not to do so. (1983: 310–14; cited in Levine 1994, 148 n.6)

Holism involves, first and foremost, a thoroughgoing skepticism towards the simplistic causal relation between feeling and behaviour, whether such is deemed religious or otherwise. As Comstock would have it, such a causal approach "should be replaced by a holistic understanding of feeling as itself a constitutive factor of the behaviour in question" (Comstock 1981, 632). Comstock utilizes the holistic perspective to argue for a "behavioural" approach to the sacred— "It is important to see that the sacred can be understood in terms primarily of what people externally do, not in terms of what they internally feel" (632; cf. Rorty 1979, 102–3; 173–82).

There is indeed merit in the attempt to ground the study of religion in what can be fruitfully observed; such an approach uses Occam's razor against those who would like to give epistemological privilege to the 'insider'—the one who experiences the sacred and acts upon this feeling. To counter such an approach is not merely to quibble with methodological niceties, for the whole substantialist paradigm of inner-outer is put into question. Yet Comstock's behavioural approach must itself be amended in order to save it from replacing a vague and impossible to verify 'experience' with a naïve approach to the 'facts' of visible behaviour. What seems to be glossed over here is language, more

specifically, the doctrines and beliefs which themselves express, frame, and interpret behaviour in religious contexts. Perhaps a non-religious analogy will suffice to show the limits to this line of thinking. To read Rilke is not to become Rilke, but it is, ideally, to share in the world 'brought about' by Rilke's words; similarly, one might argue, reading the passionate missives of a soon-to-be-martyr is not to become a martyr oneself, but may allow one to enter more deeply into the type of world as the martyr and her fellow-believers (who themselves may or may not be martyrs). Moreover, this does not only apply to poetic or metaphoric writing. As Robert Gimello has noted, doctrine, "discursive ideas promulgated by a religious tradition, may be determinative of religious experience, rather than determined by it" (Gimello 1978, 193). While Comstock acknowledges this element (1981, 637), he does not allow it to enter into his behavioural model. This is related to an understanding of the study of religion as a kind of deutero-hermeneutics, that is to say, an interpretation of interpretations. For where the study of religion differs most from the natural sciences is that there is always already "meaning" there before the scholar begins—not in a mystical 'beyond', but simply in the texts, beliefs, rituals, reflections, philosophies, doctrines and dogmas of the participants themselves.[45]

Timothy Fitzgerald is correct to argue that at root of this issue is a debate over the relevance of certain metaphysical assumptions surrounding transcendence; he is wrong however to locate the origin of these assumptions in theology, Christianity, or Western

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[45] See Byrne 1997; also Jensen 1993, 121: "Humans are not molecules randomly bouncing against each other; they perform actions in certain ways and in certain semantic universes; all their actions taking place in a given definitional space. Accordingly, the study of religion may be envisaged as a kind of ethno-hermeneutics where the indigenous interpretations and models of thought and action (i.e., culture) are the objects of study."

interests. The problem is, indeed, much broader than Fitzgerald seems willing to admit, perhaps due to his own faith in a truly scientific study of religion. The notion of transcendence, frequently used but almost never explained, indeed acts as a defense mechanism against further, potentially highly disruptive, critical enquiry and self-reflection. The concept of transcendence is virtually equivalent to a realist account of scientific truth—and thus extends well beyond the bounds of Christianity or Western religion. To borrow a notion from Feuerbach and Marx, the certainty and comfort to be found in the notion of transcendence, however variously conceived, has almost universal applicability. Fitzgerald and others who similarly critique substantialism in religious studies only tackle the problem at the waist-level. Even if they succeed in bringing the foe down, it still has its legs. A critical account of the matter must rather involve a fullscale critique of not only concepts like the sacred and the transcendent and the objective, but also more general ones like the eternal, the true and the real. Furthermore, it is precisely at this deeper level that the debate connects strongly with Buddhist thought and more specifically the work of CB.

The argument of Fitzgerald begins to undercut itself, now that the fact-value distinction has itself been put into question: indeed, now that the very root of the problem has shifted from theological mystification to inherent metaphysical errors within the scientific method. Seemingly recognizing that he has ventured into dangerous territory, Fitzgerald tries to reign in his argument by admitting that he "would still want to defend scientific method against some forms of radical relativism" (100). Yet if it is true that "this distinction between fact and value too easily allows ideologically motivated assertions

about the world to appear as objective and unassailable facts" (100), then one wonders how we can hope to sustain any meaningful non-ideological (i.e., objective) distinction at all. As Terry Eagleton has argued, "[a]ll of our descriptive statements move within an often invisible network of value-categories.... It is not just as though we have something called factual knowledge which may then be distorted by particular interests and judgments... Interests are *constitutive* of our knowledge, not merely prejudices which imperil it." In short, the objectivist appeal to a knowledge that is 'value free' "is itself a value judgement" (Eagleton 1983, 194–95).

For CB, like the insider-outsider distinction, Weber's fact-value distinction has very little weight—and indeed, it seems that a critical scholarship in religion can only with great risk rely upon such a dubious assumption. For religion is so enmeshed in valuation that to try and step outside of such, even for a so-called outsider may not be possible. In other ways, however, the vision of engaged scholarship presented here vis-à-vis CB correlates strongly with some aspects of Weber's commitment to "Scholarship as Vocation." Viewing scholarship on religion—and perhaps all critical scholarship in the humanities—*as* religion means to see it as a *practice*, defined here as a vow/commitment to providing meaning through interpretation and redescription of 'reality' while respecting tradition and working towards the creation of a 'better world'. In Levinas's terms, this might be more readily conceived as a mode of scholarship that seeks to "do justice to the other" (Levinas 1969, 12).

7.4 Responses and Reactions to Critical Buddhism

> [The language of critics] could grope toward a certain degree of insight only because their method remained oblivious to the perception of this insight. The insight exists only for a reader in the privileged position of being able to observe the blindness as a phenomenon in its own right—the question of his own blindness being one which he is by definition incompetent to ask—and so being able to distinguish between statement and meaning. He has to undo the explicit results of a vision that is able to move towards the light only because, being already blind, it does not have to fear the power of this light. But the vision is unable to report correctly what it has perceived in the course of its journey. To write critically about critics thus becomes a way to reflect on the paradoxical effectiveness of a blinded vision that has to be rectified by means of insights that it unwittingly provides.[46]

Scholarly response to CB reached a peak in the early to mid-1990s (see #1.2). Reaction came generally earlier in the US than in Japan, due in large part to the aggressive tactics and sectarian implications of the pronouncements of Hakamaya and Matsumoto, which, to many Japanese scholars, broke the rules of academic convention and frankly did not initially encourage serious intellectual debate (see Sueki 1997, 321–22). By the mid-1990s, however, this was beginning to change, and more and more responses were coming from within the Japanese academy.[47] The most significant responses to the movement, both pro and contra, have been compiled in the volume *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* (1997), edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul Swanson.

