

Tracing the Circle of Truth: Inoue Enryō on the History of Philosophy and Buddhism

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I. Introduction

IS Buddhism a philosophy, a religion, both, or neither? Although this is a question that we usually avoid because of its unwieldy scope, it was an important problem for Meiji-period Buddhists. In their attempts to tackle this question, Meiji Buddhists and philosophers also reinterpreted the meaning of Buddhism, philosophy and religion. One of the most interesting and prolific thinkers that addressed these rather large issues was Inoue Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919).¹

Although he is now largely forgotten, he was very well known in the Meiji period. He was a best-selling author who published on a wide range of topics such as philosophy, Buddhism, psychology, nationalism, the study of supernatural beings and educational philosophy. He was equally active in the application and realization of his theoretical endeavors. He founded the Tetsugakkan 哲学館, a private institute of philosophy, which later became Tōyō University 東洋大学. Inoue was also known for his *yōkai gaku* 妖怪学, detailed studies on ghosts and supernatural phenomena, which were aimed at proving their non-existence. His numerous lectures on this topic earned him

¹ For an overview of Inoue's life and intellectual activities in English, see Staggs 1983.

the nickname *Yōkai hakase* 妖怪博士, “Doctor Ghost.”² Inoue was also a core member of the nationalist organization *Seikyō-sha* 政教社, a group of intellectuals who opposed overreaching Westernization and sought to define and preserve Japan’s national essence or *kokusui* 国粹. The multidimensionality of Inoue provides us with a unique point of view on a rapidly changing Japan.

He was born in 1858 in Echigo 越後 (Niigata prefecture), the eldest son of a Buddhist priest affiliated with the Ōtani branch 大谷派 (Higashi Honganji 東本願寺) of the Jōdo Shin denomination 浄土真宗. Because this position was hereditary, Inoue was ordained into this denomination and was expected to succeed to his father’s position. In 1878, Inoue was selected to study in Tokyo with a scholarship from Higashi Honganji. As a student at Tokyo Imperial University, he studied Western philosophy with Ernest F. Fenollosa (1853–1908), who made a lasting impression on him. Inoue was the first graduate of this university who had specialized in philosophy. Upon graduation in 1885, he was offered positions in the government as well as in the Higashi Honganji organization. He refused both, just as he would continue to refuse official positions throughout his life. Since the Jōdo Shin denomination had sponsored his studies, he was expected to become a teacher within the organization in return, but he declined such a career. Inoue was diplomatic enough to be able to go his own way without openly clashing with the denominational authorities. Even though he was one of the modernizers of Buddhism, he avoided a close relationship with this Buddhist denomination.

The introduction of Western philosophy and science in the late Edo and Meiji periods led to enormous intellectual changes in Japan. Buddhism was under immense social and political pressure and questions of how to characterize it became a significant problem for Buddhists. It could no longer describe itself without reference to the new Western categories of “philosophy,” “religion” and “science.” Although Buddhism is now generally regarded as a religion, for Meiji Buddhists and philosophers this was not self-evident, because the word “religion” was closely associated with Christianity in this period.³ Further, the term, *tetsugaku* 哲学, was usually reserved for Western philosophy. A number of contemporary Buddhists and other intellectuals chose “philosophy” as a more appropriate characterization. Buddhist thinkers also had to make sense of the contradictions between Buddhism and these Western ideas. This intellectual stress can be compared

² For the context and a study of Inoue’s ghost studies, see Figal 1999.

³ For the development of the concept of religion in Meiji Japan, see Isomae 2003.

with that which medieval Christian philosophers must have felt in their attempt to reconcile Christian dogma with the newly translated works of Aristotle. Both “religion” and “philosophy” were new categories that posed real interpretative problems for Meiji Buddhists. Inoue tried to solve these problems by interpreting Buddhism as a modern philosophy. In this process, he redefined both Buddhism and philosophy, which makes him a philosopher in his own right, and not simply a Buddhist apologist. As such, the role of Western philosophy in Inoue (and others) was *not*, as has often been argued, simply a rhetorical strategy.

Inoue’s choice of the phrase “Buddhist philosophy” indicates that he was both a Buddhist and a practitioner of Western philosophy. The connection between his writings on Western philosophy and Buddhism has not been given sufficient attention in the relevant literature. Further, the attempt to interpret his thought solely through his book, *Bukkyō katsuron joron* 仏教活論序論 (An Introduction to the Revitalization of Buddhism), has led to evaluations of his work, such as “eclectic,” which are reductionist in that they gloss over the specific interpretative problems Buddhist thinkers in the Meiji era faced. For example, Judith Snodgrass has devoted one chapter to Inoue in her book on the Columbian exposition and the international context of Meiji Buddhist discourse, in which she observes that, “nowhere does he give an explanation of any Western philosophy,” and argues that his use of Western philosophy is best understood as a deployment of Western authority.⁴ In the following, I will show that Inoue’s use of philosophy and his answers to contemporary problems were more complex than has been acknowledged in this and other studies.

In this article, I will first address some of the problems faced by Buddhism in the Meiji period and consider how Inoue tried to overcome them through the combination of Western philosophy and Buddhism. In order to blend these two traditions, he needed to address the development of both. I will describe his interpretation of these histories and point out some problems in this account. In the conclusion, I will discuss *the function of his interpretation of the history of Buddhism* in his project to revitalize Buddhism, and attempt to explain what this means for our understanding of Inoue in general.

⁴ Snodgrass 2003, pp. 147, 154.

The Challenge of Revitalizing Buddhism

Inoue's project of revitalizing Buddhism must be seen against the background of the persecution of Buddhism and the subsequent reform movements in the Meiji period.⁵ Even before the Meiji Restoration, Buddhism had become highly unpopular among the intellectual elite, especially within nativist circles. The Meiji revolution brought these nativist scholars to political prominence and gave them a brief, but significant, chance to make anti-Buddhist policies a central aspect in the new government's attempt to restructure the social order. Shinto and Buddhism had coexisted more or less as a doctrinal and institutional unity, but were now forcibly separated. Shinto myths were used as the central justifying ideology of the emperor-system. At the same time, Buddhism was persecuted and suddenly lost its former position in the Japanese political order.

Gradually, Buddhists came to realize that a return to the past was impossible and that Buddhism had to redefine itself in order to find a place in a rapidly modernizing society. Inoue was one of the progressive Buddhists in the Meiji era who responded to the threat that Buddhism faced and tried to redefine it and its social position.

To understand the difficulty of the task of revitalizing Buddhism, one needs to look at the criticisms that it faced. Anti-Buddhist thought and propaganda took many forms and reached the very foundations of Buddhism. First of all, Buddhism's foreign origin became problematic in this period of national unification. In the creation of a national ideology, centered around the emperor and justified by nativist myths, this foreign religion was interpreted as an anomaly in Japanese society.

