

Japanese Philosophy and Buddhism

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It might be rather problematic for a Japanese to talk about “Japanese” philosophy, because in that case it seems difficult to avoid the danger of praising “Japan” as superior to other countries, or sometimes praising “the East” as superior to “the West.” Being conscious of the danger, I would like to analyze critically some writings considered to represent the so-called “Japanese” philosophy.

I Nishida’s Theory of “Self” (*ātman*)

It is generally considered that Kitarō Nishida 西田幾多郎 (1870-1945), i.e. a representative of the Kyoto School of philosophy, is the first original thinker in modern Japan. Although his nationalistic tendency, which has been criticized by scholars,¹ I think, stems from the core of his ideas,² the relationship between his philosophy and Buddhist thought does not seem to have been adequately elucidated.

To state my understanding briefly, the essence of Nishida’s philosophy lies in his theory of “Self” (*ātman*), as is clearly understood from the following statement in his first book, i.e. *Zen no Kenkyū* 善の研究 (*An Inquiry into the Good*) [IG] published

¹ Cf. Yoko Arisaka, “The Nishida Enigma: “The Principle of the New World Order” (1943),” *Monumenta Nipponica*, 51:1. 1996, pp. 81-99; Bernard Faure, “The Kyoto School and Reverse Orientalism,” *Japan in Traditional and Postmodern Perspectives*, Charles Wei-Hsun Fu and Steven Heine eds., New York: Suny Press, 1995, pp. 245-281; *Rude Awakenings. Zen, the Kyoto School, & the Question of Nationalism*, James W. Heisig, John C. Maraldo eds., Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994.

² My idea is quite simple. Namely, it seems very natural that Nishida’s ideas become nationalistic, because his theory of “Self” inevitably incurs Self-centred understanding concerning the problem of nations also.

in 1911.

[1] 哲学と宗教と最も能く一致したのは印度の哲学、宗教である。印度の哲学、宗教では知即善で迷即悪である。宇宙の本体はブラハマン Brahman で、ブラハハマンは吾人の心即アートマン Atman である。このブラハハマン即アートマンなることを知るのが、哲学及宗教の奥義であった。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, pp. 45-46)

[1e] The Indian religio-philosophical tradition, which provides the most highly developed congruence of philosophy and religion, holds that knowledge is good and delusion is evil. The fundamental reality of the universe is Brahman, which is our soul, our Ātman. The knowledge of this identity of Brahman and Ātman is the culmination of Indian philosophy and religion. (IG, p. 38)

In this passage, Nishida not only explains the theory of the identity of *brahman* and *ātman* (*brahma-ātma-aikya* 梵我一如) asserted in the old *Upaniṣad* literatures of Hinduism but also advocates his own conviction, as is known from his following statements.

[2] 実在の根柢には精神的原理があつて、此原理が即ち神である。印度宗教の根本義である様にアートマンとブラハマンとは同一である。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p. 97)

[2e] there is a fundamental spiritual principle at the base of reality, and this principle is God. This idea accords with the fundamental truth of Indian religion: Ātman and Brahman are identical. (IG, p. 80)

[3] 実地上真の善とは唯一つあるのみである、即ち真の自己を知るといふに尽きて居る。我々の真の自己は宇宙の本体である、真の自己を知れば常に人類一般の善と合するばかりでなく、宇宙の本体と融合し神意と冥合するのである。--- 仏教では之を見性といふ。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, pp. 167-168)

[3e] in actuality there is only one true good: to know the true self. Our true self is the ultimate reality of the universe, and if we know the true self we not only unite with the good of humankind in general but also fuse with the essence of the universe and unite with the will of God --- and Buddhism calls it *kenshō*. (IG, p. 145)

It seems evident that, in Passage [3], the word *shin no jiko* 真の自己 “the true self” means *ātman*, while the term *uchū no hontai* 宇宙の本体 “the ultimate reality of the universe” means *brahman*. Therefore, it seems appropriate to understand that the theory

of the identity of *brahman* and *ātman* asserted in Hindu monism forms Nishida's fundamental understanding of the highest reality. However, what is most important is the fact that Nishida considers the theory to be also the fundamental thought of Buddhism. He states as follows:

[4] 仏教の根本的思想である様に、自己と宇宙とは同一の根柢をもつて居る、否直に同一物である。 (『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p. 164)

[4e] As emphasized in basic Buddhist thought, the self and the universe share the same foundation; or rather, they are the same thing. (IG, p. 143)

It seems that, in this passage, the theory of the identity of *brahman* and *ātman* is advocated by Nishida as “basic Buddhist thought” 仏教の根本的思想. In other words, he explains the theory as representing not only Hindu monism but also basic Buddhist thought. In this respect, I think, his understanding of Buddhism is fundamentally wrong, because for my part I cannot consider that Śākyamuni had preached the identity of *brahman* and *ātman*.³