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[46] Paul de Man, *Blindness and Insight*, 1985, p.106. — On p. 110, de Man goes on to uphold the positive elements of such second-order critical work: "Not only is the discrepancy between the original and the critical text granted, but it is given immanent exegetic power as the main source of understanding. Since they are not scientific, critical texts have to be read with the same awareness of ambivalence that is brought to the study of non-critical literary texts, and since the rhetoric of their discourse depends on categorical statements, the discrepancy between meaning and assertion is a constitutive part of their logic."

[47] As of June 2004, a quick Google search uncovered 524 references to Critical Buddhism in English, compared to about 120 in Japanese. Well over half of these, however, are simply references to the Hubbard and Swanson volume.

Hubbard, who provides the introduction as well as an essay entitled "Topophobia," emphasizes the importance of context in interpreting CB; in particular, he notes that its birth in the mid-1980s should be viewed as "akin to the sorts of skirmishes waged in the 'culture wars' throughout the West"—battles which incidentally, after a brief lull in the 1990s, have heated up considerably since that time (1997a, xi). In addition, he notes a strong link between the CB project and postmodern currents in scholarship (1997a, xii)—a link that is not only hardly investigated by CB, but also—with some right—roundly derided by them. Hubbard also emphasizes what he refers to as the "most controversial aspect of the [CB] debates", and that is the "theological" aspect. This study suggests elements of clarification in this regard.[48] The essay entitled "Topophobia" (1997b, 81–112) is a critical appreciation of CB, in which Hubbard provides a detailed analysis of Hakamaya's understanding and usage of the key terms *critica* and *topos* as the basis for competing epistemological models. By way of a sustained reflection upon the work of Vico and the tradition of rhetoric—in particular, the fine but crucial line between "the methodological priority of topics" and "topos as an ontological ground of existence" (see #5.4). Hubbard concludes that CB requires "a better understanding of the way that rhetoric functions in religious history" (110), and that, in particular, "Hakamaya needs to

[48] "Following Max Weber's call for a scientific study of religion, religious studies in the West has labored long to be free of its theological origins and establish itself as a respectable discipline within secular universities. Buddhist studies is no exception, and to date has largely followed its European origins in the philological study of texts. Yet just as Hakamaya and Matsumoto reject Weber's idea of objective and value-free scholarship, many Buddhist scholars in the West are arguing more and more openly that there should indeed be a place within academic discourse for the committed Buddhist to argue his or her ideas about Buddhist truth—some would say that many have already been doing just that, albeit without acknowledging those commitments" (Hubbard 1997a, xiii). — Hubbard's point about CB rejection of Weber and the modern European model of text-based scholarship is rather ironic, given that one of the great weaknesses in CB is precisely a tendency to stick to the text above all, at the expense, for example, of sociological or anthropological study.

demonstrate more clearly how his notion of 'true Buddhism' escapes theoretical as well as practical authoritarianism" (111). In 1999, Hubbard published another short piece in Japanese entitled "Hihan Bukkyō no haikei no hihanteki kōsatsu 批判仏教の背景の批判的考察" Critical Thoughts on the Background of Critical Buddhism," in which he reflects more deeply upon the issue of the institutional Buddhist framework, as well as the socio-political environment, behind the movement, vis-à-vis the situation within Buddhist Studies in America and the West. Here Hubbard affirms his point that, in order to advance in a more properly 'critical' direction, CB must acknowledge that it is primarily a philosophical movement dedicated to 'criticism', as opposed to a search for historical or philological foundations to 'true Buddhism' (1999, 22–23). On the matter of relinquishing the search for a pristine form of Buddhism, CB is more than simply a "philosophical movement dedicated to 'criticism'."

Paul Swanson, with Hubbard co-editor of *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, focuses on the CB critique of the substantialist implications of the doctrine of Buddha-nature, and thus provides a thorough review of the main works of both Matsumoto and Hakamaya. Although obviously positive towards the CB movement in general, like Hubbard he makes the point that "[t]he question still remains whether or not all Buddha-nature formulations need to be classified as *dhātu-vāda* and thus antithetical to Buddhism" (Swanson 1997, 26), and he alludes specifically to Zhihyi's 智顗 interpretation of Buddha-nature in terms of the *ekayāna* principle, by which emphasis is placed on the "promise of potential Buddhahood for all beings." Thus, while he believes that Buddha-nature is salvageable

from the charges of substantialism, Swanson avers that the onus is now on its supporters to show how it can "be reconciled with the basic Buddhist teachings of *anātman* (no-self) and *pratītya-samutpāda* (causality)." Swanson concludes that "[t]he sharpness of [the CB] critique demands no less a sharpness in response. In this sense Critical Buddhism remains an unfinished task, and an ongoing challenge" (28–29).

Dan Lusthaus (1997) interprets the CB movement as part and parcel of a long, recurring theme in Buddhist tradition, which involves a thorough consideration of the causes and conditions that give rise to phenomena. Lusthaus seeks to take this further in his essay, in an attempt to clarify and discern the causes and conditions that have given rise to CB itself—a noble and important task. His recognition of the first underlying 'cause' of CB is "the prevailing sentiment over the last few decades that Buddhism, particularly East Asian Buddhism, and especially Japanese Zen, have become deficient in the area of ethics" (Lusthaus 1997, 31). The bulk of his essay may be summarized as an attempt to provide additional support, by way of sources from early Tang China and from medieval Indian debates surrounding causality, to the CB argument regarding the influence of substantialist or *dhātu-vāda* thought into East Asian Buddhism (see chapter 3). Like Hubbard and Swanson, Lusthaus shares a generally positive evaluation of CB, particularly the concern with topicalist/*dhātu-vāda* incursions by way of indigenous (in this case Chinese) thought. As Jacqueline Stone notes, Lusthaus' CB-inspired reading of the sinification of Buddhism flies in the face of most interpretations (e.g., Yūki 1961; Gimello 1976; Gregory 1991), which have more positively characterized this process in terms of the gradual refinement of Mādhyamika thought on language, its 'democratization' of enlightenment through the

notion of innate Buddha nature, and its "revalorization of the world as the locus of salvation, rather than the world of suffering to be escaped" (Stone 1999, 165). The fundamental flaw of Lusthaus's argument is shared at times by Matsumoto and Hakamaya, and it can be superficially summed up as the continuing quest for authenticity (see chapter 4).

