REVIEW ARTICLE

Milestones on the Way of Philosophy: A Review of *The Dao Companion to Japanese Buddhist Philosophy*

Thomas P. Kasulis

The Dao Companion to Japanese Buddhist Philosophy. Edited by Gereon Kopf. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2019. 749 pages. Hardcover: ISBN: 978-90-481-2923-2.

This handsome anthology deserves a privileged place in any serious collection of books on Japanese Buddhism or Japanese thought. Its coverage is remarkable, and the quality of scholarship, with contributions from an international group of leading experts, is uniformly first rate. *The Dao Companion to Japanese Buddhist Philosophy* (henceforth JBP) has two parts: ten chapters (part 1) on "Basic Issues" and twenty-two chapters (part 2) dedicated to individual philosophers spanning the historical spectrum from the eighth century (Saichō 最澄; 767–822) through the twenty-first (Ueda Shizuteru 上田閑照; 1926–2019). Each chapter has a convenient bibliography of Japanese and Western works, *kanji* 漢字 as well as romanization appear throughout, and the index includes dates for most (but, oddly, not quite all) people mentioned in the text. JBP lacks the connective tissue to be read straight through but serves as a substantial reference for students and scholars alike.

Of the ten chapters comprising part 1 and designated "Basic Issues in Japanese Buddhist Philosophy," only the first six address themes relevant to the volume as a whole. Richard K. Payne's opening chapter is a perspicacious critical piece reminding us of the hazards involved in superimposing the disciplinary apparatus of comparative philosophy and religion on to the realities of the praxis defining religious life. It both surveys the fields related to Japanese religions and critiques their social construction. John C. Maraldo's chapter lays the theoretical groundwork by explaining clearly and arguing

The Eastern Buddhist 1/2: 99–111
©2021 The Eastern Buddhist Society

persuasively why premodern Japanese thought is genuinely *philosophical* in both methods and themes. His essay dovetails into Ralf Müller's chapter documenting how major modern Japanese philosophers not only cited but also creatively drew on the ideas of premodern Japanese philosophers. Makio Takemura elaborates further, showing how Japanese thought not only meets the minimal standards to qualify as "philosophy," but with its stress on interconnectedness, supersedes many Western candidates as the "love of wisdom."

Michiko Yusa's contribution then traces the rich history of women in the Japanese Buddhist tradition, displaying their role in cultivating its philosophical outlook. Her analysis also highlights what philosophers' poetic expressions can reveal about their ideas that lineage records and commentarial texts may not. In the same vein, when exploring the Buddhist topics of impermanence, attitudes toward worldliness, and spiritual progress, Rein Raud culturally situates Japanese Buddhist philosophy by citing examples from plays, poetry, and the structure of the Japanese language.

As a set, chapters 1–6 of part 1 establish the theoretical framework and justification for JBP, serving as the prolegomena for the entire volume. Anthologies always struggle with cohesion and should not seem like a mere collection of papers on loosely related topics. Kopf's introduction as the book's editor is very brief, but it successfully outlines the basic questions to be addressed concerning the interface of philosophy, religion, and the study of Japan. (I will explore related themes in the latter part of this review.) Following the introduction, the first six chapters collectively lend the book more coherence by providing us with a sweeping overview of Japanese Buddhist philosophy from different perspectives.

At this point the organization of JBP runs into problems, however. Specifically, the remaining chapters 7–10 in part 1 are not really "Basic Issues in Japanese Buddhist Philosophy" in that, unlike the opening six chapters, they do not concern an issue or theme that pertains to the rest of the book. In part 2 (chapters 11–32), "Individual Philosophers," each chapter addresses a single philosopher. Like those chapters, chapters 7–10 are also case studies, although instead of individuals, they focus on groups, movements, or a genre of practice. So, to me, they better suit part 2 or maybe belong in a section of their own.

Placing Tomomi Asakura's "Interaction Between Japanese Buddhism and Confucianism" as chapter 7 exacerbates the problem. Given its location, the title suggests another longitudinal survey like those of Müller, Yusa, and Raud but this time focused on Buddhist-Confucian interaction. It is not. In fact, it is more an outlier to the main thrust of the book.