The word *shin no jiko* 真の自己 “the true Self” is often used by Japanese scholars. Besides, some of them assert that the concept of “the true Self” does not contradict the fundamental Buddhist teaching of “no self” 無我, because, they assert, by the teaching of “no self,” “self” is denied, while “the true Self” is affirmed. However, I am skeptical about such an assertion. In this respect, the critical comment by James Heisig, a famous scholar on Nishida's philosophy, seems quite noteworthy. He writes as follows:

[5] 現代の「自己論」は、真の自己の探求を進めることによって、無我 (anātman) を教えてきた仏教の伝統から離れる可能性が強いと言えるでしょう。anātman が否定する ātman は、ただのエゴ=自我ではなくて、かえって完全に作り直された心、Brahman と一致するような心、あるいはセルフ=自己でした。結局、自分の心の中でより高い真理を求めるという傾向は、たとえそれが現代日本の仏教においては流行しているとしても、本来の仏教の伝統的な教えに背く可能性がないとは言えないのです。

³ I do not think that the existence of *ātman* was admitted in the earliest Buddhism, while Hajime Nakamura 中村元 considers to the contrary. On this problem, cf. Shiro Matsumoto, *Bukkyō Shisōron, jō* 仏教思想論 上 (Essay on Buddhist Thought, part 1), Daizō Shuppan, Tokyo, pp. 8-9; pp. 20-23

[5e] There is a high probability that the contemporary theory of “Self,” by promoting the search for “the true Self,” deviates from Buddhist tradition which has preached “no self” (*anātman*). The *ātman*, denied by the theory of “no self” (*anātman*), is not a mere ego 自我 but rather a completely reformed mind, which is identical with *brahman*, namely Self 自己. After all, it cannot be said that there is no possibility that the inclination to search for a higher truth in one’s own mind, even if it is popular in contemporary Japanese Buddhism, contradicts the traditional teaching of original Buddhism.

Almost completely I approve this comment by Heisig. Although his critique of the “Self” theory does not seem to be directed to Nishida, it cannot be denied that the “Self” theory constitutes the essence of his ideas, as is again evidently known from his following statement.

[6] 善とは自己の発展完成 self-realization であるといふことができる。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p.145)

[6e] the good is the development and completion --- the self-realization --- of the self. (IG, p.125)

It is also to be noted that Paul Heelas in his book, *The New Age Movement*, describing “Self” theory as “Self-spirituality,” states as follows:

[7] Indeed, the most pervasive and significant aspect of the *lingua franca* of the New Age is that the person is, in essence, spiritual. To experience the ‘Self’ itself is to experience ‘God,’ ‘Goddess,’ ‘the Source,’⁴

It seems that the fundamental ideas of Nishida shown above can be fully expressed by the sentence “to experience the ‘Self’ itself is to experience ‘God’” in this passage. Thus, the structure of Nishida’s theory of “Self” seems to have been elucidated to some extent.

However, one more point is to be understood concerning Nishida’s theory of “Self.” That is the idea of “basis,” “foundation,” “place,” “topos,” or “locus.” It is to be noted that, in Passages [2] and [4], the word *kontei* 根柢 (base, foundation) is used. What, then, is the meaning of the word when it is used in the expressions *jitsuzai*

⁴ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*, Blackwell Publishers, 1996, p.19.

no kontei 実在の根底 “the base of reality” and *dōitsuno kontei* 同一の根柢 “the same foundation” ? To understand the meaning accurately, it seems necessary to refer to the following passages of Nishida.

[8] 神は宇宙の根本であつて兼ねて我らの根本でなければならぬ、我らが神に帰するのは其本に帰するのである。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p.174)

[8e] God must be the foundation of the universe and our own foundation as well. To take refuge in God is to take refuge in that foundation. (IG, p. 154)

[9] 神とはこの宇宙の根本をいふのである。上に述べたように、余は神を宇宙の外に超越せる造物主とは見ずして、直にこの実在の根底と考へるのである。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p. 178)

[9e] God is the foundation of the universe. As said before, I do not regard God as a transcendent creator outside the universe, for God is the base of this reality. (IG, p. 158)

[10] 我々は自己の心底に於て宇宙を構成する実在の根本を知ることができる、即ち神の面目を捕捉することができる。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p. 99)

[10e] we can know the foundation of reality that forms the universe in the depth of our hearts — we can grasp the true face of God. (IG, p. 81)

First, needless to say, the words *konpon* 根本 and *kontei* 根柢 have the same meaning, i.e. “basis” or “foundation.” In Passages [8] and [10], Nishida advocates the same theory, i.e. the identity of *brahman* and *ātman*, as is stated in Passages [1], [2] and [3], only using the word “God” instead of “*brahman*.” It is evident that the word “God” used by Nishida has the meaning quite different from the meaning of the word used in Christianity, because he rejects the idea of the transcendence of God who is the creator of the world. It seems evident that he uses the word *konpon* 根本 or *kontei* 根柢 in order to advocate the immanence of God, as against the transcendence of God. Therefore, to avoid misunderstandings, “God” of Nishida must precisely be understood as “*brahman*” which is immanent in the world and is the basis or the foundation of the world.