In an essay entitled, "The Limits of Criticism," former Hakamaya student Paul Griffiths points out what he believes to be a fundamental weakness covering the entire CB debates: namely, a confusion between first-order questions regarding the truths of Buddhism, on one hand, and second-order questions about determining whether things are true or right in themselves, one might say. Griffiths laments this confusion and suggests that it comes about as a result of contributors to the CB debates taking a view whereby "truth (of beliefs) and rightness (of attitudes and actions) are necessary but not sufficient conditions for those beliefs and attitudes/actions to be Buddhist" (Griffiths 1997, 148). Largely in order to clarify this issue, he develops a "sketch of what Hakamaya's criticalism ought to mean, epistemologically speaking" (152), based on the distinction between internalist and externalist epistemologies. In short, Griffiths arrives at the conclusion that a criticalist epistemology, despite Hakamaya's love for Descartes, must reject Cartesian internalism in favour of a "properly externalist use of critical reason" in order to "construe Buddhism properly and to defend it, so construed, against its internalist and positivist despisers" (160; see #5.3).

Jacqueline Stone, a specialist in medieval Japanese Buddhism and *hongaku* (original enlightenment) thought in particular, highlights in her analysis the rather ironic

appeals to truth and "true Buddhism" that seem to contradict CB arguments against objectivity—a point also noted by Sueki and Gregory. In so doing, she suggests that, besides the overtly 'theological' approach of writers like Hakamaya and Matsumoto, there remains a place for scholars such as herself "whose overriding scholarly question is not what constitutes Buddhist truth, but how Buddhists in various times and places have defined Buddhist truth, under what circumstances, and with what consequences" (Stone 1999, 170). Stone goes so far as to accuse the CB struggle against the positivist ideal of being nothing less than a "return to an authoritarian theological approach" (171). In response to Stone's criticism—one which has echoes in other critics' accusations of CB 'fundamentalism'—a way in which the methodological strategies underlying CB can be otherwise interpreted and extended has been indicated in this study. Stone raises the important issue that: "The claim that correct thinking about dependent origination can lead to greater social responsibility and egalitarianism need to be more logically developed for the constructive side of the Critical Buddhist vision to become clear" (172). Finally, Stone points out, as others have before and since, a fundamental paradox at the heart of CB—namely, its seeming attachment to an essentialist reading not only of 'true Buddhism' but also of the long-standing battle between *topica* and *critica*, in which a specific historical situation is inflated into a universal principle (182). This fits ill with the emphasis on *pratītya-samutpāda* and discriminative thinking.

At a more specific level, Stone touches on the CB arguments concerning an issue that happens to be her primary area of expertise: "original enlightenment" or *hongaku* thought. Her argument is that this issue has been simplified beyond all recognition, such

that it amounts to little more than a substantialist straw horse easily beaten to death by criticalism. In some cases, such as in the Eshin and Danna schools of medieval Tendai, *hongaku* refers not to an underlying essence or "generative monism" but to the fact that at all phenomenon, "being simultaneously devoid of independent self-existence (emptiness), yet, at the same time, arising through dependent origination (conventional existence), [are] both empty and conventionally existent (middle)" (1999, 174). Elsewhere, in direct response to critics such as Nishi Giyū 西義雄, who charges the medieval Tendai monks who constructed *hongaku* discourse as being heartless villains out of touch with the real sufferings of the day, Stone comments that we could read the case in a diametrically opposed way, such that these self-same monks might have been providing a less brutal image of the cosmos and the potential of each individual being, one that "represented an attempt to interpret change and impermanence in ways that drained them of terror and apparent randomness by assimilating them to some originally inherent structure of reality" (225). In addition, Stone goes on to suggest that *hongaku* thought was often used to balance or even reject the deterministic reading of evil karma as an obstruction to enlightenment (233–34). While this, she adds, might have led to antinomian readings, it also includes an undoubtedly 'liberatory' potential. Thus, as with King (1997) and others, Stone advises a more nuanced and perhaps more charitable interpretation of some of the doctrines that are being dismissed as 'non-Buddhist'. Moreover, regarding the status of language, Stone notes that a number of original enlightenment texts indicate a strong support for the relevance of words and letters, indicating a long history of tension or struggle over this matter within Tendai tradition (174), for example the *Kankō ruijū*

passage containing a transmission entitled "words and letters *are* liberation" (*moji soku gedatsu* 文字即解脱). (Tada et al. 1973, 207–8, my emphasis)

German Buddhist scholar Lambert Schmithausen has written several essays in response to the work of Hakamaya. Schmithausen's responses to CB form some of the very earliest non-Japanese engagements with the movement. This debate can be found in Hakamaya's 1990 reply to a 1985 publication by Schmithausen called "Buddhismus und Natur," and Schmithausen's revised 1991 version of the paper, which includes a reply to Hakamaya. In short, Hakamaya responds to Schmithausen's original piece, which was concerned with mining Buddhist resources for an environmental ethic, by employing the CB rejection of any type of ontological ground to question the notion that the natural order has any intrinsic relevance on which such an ethic can be based. As Griffiths has noted, beyond the confusions regarding each scholar's use of the term 'nature', "[u]nderlying this debate is a deep disagreement between Schmithausen and Hakamaya as to the significance and reference of the term 'Buddhism'" (Griffiths 1997, 158). While Schmithausen wants an inclusive sense in which the ideas, attitudes and actions of any who make claim to being Buddhist are included in the definition of Buddhism, Hakamaya's is "both restrictive and normative: Buddhism is criticism, based upon the doctrines of *pratītya-samutpāda* and *anātma-vāda*. Buddhism is what goes against the stream (*paṭisota),* what is not found in other streams of thought, whether in Jainism or Brahmanism in India, Taoism in China, or Shintō in Japan." Schmithausen cannot accept such a restrictive vision, mainly because, he asserts, it is "utterly arbitrary" (Schmithausen 1985, 588). But, as Griffiths rightly notes, Schmithausen may err in taking the CB thesis to be a historical rather than a "critically

normative philosophical" one (Griffiths 1997, 158). Moreover, he seems to fall into the Weberian trap of seeking the 'objective truth' of Buddhist thoughts on nature. Griffiths sums this up well, pointing out the CB recognition and acceptance of the inevitable fideism inherent in all scholarship:

> Historiography is always driven by ideology, by a set of critically—or, in a bad case, uncritically—normative decisions about what it is for and how it should be done, decisions that are not themselves given or justified historically. The advantage and virtue of Hakamaya's position and method is that it makes its broadly ideological commitments explicit; the disadvantage of Schmithausen's is that, for the most part, its commitments are hidden, tacit, even denied. (Griffiths 1997, 159)

Sallie B. King's response to CB is concerned with one specific, but central issue: the doctrine of *tathāgata-garbha* or Buddha-nature, more particularly Matsumoto's scathing critique of such as being beyond the bounds of Buddhism. King takes Matsumoto to task for failing to give credence to the strong possibility of a "soteriological" (i.e., as an *upāya* towards *bodhicitta*) as opposed to a substantialist, ontological reading of Buddha-nature based on how these terms actually function in the texts, in particular the *Fo hsing lun* 仏性論 (Buddha-Nature Treatise) of Vasubandhu/Paramārtha (King 1997, 174; see #3.4). At a broader level, King concludes her essay with some perspicuous remarks on CB social analysis, invoking a comparison between the soteriological and ethical uses of

Buddha-nature with the "Inner Light" of the Quakers to deduce that "it is plainly invalid to blame the weakness of Japanese Buddhist social ethics on Buddha-nature thought, for clearly Buddha-nature thought can be and is used [e.g., among some Engaged Buddhists] to inspire, justify, and direct Buddhist social activism." According to King, "[t]he culprit must be sought elsewhere" (King 1997, 192), specifically in factors such as the socio-economic status of religious leaders, Confucian influence, the "nature of the state" and "native Japanese ethnocentrism" (191).