Asakura's contribution would function better were it placed as a case study in part 2, perhaps as a chapter focused on Kōyama Iwao 高山岩男 (1905–1993). Asakura's claim is that the Kyoto school turned toward Buddhism, and away from what he

sees as the Confucian roots of Meiji 明治 Japanese *tetsugaku* 哲学 (philosophy). As a result, it became detached from moral philosophy. An exception, Asakura believes, was Kōyama, who argued along lines resembling in a Japanese context what the New Confucians did in twentieth-century China. The difficulty in putting his chapter in part 1 is that Asakura assumes, unlike every other author in the book, that the English term "Japanese philosophy" is semantically equivalent to how many Japanese understand the term "Nihon *tetsugaku*" 日本哲学, that is, as designating only modern academic Japanese philosophy. (I will address this issue at the end of this review.) Furthermore, he considers the Kyoto school to be the paradigmatic example of "Japanese Buddhist philosophy." By that categorization, only four of the twenty-two chapters in part 2 would even qualify as Japanese Buddhist philosophy, thereby undercutting the role of part 1 as setting the foundation for part 2.

Like Asakura's chapter, two other chapters in part 1 also deal with modern Japan: James Mark Shields's discussion of Buddhist socialist thought and Manabu Watanabe's analysis of Aum Shinrikyō オウム真理教. Shields presents a richly textured analysis of three Buddhist socialist movements centered around three quite different personalities: the Shin Buddhist Takagi Kenmyō 高木顕明 (1864–1914), the Zen 禅 Buddhist Uchiyama Gudō 内山愚童 (1874–1911), and the Nichiren Buddhist Seno'o Girō 妹尾義郎 (1889–1961). Shields not only depicts a clear context for their activities but also introduces the complexities of defining "socialism" (as well as "Buddhism") in its multiple practical Japanese manifestations. In his chapter on modern phenomena, Watanabe details how the philosophy of Asahara Shōkō 麻原彰晃 (1955–2018) of Aum Shinrikyō justified violence and mass murder as a means to spiritual liberation. Watanabe's goal is not primarily to do a psychological study of Asahara himself, but instead to show how Buddhism's theory of *hōben* 方便 (heuristic expression or skill-in-means) was used to warrant the violence.

The remaining case study from part 1 is Pamela D. Winfield's "Philosophy of the Mandala." By focusing on the eighth-century Taima 当麻 mandala of Amida's Pure Land and the Two-World (Ryōkai 両界) mandalas of ninth-century Shingon 真言, she debunks some persistent misconceptions about ancient Japanese mandalas (such as that their use was as visualization guides for practitioners to become the deities depicted in them—a Tibetan, not ancient Japanese, practice) and at the same time explains their actual function in mapping and sacralizing a ritual space.

Part 2 of JBP consists of the twenty-two chapters on individual philosophers, each with its own bibliography. Most striking is the diversity of philosophers addressed and the excellent choice of scholars to treat each: Saichō (Victor Forte); Kūkai 空海 (774–835; David L. Gardiner); Jōkei 貞慶 (1155–1213; James L. Ford); Hōnen 法然 (1133–1212; Mark L. Blum); Dōgen 道元 (1200–1253; Steven Heine); Keizan Jōkin 瑩山紹瑾 (1264–1325; Shūdō Ishii); Shinran 親鸞 (1173–1262; Dennis

Hirota); Nichiren 日蓮 (1222–1282; Ruben L. F. Habito); Chūgan Engetsu 中巖圓月 (1300–1375; Steffen Döll); Ikkyū Sōjun 一休宗純 (1394–1481; Andrew W. Whitehead); Bankei 盤珪 (1622–1693; Enshō Kobayashi); Hakuin 白隠 (1686–1769; Juhn Y. Ahn); Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之 (1863–1903; Robert F. Rhodes); Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919; Rainer Schulzer); Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 (1870–1945; Mayuko Uehara); Suzuki Daisetsu Teitarō 鈴木大拙貞太郎 (a.k.a. D. T. Suzuki, 1870–1966; Michiko Yusa); Hiratsuka Raichō 平塚らいてう (1886–1971; Saeko Kimura); Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一 (1889–1980; André van der Braak); Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 (1900–1990; John W. M. Krummel); Nakamura Hajime 中村元 (1912–1999; Toshi'ichi Endo); Tamaki Kōshirō 玉城康四郎 (1915–1999; Makio Takemura); and Ueda Shizuteru 上田閑照 (Bret W. Davis).

