

Japanese Philosophy in the English-speaking World

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The term “Japanese philosophy” is here used to cover systematic Japanese thought from ancient times up to the present. The term “English-speaking world” will be primarily used to address scholarship in English published in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, although there will also be some references to relevant works published elsewhere, especially Japan. Furthermore, because the topic is addressed in another essay in this volume, we will here only tangentially touch on the contributions of native Japanese scholars writing in English. In an essay of this brevity, there will be no attempt to discuss or even list the vast amount of literature available in English relating to Japanese philosophy in its various forms. Instead, the aim will be to explain how the English-language study of Japanese philosophy arose and evolved, focusing on the broader cultural, historical, social, and political factors that have influenced it up to now and will continue to have an impact on the future of the field. To achieve this goal, the ensuing discussion is divided into three sections. First, we will consider historical reasons why Japanese philosophy has been so slow in being recognized as a field among scholars in the United States and Britain. Much of that analysis will focus on the works published at the turn of the twentieth century and will be covered in the first section of this paper. The second section will deal with the study of Japanese philosophy as an emergent field within the English-speaking world since 1945. The third and final section

will address future directions for the study of Japanese philosophy in English.

RECOGNITION OF JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY AS A FIELD OF STUDY

The famous American scholar of Japanese literature, Edward Seidensticker, told me that for years in his survey courses, he used to joke about the “two great oxymorons” of East Asian culture: “Chinese music” and “Japanese philosophy.” With respect to the latter at least, his attitude reflected the prejudice of many scholars in Japanese studies in the west, including those from the United States and Great Britain. Why do so many think the field of Japanese philosophy is, if not an outright oxymoron, at least problematic in some way? There are several facile explanations for this attitude, but they do not hold up to even a moderate amount of reflection on the facts. Let us look at three that have been commonly offered for many decades now.

Facile explanation #1: *“Philosophy” is a western cultural phenomenon.* The assumption here is that people everywhere in the world may have rational thoughts of one kind or another, but that is not enough to merit the term “philosophy” in the full western sense of the term with its 2500 years of development. For now, let us ignore the provincial Eurocentrism in this view and turn to a different problem with this argument. For over a century it has been commonplace for English-speaking scholars to refer to “Indian philosophy” and “Chinese philosophy.” If we were to say that similarity to western philosophy in form of argument or mode of systematization were the main criterion, it is easy to see why some (but not all) forms of Indian thought (Navya-Nyāya, for instance) might qualify as “philosophy,” but the inclusion of Chinese thought (as contrasted with Japanese thought) would still be puzzling. It is hard to see why Zhu Xi (not to mention Confucius, Mencius, Laozi, or Xunzi) would be considered more “philosophical” in the western sense than Kūkai or Dōgen, for instance. Yet, for many decades American colleges and universities have taught courses called “Indian philosophy” or “Chinese philosophy” and there have been books written in English with those titles for over a century. So, the argument that philosophy is a strictly western phenomenon has not even been uniformly held in the west.

Facile explanation #2: *There may be some philosophical thought in Japan, but not much.* First of all, that claim in itself would not justify completely excluding Japanese philosophy. Even if there were only a small amount of Japanese philosophy, that does not mean it is not real or not worth studying. Even more importantly, however, it is by no means obvious that the quantity of Japanese philosophical writings is all that meager. If we use the term “philosophy” to apply to Chinese thought as well as to such western thinkers as Socrates, Thales, Augustine, Anselm, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the later Wittgenstein, then there has been plenty of comparable philosophical thought in Japan. Such Japanese book series as Iwanami’s *Nihon shisō taikēi* 日本思想大系 present a wide sweep of thinkers from ancient times through the postwar period. Certainly much of what is included in that series can qualify as philosophy. Indeed, although that series has sixty-seven volumes it has only relatively small portions of the writings of most of the major thinkers, limiting all but Dōgen to at most one volume each. So, again, even a cursory examination of the facts is enough to refute this second supposed justification for saying there is no such thing as Japanese philosophy.

Facile explanation #3: *Even the Japanese themselves say they had no philosophy, at least until the modern period.* There is circularity in this argument, however. The Japanese term *tetsugaku* 哲学 is a Meiji period neologism coined by Nishi Amane 西周. If we take the term *tetsugaku* to be equivalent to the term “philosophy,” then it is tautologically true that there was no “philosophy” in Japan before the modern period. But why should we today let Nishi Amane still arbitrate what counts as philosophy? (That he considered Auguste Comte and J. S. Mill to represent the pinnacles of world philosophy should at least give us pause about his perspicacity and breadth of insight on such issues.) Consider the parallel with the category of “religion.” Many Japanese maintain they have never had any “religion” (*shūkyō* 宗教, another virtual neologism of the Meiji period), but that has not stopped westerners from thinking of “Japanese religion” as a legitimate field of academic study. Most western scholars simply recognize that *shūkyō* does not mean “religion” in many of the usual western senses of the word. If that is an acceptable argument, perhaps it makes sense to say the terms *tetsugaku* and *philosophy* are not simply interchangeable either.