Like King, Steven Heine focuses his evaluation of CB on a specific point—a central text, Dôgen's 13th-century *Shōbōgenzō*—rather than a doctrine like *tathāgata-garbha*, in order to make a more general evaluation of the movement as a whole. In short, whereas CB and Hakamaya in particular once again in defiance of conventional scholarly wisdom, makes the claim that the most authoritative version of Dōgen's *opus* is not the early (*kyūsō*) 75-fascicle text but rather the later (*shinsō*) 12-fascicle text, Heine surveys the responses by Dōgen scholars to conclude that the CB approach can only be considered one option among at least three—CB, "conservative traditionalist" and "compromise traditionalist." Heine himself seems to favour the last, as propounded by Ishii Shūdō 石井修道 (Heine 1997, 271–78). Heine's final, rather 'off the cuff' remarks include hints for understanding, interpreting, and re-evaluating the CB project. After dismissing charges against CB as fundamentalist, as well as another criticism often voiced against CB, that, like Victorian Buddhist scholarship, it dismisses the complexity and diversity of Buddhist tradition in the naive attempt to seek out a "true, uncompromised, intellectually satisfying form of Buddhism" for today, Heine remarks that he would prefer to view CB as a case of

"foundationalism," by which he means "a sector of [a] religion trying to interpret its medieval sources from a classical or foundationalist standpoint and in terms of distinctive modern social and philosophical concerns" (279). He goes on to compare CB foundationalism with the long tradition of Buddhist scholasticism, which, being "deliberately evaluative rather than neutral or descriptive...seeks to provide a theological (rather than objective buddhological) ground for a particular form of orthopraxis by contrasting its own approach with alternatives that are judged to be partial, misleading, or deficient" (283–84). Such an approach, while faithful to Buddhist tradition, allows CB to fall somewhat outside the bounds of academic scholarship, according to Heine, though it does connect CB with movements such as Engaged Buddhism and Liberation Theology. Since this distincton between the hermeneutics of scholastic hierarchical classification and the hermeneutics of scholarship—is one that the Critical Buddhists reject or at least reformulate, this matter too bears further consideration.

Heine fails to note the irony of using the term 'foundationalism', given the CB disdain for Buddhist recalcitance on the matter of essence and substance, the very things that usually support a philosophical stance of foundationalism. Although he is employing the term here not in a metaphysical but in a methodological sense, this issue does bear further investigation. How far can a scholarly movement professing religious or philosophical anti-foundationalism rest on a methodological principle of foundationalism? While not totally dismissive, Heine is critical of CB methodological 'foundationalism' for several reasons: a) because of the narrow perspective that is generated—e.g., neglecting the role of "magico-religious ritualism" in some of Dôgen's writings, as well as the role of

other Buddhist doctrines and literature; b) because it unintentionally but inevitably fosters exclusivism, and perhaps most crucially; c) because it fails to make clear and explicit connections between the foundational texts or ideas (e.g., Dōgen's understanding of causality) and the agenda of ethical or social reform within Buddhism and Japan (Heine 1997, 280–81).

Peter Gregory, in an article entitled "Is Critical Buddhism Really Critical?" points out in particular the considerable institutional and social differences between the way Buddhism is studied and thus understood or "constituted" in America and Japan (Gregory 1997, 286). The awareness of these differences "should help make both sides more aware of their limitations, what they stand to gain from one another, and the nature of the premises on which their different perspectives are based" (286–87). Along with a number of other Western contributors to this debate, Gregory rightly notes that, "in the final analysis, the question of 'true Buddhism' (so important to Matsumoto and Hakamaya's mission) is theological and cannot be settled by historical scholarship. To me the most interesting aspect of the current debate, is what it reveals about the current state of Sōtō Zen in particular and Japanese Buddhism in general" (288). In this short essay Gregory uses his own research in medieval Chinese Buddhism to make a case for doctrinal development within Buddhism. Gregory argues that for Zongmi (780–841), along with other medieval Chinese Buddhist scholars, *hongaku* thought was inextricably connected to "a positive valuation of language." Thus, Gregory asserts, the CB implied coalescence of the tow doctrines of "original enlightenment" and "beyond words and letters" does not hold in all cases. Indeed, it would seem that, for Zongmi, *tathāgata-garbha* doctrine was

"a response to a perceived inadequacy within Buddhist doctrine"—namely, the denial of the positive role of language in Mādhyamika and Prajñāpāramitā writings. Furthermore, Gregory maintains that this re-evaluation of the role of language through *hongaku* had distinct ethical import and implications. Emphasis on Buddha-nature as the highest teaching "provides a map for Buddhist practice and so reaffirms the need for continual practice after an initial experience of enlightenment, thereby countering the antinomian tendency of the Hung-chou [Hongzhou] and P'ao-t'ang [Paotang] interpretations of Ch'an" (289). More specifically, Zongmi's writings strive to keep a balance or "essential tension" between ontological monism and ethical dualism. On the one hand, reducing all activities to the Buddha-nature (as in the Hongzhou line) results in the lack of ethical discrimination characteristic of what CB calls topicalism, while dismissing Buddha-nature entirely takes away the motivation or even the possibility of cultivation. The inseparability of essence and function "is what makes religious cultivation possible," while the difference "is what makes religious cultivation necessary" (290). This correlates strongly with the argument regarding Buddha-nature by Sallie B. King.

At a more general level, Gregory argues that the most important point here is not whether *hongaku* or *tathâgata-garbha* is truly 'Buddhist' or not, but rather "what factors were involved in the Japanese case that led to *hongaku* being interpreted in the way that its contemporary critics claim that it was" (Gregory 1997, 291). This question is more properly *critical*—in the sense of emphasizing the radical contextual and historical embeddedness of ideas, as well as alerting us to the perspectival nature of knowledge: "we can never escape the fact that we can only see something from a certain viewpoint" (291).