There is a caveat, though. The chapters of part 2 differ not only in content but also often in how they approach the theme of Japanese Buddhist philosophy. I found at work at least four different modus operandi across the chapters:

1. Some give a historical or bibliographical account of the philosopher.
2. Some explain what is philosophically significant and influential about the thinker.
3. Some interpret the figure in a way that sheds new light on previous readings of that philosopher.
4. Some analyze the philosopher's thought in a way that raises a philosophical or methodological point of broader relevance to either Japanese religious thought or religion/philosophy in general.

Several chapters, of course, engage multiple approaches, but for this review, I will divide them as above.

Scholars who adopt standpoint one, the informational and explanatory approach, need not themselves act as philosophers in doing so. They may write as intellectual historians, textual exegetes, or certain kinds of buddhologists. For this volume, they take as a given that the subject of their chapter is a philosopher and proceed to explain the biographical source of the thinker's ideas, or discuss the impact of his or her ideas on Japanese religion and culture, or trace the trajectory of the philosopher's thought through a bibliographical analysis. Ishii's Keizan, Kobayashi's Bankei, Ahn's Hakuin, Rhodes's Kiyozawa, Schulzer's Inoue, Kimura's Raichō, and Endo's Nakamura chapters fit this model most squarely.

Standpoint two is the quest to specify philosophical relevance. It is a popular approach and many chapters, at least in part, follow it. Particularly noteworthy examples include Gardiner's explanation of how Kūkai's esoteric theory of embodiment leads to engagement in this world; Ford's demonstration of Jōkei's reinterpretation of Hossō 法相 as fortifying the philosophical acceptance of Buddhist pluralism against

the selectivism of Pure Land thought; Heine's deft analysis revealing how Dōgen's *waka* 和歌 and discursive discussions of temporality and impermanence are philosophically of a single piece; Döll's intricate and nuanced analysis of Chūgan's movement between the philosophical heritages of Buddhist and Confucian thought in the early Gozan 五山 (Five Mountain) tradition of Zen; and Yusa's marvelously rich and well-documented analysis of Suzuki's logic of *sokuhi* 即非, showing its inspiration in Buddhist texts and its philosophical blossoming in the exchanges between Suzuki and Nishida.

Approach three is also common in JBP as it aims to correct or supplement previous interpretations in the scholarly literature. Representative of this standpoint are: Forte's treatment of Saichō to illuminate how Chinese Tiantai 天台 Buddhism was not imported to Japan and subsequently Japanized, but rather that Saichō himself, even while in China, was modifying the Tiantai tradition as handed down by Zhiyi 智顗 (538–597); Blum's argument that Hōnen's hermeneutic theory transformed the context of *mappō* 末法 from a historical to a psychological theory and that this modification did not begin with Shinran as often believed; Hirota's emphasis on Shinran as developing not an afterlife-oriented "faith religion," but rather one that uses language to reorient awareness in this world, opening a new vista on philosophical truths; Whitehead's interpretation of Ikkyū's poetry and licentious behavior as having not only shock value in Zen praxis, but also as serving a deeper purpose in deconstructing the sedimented views of language and body in the routinized life of Zen practitioners; van der Braak's analysis of Hisamatsu's philosophy as having two phases, that associated with the "Formless Self" of "Oriental nothingness" and the less well-known phase associated with the subsequent engagement in the world as "All Mankind" and "Suprahistorical history"; Uehara's persuasive demonstration that Nishida's treatment of the somatic was central not only in his later philosophy (as is widely known), but also in his earliest work; and Krummel's interpretation that although Nishitani uses many Buddhist concepts, his focus is not at all on Buddhist philosophy, but philosophical problems surrounding nihilism and modernity, and as such, was more adept in his use of Western philosophy than was Nishida.