Secondly, Buddhism was said to be socially and economically deficient, decadent and wasteful. There was much rivalry among the different Buddhist denominations, which was seen as a sign of the self-centeredness of the Buddhist clergy. A decadent and profligate Buddhist church was attacked as contributing nothing to the strengthening of the nation. Also, because Buddhism had enjoyed a privileged status and a significant role in the recently overthrown Tokugawa political system, it was discredited as an "evil of the past," and an impediment to modernization.

Further, Buddhism was said to be no longer a credible explanation of the

⁵ Buddhism in the Meiji period has not been researched as extensively as other periods of Japanese Buddhism. For the persecution of, and the changes in, Buddhism in that period, in English, see Ketelaar 1990, and Colcutt 1986.

world. During the eighteenth century, Japan's intellectual climate began to change, in part because of the importation of Western science and philosophy. Western science, medicine and technology came to replace classical Chinese science and philosophy as the prime source of knowledge. In this process, the credibility of Buddhism suffered greatly. In particular, Buddhist religious cosmology could not be defended as a credible alternative to Western science.

Buddhism's own history also came to be used as a critique against it. Mahāyāna Buddhism was treated by European Buddhologists and influential Japanese writers, most notably Tominaga Nakamoto 富永仲基 (1715–1746), as a deviation from “original Buddhism,” or Buddhism as taught by the Buddha. Consequently Japanese Buddhism, which is of the Mahāyāna variety, was seen, if it was accepted as Buddhism at all, as inauthentic. The “theory that Mahāyāna is not the Buddha's teachings” (*daijō hibussetsu ron* 大乘非仏説論) became a major theoretical and doctrinal problem for Meiji-era Buddhists.

Finally, Christianity, which had been forbidden and persecuted in Japan since the seventeenth century, reappeared in force after the conclusion of the treaties with the Western powers. Although not the greatest source of criticism of Buddhism, Christianity was perceived by Buddhists as their worst enemy.⁶

Inoue tried to overcome these criticisms by interpreting Buddhism as a modern philosophy that was essential for the Japanese nation. Before we look at his solution to the problems faced by Buddhism, we must realize the sociological import of defining it as a “philosophy.” Although in English it is now common to speak of “Buddhist philosophy,” the term, “philosophy” (*tetsugaku*), was at that time a new concept for Japanese. *Tetsugaku* was one of the many neologisms in a time of large-scale copying from the West. In fact, Inoue used a whole range of Western vocabulary such as “evolution,” “science,” “absolute truth,” and “nation,” which must have made his writings appear modern and new for contemporary readers. On a larger scale, the importation, translation and use of these concepts were central aspects of the modernization of Japanese society.

Philosophy was basically a new discipline for the Japanese. The first modern (i.e., Western-style) Japanese philosophers, most notably Nishi Amane 西周 (1829–1897), faced the immense task of translating and introducing a

⁶ For the relation between Buddhism and Christianity in the Meiji period, see Thelle 1987.

whole new field of study. It is less well known that Japanese intellectuals at the time faced the problem of how to match the new concepts of philosophy and religion with their native traditions of thought. There was disagreement over whether or not Buddhism and Confucianism were in fact a “philosophy” and also over the question of whether or not they possessed a “philosophy.”⁷ Nishi and Nakae Chōmin 中江兆民 were both of the opinion that Japan had never produced any philosophy. However, some philosophers like Tanaka Ōdō 田中王堂 (1867–1932), Torio Koyata 鳥尾小弥太 (1847–1905), Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944) and Inoue Enryō maintained that Buddhism and Confucianism either possessed or were a “philosophy.” Ultimately, these interpretations did not succeed. In modern Japanese, Buddhist theory is referred to as “Buddhist thought” (*bukkyō shisō* 仏教思想), and *not* as “Buddhist philosophy” (*bukkyō tetsugaku* 仏教哲学) as Inoue and others proposed.⁸ The point here is not that the self-presentation of Buddhism as a “philosophy” is anachronistic, but rather that Westernization and modernization resulted in a number of changes in the *self-understanding and self-representation* of Buddhism. While in previous eras, Buddhists had understood and represented their teachings and practices in terms of different denominations or in comparison with, for example, “Confucianism” (which is also a very problematic construct), in the Meiji period much of Buddhism’s self-perception and self-representation was conducted in, or mediated by, Western distinctions and categories. This problem of the self-definition of Buddhism vis-à-vis Western categories of philosophy and religion in this period has scarcely been researched. Inoue Enryō is important because he was one of the most active and explicit contemporary thinkers who attempted to find a solution for this problem. His texts are significant in that they deal explicitly with this problem of the self-description of Buddhism.

Inoue himself was well aware of and indeed emphasized the fact that this interpretation of Buddhism as a modern philosophy was new. For example, in his most important work, *Bukkyō katsuron* 仏教活論 (*The Revitalization of Buddhism*),⁹ he writes that he wants to “separate the philosophical parts and

⁷ See Ikeda 2001.

⁸ The difference between the Japanese and the Chinese case is remarkable. In the 1920s, Chinese philosophers, most notably Feng You-lan 馮友蘭 claimed that Chinese thought, including Buddhism, was philosophy (*zhe xue*, the Chinese pronunciation of the borrowed word *tetsugaku*).

⁹ This voluminous work was published in several parts. *Bukkyō katsuron joron* (An Introduction to the Revitalization of Buddhism), published in 1887, became a national best-seller.

the religious parts that exist in Buddhism, and group, according to [these] categories, all the elements of the two that are found in the sutras and explanatory texts, then generalize this and formulate a coherent line of reason.”¹⁰ The previously undifferentiated Buddhism was to be taken apart and rebuilt according to new categories.

Inoue interpreted Buddhism as “a religion based on philosophy,” but his writings on Buddhism are almost exclusively concerned with philosophy. We will look in more detail at the content of this philosophy later. What needs to be stressed is firstly, that this interpretation was a new and modern categorization of Buddhism, and that this new interpretation was meant to overcome the criticisms by anti-Buddhist thinkers. Both were parts of the “revitalization” of Buddhism, i.e., Inoue’s attempt to pull it out of its crisis.

In retrospect, we can distinguish three theoretical stages or layers in the attempt by Inoue to prove Buddhism’s intellectual value. In the first phase, he denies the philosophical and scientific value¹¹ of Christianity. Its growing popularity among the intellectual elite was a major headache for Meiji Buddhists. Inoue was troubled by the thought of Christianity spreading widely throughout Japan. Indeed, he devoted whole books, along with the first half of his magnum opus, *Bukkyō katsuron*, to its refutation. Inoue turned the criticism leveled against Buddhism, that it is not a valid explanation of the world, against Christianity. Apart from the plethora of contradictions and absurdities Inoue discerned in Christianity, he particularly emphasized that the Christian doctrine of creation was incompatible with the modern scientific principles of the conservation of energy, the indestructibility of matter and the law of cause and effect.