Gregory also notes the irony to which I alluded in discussing Heine's characterization of CB as 'foundationalist' that CB—Hakamaya in particular—appears to seek a true, pure, essence of Buddhism beneath the adventitious defilements of history. Such an approach to history and scholarship allows CB "to slip into the very substantialist fallacy they are intent on refuting" (293). Like Heine, but with sharper edge, Gregory presents a dichotomy between his own academic or "intellectual historian" approach and the "theological" one taken by CB:

> For the intellectual historian, Matsumoto and Hakamaya's approach rides roughshod over the most interesting and important issues that need to be studied in detail and appreciated in terms of their subtle shades of nuance. For the theologian intent on arriving at critical judgments on the nature of true Buddhism, however, such concerns are largely beside the point. Our differences in regard to the issue of indigenous thought are thus to a large extent a function of our different standpoints and agendae. But they also reflect fundamental disagreements over the nature of religion and a different reading of 'Buddhism'. (293)

This point raises some of the most fundamental issues concerning CB as a "new methodological movement" as well as a possible case of "Buddhist theology." Like Heine, Gregory's division of the academic and the theological approach, while an important initial approach to the matter, ultimately must itself be problematized in a more critical fashion. Moreover, Gregory's attacks on CB as being primarily "textualist," "originalist" or

"Protestan," also require further examination, precisely by way of the "pragmatic" approach to truth mentioned by Gregory as a counterpoint to CB.

Lin Chen-kuo, in "Metaphysics, Suffering, and Liberation: The Debate Between Two Buddhisms," situates CB within contemporary philosophical reflections on modernity. There is some irony here, in that it is a scholar from Taiwan who has best served to open the shutters of the buddhological room in which much of the CB debate has taken place and step out into the realm of world—and more particularly Western—philosophy. Lin recognizes, unlike some of the other critics of CB, that "rather than a return to the origins, the key concern for Critical Buddhists is bringing Buddhism back to the modern world as the only place where the problems of theory and sociopolitical praxis can be properly tested" (Lin 1997, 303–4). Citing the work of "negative metaphysicians" from Heidegger to Adorno and Derrida, Lin limns Habermas's critique of such thinkers as being "secret accomplices of the metaphysical Idealism they seek to overcome" (302). Indeed, Habermas, in Lin's eyes, becomes a kind of honourary Critical Buddhist in his attempt to find a middle way between the topical tendencies of metaphysical Idealism and the tyranny of self-centered reason.[49] Lin also provides a re-interpretation of Nishitani's thought—in particular the "deconstructive" aspect of his philosophy found most clearly in the third stage of his threefold schema of the drama of modernity—which allows for a reading of Kyoto School thought that is quite different, and far less "topical" from that

[49] "Like Habermas, the Critical Buddhists choose to carry out the project of modernity because they see that both the West and Buddhism share the same idea of enlightenment, namely as a quest for liberation from ignorance and domination" (Lin 1997, 305). See Van Meter Ames (1960, 9): "Zen enlightenment does not fit the Western sense of the Enlightenment of John Locke and the French Encyclopedists, meaning the light of reason and science. It is more like the light in the Bible...if divested of theology. For Zen, the light of awakening is the Buddha-nature in everyone."

provided by CB, one in which "emptiness" comes to mean little more (or less) than the recognition of all things in there "mere conventionality" (310–11).

Besides this re-reading of Kyoto School thought, Lin's piece is particularly important for his attempt to problematize the understanding of suffering as it pertains to CB and to Buddhism as a whole, and the relations of such with modernity. Although one cannot wholly endorse Lin's rather blithe conclusion regarding the need to transform Buddhism into a "joyful science" in which a recognition and affirmation of the paradox of bringing together metaphysics, suffering and liberation make one "laugh and play without losing the critical consciousness of suffering" (Lin 1997, 313), Adorno's remark cited by Lin (301): "The need to let suffering speak is the premise of all truth," may help us move towards a more engaged understanding of the aims and implications of CB. In this regard Lin cites the work of two modern Chinese scholars who he claims as forerunners to CB: Ouyang Jingwu 歐陽竟無 (1871–1943) and Lü Cheng 呂澂 (1896–1989). Lü, in particular, recognized "the importance of cognitive conversion (*parāvrtti-āsraya*) as the foundation of sociopolitical reform and progress" (306), which confirms Lin's suspicion that "the ideological distinction between Conservative Buddhism and Progressive Buddhism is drawn in terms of a contrast between ontology and epistemology" (306).

In extended reflections on original enlightenment, or, as he prefers, "originary enlightenment," Ruben Habito (1996) makes brief mention of CB, presenting an analysis of it in terms of the "two prongs" of ontological and socioethical critique. In a later essay entitled, "Tendai *Hongaku* Doctrine and Japan's Ethnocentric Turn" (1997), Habito takes

up the issue of CB evaluation of *hongaku* thought vis-à-vis its presumed socio-political consequences. While Hakamaya and Matsumoto are more interested in asserting the effects of *hongaku shisō* on modern Japanese society, Habito cites scholars such as Tamura Yoshirō and Kuroda Toshio and extends the issue back to the late 13th and early 14th centuries, identifying what he calls a much earlier original enlightenment inspired "ethnocentric turn" in Japanese social history grounded more specifically in a "reverse Copernican" move that effectively moved Japan from the periphery to the center of Buddhist cosmology (1997, 377–86). Though Habito's essay does add some historical depth to the CB argument, it offers little else by way of either support or critique of the validity of CB in whole or part.

William Bodiford (1996) has written what remains the most succinct and accurate portrayal of the socioethical context out of which CB emerged in the 1980s —particularly the issue of social discrimination against the so-called *burakumin* (see #2.3). Within the same article, Bodiford concludes with some of his own comments and criticisms of CB, which bear note. While noting that, "at first glance," it would appear that Hakamaya and Matsumoto have succeeded in altering the "rules of Japanese academic discourse," Bodiford argues that, upon further inspection, things are not quite as they seem. Indeed, CB "academic assertions can be seen to shield Sōtō Zen from charges of promoting social oppression and portraying Dōgen... as a friend of the oppressed" (Bodiford 1996, 20). The argument is that the CB scholars—or, Bodiford allows, those Sōtō leaders who have recently begun to adopt their ideas—end up serving the aims of Sōtō sectarianism by trying to preserve the pure essence (i.e., non-discriminatory teachings) of the sect's revered

founder. Bodiford calls this into question not only in terms of methodology but also of facts, pointing to the Buraku Liberation League's own findings suggesting that, of all the founders of the Kamakura sects, Dōgen's Sōtō seems to have been the one *least* concerned with the plight of 'outcastes' and the poor (21). Although Bodiford does not use the term, his reading suggests that the CB scholars, in their reverence for Dōgen, themselves fall back upon a kind of substantialist thinking.