My concern is not to decide whether there is or is not “Japanese philosophy” (that question is discussed elsewhere in this volume), but simply

to note the historical and social fact that there has traditionally been a great deal of skepticism in the English-speaking world about its existence or at least its parameters. There may be legitimate reasons for saying there is no such phenomenon as Japanese philosophy (or that there is none until the modern period), but they are not found in the three common explanations examined here. Yet, for the past century many intelligent anglophone Japanologists—like Seidensticker, for example—have openly questioned the existence of the field, typically without much argument. Why? Let us consider a historical reason, namely, the result of how and when Japanese thought and culture came to the attention of the English-speaking world. It is especially illuminating to compare that process with the introduction of Indian and Chinese thought to the west. As we will see, the Japanese policy of national seclusion (鎖国 *sakoku*) is particularly pertinent.

Information about Chinese and Indian thought trickled sporadically into the west from ancient times and in a more steady flow from the sixteenth century onward. To a great extent these ideas were carried by Christian missionaries and international traders. The missionaries in particular did the philological studies and translation work that enabled east-west philosophical interaction. Dedicated to convert Asians to Christianity, they wanted a grasp of the basic philosophical and spiritual ideas of the people they were going to engage. Because of these translations, interested western philosophers as far back as Leibniz drew on Neo-Confucian ideas and a century later Hegel explicitly mentioned Indian and Chinese philosophical systems in his discussions of logic and the history of philosophy. By the mid- and late nineteenth century, western thinkers like Schopenhauer, Emerson, Nietzsche, and Freud could refer to Asian ideas like “nirvana” as if they expected their educated readers to be at least somewhat familiar with the term. Because of Japan’s self-imposed cultural isolation, however, its ideas could not be part of the western discussion at that time. We can only speculate whether the western attitude toward Japanese philosophy might have been different had Japan not excluded the Christian missionaries in the early seventeenth century. For example, a term like *kokoro* 心 or *mono no aware* もののあはれ might have found a place in western intellectual discussions comparable to the prominence given terms like *nirvana* from India and *dao* 道 from China.

Instead, it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that Japanese

culture became less a cipher to the western mind. At that point, however, the character of the interface between Japan and the English-speaking west was quite different from the context of east-west interaction involving India and China. First, while the Americans and the British might have originally thought otherwise when they forced Japan to open itself to trade in the mid-nineteenth century, by the end of the century, Japan was clearly more likely to be a East Asian colonizer than a western colony. In that half century, Japan went from being a potential source of labor and goods serving European and American interests to being a political, military, and economic competitor. In the case of India and China, by contrast, that kind of transition occurred more slowly over more than two centuries (and can be considered to be reaching its culmination only in the last decade or two). Therefore, before the west could fully romanticize the Old Japan, it had already become sensitive to the threat of the New Japan. In contrast, because of the very different history of their interaction with the west, India and China had already firmly entrenched themselves for centuries in the western romantic and orientalist image of being “ancient wisdom cultures.” At the end of the nineteenth century, the British and Americans could still afford the luxury of that quaint fantasy in regard to India and China, but not toward Japan, their new imperialist rival in Asia.

A second historical factor to consider is the impact of the spiritual ideology of the Meiji Restoration—arising at precisely that historical point at which western scholars first become interested in Japan in a sustained way. The British and American scholars of the late nineteenth century found themselves amidst an intellectual scene defined by the impact of the ideas and values sprouting from such traditions as the Mito School (水戸学), Restoration Shinto (*fukko shintō* 復古神道), and Native Studies (*kokugaku* 国学). Those ideologies were the backdrop for the early English scholarship represented by William George Aston (1841–1911) and Basil Hall Chamberlain (1850–1935). Classically trained in Victorian Britain, Aston and Chamberlain assumed that great civilizations were built upon ancient foundational texts. So they looked for the texts that were the origins of Japanese civilization in the way the Greek classics served the west, the *Qur'an* served the Islamic world, the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* served India, or the *Four Books* served China. In their quest for the analogous textual cornerstones of Japanese culture, Aston and Chamberlain—guided by their Japanese government and academic informants enam-

ored of the new State Shinto ideology—turned to *Nihonshoki* 日本書紀 and *Kojiki* 古事記. It was as if a neophyte were asking Hitler’s or Mussolini’s advisors for guidance on how to understand the roots of German or Italian culture. One would certainly get plenty of advice, but would it be good advice? Given this context, it is not surprising that Aston, a British diplomat-cum-philologist, decided to translate *Nihongi* (*Nihonshoki*) in 1896 and in 1905 published a book called *Shintō*. Meanwhile, the British philologist and professor at Tokyo University, Basil Hall Chamberlain, translated *Kojiki* in 1906.

Thus, it happened that the English-speaking world came to think of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* as the founding texts of Japanese civilization. Few anglophone readers had any idea that these narratives had been considered founding narratives by the Japanese only since 1800 and or so. That is, although *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* were written in the eighth century, they did not become “classics of ancient Japan” until a thousand years later. Nor did English readers know that *Kojiki* had been written in an orthography that made large portions unreadable to even most educated readers from about 800 to almost 1800 (when Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 decoded the text through his philological cryptology). Nor would such an audience have had a clue that almost all the major creative, systematic philosophical thinkers in Japanese history from 800 to 1600 had been Buddhist, not Shinto. (And they were later joined in the ensuing one hundred and fifty years by Confucians of various ilk, again not Shinto thinkers). Yet, the Meiji state ideology was to emphasize Shinto over Buddhism and to relegate Confucianism to morality, especially as filtered through *bushidō* 武士道. Either knowingly or unknowingly, Aston and Chamberlain were reflecting what amounted to only a fairly recent Japanese reconstruction of its own civilizational origins.