In the second phase, Inoue argues that Buddhism, in contrast to Christianity, accords with modern science and philosophy. The way that he tried to prove how they were in accordance with each other will be described in the

The main body of the work consists of two parts. *Bukkyō katsuron honron dai ippen: haja katsuron* 仏教活論本論第一編 破邪活論 (The Revitalization of Buddhism Part One: Refuting False Doctrines) and *Kenshō katsuron* 顯正活論 (Part Two: Bringing out the Truth), are a refutation of Christianity, and a new philosophical interpretation of Buddhism, respectively. What was originally meant to be the third part appeared as a separate book in 1912, under the title *Katsu bukkyō* 活仏教 (Living Buddhism).

¹⁰ Inoue 1990a, p. 222.

¹¹ Note that Inoue, like most other Meiji intellectuals, made some sort of distinction between philosophy and science, but saw both of them as belonging to one whole, and ascribed the same authority to both. Inoue saw philosophy as the unifying science, or the study of the principles which underlie those of all particular sciences.

next section. As for science, he compared the law of causality in Buddhism with that of cause and effect in science. Furthermore, Buddhism, unlike Christianity, assumes that the world has always existed and will do so forever.¹² Therefore, it is in keeping with the principle of the indestructibility of matter.

However, one could argue that, if Buddhism is of equal value as Western philosophy and science, Japan should continue to import the latter and discard Buddhism. In the third phase, Inoue argues that Buddhism has an extra value in comparison to Western philosophy and science. According to him, Buddhism is the only successful combination of philosophy and religion. As a philosophy, it is based on universal truth. As a religion, Buddhism shows the way in which individuals can reach that truth in enlightenment. Thus Buddhism is the application (*ōryō* 応用) of philosophy. In other words, Buddhism satisfies both intellectual and emotional cravings. Inoue contrasts this with Western philosophy and religion. “Western scholars of today have searched for and tried to organize this application, but as yet have been unable to do so. We can see that it has existed in the East for already three thousand years!”¹³ We can interpret Inoue’s criticism in the following way. Regarding Christianity, there have been attempts to prove its philosophical value, but they are unconvincing because Christianity’s origins are not in philosophy. Christianity is based on revelation. Regarding Western philosophy, it always remained an intellectual insight and never succeeded in becoming a religion. In sum, Inoue argues for the supremacy of Buddhism by negating the philosophical value of Christianity and the religious value of Western philosophy.

II. History of Philosophy and Buddhism

Inoue’s interpretation of Buddhism as a philosophy is also a theory of the history of philosophy and that of Buddhism. This theme will be presented here mainly by considering two books that contain the core of his philosophical thought. Both were written around the same time. The first is *Tetsugaku yōryō* 哲学要領 (*The Essentials of Philosophy*), written between 1886 and 1888.¹⁴ The second book is his magnum opus, *Bukkyō katuron*. One of the main points here is that Inoue’s works on philosophy and Buddhism are closely

¹² In later writings, most notably *Against Materialism* (1898), Inoue used this argument to criticize the shortcomings of the evolutionary theory.

¹³ Inoue 1990a, p. 251.

¹⁴ Inoue 1987b.

related. Previous studies have not discussed the intimate connection between his philosophical texts and his Buddhist writings, despite the fact that it is the single most distinctive characteristic of his theory-construction. In the following section, we will look in detail at how *Tetsugaku yōryō* lays the philosophical basis for *Bukkyō katsuron*. The reader of the latter was assumed to be familiar with the philosophical themes explored in the former.

History of Philosophy

In *Tetsugaku yōryō*, Inoue describes the development of philosophy, East and West. The first part gives a general introduction to the field of philosophy and what he calls the “external development of philosophy” (*tetsugaku gaibu no hatten* 哲学外部の発展): a history of the different schools and philosophers in different countries. The second part describes the “inner,” logical development of philosophy.

(1) External Development of Philosophy

Inoue divides Eastern philosophy into Chinese and Indian philosophy. Western philosophy is divided in terms of time into ancient Greek and modern philosophy.¹⁵ Although this history of philosophy was meant as an introduction to philosophy, and appears to us now to be essentially a text book, it also reveals Inoue’s ideas of the development and history of philosophy.

The first point of significance is his claim that there is something like “Eastern philosophy” at all. As noted above, this was a new category in Japan, and it was an active, interpretative choice to classify various Asian systems of thought under the foreign category of “philosophy.” Inoue writes that, around the same time, several different theories started competing with each other in Greece, India and China, thereby giving rise to abstract thought and philosophy. This line of thought is similar to what Karl Jaspers later presented as the theory of the axial age, with the difference being that Inoue did not give much significance to the rise of Judaic thought. Also, Inoue, as a nationalist, was concerned with the demise of Japanese (and also Asian) culture, religion and thought. His claim that Eastern philosophy exists was meant as a wake-up call for Japanese who were too Western-minded and had discarded their own traditions, as well as a critique of a Eurocentric account of philosophy. Inoue writes the following in the preface to *Tetsugaku yōryō*:

¹⁵ Philosophy of the Roman era and the Middle Ages is excluded because it was regarded as the “dark age,” where philosophy declined because of Christianity. See Inoue 1987b, p. 128.

Inoue Tetsujirō has already published his lectures on philosophy. But that book is only a summary of Greek philosophy and does not deal with modern Western philosophy or with Eastern philosophy. Therefore, by reading that book, one comes only to know one part of philosophy, one cannot avoid the regrettable fact that one does not know the whole. My book is not like that. [I will] write down in order and compare the philosophy of old and new, East and West. I believe that the reader will come to know the grand outline of the whole system of philosophy without difficulties.¹⁶

In short, we can say that Inoue Enryō tried to globalize the history of philosophy. While doing so, he made some of the first steps in comparative philosophy.

The second point of importance is that the book familiarizes the reader with the concept of the “development” of thought. The idea of development was also relatively new in Japan. Theories of evolution were introduced by foreign teachers like Fenollosa and Japanese thinkers like Katō Hiroyuki 加藤弘之 (1836–1916), both teachers of Inoue. Theories of evolution, in particular the social Darwinism of Herbert Spencer, became a major influence on Japanese intellectual life.