For standpoint four, the most obvious examples include: Habito's treatment of Nichiren to argue that religious praxis is always most profound when it goes beyond individual transformation to the transformation of the world through active engagement; Takemura's evaluation of Tamaki as an example of how dependence on one's own religious experience can at once enliven one's scholarly expression, but also cloud objectivity in interpreting Buddhist philosophy; and Davis's nuanced analysis of Ueda's Zen-inspired philosophy of language, supplemented with his own insights into Zen praxis, in order to show how Zen's ideal is to be "both free from language for language" (p. 734).

The Dao Companion to Japanese Buddhist Philosophy *as a Milestone in Scholarly Progress*

Having already commented on the specifics of JBP, the second part of this review considers the book's significance against a broader backdrop. In his introduction, Kopf says that the volume will address questions about the nature of philosophy, religion, and Japanology, as well as their intersections. After evaluating the contributors' responses, I see this book as a milestone, signifying remarkable progress in scholarship over the past century and a half. Such a work could not have been written even two or three decades ago, and certainly not with such a stellar cast of contributors. This realization motivates me to assess where the scholarship currently stands, whence it has come, and whither it might be going. To organize my reflections, I will break down the title *Japanese Buddhist Philosophy* into three overlapping fields, giving individual attention to each: Buddhist philosophy, Japanese Buddhism, and Japanese philosophy.

First, we have "Buddhist philosophy." When Buddhism became a topic of Victorian scholarly interest, the Pali Text Society focused on the Theravada tradition, framing it as more a philosophy than a religion—a "wisdom tradition." By the early twentieth century, though, with the emergence of such academic disciplines as *Religionswissenschaft,* anthropology, comparative religion, the study of Buddhist art and ritual, and so forth, Buddhism acquired the new status of being a "world religion." That made "Buddhist philosophy" an activity within the Buddhist religion, much as we speak of Christian, Jewish, or Islamic philosophies. But exactly what activity? The answer is not obvious. Even in the Abrahamic cases, we encounter knotty issues about the relation between religion and philosophy. How much more so when we consider a religion from a cultural sphere in which "philosophy," "religion," and even "Buddhism" are themselves not indigenous terms, but Western projections (see Payne, ch. 1). Yet, precisely because scholars of philosophy and religion coexist in the Western academy alongside scholars of Buddhism, synergy between the former two fields inevitably affects methodological questions in the third as well. So, let us begin by outlining the three traditional ways in which philosophy has interacted with religion in the modern West.

First, religion can use philosophy to explain or clarify its teachings for the spiritual betterment of its own members. That is, so-called *edifying religious philosophy* may serve a pedagogical purpose within religious praxis by organizing teachings into first and secondary principles, developing analogies, addressing confusions about orthodoxy or orthopraxis, and so forth. Consider how philosophical rabbinics or Jesuit theology might inform a sermon or book of spiritual guidance, for instance. In such cases, formal arguments may play a minor role, if any, generally yielding to the more practical pedagogical task of making the audience into better practicing Jews or Catholics.

This explanatory and edifying form of religious philosophy is often not persuasive to people outside the tradition, nor is it intended to be. As simple a point as this may

seem, it is often overlooked. For example, a Zen utterance may trigger a moment of clarification for a practicing Zen Buddhist but have little or no value in converting an outsider to Zen. Hence, many of D. T. Suzuki's writings resonate dramatically when preached to the converted but lead skeptical outsiders to walk away in a huff. As we will see later, incidentally, this does not mean that such edifying discourse is of no relevance at all to philosophers outside the tradition.