Let us turn now to the Americans of this era. The early American students of Japan were, perhaps predictably, less concerned with discovering the classic texts at the roots of Japanese civilization. Instead their interests were more populist. And when they focused on elite culture, they were often more attracted to the fine arts than to the written word. The paradigmatic writer for the former was Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904). Born in Greece (of maternal Greek and paternal Anglo-Irish stock), Hearn was raised in Dublin, but eventually found his way to America, where he became a journalist for a newspaper in Cincinnati, Ohio. He spent the last fourteen years of his life in Japan, however, where he was a writer for

the English-language *Kobe Chronicle* before Chamberlain got him a job teaching English literature at Tokyo University. Hearn was nostalgic for Old Japan (as he understood it) and wrote books about Japanese folktales, ghost stories, and rural culture. He even “went native” and took a Japanese wife from a samurai family and gave himself a Japanese name (Koizumi Yakumo). His romantic works on Japan, such as *Glimpses of an Unfamiliar Japan* (1894), *Shadowings* (1900), *Japan: An Attempt at an Interpretation* (1904), and *Kwaidan* (1904), were very popular among English readers. His interest in the traditional life of rural Japan also meshed with the burgeoning interest among Japanese themselves in their own ethnological and folkloric studies (some of which grew out of *kokugaku* interests, starting with the peasant ethnography of Hirata Atsutane 平田篤胤).

Between the myths of *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* and the folktales related by Hearn, anglophone readers gleaned a picture of Japan as rustic, simple, and not necessarily very sophisticated intellectually. That conception was attenuated, however, by the increasing western awareness of Japanese fine arts. In some ways, the arts played a role for the western image of Japan comparable to the role of the western image of the “ancient wisdom cultures” applied to India and China. That is: like the ancient wisdom culture of China and India, the fine arts culture of Japan was something westerners could admire in spite of—and often because of—its exotic nature. Some European impressionists were fascinated with Japanese woodblocks and the Japanese displays of native arts and crafts were big hits at such venues as the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago. In the scholarly appreciation of Japan’s traditional fine arts, the American philosopher, Ernest Francisco Fenollosa (1853–1908), played a central role. Fenollosa had studied philosophy and sociology at Harvard and was brought to Japan in 1878 to teach philosophy and logic at Tokyo University. In that capacity, he influenced the development of modern Japanese philosophy insofar as he was a mentor to such important Meiji philosophers as Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎, Miyake Setsurei 三宅雪嶺, and Inoue Enryō 井上円了. (It is interesting that these three thinkers, unlike Nishi Amane, uniformly considered *tetsugaku* to be an Asian as well as western enterprise and in their own philosophies attempted east-west syntheses.) Fenollosa played a crucial role in developing the Japanese intellectuals’ own interests in their traditional art objects of high culture, which many Meiji intellectuals had been too quick to abandon in favor of

the fashion emphasizing things western. Yet, as much as Fenollosa appreciated Japanese traditional material arts, he did not seem to have any interest in traditional Japanese philosophical ideas, even aesthetics. His writings, almost all published posthumously (the poet, Ezra Pound, was his literary executor), were on the history of East Asian art (*The Masters of Ukiyoe* and *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art*) and Nō 能 drama, not philosophy—either western or Japanese.

The fact that traditional Japan did have spiritual ideas not limited to Shinto was not lost on everyone, however. Not surprisingly, Christian missionaries were among those who realized the importance of Buddhist doctrines and values in everyday Japanese life. A good example of such a scholar was August Karl Reischauer (1879–1971), the father of the famous American scholar and ambassador to Japan, Edwin O. Reischauer. Besides founding what is now Tokyo Women's Christian University, the elder Reischauer was deeply involved in the (frustrating) attempt to convert Japan to Christianity. Like the missionaries centuries before who had translated the texts and written commentaries on the spiritual doctrines of Indian and Chinese religions, Reischauer wrote on Japanese Buddhism: *Studies in Japanese Buddhism* (1917), and *Ojoyoshu: Collected Essays on Birth into Paradise* (1930). His hope was to give Christian missionaries a grasp of Japanese spiritual ideas and values to help them in their task of conversion. Other important works on Buddhism from this early period included Sir Charles Eliot's *Japanese Buddhism* (1935), Arthur Lloyd's *The Creed of Half Japan: Historical Sketches of Japanese Buddhism* (1911), William Elliot Griffis' *Religions of Japan: From the Dawn of History to the Era of Meiji* (1904), and Robert Cornell Armstrong's *Buddhism and Buddhists in Japan* (1927). None of these books took a particularly philosophical approach to Buddhist teachings, but at least enough reference was made to Buddhist doctrines that one might at least suspect there had been at least some philosophical development in premodern Japan. Unfortunately, because the books were published mainly in the period between the two world wars, the potential western audience was distracted by other issues. And the window of opportunity for the missionaries to build on their spiritual insights into Japan as a means of converting the country to Christianity had long since closed. So, the appreciation of Japanese Buddhism as a philosophical and spiritual tradition did not find a milieu in which to flourish.