Inoue applies evolutionary theory to the development of philosophy. In his view, to understand philosophy properly, one must grasp the “laws of the development of thought.” Inoue states that philosophy is a living entity, and as such is subject to many of the same laws that govern living organisms. To begin with, philosophy is organized as an organic structure. He states: “The development of thought is the same as that of an organic body, with different sorts of elements together making up a new component, and when components come together, they form a new structure.”¹⁷ The relationship between philosophy and society is also explained in organic terms. Attaching great importance to philosophy, Inoue compares it to the nervous system of the greater organism of society. One cannot develop without the other, and philosophy is the “internal spirit” that animates society.¹⁸ Philosophy is strongly influenced by its social and political environment and has to adapt itself to society in order to survive. Furthermore, philosophy thrives when its elements compete and struggle with each other. Inoue states that the comprehension

¹⁶ Inoue 1987b, p. 87.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

¹⁸ See the reprint of Inoue’s English notes on Western philosophy in Saitō 1988, p. 202.

among many schools and theories partly explains why philosophy flourished in Greece, India and China. He also argues that it explains the contemporary decline of philosophy in Asia:

[A]fter the Middle Ages, new theories perished or just did not arise. This is mainly because studies of ancient times that once flourished, had a force that almost overwhelmed society. They lasted for hundreds and thousands of years, so that new good theories challenging this [situation] could not arise. Therefore, human understanding submerged deeper into old practices. Thought, in the end, became banal, and this has caused today's decline.¹⁹

Inoue combines this organic notion of development (evolutionary theory) with a logical development of philosophy (the dialectics of Hegel). Philosophy is organically built up of small parts forming structures, and this happens according to Hegel's dialectic: the law of thesis, antithesis and the union of both in a synthesis, which in turn is challenged by an antithesis, and so on. According to Inoue, all philosophy is subject to this law, and he interprets the history of philosophy of both East and West according to this principle. An important consequence of this idea of development is that the earlier stages of philosophical development are not discarded, but are retained in the grand structure of philosophy.²⁰ The later stages are more developed and express a better understanding of reality, but are still continuations of the earlier explanations. In his English notes on philosophy, he predicts that Chinese philosophy will rise again if its harmony is disrupted by the confrontation and combination of indigenous philosophy with elements of Western philosophy. On a larger scale, he writes that we can expect "a more complete philosophy" if a synthesis is made between Asian and Western philosophy. With this assertion, Inoue is, in fact, announcing his own intentions to synthesize Eastern and Western philosophy.²¹

(2) Internal Development of Philosophy

The second part of *Tetsugaku yōryō* describes the "inner organization of pure philosophy." It presents his interpretation of an "inner logical development of philosophy" which we can see "if we proceed from the initial steps of phi-

¹⁹ Inoue 1987b, pp. 95–96.

²⁰ See also Inoue 1987a.

²¹ Saitō 1988, p. 191.

losophy to its profound meaning.”²² For Inoue, “pure philosophy” (*junsei tetsugaku* 純正哲学) means the study of what he sees as the most fundamental problem of philosophy: mind and matter. It is an analysis of how they come into existence and the relation between them. This problem is central to Inoue’s own philosophy, though his usage of the terms is not clear-cut. Matter and mind carry several meanings in his writings. He also occasionally switches between them. However, his distinction basically refers to that of the subject and the outside world. His philosophy can, in this sense, be traced to the legacy of Kant, who maintained that reality, as we know it, is constructed by the categories as well as by the object of perception, which would remain “blind” without these categories. The result is that we cannot know if reality as we know it actually corresponds to reality in the outside world, or “*das Ding an sich*.” Thus Kant concluded that it therefore remains unknowable.

Fichte criticized Kant for assuming, and thereby “knowing,” the existence of something unknowable. He eliminated the “*Ding an sich*” and turned Kant’s philosophy into idealism. This was the beginning of German idealism, which heavily influenced Inoue. Echoing Kant, Inoue also discusses the knowable/unknowable distinction. His philosophy of mind and matter can be characterized as an attempt to overcome the distinction between subject and unknowable object. This philosophy was also a reaction against positivist and especially materialist philosophy which had found its way to Japan. In this sense, matter and mind in Inoue’s philosophy signify the building blocks of the universe. He somehow combines these two meanings in his own philosophy.

To return to the development of philosophy, he argues that the inner development of pure philosophy consists of several stages. Each stage is a different position on the problem of matter and mind. According to Inoue, the stages proceed from one to the next according to the laws of logic. This development consists of seven stages, and the primary progression is the dialectical movement from materialism to idealism and, finally, the synthesis of the two in his philosophy. The order of this development proceeds as follows:

1. Dualism of matter and mind (*bushin nigenron* 物心二元論), or the position that mind and matter differ in substance (*bushin itairon* 物心異体論).
2. Matter-only, no mind (*yuibutsu mushinron* 唯物無心論), or materialism (*yuibutsuron* 唯物論).

²² Inoue 1987b, p. 150.

3. Not matter, nor mind (*hibutsu hishinron* 非物非心論), or rationalism (*yuiriron* 唯理論).
4. No matter, no mind (*mubutsu mushinron* 無物無心論), or nihilism (*kyomuron* 虛無論).
5. Mind-only, no matter (*yuishin mubutsuron* 唯心無物論), or idealism (*yuishinron* 唯心論).
6. Matter and mind both exist (*yūshin yūbutsuron* 有心有物論).
7. Matter and mind share the same substance (*busshin dōtairon* 物心同體論).

Let us begin with an overview of these stages of pure philosophy: The first is a pre-reflexive one, the “view of the common people,” where there is not yet a philosophical distinction between phenomenon and substance of matter and mind.²³ Matter-only, or materialism, which he defines as the view that everything is made out of atoms and there is nothing like the mind, is the first philosophical stage. Inoue poses several objections to materialism, the most fundamental of which is that ultimately the atomic theory does not explain what matter actually is. Further, he argues that evolution cannot be explained without recourse to some power which drives it and a basic structure which must have been present from the beginning. Therefore, he states that the existence of an origin which cannot be reduced to matter must be accepted.

This necessity brings one to the third stage, “not matter, nor mind,” which holds that all things come from an original substance which is neither matter nor mind. Inoue says this position is found in the philosophy of Anaximander, Pythagoras, and Spencer’s theory of the original power and the (Neo-) Confucian idea of the Great Ultimate (*taikyoku* 太極). For Inoue, the problem with these theories is that this original beginning, which is neither matter nor mind, remains unknown. This way of reasoning does not bring us to the truth.

Inoue says that at this point one is forced to change the direction of the investigation toward the study of the mind. If we look at what we know of matter, one can see that it consists of form, touch, taste, sound and fragrance, but these are all qualities which are constructed by the senses, and together we give them the name of “matter.” However, we do not know what it is like outside the senses. We cannot tell if matter actually exists or if it has any substance outside the senses. Regarding “mind,” we only have the same phenomena of the senses and of thinking, but thinking is actually nothing more

²³ Ibid., p. 154.

than a combination of sensations, and we do not know if there is a mind-substance apart from this sense phenomena. At this fourth stage (no matter, no mind), it is therefore said that mind, like matter, is nothing more than sensations.

The phase of mind-only or idealism is reached when one realizes that the fourth position is untenable because it does not account for logic and the categories of time and space. The fourth theory (no matter, no mind) holds only itself to be true and therefore other theories to be untrue, so it at least affirms the principle of non-contradiction, that A and not-A cannot be true at the same time and in the same respect. In other words, it assumes logical rules. Further, for sensations to arise or to combine, space and time are necessary, both of which cannot arise from the sensations, themselves. They are elements of thinking, i.e., of mind. Therefore, the next step is necessarily the position which holds that only mind exists, idealism. Everything—mind, matter, logic, all distinctions—ultimately exists only for consciousness. The most extreme proponent of idealism is, according to Inoue, Fichte.