Carl Bielefeldt, in an internet article reflecting on Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* vis-à-vis the work of American 'Zen poet' Gary Snyder, seems to be genuinely mystified at the hype surrounding CB, which he claims is little more than "interesting church gossip" or "the passing passions of sectarian squabble" hardly worthy of serious intellectual response (Bielefeldt 1998, 1–2). More specifically, Bielefeldt takes Hakamaya and Matsumoto to task for their blatant "philosophical reductionism"—of taking a few selected doctrines like *pratītya-samutpāda* and using these to reject "most texts of the tradition" (7). Referring to Buddhists like himself and Gary Snyder, Bielefeldt appeals to the longstanding Buddhist precedent of attempting to "make the dharma come alive in our own historical situations," largely through using elements of the tradition itself to do so. In addition, he notes that CB clearly—unlike Dōgen—"rests less on faith in the dharma as an historical tradition than on belief in the dharma as a philosophical system"; Bielefeldt attributes this largely to the "Protestantization" of modern Buddhism, i.e., the desire to define Buddhism as a coherent system of beliefs (8). His concluding words require full citation:

> I am not myself drawn to such work, what we might call the "Protestantization" of the dharma that weeds out the rich overgrowth of art and literature, myth and ritual, and in the process cuts off most possibilities for being Buddhist. But my larger point here is not to condem this work so much as to remind the professors that their call to take a stand on orthodox doctrine and reject the rest, whatever value it may have in challenging and reforming the Sōtō-shū, belongs to a particular historical context and is but one more example of how Buddhist must always struggle to bring the dharma alive in their own situations to remind them of this and to suggest that, if they look around for other Buddhists in other situations, both in the past and the present, they may find more friends than they think, even among those who take refuge in the Buddha nature or sing at night to the Mountain Spirit. (Bielefeldt 1998, 8)

Indeed, there is much to be gleaned from Bielefeldt's remarks, particularly with respect to the aspect of reductionism that oftentimes overshadows the more properly critical elements of CB, and the apparent refusal to allow for a more nuanced understanding of language that might include elements of the 'mythic'. However, the refusal on Bielefeldt's part to take a stand of any sort regarding the normative claims of Buddhism, or regarding the attempt to qualify or distinguish between different "Buddhisms" may simply reflect his attachment to the Weberian sort of 'objectivity' that has been called into question not only by CB but also by many other contemporary scholars. In other words, lapsing into song to the Mountain Spirit may be well and good

(and also Buddhist), but it tells us very little about the social-ethical or political implications of Buddhist doctrines or practices, which are a key concern for CB. In short, it misses their point. Unqualified praise for the mytho-poetic side of Buddhism à la Gary Snyder is equally indicative of a modern Romantic reading of Zen that may be more powerful in the later 20th-century than the 19th-century perspective, all too-quickly qualified as 'Protestant'. Bielefeldt's distaste for the 'Protestant' element of CB might simply be put down to a matter of taste.

Charles Muller, in his analysis of CB, emphasizes in particular the importance of the "essence-function (*t'i/yung*)" paradigm within East Asian thought as a way to criticize CB readings of original enlightenment as topicalism. Along with King (1997), Muller concludes that in the Ch'an texts original enlightenment is often understood in a soteriological rather than ontological or metaphysical manner.

> [W]ith innate and actualized enlightenment as manifestations of the essence-function model, innate enlightenment was not hypostasized as a "locus" but was instead understood as an experiential and enhanceable potentiality. In terms of basic constitution, in the process of enlightenment, the human mind and body have nothing added or subtracted. This is a basic premise for the teachings contained in innate enlightenment texts such as the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment* (*Yüan chüeh ching*) and the *Awakening of Faith* (*Ta-sheng ch'i-hsin lun*), where innate and actualized enlightenment are described not as static ontological categories, but as

> ways of looking at existence that allow for a workable prescription toward practice. (Muller 1998, 4)

Muller's interpretation provides an interesting twist in his suggestion that the sinification of Buddhism includes a more explicit and workable association between philosophical categories and their practical application. If this holds, it would appear to undercut, or at least seriously throw into question CB arguments against the necessarily weakening effects of indigenous thought. On the other hand, Muller's development of the idea that language itself was, for Ch'an masters, itself "dependently conditioned" throws into greater relief the weaknesses in the CB theory of language and its relation to 'practice'. Also, Muller argues that, contrary to the idea that Chan/Son/Zen promotes "no-thought," many texts in these traditions—such as the *Platform Sutra* and the *Sutra of Perfect Enlightenment*—rather emphasize "non-attached thought." The most significant contribution here is Muller's incorporation of Korean Son Buddhism, a tradition that is neglected entirely in CB writings.

Joseph O'Leary has published one of the most detailed general critiques of CB in "The Hermeneutics of Critical Buddhism" (1998). After an introductory paean to the Critical Buddhists as critical theologians and religious "reformers" in the tradition of St. Paul, Luther, and Karl Barth, O'Leary points to what he suggests are serious "methodological inadequacies" within the work of Hakamaya and Matsumoto. O'Leary's main line of attack is against a) the dualism asserted by CB, between *prajñā* and *dhyāna*—or conceptual thinking and mystical contemplation, b) the normative element in such,

where the former is lionized and the latter dismissed, and c) the concomitant implication that all phenomenality is conceptual. O'Leary argues against this reductionist thesis, insisting that "*nirvana* is more than insight into the twelvefold chain of dependent co-arising; it is the breaking of the chain, the realization of a condition beyond dependent co-arising. Intellectual *prajñā* does not suffice to achieve this release; the conversion of the mind must be followed by the more difficult conversion of feelings and instincts, and *dhyāna* is an essential weapon in this task" (O'Leary 1998, 284). O'Leary's general criticism of the CB tendency to oversimplify weighty matters in slapdash manner is well-taken, while the more specific concern with the CB reading of *prajñā* as 'conceptual thinking' has been discussed in some detail. However, O'Leary's own positive proposals are rather superficial, amounting to little more than a slightly-nuanced restatement of the very interpretation of Buddhism that CB is attempting to deconstruct. The more crucial matter is the interpretation not only of *prajñā* but also of *dhyāna* itself, which O'Leary defines as a "contemplative *Stimmung*" (284) that somehow adds "spiritual significance" to *prajñā* and allows access to "ultimate truth." Such invocations amount to a rehashing of appeals to the primacy of intuition and provide little new ground for developing the meaning and relation between these important terms.

O'Leary's concluding comments on hermeneutics provide more fertile soil for reflection. Indeed, CB seems to have an almost irrational fear of hermeneutics (285–86), based on the assumption that to allow for anything other than Cartesian critical method in Buddhism or philosophy is to give the game away to topicalism. As O'Leary rightly notes, "lacking a comprehensive hermeneutic frame of understanding, Matsumoto is prone to

textual fetishism" (286), and lays himself open to the charge of disallowing the flexibility that is part and parcel of ordinary language usage or, as Sallie King would say, of disallowing for *upāya.* As I shall argue below, CB is certainly a form of hermeneutics, and it would be better to own up to, and develop in more explicit manner, the form of hermeneutics at work—specifically, the relation or tension between hermeneutics and criticism.