During this period, there was also some initial scholarship on Japanese

literature and cultural history among the British. The two notables in this field were, respectively, Arthur Waley (1889–1966) and Sir George Bailey Sansom (1883–1965). Waley was a translator in the employ of the British Museum and from 1919–1933 translated various Japanese literary classics including poems, Nō plays, the *Pillow Book*, and *Tale of Genji*. He subsequently turned more to Chinese texts including the *Analects*. Waley was outside the turmoils of Japanese ideology at the time inasmuch as his language skills in Japanese and Chinese were largely self-taught and he never visited East Asia. Waley, though not a philosopher in any sense, did reveal some philosophical nuance in his translation of Confucius. However, in his choice of materials to translate from the Japanese tradition, he did display any particular philosophical interests. His major influence on anglophone readers was to stir their interest in classical Japanese literature. In effect he did for Japanese literature what Fenollosa did for Japanese fine arts. Waley's translations further reinforced the anglophone reader's impression that the Japanese were better artists than thinkers.

Whereas Waley never went to Japan, George Sansom was a long-time resident in his role as diplomat-scholar. For the most part, however, his historiographical interests allowed him some distance from the State Shinto ideology that had served as the context of Aston and Chamberlain's work. As demonstrated in his 1928 *An Historical Grammar of Japanese* and his 1931 *Japan: A Short Cultural History*, Sansom had a good grasp of the complex development of Japanese civilization. He had some feel for the intellectual strains running alongside cultural developments and, although he did not address the issue of Japanese philosophy, he did at least present a rich enough picture of Japanese culture that one could at least imagine they had a philosophical tradition of some sort and that they were more than a culture of myths, folktales, and various arts. After the Pacific War, Sansom finished his scholarly career in the United States at Columbia and then Stanford Universities. His three volume *History of Japan*, written between 1958 and 1963 became a model of Japanese cultural history for the anglophone world, at least until a latter generation of American intellectual historians brought their leftist concerns about ideology to their historical studies of Japan starting the late 1970s. Sansom's lack of focus on Japan's political ideologies had lent his work a refreshing independence in the 1930s, but that same quality seemed more a blindspot to the neo-Marxian Japanese historians writing in America during the late 1970s and 1980s.

THE POSTWAR STUDY OF JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY
IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

With the war's end in 1945, the United States and, to a lesser extent Great Britain, set out to rebuild Japan into a model Asian capitalist democracy. The Maoist revolution in China and the Korean Conflict lent all the more urgency to this plan, especially in the minds of the Americans. Rebuilding Japanese society included refurbishing the image of Japan from being an arch-enemy to a staunch and admirable ally. Obviously, in its wartime associations with ultranationalism and militarism, Shinto could no longer be called the “national faith of Japan,” as it had been characterized by D. C. Holtom in the title of his 1938 book. In general, the anglophone scholars' would turn away from their earlier interest in Shinto. It was not until 1968 that Donald L. Philippi would supply a much needed replacement for Chamberlain's 1906 translation of *Kojiki* and Aston's translation of *Nihonshoki* has still not been superseded by any new translation. So, if not Shinto and its “classic” texts, what would be the new focus for western scholarship?

Part of the refurbishing of Japan's image was the English-speaking world's increasing appreciation for the Japanese literary tradition. After the war, Japan was awash with ex-intelligence personnel from Britain and the United States whom the military had trained as translators. These individuals had been singled out for Japanese language training by their military commanders because of their linguistic skills, not their spirituality (as had been the case in the missionary translators of India and China) nor for their proclivity for abstract thought (logicians were more useful as code-breakers than translators). Hence, these ex-GIs, such as Donald Keene and Edward Seidensticker tended to gravitate toward being translators and interpreters of Japanese literature, picking up the project begun by Waley before the War. The steady flow of Japanese literature—both classical and modern—into English translation also fit well the earlier emphasis by Hearn and Fenollosa in characterizing the Japanese as story-tellers with a keen aesthetic sense. This reinforced the idea that the Japanese were better poets and novelists than thinkers. Hence, the “oxymoron of Japanese philosophy” was born in the mind of many major English-speaking Japanologists of the postwar period. But there was an undercurrent running against this mainstream, although it was barely discernible at first.