The sixth stage maintains that both matter and mind exist. The reason for this is that we do not know these two apart from each other. They have a relative, dependent existence with regard to each other. Therefore, both the theories of mind-only and matter-only cannot be true. Mind and matter, both relative, must come into existence out of an absolute, which is neither mind nor matter. According to Inoue, this theory is free from the faults of idealism and materialism, but does not properly explain the relation between the absolute vis-à-vis matter and mind.

This problem is, in turn, solved in the last stage, which is the theory that holds that matter and mind are phenomena that share the same substance. We will look at this theory in some detail, because according to Inoue this stage is the most perfect philosophy. First of all, in contrast to the previous position, he maintains that the absolute cannot be outside of the relative for two reasons. The first is *epistemological*: If the absolute exists outside of the realm of relative phenomena (meaning matter and mind), it is unknowable. Since we know this absolute exists, it must be in the sphere of the relative. The second is *logical*: We know what “absolute” is only in contrast to “relative,” which implies that the absolute is not really absolute, and therefore must be relative. So only the relative exists. However, if there is only the relative, then that implies that the relative is in fact absolute, and so on. From this paradox, Inoue draws the conclusion that the absolute and the relative are inseparable and that they share the same substance. Inoue applies similar arguments to a

whole set of related distinctions: matter/mind, phenomenon/substance, the ideal/matter and mind, sameness/difference. In fact, his philosophy as a whole can be characterized as an attempt to overcome distinctions. All the poles of these distinctions are said to share the same substance.

However, it is important to note that their differences are not simply dissolved; there is difference in sameness. This is explained by the same logic: "Sameness (no-distinction, or no-difference, *musabetsu* 無差別) is different from difference (*sabetsu* 差別). Therefore, its substance is difference. Sameness is difference, and because the two are both difference, there is no difference between the two."²⁴ The conclusion is that difference and sameness share the same substance, i.e., "from the no-difference, difference arises."²⁵

To return to the original problem, mind and matter are distinct, but share the same substance in "the ideal" (*risō* 理想). Always pedagogical, Inoue compares this to a sheet of paper in order to visualize it:

In the one substance of the ideal there is the difference of matter and mind. This is like a sheet of paper with a front and a back. If you look at it from the front, matter is the whole or the ideal. If you look at it from the back, mind is the whole or the ideal. Apart from the front, there is no back, and apart from the back there is no front. Therefore mind and matter share the same substance. Apart from the front and back, there is no whole, and apart from the whole there is no front and back. Therefore the ideal substance is mind and matter, but the front and the back differ, and therefore there remains a distinction between mind and matter.²⁶

Inoue goes one step further and maintains that one half (mind or matter) also contains the other half. As each contains the other half (and itself), each contains the whole of the ideal. This is because there is difference in sameness. To conclude, this metaphysics has an epistemological consequence: one mind (or one piece of matter) is at the same time a small part and the whole of the ideal, "Compare it with the eye which is but one part of the universe, yet can contain the whole of its phenomena."²⁷ Therefore we can know the ideal. Although we can recognize it as a basic tenet of Tendai Buddhism, this theory, according to Inoue is also found in Hegel's philosophy. Again following

²⁴ Ibid., p. 206.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 205.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 208.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 209.

the logic of the latter, the theory of the unity-in-substance of matter and mind is the synthesis of materialism and idealism. Showing no small ambition for what is of course his own philosophy, Inoue concludes that it is the only complete philosophy, and “it unites and harmonizes the theories of old and new, East and West.”²⁸

To recapitulate, this rather unusual account of philosophy is, according to Inoue, the way philosophical thought naturally and logically develops from a pre-reflexive state to materialism, then to idealism and the synthesis of the two. However, this gives the impression of a linear development, but Inoue states that philosophy develops in a circular way:

“[In the stage where] intellectual capacities are not yet developed, all people believe that mind and matter differ in substance. When the intellect moves to its highest stage it gradually comes to understand the principle of the unity-in-substance of matter and mind. If we look at it like this, difference-in-substance is the starting-point of logical thinking and unity-in-substance must be the final stage. However, these two are not entirely different. If one reasons from the principle of difference-in-substance and goes one step further, one comes to the unity-in-substance. If one reasons from the unity-in-substance and goes one step further, one returns to the difference-in-substance. This is called the circulation of the ideal (*risō no junka* 理想の循環). This circulation means that logic revolves and returns to its starting-point.”²⁹

A consequence of this circularity is that it is possible to start at any point on the circle, i.e., any of the positions described above, and eventually return to the same point. Inoue writes that he chose as the starting-point the position of difference-in-substance of matter and mind, “only because it is based on our ordinary way of thinking.”³⁰ If we ask for the theoretical basis for this theory of circulation, it is found in the last position, the unity-in-substance of matter and mind. The ideal itself produces from its own power the whole of evolution in matter and mind. When it reaches its culmination, evolution finds itself back at the starting-point. This circularity is therefore “not only the law of the ideal, it is the law of logic, . . . and it is the law of things.” In other

²⁸ Ibid., p. 215.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 153.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 154.

words, the development of thinking and that of the universe share the same circularity.

There is a variety of philosophical problems in Inoue's account. For instance, if the development of thinking and that of the universe share the same circularity, one might ask what the relation between the two is, but Inoue is not explicit on this point. Further, one might ask if the development of philosophy also has a metaphysical meaning. We are reminded of Hegel's philosophy, in which the history of philosophy is both man's developing understanding of the absolute and, at the same time, the absolute coming to understand itself. But Inoue does not make an elaborate comparison between his own philosophy and Hegel's, because he argues that they are the same. In short, the status of the internal development is left unclear. In any case, in Inoue's philosophy, *risō*, the ideal, means three things: ultimate understanding, true reality and the origin of the universe. As in Hegelian philosophy, Inoue makes no real distinction between logic and ontology. Another problem is that Inoue attempts to overcome the conflict between materialism and idealism, which necessarily presupposes the existence of a distinction between matter and mind. Both materialism and idealism try to reduce one pole of the distinction to the other. Inoue tries to overcome this by positing an origin that is neither wholly material nor spiritual. But ultimately this origin is also left vague. He never explains it clearly and mostly describes it using paradoxical expressions, such as "neither one, nor two" (*fuitsu funi* 不一不二).

To recapitulate, Inoue's philosophy of the history of philosophy is a combination of (1) evolutionary theory, (2) Hegelian dialectics, (3) a development of thinking on matter/mind, and (4) circularity. Although there are several problems with Inoue's view of Western philosophy and his own theories, the primary concern of this paper is the way in which he attempts to harmonize Western philosophy and Buddhism. We will now turn to Buddhism, for the crux of Inoue's philosophy is in his application of these principles of the development of philosophy to that of Buddhism.

History of Buddhism

The main argument in *Bukkyō katsuron honron* 仏教活論本論 (The Revival of Buddhism) is that Buddhism is a religion based on philosophy. This characterization involves a reinterpretation of Buddhist history. As a philosophy, Buddhism is subject to the same laws of development that Inoue applies to Western philosophy. Therefore, he also distinguishes between the external and the internal development of Buddhism.