Like edifying religious philosophy, the second interface between philosophy and religion also occurs within the tradition itself. *Constructive religious philosophy* expands the religious understanding of self and world through the application of philosophical methods (using logic to root out inconsistencies or heretical interpretations that do not jibe with tradition, analyzing differences between closely related terms, posing arguments against rival religious worldviews, deducing new teachings derived from what has already been accepted, using phenomenology to clarify the nature of some experiences, etc.). In the Abrahamic traditions, these activities often fall under the rubric of philosophical theology. When there is a vibrant secular philosophy available to the religion, constructive religious philosophers will often use that as a resource for furthering their own religious philosophizing (as Thomas Aquinas used Aristotle, or as Martin Buber, Paul Tillich, and Karl Rahner all used Martin Heidegger, for example). What aspects of Buddhist thought fall into this category of constructive religious philosophizing?

Obviously, Buddhist logic is one. It is undeniably philosophical, it expands on Buddhist doctrine, and it may draw on non-Buddhist philosophy for some terms and methods. JBP includes examples like the Tiantai/Tendai 天台 logic of the three truths (Forte, ch. 11), the dialectical logic in Hiromatsu Wataru 廣松渉 (1933–1994) and Kōyama (Asakura, ch. 7), and Suzuki's logic of *sokuhi* (Yusa, ch. 26). Buddhist ethics may also be a candidate for constructive religious philosophizing, but only when it involves the evaluation of Buddhist arguments based on reason, not simply the authority of texts or masters. That is, not every Buddhist ethical discussion or claim qualifies as philosophical in this constructive sense. To so qualify, its conclusions must follow inferentially from premises that are themselves supported with evidence or argument and not simply by an appeal to authority (what is called *śabdha* in Sanskrit). JBP includes arguments for various ethical theories of engagement based in such constructive Buddhist philosophy (Takemura, ch. 3; Habito, ch. 18). The same would apply to Buddhist political philosophies (Shields, ch. 9; Kimura, ch. 27).

What kind of philosophizing occurs in determining the meaning of Buddhist texts? In the past two or three decades, Western hermeneutic and postmodern philosophies have leaked through cracks in the disciplinary foundations of positivistic historiography and scientific philology. Responding to that situation, Buddhist studies has opened itself to philosophical insights concerning intertextuality, hermeneutic circles,

authorial bias, and discourses of power. Indeed, we have come to learn that even *we* do not always completely know the full meaning of what *we* say, let alone some medieval Japanese Buddhist whose writings have been recorded and copied how many times by who knows whom with whatever agenda, conscious or unconscious. When that new light broke into the buddhologists' studies, they also discovered that Buddhist thinkers had long established exegetical methods and hermeneutical theories of their own, incorporating issues related to theories of language, textual production, perspective of audience, and so forth. All those can fall under the category of Buddhist philosophy as constructive religious philosophizing. Such constructive Buddhist philosophical theories of language are well represented in JBP (e.g., Heine, ch. 15; Hirota, ch. 17; Davis, ch. 32).

What about Buddhist soteriology and ritual/meditation? Until the late twentieth century, these were considered the most "religious" aspects of Buddhists' daily lives, dealing with praxis as distinct from doctrine or theory. As such, their analysis was left mostly to the anthropologists, historians of religion, and comparative religionists. Being theory-oriented, philosophers were assumed to have no role. This narrow understanding of praxis has also been challenged, and the very first footnote in JBP (Payne, p. 3) defines "praxis" as a dialectical relation between doctrine and practice rather than a dichotomizing opposition between thought and action. Statements formerly seen as practical instructions or metaphysical speculations are now sometimes revealed to be *metapractical* (i.e., philosophical) justifications about *why* and *how* the praxis is effective. (See Blum, ch. 14 and Hirota, ch. 17, respectively, for Hōnen's and Shinran's reinterpretation of traditional Pure Land discourse about praxis, from being practical instructions for achieving a good afterlife, into being a metapractical justification for the role of praxis as a psychologically or cognitively transformed engagement with this world.)

Such discoveries of a constructive philosophical layer in the Buddhist discourse about language and praxis reflects, at least in part, advances in the third interface between philosophy and religion, the *critical philosophy of religion*. Unlike the edifying and constructive religious philosophers, the critical philosopher of religion takes a standpoint (even if only for methodological purposes) outside religious traditions to ask what religion is and what purpose or function it fulfills. David Hume, for example, is sometimes considered the first critical philosopher of religion in the modern West when he argued in *The Natural History of Religion* (1757) that all religions originate in fear and, as such, are essentially independent of both reason and morality.