Another way to present the new image of Japan to the west would be to highlight its secular academic tradition of philosophy: the western-influenced academic philosophizing that had taken root in the Meiji period and continued to develop at the major universities, especially Kyoto and Tokyo. Hence, with the support and endorsement of UNESCO, a book by each of the two greatest philosophers of each institution was translated into English. The American, Valdo Viglielmo, translated Nishida Kitarō's 西田幾多郎 *Zen no kenkyū* 善の研究 (*A Study of Good*, 1960) and the Englishman, Geoffrey Bownas, translated Watsuji Tetsurō's 和辻哲郎 *Fūdo* 風土 (*Climate and Culture: A Philosophical Study*, 1961). Of Nishida's works, *Zen no kenkyū* was an obvious and appropriate choice to introduce the English-speaking world to modern Japan's academic philosophy. The Japanese work had had an enormous impact on the Japanese academic scene, had established Nishida as a major philosopher worthy of national attention, and had in effect launched the Kyoto School of philosophy. The choice of the Watsuji volume by the UNESCO committee was, by comparison, a little idiosyncratic. The committee had probably chosen that volume because it was a relatively early work by Watsuji, written just after his return from studying philosophy in Germany, but the topic was not one that would attract the attention of most western readers. Furthermore, it was hardly Watsuji's best work, or even his best early work. (I would have thought the *Ningen no gaku to shite no rinrigaku* 人間の学としての倫理学 of 1934 to have been a more engaging work for a western audience and one that demonstrates the themes of culture-society-individual-ethics for which Watsuji is most famous.) Perhaps because Watsuji had grown increasingly critical of American society in his later works, however, it was probably deemed safest to pick a book from his earlier years. Unfortunately, because of the limited publication run in Japan and poor distribution for both books, they did not achieve much visibility among anglophone audiences.

In the long run Viglielmo's taking a position in modern Japanese literature at the University of Hawai'i was probably as significant as his translation of *Zen no kenkyū*. When Robert J. J. Wargo also subsequently joined the philosophy department at the end of the 1960s, the University of Hawai'i became the only institution in the English-speaking world with two scholars actively focusing on modern Japanese philosophy. Through both its scholarly press and its department of philosophy, the University of Hawai'i would play a crucial role in the study of Japanese philosophy

in the English-speaking world. Under its founding chairman, Charles A. Moore, the philosophy department had had an interest in Asian philosophy going back to its hosting a series of East-West Philosophers conferences beginning in the 1930s. In 1951 it established the only English-language journal in the western world devoted entirely to articles on Asian or comparative (Asian-western) philosophy: *Philosophy East and West*. In its original Asian curriculum and in its early publication projects, the department used a threefold classification system for Asian thought: Indian philosophy, Chinese philosophy, and Buddhist philosophy. This was the same categorization used in the plan for the first significant series of sourcebooks on Asian philosophy to appear in English and published by Princeton University Press. Although only two volumes ever appeared—the *Sourcebook of Indian Philosophy* (edited by Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan and Charles A. Moore) and the *Sourcebook of Chinese Philosophy* (edited by Wing-tsit Chan)—the original project was to have three volumes, the third being a *Sourcebook of Buddhist Philosophy*. (Only many years later did the idea—also as yet unrealized—arise that there might be a fourth volume in the series, *A Sourcebook of Japanese Philosophy*.)

Therefore, partly through the influence from Hawai'i, the U.S. flagship in the study of east-west philosophy, Japanese philosophy was originally classified as a subset of Buddhist philosophy. Such a categorization ignores all the philosophy in Japan that is not-Buddhist: Confucian, Neo-Confucian, Shinto (such as *kokugaku*), and the secular academic philosophy of the modern period. This is such an odd characterization of the Japanese tradition that its cause is worth briefly exploring.

If one did not want to consider Japanese philosophy a discrete tradition, one might have thought it most natural to place it under the rubric of Chinese philosophy. After all, Japan was deeply influenced by Confucian as well as Buddhist thought and Buddhism came to Japan via China (either directly or as filtered through Korea, but either case using the Chinese language as its medium). So why would did the Hawai'i faculty even think of putting Japanese philosophy under Buddhist philosophy? The primary answer lies in the development of Buddhology as a field in modern Japan. In the Meiji period the influence of western scholarship liberated Japanese scholars from the simply sectarian study of Buddhism within each tradition (*shūgaku* 宗学) to a more independently academic approach emphasizing history, philology, and the comparative study of traditions. When this new form of nonsectarian and historical scholarship

(*bukkyōgaku* 仏教学) found a home in the newly established imperial universities of Tokyo and Kyoto, it was important to the Meiji leaders that there be a complete break of the academic study of religion from the practice of religion. To avoid the appearance that the imperial universities were supporting “religious” scholarship (particularly Buddhist scholarship, given the new Shinto emphasis of the Imperial Restoration), *bukkyōgaku* was put into the curricula as a subset of “Indian studies” (*indogaku* インド学). The impact of this development was far-reaching. First, since *bukkyōgaku* was to be a subcategory of *indogaku*, Sanskrit became the lingua franca of Buddhist studies. This began the tradition, still common in Japanese Buddhist studies, of tracing all Japanese Buddhist terminology back to the “original” Sanskrit. Thus, in reading, say, Shinran, Nichiren, or Dōgen, Japanese scholars will sometimes analyze their key terms in light of the Sanskrit derivation even though none of those Kamakura-period Japanese knew a word of Sanskrit. The connections of those same Japanese key terms to Confucianism, Daoism, or Shinto (of which those Japanese thinkers did know a little bit) are often completely ignored. A second impact is that while buddhologists claim, on one hand, that one cannot understand Japanese Buddhism without understanding Indian Buddhism first, there is a related tendency to see Japanese Buddhism as containing all previous Buddhism. Japanese Buddhism is, in this view, the culmination of all the Buddhist traditions. This is very much the dual viewpoint found in Takakusu Junjirō’s 高楠順次郎 *Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, a text published by the University of Hawai‘i in 1949 and edited by Wing-tsit Chan and Charles A. Moore, both teaching at Hawai‘i at the time. That historical context helps explain how Japanese philosophy was associated with Buddhist philosophy at Hawai‘i.