In my opinion, Nishida’s theory of “Self” (*ātman*), or precisely the theory of the identity of *brahman* and *ātman*, connected with his theory of “foundation,” can be understood as succeeded from the monism of Hinduism. In fact, according to the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* (6.8.4), an old *Upaniṣad* literature, Uddālaka Āruṇi said as

follows:

[11] sanmūlāḥ saumya imāḥ sarvāḥ prajāḥ sadāyatanāḥ satpratiṣṭhāḥ/

[11e] All these creatures (*prajā*), my dear son, have the existent (*sat*) as their root (*mūla*), have the existent as their resting-place (*āyatana*) and have the existent as their foundation (*pratiṣṭhā*).

In this passage, the words “*mūla*,” “*āyatana*” and “*pratiṣṭhā*” have the same meaning, i.e. “foundation” or “basis.” Therefore, we can understand that, in the passage, “the existent” (*sat*) is stated to be the “foundation” (*mūla*, *āyatana*, *pratiṣṭhā*) of the world. Moreover, “the existent” (*sat*) can be understood as “*brahman*,” because Uddālaka Āruṇi also said in the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* (6.2.1), as follows:

[12] sad eva saumya idam agra āsīd ekam evādvitīyam/

[12e] In the beginning, my dear son, this world (*idam*) was the existent (*sat*) only, one (*eka*) only without a second.

In this passage, “the existent” (*sat*) is stated to be “one only without a second” (*ekam evādvitīyam*) and to be the origin⁵ of the world

To sum up, in the monism of Uddālaka Āruṇi, “the existent” (*sat*), which is “one without a second,” is the origin as well as “the foundation” (*mūla*, *āyatana*, *pratiṣṭhā*) of the world. In order to clarify the structure of such a monism, I have proposed a hypothesis of *dhātu-vāda*, i.e. the theory of “locus,” using the word “locus”⁶ instead of “foundation” or “basis.” According to the hypothesis,⁷ all things are positioned in terms of a locus below and a super-locus above. The defining characters of *dhātu-vāda* are as follows:

1. “Locus” is the basis for “super-loci.”

⁵ The temporal relation between “the existent” (*sat*) and “this world” (*idam*) is stated by the expression “in the beginning --- was” (*agra āsīd*), which means that “the existent” is the origin of “this world.”

⁶ A reason of my adopting the term “locus” was that the term can be used in contrast with “super-locus.” Namely, I thought, the relationship between “locus” and “super-locus” (*ādharma-ādheya-bhāva*) can be well expressed by the term.

⁷ Cf. Shiro Matsumoto, “The Doctrine of *Tathāgata-garbha* Is Not Buddhist” (Translated by Jamie Hubbard), *Pruning the Bodhi Tree, The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, Jamie Hubbard & Paul L. Swanson eds., University of Hawai‘i Press, Honolulu, 1997, pp.169-170.

2. “Locus” gives rise to “super-loci.”
3. “Locus” is one, “super-loci” are many.
4. “Locus” is real, “super-loci” are not real.
5. “Locus” is the essential nature (*ātman*) of “super-loci.”
6. “Super-loci” are not ultimately real, but have some reality in that they have arisen from the “locus” and share its nature.

And what is most important is the fact that such a Hindu monism of *dhātu-vāda* was introduced into Buddhism so that it forms the fundamental structure of *tathāgata-garbha* thought or Buddha-nature (*buddha-dhātu*) thought. Although it is not clear whether Nishida actually read Passages [11] and [12] of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad* or not, it seems definite that he had grasped rather accurately the structure of *dhātu-vāda* through reading many Chinese and Japanese Buddhist texts basically influenced by Buddha-nature thought, the fundamental structure of which, I think, is *dhātu-vāda*.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to understand Nishida’s theory of “foundation” as a type of *dhātu-vāda*, i.e. the theory of “locus.” Thus, I think, without referring to the expression “*sat-pratiṣṭhāh*” (having the existent as their foundation) in Passage [11] of the *Chāndogya-upaniṣad*, we cannot reach the accurate understanding of Nishida’s idea that “God is the foundation of the universe” in Passage [9].

As for the philosophy of Nishida, it is often asserted that Nishida’s ideas had considerably changed or developed in his later days. Especially, the idea of *gyaku taiou* 逆対応, often translated as “inverse correspondence,” stated in his last writing, i.e. *Bashoteki Ronri to Shūkyōteki Sekaikan* 場所的論理と宗教の世界観 (The Logic of Place and A Religious Worldview)⁸, is considered to be rather different from his ideas in his earlier period. However, I am skeptical of such an understanding. What, then, is his idea of “inverse correspondence”? Nishida explains as follows:

⁸ For English translations of the text, cf. David A. Dilworth, *Last Writings, Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, University of Hawai’i Press, Honolulu, 1987, Michiko Yusa, “The Logic of *Topos* and the Religious Worldview,” *The Eastern Buddhist*, New Series, Eastern Buddhist Society, 19 (2), 1986, pp. 1-29, 20 (1), 1987, pp. 81-119. The word 逆対応 was translated by Yusa as “inverse correlation” (p. 19), while it was translated by Dilworth as “paradox” (p. 78). I would like to modestly propose, as the translation of the word, “inverse parallelism” or “counter-parallelism.”