When religious studies became its own discipline as a discrete department within the university in the 1960s, it institutionalized its subfields into areas like ritual studies, psychology of religion, sociology of religion, anthropology of religion, textual studies, and philosophy of religion. This led to a schism among philosophers of religion between those wanting to continue from a standpoint that privileged the categories of

Abrahamic religions and others eager to engage in dialogue with religion scholars of other subfields and traditions. As a result, today's large research universities often have a "traditional" philosopher of religion housed in the philosophy department and a "comparative" philosopher of religion who interfaces with historians of religion in the religious studies department. Most often, it is the latter who study Buddhist philosophy.

The comparative critical philosophers of religion were immediately drawn, of course, to the philosophical arguments found in Buddhist texts of a constructive philosophical nature. But they soon also showed interest in edifying Buddhist philosophical materials. Being pedagogical, they highlighted what the followers of the religion themselves found most important in the teachings of their tradition, thus giving the critical philosophers of religion an insight into the religion as lived and how it affects its members. That would have a direct bearing on the question of the nature and function of religion.

Consider this analogy. Suppose I were doing a critical philosophy not of religion but of humor. As part of my research, I read a collection of insider jokes from groups to which I do not belong. Not being an insider, I would not necessarily expect to laugh, but after a while, I might be able to formulate some insight into how insider jokes work. Applying the analogy, by studying the edifying Buddhist philosophical texts, a critical philosopher of religion may not be personally transformed spiritually, but might be able to understand better how Buddhist spiritual transformation works. In JBP, we have several discussions of what religious language or mandalas *do* in Japanese Buddhism, beyond their referential functions (see Winfield, ch. 8; Heine, ch. 15; Whitehead, ch. 20; Davis, ch. 32).

Furthermore, the critical philosophers of religion do not just absorb information from their religious studies colleagues, but have also contributed new methods and perspectives helpful to understanding religious phenomenon. I have already mentioned theories of language and interpretation. We can add to that phenomenological theories of embodiment, contributions of neuropsychology to understanding the modification of experiential states, and the cognitive science of judgment and behavior. Most provocative of all, as we saw with the case of Buddhist hermeneutics and theories of language, once Western philosophies of embodiment, neuropsychology, and cognitive science were applied to Buddhist religious phenomena of praxis, scholars discovered there were already in the emic conceptual system of Buddhism its own constructive theories performing philosophical functions parallel to those in the West. This opened the door to comparative and collaborative work in many areas, from medicine to performance studies to artificial intelligence.

My second breakdown of the book's title considers the term "Japanese Buddhism." What progress does the milestone mark in that regard? For much of the first century of

buddhological studies in Japan as well as in the West, the term "Japanese Buddhism" meant, in effect, "Buddhism in Japan." That is, the focus was on how we find in Japan a particular manifestation of something not inherently Japanese called "Buddhism." So, scholarly accounts commonly accused Dōgen or Shinran, for example, of "misinterpreting" this or that Chinese Buddhist term or concept. If doubts remained, we could trace the word or idea back to the "original" Sanskrit meaning from which the Chinese had been derived. Notice that this slant in scholarship fits the premise of naive positivism as a translation strategy: every word has one and only one meaning/translation in any context and every historical event only one true account.[1] As we move along the road in the early twentieth century toward our milestone, however, this idea that Japanese Buddhism is no more than corrupted original Buddhism came into question.

German idealism dominated philosophical thinking in prewar Japan. Its explanation of history as the unfolding dialectic of ideas through time led many Buddhist scholars to trace the progression of Buddhism from India to China (to Korea) to Japan as schools of thought moving from one culture to the next in a structured sequence. For instance, the understanding was that Chinese Tiantai Buddhism was imported into Japan, was Japanized, and eventually became Tendai Buddhism. This was now seen as less a mistake or a corruption than as a necessary development in the relentless, often unconscious, logic of history that Hegel and his followers often referred to as the "cunning of reason."