Starting in the late 1960s, Japanese philosophy began to have more an identity of its own. First, the appointment of Wargo as an assistant professor at the University of Hawai‘i led to the development of the first regularly offered course in America called “Japanese philosophy.” It focused only on the modern secular academic tradition and so had only a marginal connection to Buddhism. Second, when Charles A. Moore collected a series of essays from the East-West Philosophers’ Conferences, he divided the collection into three volumes: *The Indian Mind*, *The Chinese Mind*, and *The Japanese Mind* (all published through the University of Hawai‘i Press in 1967 and 1968). It was not until my arrival as an assistant

professor in Hawai'i in 1975, however, that the University of Hawai'i department began to offer a sequence of courses in Japanese philosophy, both premodern and modern. The treatment of Japanese philosophy as a continuous tradition led in 1977 to the field of "Japanese philosophy" as an area of specialization with the department's doctoral program, joining the already established options of "Indian philosophy," "Chinese philosophy," "Buddhist philosophy," and "Comparative philosophy." Wargo had by then departed UH and I was his replacement. Although I was the only specialist on Japanese philosophy in the department, we were also able to draw on the expertise of Viglielmo from East Asian Languages and Literatures and Alfred Bloom (a Shinran specialist) from Religious Studies. Furthermore, within the philosophy department, Roger T. Ames and Graham Parkes had secondary interests in Japan that helped bolster the program significantly. (After my departure in 1981, Steve Odin filled the slot I had vacated.)

Outside Hawai'i, the major contributions to the development of modern Japanese philosophy in the United States was via the translations and articles written by David A. Dilworth of the State University of New York at Stony Brook. Dilworth collaborated with Viglielmo on the translation of Nishida's *Geijutsu to dōtoku* 芸術と道徳 (*Art and Morality*, University of Hawai'i, 1973) and collaborated again (along with Agustín Jacinto Zavala) in compiling a 22-essay, *Sourcebook for Modern Japanese Philosophy* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998). Besides several essays published in journals, Dilworth was also the sole translator of Nishida's *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i, 1989) and his *Fundamental Problems of Philosophy* (Tokyo: Sophia University Monograph Series, 1970), as well as Fukuzawa Yukichi's 福沢諭吉 *Encouragement of Learning* (Tokyo: Sophia University, Monumenta Nipponica Monograph Series, 1969).

Coincident with these developments, the study of premodern Japanese thought was also on the rise in the United States. With the impact of D. T. Suzuki in the 1950s and 1960s, the interest in Zen Buddhist studies skyrocketed on American campuses. Pioneers in the philosophical approach to Zen in the United States included Paul Wienpaul and Van Meter Ames. English translations of Zen texts were beginning to appear, in part to meet the interests of Zen communities sprouting up around America. Shin Buddhist translations also continued as a service to the increasing number of Japanese-American Shin Buddhists (mostly in Hawai'i and

the west coast of the U.S. and Canada) who could no longer easily read Japanese materials. At about the same time, partly in response to heightened interest among students, buddhology started to assume a more prominent place in the American and Canadian academies with major training sites being Harvard (under Masatoshi Nagatomi), Yale (under Stanley Weinstein), Chicago (under Joseph Kitagawa), University of Wisconsin (under Richard Robinson), University of British Columbia (under Leon Hurvitz), and Berkeley (under Lewis Lancaster). While none of these scholars were philosophers, some of them (and their students) had distinctively philosophical interests. For the study of Japanese Confucianism, the early American scholarship developed mainly in programs of intellectual history at various institutions, such as those supervised by William Theodore deBary at Columbia, Peter Nosco in USC, and Tetsuo Najita and Harry Harootunian at the University of Chicago. Again, these were not primarily philosophical programs, but some thinkers and texts of philosophical import were often studied.

Starting in the 1980s, the study of Japanese philosophy in the English-speaking world, especially the United States and Canada, has been showing steady progress. A major factor was the involvement of the Jan Van Bragt and James Heisig of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture in the translation of modern Japanese philosophy works of the Kyoto School and related critical studies. Unlike the earlier translations of modern Japanese philosophy, these works were published in major academic presses with wide distribution throughout the English-speaking world. Along with the involvement of English-speaking philosophers from Japan such as Abe Masao, these efforts have created a significant stir in the United States, especially among philosophical theologians such as John Cobb, David Tracy, Langdon Gilkey, and Gordon Kaufman. It was as if the spiritual interest that had formally been limited to India and China was not being applied to Japan as well. There was a key difference, however. As a living tradition, the Kyoto School philosophers were also studying western philosophy and were able to engage in a dialogue with the west. Partly through the dynamic of this exchange and the interest in Japanese philosophy shown by the English-speaking west, Japanese philosophy—both modern and premodern—started to gain added attention within Japan as well.