[13] 神と人間との対立は、何処までも逆対応的である。(NKZ, 11, p. 409)

[13e] The confrontation between God and human beings is always an inverse correspondence.

[14] 我々は自己否定的に、逆対応的に、いつも絶対的一者に接して居る。(NKZ, 11, p. 429)

[14e] We are always in contact with the absolute One, by self-denial or inverse correspondence.

[15] 我々の自己は、唯、死によってのみ、逆対応的に神に接するのである。(NKZ, 11, p. 396)

[15e] Our Self is in contact with God, only by death or inverse correspondence.

It seems evident that the word *shi* 死 “death” in Passage [15] means *jikohitei* 自己否定 “self-denial” or *hitei* 否定 “denial” in Passage [14]. However, I do not think that “self-denial” is really asserted in these passages, because, in my understanding, what is asserted in these passages is not “self-denial” but “self-affirmation,” or precisely the identity of *ātman* (Self) and *brahman* (“God” in Nishida’s expression) repeatedly stated in Passages [1], [2], [3], [4], [8] and [10] of *An Inquiry into the Good*, as shown above. This understanding might seem wrong, because it cannot be denied that the word *jikohitei* 自己否定 “self-denial” is used in Passage [14]. However, how can we understand the following passages?

[16] 我々の自己は、何処までも自己の底に自己を越えたものに於て自己を有つ、自己否定に於て自己自身を肯定するのである。(NKZ, 11, pp. 445-446)

[16e] Our own self possesses a [true] self, i.e. that which always transcends the self, at the bottom of our own self. Our own self affirms the self by self-denial.

[17] 我々の自己の底には何処までも自己を越えたものがある、而もそれは単に自己に他なるものではない、自己の外にあるものではない。(NKZ, 11, p. 418)

[17e] At the bottom of our own self, there is always something which transcends the self. And, it is not merely other than the self. It is not outside the self.

In these passages, Nishida still talks about *jiko no soko* 自己の底 “the bottom of self,” which is, needless to say, identical in meaning with *jiko no shintei* 自己の心底 “the depth of our hearts” or “the bottom of the heart of self” in Passage [10] of *An Inquiry into the Good*. Moreover, it is also clear that the words *jiko o koetamono* 自己を越えた

もの “that which transcends the self” means “God” in Nishida’s terminology. But, can we understand that Nishida’s “God” really transcends the self? Because he describes “that which transcends self” as *jikoni tanarumono dewanai* 自己に他なるものではない “that which is not other than the self” or as *jikono sotoniarumono dewanai* 自己の外にあるものではない “that which is not outside the self,” it seems evident that Nishida’s “God” does not really transcend the self but is immanent in the self, or precisely is at the bottom of the self.

If we interpret Nishida’s “God” as being immanent in the self, I think, the following passage can be accurately understood.

[18] 自己自身を超越することは、何処までも自己に返ることである、真の自己になることである。 (NKZ, 11, p. 423)

[18e] To transcend our own self is to return to the self, to become the true self.

In this passage, in which Nishida still affirms “the true self” as in Passage [3], his idea is clearly expressed that transcending the self is returning to the self or becoming the true self. Although he uses the term “transcend,” there is in reality no moment of “transcendence” or “denial” in the idea of “becoming the true self.” Nishida’s concept of “self-denial” or “inverse correspondence” is explained also in the following passage.

[19] 自己を否定するものは、何等かの意味に於て自己と根を同じくするものでなければならぬ。全然自己と無関係なるものは、自己を否定するとも云われないのである。 (NKZ, 11, p. 397)

[19e] That which denies the self must be something which has the same root with the self. That which has no relationship at all with the self cannot be stated to be that which denies the self.

In order to understand accurately the meaning of this passage, it seems necessary to refer to the following passage of *An Inquiry into the Good*.