(1) External Development of Buddhism

To start with, we can look at the application of evolutionary theory to the development of Buddhism, but before looking at how this works concretely, we have to pause and realize the novelty of the seemingly banal statement, “Buddhism develops.” The traditional Buddhist account of its existence in time is found in the theory of *mappō* (*mappō shisō* 末法思想). This theory divides history into three periods: “true law” (*shōbō* 正法), the “imitative law” (*zōbō* 像法), and the “latter day of the law” or the “end of the teachings” (*mappō*). In other words, Buddhism is considered to be the most perfect at the time of the Buddha and is said to deteriorate gradually, because it is subject to its own law of evanescence. Inoue turns this traditional account on its head. In modernist fashion, he claims that Buddhism develops and improves, and also that it must be developed and improved. For Inoue, this meant a break with traditional Buddhist scholarship:

In general, Buddhists believe that Buddhism was most developed at the time of the Buddha, and, after that, it has deteriorated until today. Their studies are accordingly mere notes on the sutras preached by the Buddha, notes on notes and interpretations of phrases and sentences. They do not have the perspicacity to ask what the spirit behind these phrases is, nor do they make [Buddhism] grow and develop. This is the so-called annotation-study and is not one based on development.³¹

According to Inoue, the study of Buddhism has to be concerned with evolution because Buddhism, like philosophy, is a “living thing.” Like any other living thing, it has to adapt itself to its environment. Throughout history, Buddhism adapted itself to its socio-cultural environment, which is, for Inoue, the reason that Indian, Chinese and Japanese Buddhism are different, but still remain Buddhism. He compares it to a plant, developing from a seed which contains the stem, branches and flowers in a primordial form. The seed is the original preaching of the Buddha, and the branches and flowers are the different sects. Inoue says that his vision of a developing Buddhism is a conscious choice of a “Western conception of history.” He argues that, in Eastern thinking, the original is thought to be the most perfect, and the gradual growth in complexity is considered a deterioration, but in Western thought, the development into more complex structures is said to signify progress. In a later

³¹ Inoue 1990a, p. 213.

book, *Bukkyō tetsugaku* 仏教哲学 (*Buddhist Philosophy*), he again contrasts traditional Buddhist scholarship, which he calls “annotation-study,” and study in terms of development:

According to annotation-study, all possible truths of Buddhism were already fully explained by Śākyamuni. If one thinks in terms of development, then Śākyamuni, as the first, laid the seed of Buddhism. In other words, according to the former the flower had already opened, while according to the latter the seed planted by the Buddha gradually develops and opens later.³²

Inoue asserts that the theory of *mappō* is not completely wrong, but that it is one-sided. He states: “The *mappō* of today will be turned around and will be made the *shōbō*.”³³

(2) Internal Development of Buddhism

The metaphor of the Buddha’s teachings as a seed brings us to the logical (or internal) development of Buddhism. According to Inoue, Buddha first expounded his entire teaching in the Kegon 華嚴 (*Avatamsaka*) sutra. After that he preached other sutras according to a dialectical pattern. Inoue interpreted the philosophical development of Buddhism as parallel to that of philosophy, as described above. Buddhism also moves from materialism to idealism, and the synthesis of the two in “rationalism” (*yuiriron* 唯理論).³⁴ He explains the development of Buddhism as the alternation of the concepts “being” (*u* 有) and “emptiness” (*kū* 空). Being means possessing a definite substance, truly existing. Emptiness means the absence of a definite substance, not truly existing. The synthesis of all theories of being and emptiness is found in the “middle” (*chū* 中). Inoue argues that these Buddhist concepts correspond to the dialectical development of pure philosophy, which is his original Buddhist philosophy. He classifies the Buddhist texts in the following order:

1. *Kegon-kyō* 華嚴經 (*Avatamsaka-sūtra*), explaining the Middle Way.
2. *Agon-gyō* 阿含經 (*Āgama-sūtra*), explaining being.

³² Inoue 1990b, p. 114.

³³ Inoue 1990a, p. 221.

³⁴ Note that Inoue uses the term “rationalism,” which in the development of philosophy conforms to the third stage and not the final one. The “rationalism” here in fact corresponds to the last stage, the synthesis of materialism and idealism.

3. *Hōdō-kyō* 方等經 (*Vaipulya-sūtra*), explaining parallelism of being and emptiness.
4. *Hannya-kyō* 般若經 (*Prajñāpāramitā-sūtra*), explaining emptiness.
5. *Hokke-kyō* 法華經 (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*) and *Nehan-gyō* 涅槃經 (*Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*), both explaining the Middle Way.

This classification describes the order in which the Buddha preached the various sutras (i.e., the development of the Buddha's philosophy), but Inoue also describes Buddhism as a development of different schools. He states that while Buddhism is essentially a religion based on philosophy, there is a distinction between intellectual and emotional schools. The emotional ones are Zen 禪, Nichiren 日蓮 and Jōdo 淨土. The intellectual ones are Kusha 俱舍, Jōjitsu 成実, Hossō 法相, Sanron 三論, Kegon and Tendai 天台. He states that Buddhist philosophy is found in the intellectual schools, which he arranges as follows:

1. Kusha: school of being.
2. Jōjitsu: school of being, variant of emptiness.
3. Hossō: school of emptiness, variant of being.
4. Sanron: school of emptiness, variant of emptiness.
5. Kegon and Tendai: school of the middle.

Kusha and Jōjitsu are labeled Hīnayāna; Hossō and Sanron are called “provisional Mahāyāna” (*gon daijō bukkūyō* 權大乘仏教); Kegon and Tendai are said to be Mahāyāna proper. The first school, Kusha, teaches that the self is empty because everything in reality consists of dharmas (*hō* 法). Only dharmas have substance and a real existence. Because Kusha is primarily concerned with the substance of matter, Inoue calls it materialism. He admits that there are different varieties of materialism in Buddhism, Indian philosophy, Greek philosophy and modern philosophy. The materialism of the Kusha school is most similar to that which is found in modern science. Inoue compares the theory of dharmas to that of atoms. He also compares the Buddhist theory of causality to the law of cause and effect found in modern science. They share the same principles, but the difference between Kusha and modern materialism is that the latter denies the existence of mind altogether, while in Kusha, mind is one of the elements (aggregates) that constitutes human beings. Therefore, Kusha is not materialism in the sense of “matter-only,” it contains the dualism of matter and mind. The second school, Jōjitsu teaches

that not only the self but also the dharmas are empty. But the “emptiness” in this instance is said to lack the depth of insight found in later Mahāyāna schools. Therefore Jōjitsu is still part of the school of being, but is a variant of emptiness.