The interest in studying Japanese philosophy was enhanced within English-speaking North America by the involvement of the next genera-

tion of American, Canadian, and Japanese-American scholars including John Maraldo, Shigenori Nagatomo, Christopher Ives, Robert E. Carter, Michiko Yusa, Graham Parkes, Steve Odin, Steven Heine, Dale Wright, and myself. Through the efforts of such scholars, the sharp boundaries dividing modern and premodern Japanese philosophy have gradually eroded. Although scholars may still specialize more in one area than the other, the discontinuities between premodern and modern Japanese philosophy have come to be deemphasized in light of important continuities. This reflects, incidentally, the view of most major modern Japanese philosophers themselves. For example, Watsuji Tetsurō, Miki Kiyoshi 三木清, Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治, Takeuchi Yoshinori 武内義範, Ueda Shizeteru 上田閑照, Sakabe Megumi 坂部恵, and Yuasa Yasuo 湯浅泰雄 all wrote books about premodern Japanese thinkers, treating them as having an important philosophical profile.

The generation of U.S. and Canada based scholars of Japanese philosophy we are discussing here (let us refer to them simply as “second generation” scholars) also benefited in their work from occasional collaboration of scholars in religion or literature who have contributed various insights into Japanese philosophy, both premodern and modern. Two prominent examples include William LaFleur and Michael (Michele) Marra. In addition, as this generation of scholars approaches retirement, there are a cadre of able younger scholars who are already making crucial contributions and will be able successors. To mention just four: Gereon Kopf, Yoko Arisaka, Mark Unno, and Bret Davis. They typify the core of what we can call the “third generation” of anglophone scholars of Japanese philosophy.

Let us encapsulate this analysis of the postwar situation. With the changing environment of Japan-U.S. relations, the English-reading audience has had the opportunity to engage the religious and philosophical traditions of Japan in a way not previously possible. The interest in Japanese philosophical thought has arisen from several fronts. Academically, the University of Hawai‘i has played a central role in this history and the importance of Hawai‘i’s achieving U.S. statehood in 1959 was critical. With Hawai‘i as a state and not merely a territory, the University of Hawai‘i and the federally-funded East-West Center were able to achieve a special prominence in the American academic scene. With its large Japanese-American population and its long-standing connections with Japan, Hawai‘i was the obvious site for initiating the study of Japan-

ese philosophy in the United States. On the publishing front, again the University of Hawai'i Press (including its premiere journal *Philosophy East and West*) would lead the way, but there would also be significant support from such sources as Sophia University and its *Monumental Nipponica* journal and monograph series. Also published in Japan, Ōtani University's journal *The Eastern Buddhist* became a critical link between the Kyoto School philosophers, Japanese scholars of Buddhism interested in philosophical issues, and the growing number of English-language scholars interested in Japanese thought both modern and premodern. Through its series, Nanzan University used a variety of western publishers to make important books on Japanese philosophy and translations of Japanese philosophical works available to English readers. On a less institutionalized and broader intellectual front, east-west dialogue, including Buddhist-Christian dialogue, spurred further interactions between Japan and the west. It can even be argued that to some extent the increasing interest the west showed in Japanese philosophical thought led to a heightened sensitivity among Japanese intellectuals as to the importance of their own tradition. It is somewhat reminiscent of how Fenollosa's appreciation of the Japanese fine arts influenced modern Japan's appreciation of its own artistic heritage.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STUDY OF JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY IN THE ENGLISH-SPEAKING WORLD

From what has been said up to here, it might seem that the future of the study of Japanese philosophy in the anglophone world is bright. There remain significant obstacles, however. First, despite their efforts, the second generation scholars did not make major inroads into the main training centers of philosophy in North America. The only philosophy department in the United States that, as a department, has made a permanent curricular commitment to Japanese philosophy is still the University of Hawai'i. Even the State University of New York/Stony Brook where David Dilworth has spent his entire career teaching Japanese philosophy has not set up such a permanent program. When Dilworth retires it is not clear whether the department would replace him with another Japanese philosophy specialist. Furthermore, if we look at universities with the highest ranked East Asian programs and those with

the highest ranked philosophy programs, the overlap (including institutions like Harvard, Michigan, Columbia, Yale, Chicago, Stanford, UCLA, Berkeley, Pittsburg, and USC) have *no* specialists in Japanese philosophy. Indeed, almost all those departments are so committed to the Anglo-American strain of analytic philosophy (including areas like formal logic, cognitive science, and artificial intelligence) that they seldom have strength even in Continental European, not to mention Asian, philosophy. So, it is not likely they will expand soon into the area of Japanese philosophy, at least unless endowment funds specifically come to them for that purpose. (The few that do have permanent positions for Chinese philosophy seem to have had such external support at some point.) And even if they did, it is hard to imagine how doctoral students could be properly trained in modern Japanese philosophy without a solid background in European Continental thought to contextualize it.

Different obstacles hinder the further study of premodern Japanese philosophy. In the past decade or two, there has been a trend within Buddhist studies in the United States to turn away from some of its earlier philosophical interests in doctrine and instead toward the study of cultural and social theory, often of the postmodern variety. This methodological approach brings a hermeneutic of suspicion to the reading of all “elite” texts, surmising the social and political agenda behind the institutions that produced those texts without much concern for or analysis of the arguments and philosophical insights within the texts themselves. This trend seems to be especially true in the field of East Asian Buddhism (where the line is followed to differing degrees by such prominent scholars as Bernard Faure and Carl Bielefeldt at Stanford, Robert Sharf at Berkeley, and George Tanabe at Hawai‘i).