[20] 例えば色が赤のみであったならば赤という色は現われ様がない。赤が現われるには赤ならざる色がなければならぬ。而して一の性質が他の性質と比較し区別せらるるには、両性質はその根柢において同一でなければならぬ。全く類を異にしその間に何らの共通なる点をもたぬ者は比較し区別することができぬ。かくの如く凡ての物は対立に由って成立するというならば、その根柢には必ず統一的或る者が潜んで居るのである。 (『善の研究』 NKZ, 1, p. 68)

[20e] For instance, if red were the only color, it would not appear to us as such, because for it to do so there must be colors that are not red. Moreover, for one quality to be compared with and distinguished from another, both qualities must be fundamentally identical;⁹ two things totally different with no point in common cannot be compared and distinguished. If all things are established through such opposition, then there must be a certain unifying reality concealed at their base. (IG, p. 56)

The message emphasized in this passage seems that the two opposed things must be identical, because they have the same foundation (*kotei* 根柢) or the same essence.¹⁰ This is Nishida's fundamental idea of "opposition," "contradiction" or "denial," which is expressed by him also as "inverse correspondence" or as *zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu* 絶対矛盾の自己同一 "self-identity of absolute contradictions." Therefore, it is evident that the meaning of the sentence 自己を否定するものは、何等かの意味に於て自己と根を同じくするものでなければならぬ "That which denies the self must be something which has the same root with the self" in Passage [19] is not fundamentally different from the message of the sentence 両性質はその根柢において同一でなければならぬ "both qualities must be fundamentally identical (at their foundation)" in Passage [20].

When Nishida's idea of "opposition" is applied to the relationship between "Self" and "God," it is stated in *An Inquiry into the Good* as follows:

⁹ For my part, I would like to translate the sentence 両性質はその根柢において同一でなければならぬ as "both qualities must be identical at their foundation or with respect to their foundation" without using the word "fundamentally," because the word seems too ambiguous.

¹⁰ It is to be noted that, in the structure of *dhātu-vāda*, the two opposed things are considered to be identical, because, as Nishida considers, they have the same locus (*dhātu*) and the same essence (*ātman*). For example, in the famous verse "*anādikāliko dhātuḥ sarvadharmasamāśrayaḥ/ tasmīn sati gatiḥ sarvā nirvāṇādhiḡamo'pi ca*" (*Ratnagotravibhāga*, Johnston ed., p.72, ll.13-14) of the so-called *Mahāyāna-abhidharma-sūtra*, the locus (*dhātu*), which is the equal basis (*sama-āśraya*) of all things, is stated to be the locus of the two opposed things, i.e. the destinations of transmigration and the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. Likewise, in the *Śrīmālāsūtra*, *tathāgata-garbha* is stated to be the locus (*niśraya*, *ādhāra*, *pratiṣṭhā*) of the two opposed things, i.e. produced properties (*saṃskṛta-dharma*) and unproduced properties (*asaṃskṛta-dharma*). Cf. *Ratnagotravibhāga*, p.73, ll. 2-5.

[21] 若し神と我とは其根柢において本質を異にし、神は単に人間以上の偉大なる力といふ如き者とするならば、我々はこれに向かつて毫も宗教的動機を見出すことはできぬ。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p. 173)

[21e] If we assume that the essences of God and self¹¹ differ fundamentally¹² and that God is merely some sort of great power above and beyond us, then there is no true religious motive in our response to God. (IG, p. 153)

[22] 凡ての宗教の本には神人同性の關係がなければならぬ。(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p.173-174)

[22e] At the base of all religions must be the relationship between God and humans in which they share the same nature. (IG, p.154)

[23] 神人その性を同じうし、人は神に於て其本に帰すといふのは凡ての宗教の根本的思想であつて、(『善の研究』NKZ, 1, p.174)

[23e] I think it is a fundamental idea of all religions that God and humans have the same nature, that in God humans return to their origin (“foundation” M)¹³, (IG, pp. 154-155)

Thus the problem to be asked is whether “the relationship between God and human beings in which they share the same nature” advocated in *An Inquiry into the Good* was later rejected by the concept of the *gyaku taiou* 逆対応 “inverse correspondence” between God and human beings or not. My understanding is that it was not at all rejected, because “the relationship between God and human beings in which they share the same nature or foundation” is asserted in Passage [19] also, although God is expressed there as *jiko o hiteisurumono* 自己を否定するもの “that which denies the self.”

It seems evident that Nishida’s understanding expressed by the sentence “it is a fundamental idea of all religions that God and humans have the same nature” cannot be applied to the orthodox idea of Christianity. Or rather, in Nishida’s emphasis of the identity, or precisely the essential identity, of God and human beings, we can recognize

¹¹ I have changed the translation of the word 我 as “humans” in IG.

¹² As for the translation “fundamentally,” cf. note 9 above.

¹³ The word 本 seems to mean not only “origin” but also “foundation” or “locus” in my terminology.

his motive of opposing Christian idea of “transcendence of God,” especially asserted by Karl Barth (1886-1968).¹⁴ For Nishida, as is explicitly stated in Passage [8], God is the foundation of the universe. So it is a matter of course that he cannot accept the idea of “transcendence of God.”

Moreover, I do not think that he was completely free from the idea of the distinction between “the West” and “the East” when he asserted the superiority of the idea of “immanence of God” to the idea of “transcendence of God,” because he seems to have been rather fundamentally obsessed with the idea of the distinction between “the West” and “the East,” as seems to be clearly indicated by the following passage of *Hatarakumono kara Mirumono e, jo* 『働くものから見るものへ』序 “the Preface to *From Acting to Seeing*” written in 1927.