In his theory of the development of philosophy, Inoue argues that there occurs an inward turn between the third and fourth stages of the development of Buddhism. The theory of dharmas is unsatisfactory in the same way that the theory of atoms is, because it offers no explanation of what matter is or how the dharmas come to exist. According to Inoue, in order to overcome this problem, one is forced to look inwards, and realize that everything we know is a phenomenon of the mind. Thus Buddhism logically develops into idealism, as expounded by the Hossō school, which teaches that all reality is a product of the mind, and that all phenomena are transformations of consciousness-only. The idealism of this school is, according to Inoue, identical with the philosophy of Fichte. Inoue calls Hossō the first school of emptiness, because it teaches that outside the mind nothing exists. However, since it assumes that the mind and the images therein have substantive existence, he says it is a variant of being.

According to Inoue, because doubt arises about the substantive being of those images of consciousness, one must assert their emptiness. The fourth school, Sanron therefore teaches that everything is empty. Accordingly, Sanron is said to be the alternative to emptiness in the school of emptiness, and leads to the Middle Way (*chūdō* 中道, or *chūron* 中論), the synthesis of materialism and idealism. The Middle Way teaches that matter and mind are identical in substance, and is the same as the acme of philosophy described in Inoue’s *Tetsugaku yōryō*. Here he uses the Buddhist term, “Suchness” (*shinnyō* 真如), to describe the ultimate or the ideal. *Shinnyō* is described in logical terms as “neither one, nor two” (*fuitsu funi*), and in metaphysical terms as “matter and not matter, emptiness and not emptiness, neither matter nor emptiness, and both matter and emptiness.”³⁵ This indicates that Inoue’s presentation of the development of Buddhism is concerned with the same questions of pure philosophy that he describes in *Tetsugaku yōryō*: matter and mind.

The dialectic movement of Buddhism can also be described in terms of “Objective Theory” (*kyakkanron* 客觀論), “Subjective Theory” (*shukanron* 主觀論) and “Theory of the Ideal” (*risōron* 理想論). Inoue uses the terms, “Objective Theory” and “Subjective Theory,” to describe the orientation of

³⁵ This pattern is derived from the fourfold negation or tetralemma in the logic of Nāgārjuna, the main figure of the Sanron school.

a given theory. The first means oriented toward matter, or simply the outside world, while the second means oriented toward the mind. The most extreme form of an objective theory is found in the materialism of Kusha, and the most extreme form of a subjective theory is found in the idealism of Hossō. In Kusha, Buddhism presents us with explanations in terms of “Objective Theory” that conform to Western scientific theory. Hossō presents the arguments that are “Subjective Theories,” and the Middle Way synthesizes the two in the “Theory of the Ideal.” However, the crux of the reasoning that leads up to the “Theory of the Ideal” is essentially “Subjective Theory,” and the idealist argumentation.

Although the acme of philosophy and Buddhism presented in *Tetsugaku yōryō* results in the synthesis of the two, Inoue here qualifies Buddhism as a “Subjective Theory,” without much further comment or explanation. He argues that the ideal is explained in logical terms (not one, not two; the identity of relative and absolute), and that it is based on reason, which is a part of the mind. He criticizes the theory that only mind exists, but the subjectivist argument of Hossō, that everything exists only for the mind, is never actually denied in his critique. In *Bukkyō katsuron honron*, Inoue makes a distinction between “absolute mind” (*zettaishin* 絶対心), which means Suchness, and “relative mind” (*sōtaishin* 相对心), which includes matter and what we normally consider as “mind.” Although for Inoue, the Theory of the Ideal is the synthesis of materialism and idealism, the balance is clearly tilted toward idealism. Maybe we can say that Inoue’s Buddhism is a sort of methodological idealism, in that the basic method and arguments are idealist, but the conclusion is not that “only mind exists.” The dialectical development of Buddhism can be summarized in the following chart:

Kusha	Being	Materialism	Dualism of matter	Objective Theory and mind
Jōjitsu	Being (emptiness)	_____	_____	_____
Hossō	Emptiness (being)	Idealism	Monism of mind	Subjective Theory
Sanron	Emptiness (emptiness)	_____	_____	_____
Tendai/Kegon	Middle	Rationalism	Unity-in-substance	Theory of the Ideal

Finally, Buddhism, as a philosophy, has a circular development. To complete the circle, Inoue adds the school of Shingon 真言, which has not been described above, because he interprets it to be philosophically the same as Tendai and Kegon. Shingon stresses the “interpenetration and non-obstruction” of all things, but describes it in an “objectivist” way, which brings us back to the starting-point of Kusha. For Inoue, the circular development implies that all theories contained in it are in fact equal. From the viewpoint of absolute truth there are no different theories, they only exist from the viewpoint of man. The starting-point can be any position on the circle. The complete truth becomes apparent only when one moves around the entire circle. The theoretical basis for this circular development of Buddhism is found in the Theory of the Ideal itself:

Firstly, the truth or the substance of the ideal is equality. It is without discrimination, without beginning or end, earlier or later. It is like a uniform circle. If we now use logic to inquire into this, it is as if we have to fix a starting-point on the circle. And with one step of logical reasoning, the difference between first and last, beginning and end, immediately comes about. Therefore, if we continue [to reason] according to logic in the ideal, we should certainly know that we will move in the same way as in a circle. This [circle] is actually the natural character of the ideal.³⁶

In other words, the theory of Buddhist philosophy moves in a circular way because reality moves in such a way. Another basis for the argument of this circular development is found in the Buddhist conception of time. In the first part of *Bukkyō katsuron honron*, Inoue contrasts the Western (Christian) linear conception of time with the endless circle of time as taught by Buddhism. In contrast to the theory of creation, Buddhism teaches that there is no beginning or end in time, and that time moves in a circle.³⁷

To say that Buddhist theory develops in a circular way means in effect that Buddhism itself is subject to its own laws. The Buddhist idea of difference in equality is also applied to Buddhism itself. All Buddhist theories stem from the same truth, and are in this respect equal. However, at the same time they remain distinct, they can also be distinguished in terms of their quality. Therefore, Inoue can still maintain that Mahāyāna is more profound than Hīnayāna.

³⁶ Inoue 1990a, p. 291

³⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59, 176.

One might ask the question: If all theories are equal and there is only one truth, why are there different theories? Inoue explains that because of the difficulty of this one truth, the Buddha preached it in several stages, following the logical capacities of humanity. This gives us the logical development of Buddhism from materialism to idealism into rationalism. Although Inoue's theory of development is based on philosophical arguments, this philosophical basis for his argument for circular development is somewhat weak. However, the circularity in logic is also found in reality, which means that the theory takes itself into account. This gives it a strong universal character, which is what Inoue was aiming for.

Inoue constructed a new history for Buddhism, but it is not what we would normally expect from a history. It is one of philosophical stages, not one based on the research methods of the academic discipline of history. However, because present and future are made more important than or at least equally as important as the past, it is a "modern" history. The circularity ultimately makes all Buddhism and philosophy a phenomenon of the one eternal truth, which in a sense de-historicizes both Buddhism and philosophy. At the same time, according to Inoue, Buddhism develops in this world, and has in fact adjusted to the socio-cultural environment in India, China and Japan. However, he does not clarify how this circular, internal development and this historical, external development relate to each other.