A parallel tendency is influential within the study of Japanese intellectual history in America. Led originally by the University of Chicago duo of Najita and Harootunian, this approach tends to reduce all philosophy to disguised political ideology developed for the purposes of world domination and oppression of the masses. In this reading of intellectual history, both Edo-period *kokugaku* thought and the philosophies of almost all the modern Kyoto School philosophers, for example, are considered no more than masked nationalistic right-wing ideologies. The problem in this methodological approach is not that it tries to reveal the cultural-historical-political contexts influencing what the philosophers wrote about. That would obviously be a valuable project: it helps us appreciate

the conditions of thought in a given age and the role that philosophical ideas might have played in either reinforcing or undermining them. But this methodology tends to go much further: it typically takes this background context and treats it as the “real meaning” and “hidden agendas” lurking behind the text. In so doing, it denies the integrity of the thinker’s distinctive position and obscures the nuanced way any individual thinker both reflects and responds against the ideologies of one’s own time and place.

In short: in an earlier stage of their development in America, Buddhist studies and Japanese intellectual history complemented work that was being done in Japanese philosophy. There is some indication, however, that this complementary working relationship may be dissolving. Some important scholars in the areas of Buddhist studies and Japanese intellectual history are taking a stance that marginalizes the philosophical character of some of the materials on which they work. Contextualization of the philosophical thinker has often been replaced by contestation against philosophizing itself.

Because of these changing contexts in English-speaking scholarship, if Japanese philosophy is to develop further as a discipline in America, it will probably happen initially outside standard philosophy programs. For example, over the years Temple University (under Shigenori Nagatomo, who did his doctoral work at the University of Hawai‘i) has trained some specialists in Japanese philosophy under the rubric of its religious studies program. In some other cases, graduate students have gone to Japan to study Japanese philosophy in order to supplement what they could not do in their American graduate programs in philosophy. The key question is, however, how to generate enough interest in Japanese philosophy among western philosophers so that they will want to expand their programs to include faculty members with such an expertise. Here, it seems to me, the major responsibility falls on the shoulders of what we have designated the “second generation” of scholars. These individuals are in the final decade or so of their teaching careers and have the knowledge of both Japanese philosophy and American academic politics to try to make a difference. There are four kinds of projects in which they might participate.

First, it is time to realize the long-standing plan to publish a *Sourcebook for Japanese Philosophy* that would give an overview of the whole tradition in readable translations. It is important to keep in mind the undergradu-

ate classroom as a main audience for this work. It was the undergraduates of the 1960s who became enamored with Zen Buddhism and spurred the development of graduate programs in Buddhist studies throughout the English-speaking academy. So, the sourcebook must be available in paperback and not be too expensive. It should have a good bibliography so students (and their professors) know where to look for more information. And it should also have the apparatus (such as the inclusion of *kanji*) that would allow it to serve as a ready reference tool for graduate students and for philosophers who may be learning Japanese or who may know an orthographically-related language like Chinese.

Second, ways should be found for getting selections from Japanese philosophy into standard philosophy textbooks and anthologies of readings. One project might be to have translated works available on the internet arranged by philosophical category. For example, if a philosophy professor were teaching an introductory course on ethics, that professor might include in the course assignments a translated piece from, say, Watsuji, Nishida, or Dōgen. This would especially be true if it were readily available on the internet (at no cost). The same would obviously apply to courses in aesthetics, political philosophy, metaphysics, and so forth. Once such internet translations were available, they would have to be publicized through, say, the American Philosophical Association. Another way to make Japanese philosophical essays more available would be through inclusion in present popular textbooks of readings for introductory philosophy courses (mainly courses like “introduction to philosophy” or “ethics”). This might mean systematically contacting the authors/publishers of such books and suggesting readings they might include.

Third, there is a need for a good survey of the history of Japanese philosophy. That is actually my current project. I have been working on it for some years, but it is now finally nearing completion. This will, I hope, help contextualize the field and make it more accessible to nonspecialists. I would hope others would pursue similar kinds of projects that are meant to serve the needs of nonspecialists as well as colleagues in the field.

Fourth, although I currently know of no practical way to fund this, it would be of great value to establish a special program for philosophers who are already established in their fields (for example, as tenured faculty in philosophy departments), but who would like to learn more about

Japanese philosophy so that they could teach about it in their classes. I can imagine, for example, a one-year program wherein a group of, say, five to ten philosophers would study a little Japanese language, take some seminars, and develop a syllabus for a course they will teach focusing on Japanese philosophy. I would imagine the program being held someplace in the United States for about half the year and in Japan for the other half. Seminars, workshops, and lectures could be supplied by a variety of scholars from both the U.S. and Japan. If the program ran for just four years, the result would be twenty to forty new courses in Japanese philosophy offered at twenty to forty different institutions. Since all the professors would already be tenured faculty, one could count on the program's having a continued effect for many years.

If Japanese philosophy is to flourish as a field in the English-speaking academy, we need to think of how to effect such practical programs. This can be the legacy of the "second generation" of scholars and the departure point for the third generation in their attempts to expand the field.