[24] 形相を有となし形成を善となす泰西文化の絢爛たる発展には、尚ぶべきもの、学ぶべきものの許多なるは云ふまでもないが、幾千年来我等の祖先を孚み来つた東洋文化の根柢には、形なきものの形を見、声なきものの声を聞くと云つたようなものが潜んで居るのではなからうか。我々の心は此の如きものを求めて已まない。私がかかる要求に哲学的根柢を与へて見たいと思ふのである。(NKZ, 4, p.6)

[24e] Although it is needless to say that there are many things to be revered and learned in the magnificent development of European culture in which “form” (*eidōs*) is considered existent and “formation” is considered good, it seems that, at the basis of Eastern culture which has fostered our ancestors for thousands of years, lies something which sees the form of the formless and hears the voice of the voiceless. We cannot stop seeking for such a thing. I would like to supply a philosophical basis for such a demand.

In this passage, Nishida talks about the distinction between “the West and “the East” as a self-evident premise of his philosophical ideas or as his motive to construct them.

¹⁴ Nishida’s rejection of the idea of “transcendence of God” emphasized by Barth is stated as follows: それは鞠く神であつて、絶対的救済の神ではない。それは超越的君主的神にして、何処までも内在的なる絶対愛の神ではない。(NKZ, 11, p. 458), “That is the God who judges [human beings], and not the God of absolute salvation. That is the transcendent, monarchical God, and not the ever immanent God of absolute love.”

Needless to say, the distinction is an illusion resulted from the so-called Orientalism. So I do not think it is inappropriate to understand the philosophy of Nishida and of the Kyoto School as a type of “Reverse Orientalism,” according to which “the East” is considered superior to “the West.”¹⁵

In conclusion, I think, Nishida’s understanding of Buddhism is fundamentally erroneous, because his theory of the essential identity of “God” and “Self,” is nothing other than the identity of *brahman* and *ātman* (*brahma-ātma-aikya*) advocated in Hindu monism.¹⁶

II Dōgen’s theory of Buddha-nature

Dōgen 道元 (1200-1253), a founder of the Sōtō School 曹洞宗 of Japanese Buddhism, is sometimes considered to be the most outstanding philosopher ever appeared in Japan. For example, Hajime Tanabe 田辺元, a philosopher of the Kyoto School, states in 1938 concerning Dōgen’s main literary work, *Shōbōgenzō* 正法眼藏, as follows:

[25] 正法眼藏の哲学は、啻に日本哲学の先蹤に止まるものでなく、今日東西洋の思想を綜合すべき任務を負ふ当来の日本哲学に対し、指導的意味をも有し得る¹⁷。(p. 101)

[25e] The philosophy of the *Shōbōgenzō* not only was a precursor of Japanese philosophy but also has the leading role for the future Japanese philosophy which bears at present the obligation to synthesize the Eastern thought and the Western thought.

¹⁵ Although I have known the term “Reverse Orientalism” for the first time in the article by Bernard Faure (cf. note 1 above), I am not sure whether my understanding of the term is accurately accordant with Faure’s understanding or not.

¹⁶ As for my critiques of Nishida’s philosophy and the Kyoto philosophy, cf. Shiro Matsumoto, *Kyōto Gakuha no Bukkyō Rikai* 京都学派の仏教理解 (The Interpretations of Buddhism by the Kyoto School), 駒澤大学仏教学部論集 (*Journal of Buddhist Studies, Faculty of Buddhism, Komazawa University*), 45, 2014, pp.494-464.

¹⁷ Hajime Tanabe, *Shōbōgenzō no Tetugaku Shikan* 正法眼藏の哲学私観 (*A Personal View of the Philosophy of the Shōbōgenzō*), Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1939, Tokyo, p.101.

This statement of Tanabe indicates clearly that praising Dōgen as the highest philosopher in Japan or even in the world has the inclination to be easily connected with the idea of the distinction between “the West” and “the East,” often accompanied by Japanese nationalism. However, needless to say, Dōgen himself is not responsible for nationalistic interpretations of his ideas, still less for the idea of the distinction.

Setting aside the nationalistic interpretations, I would like to analyze critically Dōgen’s theory of Buddha-nature 仏性. The following sentence in the *Shōbōgenzō* is often quoted as expressing Dōgen’s fundamental understanding of Buddha-nature.

[26] 悉有は仏性なり。(『正法眼藏』「仏性」卷、ShG, p. 14)

[26e] Everything is Buddha-nature.