In order to characterize Inoue as a Buddhist historian, one must consider his endeavor in its historical context. The classical Buddhist view of history is found in the theory of *mappō*.³⁸ Inoue, as we saw, turned this theory on its head. The critical classification of teachings carried out in China (Jpn. *kyōsō hanjaku* 教相判釈) is, in a sense, the traditional Buddhist method of historical analysis. This analytical process was an attempt to classify Buddhist teachings from superficial to more profound. Inoue typifies his own classification as a new *kyōsō hanjaku*.³⁹ His *kyōsō hanjaku* is not entirely new in that it is clearly inspired by the Tendai school, and is justified by the classical Buddhist notion of *upāya* (*hōben* 方便).⁴⁰ What is new about his classification is that he explains it *in terms of modern philosophy*. In sum, Inoue's history of

³⁸ For the question of characterization and study of Buddhist historical consciousness and hermeneutics, see Maraldo 1993.

³⁹ Inoue 1990a, p. 224. See also Tachikawa 2000.

⁴⁰ This interpretation says that the more profound teachings of Mahāyāna were kept hidden because humans were not yet ready to understand them, and therefore the Buddha gradually expounded the truth by starting with the more superficial Hīnayāna.

Buddhism is a hybrid of classical Buddhist scholars' *kyōsō hanjaku*, Hegelian dialectics and evolutionary theory.

Inoue's history of Buddhism is situated between traditional Buddhist scholarship and modern Buddhology. Classical *kyōsō hanjaku* is historically incorrect, because the Mahāyāna teachings were produced centuries after the Buddha's death, which was the basis of the argument that holds that Mahāyāna Buddhism is not the Buddha's teachings. In the Meiji era, Buddhology, as a Western academic discipline, was introduced to Japan from Europe. The historians, trained in this discipline, were seriously concerned about the apparent historical invalidity of Mahāyāna Buddhism. Inoue differs from modern Buddhologists in that he interprets Buddhism as a modern philosophy, and says that therefore he is not interested in questions about exact dates or who first preached Mahāyāna teachings. Inoue argues that Buddhism is to be believed for its philosophical value, not for the authority of the one who first spoke of it.

III. Conclusion: Changing Buddhism's Past to Address the Present

Having read this summary of Inoue's presentation of the development of philosophy and Buddhism, philosophers probably feel some dissatisfaction with his argumentation, and Buddhologists might object that he did not know his own history very well. His thesis that philosophy and Buddhism share the same logical development is forced, and nobody would make the same argument in academic circles today. Although these are all justified objections, Inoue had to work with the tools that he had and face the realities of his time. The discipline of philosophy was only just being introduced in Japan, and he played a significant role in this process. Buddhology as an academic discipline was also only just in its initial phase. Inoue was not a historian, in the strict sense of the word, and therefore should not be evaluated as a historian of Buddhism. He was, instead, a new protagonist of Buddhism, who wanted to make a new move in Buddhism, just like others before him.

Let us therefore return to the reason behind Inoue's theorizing: the revival of Buddhism in Meiji Japan. We saw that Meiji Buddhism was suffering from persecution and faced critiques that challenged its very foundations. For Inoue, the reinterpretation of Buddhism's past was in large part an ideological reaction against these three critiques: that Mahāyāna Buddhism was not authentic Buddhism, that Buddhism was not Japanese, and that Buddhism was both socially and economically harmful to society.

The following is a discussion as to how Inoue's new interpretation of Buddhism's past can be used against these anti-Buddhist criticisms. In response to the first, he applies the evolutionary theory in order to free Japanese Buddhism from the critique that it is not Buddhism and to prove that Mahāyāna is its most perfect form. He makes ideological use of the evolutionary theory to frame his argument that Hinayāna is only the seed, and that Mahāyāna is the flower. Secondly, the foreignness of Buddhism is countered by his idea that it adapted to its environment in India, China and Japan. It became naturalized in the Japanese environment. To counter the criticism that Buddhism is harmful to society, Inoue argues that philosophy is like the nervous system or the animating spirit of the greater organism of society. Buddhism, as Japan's philosophy, should be kept and nurtured. Further, one of the reasons for discontent with Buddhism was the plurality of schools and sectarian quarrels. Instead, Inoue interprets this plurality as a sign of development. He stresses that Buddhism's development from a simple seed of the original teachings to a complex form with different schools as branches and flowers, was progress, in the Western sense of the word. More abstractly, a modernist view of history in terms of progress through evolution made Buddhism's present and future more important than its past. Buddhism was understood dynamically, in the sense that it could adapt itself to anything and still remain the same Buddhism. Therefore, Inoue could maintain that it was not an evil of the past, and could adapt to whatever changes were to come in the rapidly modernizing Japanese society.

He also uses the logical development of Buddhism to the same ideological ends. To interpret it as a philosophy, it was necessary to provide Buddhism with a history and an account of its development like those of Western philosophy. The culmination of both in the Theory of the Ideal proves the philosophical validity of Buddhism, which was disputed by anti-Buddhist rhetoric. Inoue mentions that Buddhism is in fact the same as the philosophy of Hegel, no doubt with the desire in mind to appropriate the authority attached to Hegel's name. Finally, the theoretical characterization of Buddhism as a subjectivism, which according to Inoue is mainly expressed in Mahāyāna, is also one more argument against the theory that "Mahāyāna is not Buddhism." Although his presentation of the circular development of thought seems somewhat elusive, it may have had a concrete ideological purpose. Granting all the stages of Buddhist philosophy the same status on the circle makes all the schools equal, which may have been Inoue's attempt to formulate a theoretical basis for discarding intersectarian quarrels.

Finally, I wish to add a note on Inoue's thought as a whole. First of all, the extent of his concrete influence on Japanese Buddhism and philosophy has not yet been ascertained. Most Japanese studies on Inoue (mainly conducted by Tōyō University of which he is the founder) avoids mentioning that his name, once so well known, is now forgotten. Also, in Japan, Buddhism does not describe itself as "philosophy" any longer. On the other hand, some of Inoue's theories, especially those regarding the external development of Buddhism, are found in later Buddhist writers. Secondly, his philosophical ambition was not limited to the revival of Buddhism. Studies on Inoue mostly emphasize one aspect, and interpret his other activities as a function of that aspect: Inoue as a nationalist, Buddhist, or philosopher. However, much like Hegel, as a typical thinker of the nineteenth century, he tried to make one all-encompassing system of thought. He attempted to include philosophy, religion, nationalism, science and psychology, into his own version of Buddhist philosophy. In order to define Buddhism's place at the top of all philosophies and religions, he had to change its past.

ABBREVIATION

IES *Inoue Enryō Senshū* 井上円了選集 (Selected Works of Inoue Enryō). Tokyo: Tōyō Daigaku, 1989.

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