In a recent full-length work provocatively entitled *The New Buddhism: A Rough Guide to a New Way of Life* (2002), David Brazier has penned an unrepently normative Critical Buddhist-inspired account of Buddhism in the modern world. Brazier's main concern is the nationalism that has, in his eyes, tainted much of institutional Buddhist history, and contributed to a failure of the tradition to "advance the radical social implications of some of its central teachings" (Brazier 2002a, 66). Like Hakamaya, Brazier sees the problem as being rooted more deeply in doctrine than has been previously allowed by Buddhist social activists such as those involved in Engaged Buddhism. Moreover, he warns that Western Buddhists—or, as he rather awkwardly puts it, "white Buddhists"—have turned Buddhism into little more than an "irrelevant pursuit of personal euphoria," which he claims is far distanced from what the Buddha actually taught (26). As for the 'New Buddhism' of the title, Brazier relies largely on the work of the Critical Buddhists to make his claims that Buddhism is or should be really about critical thinking and engagement leading towards social liberation. In several chapters devoted exclusively to CB, Brazier eschews scholarly analysis in order to present a down to earth picture of the movement and its implications for modern Buddhism. In short, he concludes that, while we

may not be willing to accept CB in its entirety, we should see it as a "warning bell", indicating the potentially harmful ways in which doctrine can have effect on social ethics and politics (160). Brazier does agree on almost all points with CB attacks against, for instance, "the cult of anti-intellectualism," authoritarianism in master-student relations, and the apparent encroachment of Taoist ideas into East Asian Buddhism. Unlike Hakamaya and Matsumoto, however, Brazier is intent on putting his ideas into practice, and to this end has founded a socially engaged movement entitled the Order of Amida Buddha, in the United Kingdom (see www.amidatrust.com).

One strength of *The New Buddhism* is Brazier's emphasis on the "immensely practical" principle of *pratītya-samutpāda*, which "provides a sound general principle upon which to build a socially engaged Buddhism" (Brazier 2002b, 2). Brazier's essentially 'pragmatic' argument for the centrality of *pratītya-samutpāda* as the basis for other Buddhist ideas such as emptiness and for Buddhist ethics is provocative and insightful. The main weakness with Brazier's co-optation of CB is his tendency to look for foundations in origins—the true teachings of the Buddha—and occasionally even in mysticism—"the direct seeing into the heart of reality," which he claims is part and parcel of religious life, although he does insist that this form of mysticism does not lead to escapism or quietism. The continued insistence that the inspiring vision of Buddhism contructed by Brazier is one that is exactly in accord with the intentions of "old Shakyamuni" is not only highly dubious and impossible to substantiate; it raises also the spectre of Buddhism being somehow 'beyond' culture and history, a point Brazier, for all his insistence on conditions and causes, appears unwilling to admit. Indeed, a telling

comment in an early chapter provides what might be a more honest principle on which to build the 'New Buddhism': "Whether our interpretation of history is precisely right or not will be less important than whether we can establish virtue, truth and compassion as the dominant powers in our own time. History, however, can provide the mythology that animates the future." (Brazier 2002, 36)

Among Japanese scholars, esoteric Buddhist scholar Tsuda Shin'ichi 津田真一, one of the first to respond to CB, also may be the one most strongly opposed to CB arguments. Essentially, Tsuda accepts the point that much of Buddhism in East Asia has been of the 'topicalist' sort, but he denies that this admission renders such large swaths of the tradition "non-Buddhist." As he cheerfully claims, "I am *dhātu-vādin*" (Tsuda 1994, 132; Sueki 1997, 327), or, as he reportedly shouted to Hakamaya on the telephone: "*Dhātu-vāda* IS Buddhism!" (Hakamaya 1997b, 138).

Ishii Shūdo 石井修道, author of *Sōdai zenshūshi no kenkyū* 宋代禅宗史の研究 (Studies on the History of the Chan School during the Sung Period, 1987), offers a qualified acceptance of CB arguments regarding the recurrence of 'indigenous' elements—Taoism in particular—within Chinese Chan Buddhism, but maintains that such an allowance does not imply the secondary normative claim that this somehow makes Chan "non-Buddhist" (Ishii 1987, ix). Another of Matsumoto and Hakamaya's colleagues at Komazawa University, Itō Takatoshi 伊藤隆壽, follows even more closely to the methods and ideals of CB, a fact which can be quickly gleaned from the title of his 1992 work, *Chūgoku Bukkyō no hihanteki kenkyū* 中国仏教の批判的研究 (Critical Studies on Chinese Buddhism). Focusing on the work of Sengzhao 僧肇 (c. 378–413) and Jizang 吉藏 (549–

523) of the Sanlun 三論 (Mādhayamika) school, Itō concludes that "All of Chinese Buddhism, from the time of its introduction to the dominance of the Ch'an school, is a Buddhism of 'matching terms'"—in which indigenous Chinese elements are 'matched' or assimilated with Buddhist notions. Thus, and here we see the normative element of CB at work, it renders much of Chinese Buddhism 'false' Buddhism. (Itō 1992; Swanson 1997, 22)

Matsuoka Yukako 松岡由香子 (1996) sides largely with the CB reading of Dôgen's *Kehre* vis-à-vis the 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō*—allowing that it may well have been borne out of disillusion with the "warrior Zen" of the day and related recognition of the antinomian implications of some of his earlier work; but she situates this change more deeply within the broader social issues of the time. In this way, in the same manner as the present study, she seeks not to dismiss but rather to 'fine tune' CB at specific points. In similar fashion, Takasaki Jikidō 高崎直道, a former teacher of both Matsumoto and Hakamaya, while accepting their aims and scholarship, disagrees with the stronger CB conclusion that *tathāgata-garbha* and *hongaku* "are not Buddhist" (1997, 314); he recalls that the texts themselves take pains to refute the charge that they are retrieving *atman* under a new name, and he suggests that the whole idea of labeling a doctrine as "non-Buddhist" smacks of a type of religious exclusionism that has "nothing to do with normal academic debate."[50] In addition, Takasaki wonders whether the useful socioethical critique of CB (one of the "two prongs" noted by Habito) is insufficiently bolstered, and perhaps

[50] Takasaki 1997, 315. — Of course, we may accept this while adding that the problem may then lie not with CB but with "normal academic debate"—perhaps especially, thought not exclusively, as it is conceived in Japan. Elsewhere, Takasaki notes that while CB claims "may serve to advance the cause of particular

even unrelated, to the doctrinal evisceration they attempt by way of purging *tathāgata-garbha*. Perhaps, he suggests, compassion itself is all that is required—or should be all that is required—to provide a Buddhist case against injustice, violence, and discrimination (Takasaki 1989, 373ff).