However, first it is to be noted that the idea that “everything is Buddha-nature” cannot be recognized in Indian Buddhism, because, according to Indian theory of Buddha-nature, Buddha-nature is considered to be found only in sentient beings (有情) or especially in the bodies of sentient beings, excluding insentient beings (無情) like grasses and trees (草木) or walls and stones (牆壁瓦礫), as is known from the following passages of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

[27] 一切衆生皆有仏性、在於身中。(『涅槃經』法顯訳, Taisho 12, 881b)

[27e] Buddha-nature is in all sentient beings, in their bodies.

[28] 非仏性者、所謂牆壁瓦石無情之物。離如是等無情之物、是名仏性。(『涅槃經』曇無讖訳, Taisho 12, 581a)

[28e] The word “non-Buddha-nature” means insentient things like walls and stones.

Excluding insentient things like these, [sentient beings are] called Buddha-nature.

Why, then, Buddha-nature is found only in sentient beings? The reason is that Buddha-nature is considered to be *ātman*. In fact, it is stated in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* as follows:

[29] 仏者是我義。(『涅槃經』法顯訳, Taisho 12, 862a)

[29e] “Buddha” means *ātman* (self).

However, in my understanding, the exact meaning of this sentence is not that Buddha is called *ātman* but that *ātman* is called Buddha. In other words, I think, the *ātman* advocated in Hindu monism is called Buddha or Buddha-nature in the sentence. Therefore, being nothing other than *ātman*, Buddha-nature is stated in the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra* to be permanent (*nitya*), as follows:

[30] 佛性常住無變。(『涅槃經』曇無讖訳, Taisho 12, 562c)

[30e] Buddha-nature is permanent and unchangeable.

To sum up, the theory of Buddha-nature in Indian Buddhism can be understood as the theory that *ātman* or Buddha-nature is found in all sentient beings. Therefore hypothetically I call the theory Buddha-nature Immanence theory (仏性内在論). However, it must be admitted that there is another type of Buddha-nature theory. For example, Dōgen's idea that "everything is Buddha-nature" is fundamentally different from Buddha-nature Immanence theory, because according to the theory the existence of Buddha-nature in insentient beings cannot be admitted.

Moreover, according to Dōgen's idea that "everything is Buddha-nature," Buddha-nature is not found in everything, but rather it is everything itself. In other words, Buddha-nature is not hidden in everything but manifested as everything. Therefore I call the theory, which is clearly expressed by Dōgen's idea that "everything is Buddha-nature," Buddha-nature Manifestation theory (仏性顕在論). Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is not necessarily Dōgen's original theory, because the theory had been advocated by many philosophers before Dōgen, although, as stated above, basically it was not at all recognized in Indian Buddhism. Meanwhile, in Chinese Buddhism, possibly influenced by Taoism, Buddha-nature Manifestation theory was formed, and advocated by many thinkers. Among them, the most important philosopher seems to be Jizang 吉藏. In the *Dasheng Xuanlun* 大乘玄論, attributed to him, it is stated as follows:

[31] 衆生有佛性、則草木有佛性。(Taisho 45,40c)

[31e] If there is Buddha-nature in sentient beings, there is Buddha-nature in grasses and trees [i.e. insentient beings].

Grasses and trees (草木) are considered to be insentient beings according to Buddhist doctrines. Therefore, this sentence clearly expresses the idea that Buddha-nature is found not only in sentient beings but also in insentient beings, or the idea that Buddha-nature is found in everything. As repeated above, such an idea is not recognized in Indian Buddhism. So briefly we can summarize the two types of Buddha-nature theory as follows:

Buddha-nature Immanence theory = Indian *ātman* theory

"Buddha-nature (*ātman*) is found in all sentient beings".

Buddha-nature Manifestation theory = Chinese development

“Buddha-nature is found in everything or is manifested as everything.”

In Chinese Chan Buddhism, some masters adopted Buddha-nature Immanence theory, while others advocated Buddha-nature Manifestation theory. For example, according to the *Zutangji* 祖堂集, Yuizhong 慧忠, who was highly evaluated by Dōgen as a precursor of his idea that “everything is Buddha-nature,” being evidently influenced by Passage [28] of the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*, stated as follows:

[32] 牆壁瓦礫無情之物、並是古佛心¹⁸。

[32e] Insentient things like walls and stones are wholly the mind of the past Buddhas.

The gist of this statement was quoted in Dōgen’s *Shōbōgenzō* as being accordant with his idea that “everything is Buddha-nature.”¹⁹ Moreover, the following passage in the *Yunmen Guanglu* 雲門廣錄 is also famous.

[33] 一切聲是佛聲、一切色是佛色。(Taisho 47,555b)

[33e] All voices are the voices of Buddhas. All colors are the colors of Buddhas.

Voices 聲 and colors 色 are considered to be insentient beings. Therefore, by this passage, it is stated that insentient beings are the manifestations of Buddhas or that they are themselves Buddhas.

Furthermore, Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is clearly advocated by Dōgen in the following sentence also.

[34] 山河をみるは仏性をみるなり。(『正法眼藏』「仏性」卷, ShG, p. 17)

[34e] To see mountains and rivers is to see Buddha-nature.