In the postwar decades, partly supported by the end of Japan's persecution of Marxist thought, more materialist forms of historiography came to the fore. One trend was to place the agency of historical change not in ideas or the interaction of schools of thought, but more squarely on the shoulders of "the people," either collectively as social movements or as key individuals. Put simply, ideas do not change history; people *with* ideas do. This altered how we now view the Tiantai/Tendai relation, for example.

As Forte demonstrates (ch. 11), Tiantai Buddhism did not enter Japan as the pure system of Buddhist thought it was on Mount Tiantai. Rather, Saichō entered Japan. That was after his trip from Japan to China and his study on Mount Tiantai where he already formed some interpretations that did not quite coincide with Zhiyi's, and after he had acquired some training in esotericism on his way home that would become a central part of Tendai *taimitsu* 台密. So, the old "Japanization of Tiantai" narrative has been replaced by the narrative about the experience of an influential Japanese Bud-

[1] A version of the so-called "critical Buddhism" movement is a throwback to this outmoded way of thinking by claiming that if Siddhartha did not teach it, it is not "Buddhism," so Japanese Buddhism is not really Buddhism. Note that this only makes sense if "Japanese Buddhism" means "Buddhism in Japan" and does not allow that it could mean "the religion of Japanese Buddhists."

dhist. Similarly, if our interest in Japanese Buddhism is the early Five Mountain Zen tradition, we will better understand the dynamic among Buddhism, classical Confucianism, and neo-Confucianism by focusing on how a particular Japanese Buddhist like Chūgan (see Döll, ch. 19) negotiated his own spiritual identity among them rather than by studying the doctrines of the schools in the abstract.

To sum up: over the last century the study of Japanese Buddhism has evolved from the study of Buddhism with Japanese aberrations, then to the study of Buddhism as dialectically evolving across time and place into its present Japanese schools or sects, and finally to the study of Japanese Buddhist persons, past and present (some of whom may not have even self-identified as such).

This focus on Japanese Buddhism as Japanese Buddhists has implications for studying Buddhist praxis as well. Take the example of Zen. Rather than making abstract statements about Zen praxis in general, or limiting our understanding to one case without venturing any generalizations, the critical philosopher of religion can use phenomenological methods to draw out the dynamics in multiple cases from different times, sects, genders, and personalities. In JBP I found nine discussions of the Zen praxis of individuals and how that influenced their philosophical views: Dōgen (chs. 2, 15), Mugai Nyodai 無外如大 (1223–1298; ch. 4), Raichō (chs. 4, 27), Nishiari Bokusan 西有穆山 (1821–1910; ch. 6), Ikkyū (ch. 20), Bankei (ch. 21), Nishida (ch. 25), Tamaki (ch. 31), and Ueda (ch. 32). A single study of all could yield a better understanding of the praxis of Zen Buddhism as the praxis of Zen Buddhists and how that relates to Japanese philosophy.

That brings us to our final breakdown of the book's title, the phrase "Japanese Philosophy." The eminent scholar of Japanese literature, Edward Seidensticker, once confessed that he used to open his survey course on East Asian civilizations at Columbia University by saying he had encountered two oxymorons in his studies: Chinese music and Japanese philosophy. So, it seems our milestone stands alongside a road that began in muddy terrain. It became a narrow footpath when the qualification was added that there is indeed such a thing as Japanese philosophy, but only in the modern period when Japanese thinkers were introduced to Western philosophy and followed in its footsteps. Eventually, as Western scholars delved more deeply into the writings of Nishida Kitarō and the Kyoto school, they acknowledged the creativity in modern Japanese philosophy, discovering elements beyond the mere imitation of Western ideas and methods. Then, having recognized Nishitani, Tanabe Hajime 田辺元 (1885–1962), and Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎 (1889–1960) as legitimate philosophers, it was impossible to ignore that they themselves had found their own philosophical predecessors in premodern Japan.