Elsewhere, Takasaki investigates the key CB term *dhātu-vāda*, noting in particular earlier precedents for the term found in the *Mahāyāna-abhidharma Sutra* and *Anūnatvāpurṇatvanirdeśaparivarta* (Sutra of neither increase nor decrease) where reference is made to a 'place' or 'realm' which serves as "the context within which one passes, through practice, from samsara to nirvana" (Takasaki 1997, 315). Takasaki insists, however, that within the *tathāgata-garbha* tradition what is referred to here is not a 'way of being' (*asti*) that implies substance, but rather something that might be better described as 'existential'. Yet the matter is further complicated by the fact that the term *dhātu* has at least two distinct meanings: 'realm'—in the sense of "the collection of 'things' in that place"—and 'cause'—or "the common features that allow the classification of all 'things' into a single group" (316). Moreover, Takasaki points to the clear influence of Indian Upaniśadic thought upon early Buddhism—especially Mahāyāna—which may well have led to the reincorporation of atman=brahman-like substantialism through the idea that the Buddha does not only discover the Dharma but somehow 'is' or 'becomes' the Dharma. These are fertile points that help to fill out CB, although some of Takasaki's concluding remarks miss the point. For one, he claims that Matsumoto, at least, "bases his discussion on the assumption that Buddhism should not permit influence from other Indian ways of

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schools or sects within Buddhism... they are not the stuff of Buddhology" (1997, 320). This should prompt a closer look at the very notion of Buddhology.

thinking" (318). While this may appear to be the case, the main danger for CB is not 'Indian' or for that matter, Japanese, Chinese, or 'indigenous' thought per se, but rather the topicalist elements within such that must be uplifted, examined, and criticized. Otherwise, the charges of fundamentalism or exclusivism leveled by some critics, including Takasaki, would stick all the more. There is or should be more stable criteria for making judgements about past and present Buddhist doctrines and practices, other than the fact that they seem to be 'foreign'.

Hirakawa Akira 平川彰, another leading Buddhist scholar in Japan, has responded to Matsumoto's writings by affirming, along the same lines as Sallie B. King, that *tathāgata-garbha* must be understood as the dynamic "potential" to attain buddhahood, which is even associated at times with *pratītya-samutpāda* itself. (Hirakawa 1990, 78ff) Thus, like many other scholars, Hirakawa cannot accept the CB notion that *tathāgata-garbha* thought is "not Buddhist."

In a short piece dedicated to the issue of *dhātu-vāda*, Yamabe Nobuyoshi 山部能宣 argues that Matsumoto's textual exegesis of such within the Yogācāra *śastra*s is unpersuasive (Yamabe 1997a; 1997b). While conceding that the Yogācāra theory of *gotra* is discriminatory, "it is not based on [generative] monism"—as claimed by Matsumoto. Like everything else, even the CB model of *dhātu-vāda* is without unchanging essence (213). Yamabe, like many other scholars attending to CB arguments, attempts to problematize the history of effects—what Gadamer calls *Wirkungsgeschichte*—of doctrines and textual understandings, some of which appear to be oversimplified within

CB. As Yamabe says at one point, in response to Matsumoto's use of *dhātu:* "the importance of the idea is not matched by its clarity" (1997b, 210).

Yamaguchi Zuihō 山口瑞鳳, a scholar of Tibetan Buddhism considered by some to be a mentor of the CB movement, has long been at the forefront of a debate between the competing interpretations of Buddhist liberation as sudden or rather as gradualist. While professing academic neutrality—a pose explicitly criticized by his erstwhile devotee Hakamaya—Yamaguchi, relying mainly on the work of 8th century Buddhist scholar Śāntaraksita, presents the "defining characteristics of Indian Buddhism" in terms that fit almost perfectly with the CB version of "true Buddhism." In short, Indian Buddhism 1) has as its goal not liberation (*mukta, vimokṣa, satori*) but rather "bodhi-wisdom" directed towards compassion; 2) considers bodhi-wisdom to be "an attainable existential realm and state of latent consciousness"; and 3) teaches that the achievement of such comes from first cultivating "an awareness of the a priori actuality of the phenomenal world that can be expressed in words," and second passing "beyond words to the habit of revisioning the world in terms of an a priori flow of causal relations and lack of a graspable substance" (Yamaguchi 1997, 222). Of note here is the place of wisdom and language, and the emphasis on the necessary link between 'achievement' and ethical practice—key components in CB.

Finally, one Japanese scholar who has been involved in a decade-long debate with Hakamaya and Matsumoto is Sueki Fumihiko of Tokyo University. While acknowledging the work of CB in criticizing the sometimes overt but often covert nationalism of much early to mid-20th century Buddhist scholarship in Japan, Sueki insists on a more nuanced

understanding of the historical development of doctrinal ideas such as *sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu* 山川草木悉皆成仏 (mountains, rivers, grasses, trees all attain Buddhahood), *hongaku* and *dhātu*.[51] Regarding the last, Sueki argues that the tension between the groundlessness of no-self and emptiness on the one hand, and the security of a stable ground or locus on the other, "has been a dynamic force in the history of Buddhism's development" (329). Further, Sueki remarks upon the use of language within Chinese Chan, and by extension Japanese Zen, that these traditions do not eschew language entirely but simply the sort of "ordinary expression" that leads to substantialist thinking (331). Finally, Sueki provides some worthy insights about CB method and the rejection of Weberian objectivity as the goal of Buddhist scholarship. Perceiving a weakness in the CB attempt to both reject objectivity and claim objective status for their own historical and doctrinal claims, Sueki proposes an alternative to CB he calls "Buddhism as method," which has as its aim "to understand Buddhism not as a fixed system but as a perspective from which to reflect on life and culture" (334).

In addition to these various scholarly replies, the response and use of CB ideas by some Japanese feminists marks an interesting and unexpected development of the work of Hakamaya and Matsumoto. A 1990 work entitled *Seisabetsu suru Bukkyō* 性差別する仏教 (Buddhism as a Promoter of Sexual Discrimination) picks up on CB critiques of *hongaku,* the ideology of harmony and Japanism to ferret out and call into question some of the major contributing factors to the historical discrimination against women in Japanese

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[51] Sueki 1997, 327–29. — In response, Hakamaya accuses Sueki's stance of being "too moderate," or one might say, too academic in the sense of being insufficient to allow for a debate on social issues beyond the academic world (see Sueki 1997, 328).

society (Ōgoshi, Minamoto, and Yamashita 1990). While this issue cannot be touched upon in this study, it reinforces the point that, for all its flaws, CB as a movement has much to provide to critical scholarship across various disciplines, extending into the realm of socio-political praxis. Similarly, a close relationship between experience, language and practice with the attempt of analysing the central relevance of language within Buddhism and modern thought, as well as the more specific relation between radical contingency and compassion as the basis for an effective critical Buddhist ethics are important issues to be tackled in further study. These issues have been introduced in this study in order to suggest a rough scheme—a first step on a long road towards their genuine development.

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