As a result, the trend in English (as with most other European languages) is to use the term "Japanese philosophy" to include premodern as well as modern figures, as

indeed JBP does (see Maraldo, ch. 2, for his vigorous justification for doing so). That is also the convention in internationally recognized reference works such as the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online), the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (online), the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, *The Oxford Handbook of Japanese Philosophy* (2019), and *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2011). My own *Engaging Japanese Philosophy: A Short History* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2018) even details continuities between the premodern and the modern traditions.

Yet among scholars in Japan there remain many stragglers who lag behind on the road toward our milestone, continuing to limit the Japanese term "Nihon *tetsugaku*" only to Western-influenced, modern Japanese philosophy. Given their usage, the Japanese term would best be translated as "modern Japanese academic philosophy" rather than "Japanese philosophy." Like the outdated interpretation of "Japanese Buddhism" as "Buddhism in Japan," "Nihon *tetsugaku*" means "philosophy in Japan" rather than "philosophizing by Japanese people." The Chinese clearly understood the situation differently.

When the Chinese borrowed the Japanese word for philosophy with the same sinographs (Zhongguo *zhexue* 中国哲学), they applied it to their entire philosophical tradition from ancient times to the present. And the Japanese use that term for Chinese philosophy in that comprehensive sense as well. Why then do they hesitate to do the same for their own culture and use "Nihon *tetsugaku*" in a parallel fashion? For years, I thought the Japanese might be embarrassed by their premodern tradition, thinking it inferior to "real" philosophy (as in the claim by Nakae Chōmin 中江兆民 [1847–1901] that Japan has no philosophers). Yet, if that were true, would not the Japanese also believe ancient China lacked "philosophy" as well? Come to think of it, why do Japanese think that the neo-Confucianism of someone like Zhuxi 朱熹 (1130–1200), for example, is "Zhongguo *zhexue*" when in China, but "Nihon *shisō*" 日本思想 when in Japan? The fact that Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944) did originally label such Japanese neo-Confucianism "*tetsugaku*," but the Japanese generally no longer do, is even more befuddling. I fear something darker may be at play, if only on the unconscious level.

Perhaps Kokugaku 国学 (Native Studies) and Kokka Shintō 国家神道 (State Shinto) ideologies have created such a rut in the Japanese *tetsugaku no michi* 哲学の道 (path of philosophy) that the real issue for some Japanese is not that the premodern Japanese fall short of meeting the standard for philosophy (*tetsugaku*). Rather, the hesitancy may be that they believe philosophy as Nihon *tetsugaku* cannot plumb the depth of sensitivity and insight found in the *kokoro* 心 (mindful heart) of premodern Japan.

When the Ministry of Education developed its curricula for teaching the Japanese language in 1978, the Japanese language for nonnative Japanese was officially called "*nihongo*" 日本語 (lit. "language of Japan") and the Japanese language for native Japa-

nese, "*kokugo*" 国語 (lit. "language of [our] nation"). Some linguists like Suzuki Takao 鈴木孝夫 (1926–2021) opined that foreigners did not need to learn *kokugo*, and as foreigners, probably could never really master it anyway. For the sake of international understanding, *nihongo* would suffice. Do some Japanese think of Nihon *tetsugaku,* like *nihongo*, as something for international discourse, whereas premodern Japanese philosophy is distinct, something not really meant for foreigners? And possibly premodern Japanese philosophy is *koku tetsugaku* 国哲学 as distinct from Nihon *tetsugaku*?

Foreigners like Maraldo (ch. 2), Müller (ch. 6), and I (in *Engaging Japanese Philosophy*), as well as Japanese philosophers like Tanabe, Nishitani, Miki, and Watsuji have all found continuities between premodern and modern Japanese philosophy. The Nihon *tetsugaku no michi* 日本哲学の道 goes from ancient Japan out into the world as part of global philosophy. JBP is a milestone on this path. On the detour called the *koku tetsugaku no michi* 国哲学の道, however, you will find no such milestone because it is only a path circling back into the darkness of ethnocentric exceptionalism. The refusal to include the premodern under the rubric of "Nihon *tetsugaku*" may, in the end, amount to no more than a desperate, obstinate attempt to preserve the past by ignoring it.