It seems evident that insentient beings such as mountains and rivers are stated to be Buddha-nature in this passage.

Moreover, in order to understand the significance of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, it seems necessary to analyze the so-called Tendai Original Enlightenment thought 天台本覚思想 in Medieval Japanese Buddhism, because Buddha-nature Manifestation theory seems to have been the essence of the thought. For example, in the

¹⁸ *Zutang ji* 祖堂集, Zengaku Sōsho 禅学叢書, 4, Chūbun Shuppansha 中文出版社, Kyoto, 1972, p. 61a.

¹⁹ ShG, p. 38, p. 79.

Shinnyo Kan 真如觀, a typical text of the Tendai Original Enlightenment thought produced in the 11th or the 12th century A.D., it is stated as follows:

[35] 一切の有情、皆真如なれば則仏也。草木瓦礫山河大地大海虚空、皆是真如なれば、仏にあらざる物なし²⁰。

[35e] All sentient beings are Buddhas, because they are all suchness (真如, *tathata*). Grasses, trees, stones, mountains, rivers, earths, seas and space are [also] Buddhas, because they are all suchness.

In this passage, all insentient beings as well as all sentient beings are stated to be Buddhas, with special emphasis on the former's being Buddhas.

Because, according to Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, the emphasis is almost always put on insentient beings' being Buddhas or having Buddha-nature, "the attainment of Buddhahood by grasses and trees" (草木成仏) had become, as it were, the common tenet of the theory, as is suggested by the sentence "there is Buddha-nature [also] in grasses and trees" (草木有仏性) in Passage [31] of the *Dasheng Xuanlun*.

Therefore, it does not seem totally inappropriate to state that the theory, according to which "the attainment of Buddhahood by grasses and trees" is admitted, is Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, while the theory, according to which it is not admitted, is Buddha-nature Immanence theory.

However, it is to be noted that there are two different interpretations of "the attainment of Buddhahood by grasses and trees" among the *Tendai* 天台 (*Tiantai*) philosophers in China and Japan. Namely, according to the *Shinjō Sōmokujōbutsu Shiki* 懺定草木成仏私記 written in the ninth century by Annen 安然, a most influential philosopher of Tendai Original Enlightenment thought in Japan, it is reported that Tokuen 徳円, a Japanese *Tendai* scholar, sent the following question to the *Tiantai* scholars in China.

[36] 非情草木成仏者、為隨有情成故非情亦成、為非情自独發心成仏²¹。

[36e] Does the message "insentient beings like grasses and trees attain Buddhahood" mean that "insentient beings also [can] attain Buddhahood in

²⁰ Tada Kōryū 多田厚隆 et al., *Tendai Hongakuron* 天台本覚論, Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, 1973, p. 134.

²¹ Fumihiko Sueki 末本文美士, *Heian Shoki Bukkyōshisō no Kenkyū* 平安初期仏教思想の研究 (*Studies of Buddhism during the Early Heian Period*), Shunjūsha 春秋社, Tokyo, 1995, p. 711.

accordance with or after the attainment of Buddhahood by sentient beings,” or that “insentient beings, independently or of their own accords, [can] produce aspirations for Buddhahood and attain Buddhahood” ?

This question clearly indicates the difference between the two interpretations of “the attainment of Buddhahood by insentient beings.” Namely, while Chinese *Tiantai* philosophers as well as some thinkers of the Japanese *Tendai* school admitted that insentient beings can attain Buddhahood “only in accordance with or only after the attainment of Buddhahood by sentient beings,” other Japanese *Tendai* thinkers, including Annen himself and possibly Tokuen, asserted that insentient beings [can] attain Buddhahood “independently or of their own accords.” The latter interpretation seems completely strange in consideration of Indian Buddha-nature theory, i.e. Buddha-nature Immanence theory that Buddha-nature is found only in sentient beings, and also seems too extreme even if the development from Buddha-nature Immanence theory to Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is taken into account, because according to the interpretation the existence of mentality and spontaneous activity in grasses and stones is admitted.

Maybe such an interpretation can be understood as a type of animism. However, it seems rather difficult to deny the understanding that, in such an extreme interpretation, being not recognized in Indian and Chinese Buddhism, the peculiarity of Japanese view of nature (*sizen* 自然) is well expressed. For my part I am critical of the idea that Japanese people are always in harmony with nature,²² because such an idea of harmony (*wa* 和) has been advocated almost always connected with Japanese nationalism, as is evidently indicated in the *Kokutai no Hongi* 国体の本義 (*Cardinal Principles of the*

²² My understanding is as follows: “I wish to state in the strongest possible terms that the particularity of the Japanese does not lie in a simple “oneness with nature.” The Japanese people are not perpetually in an ecstatic state induced by staring at flowers and trees. --- What makes us distinctively human is the same thing that makes Westerners human: we can think. If “not thinking” were the ideal for humanity, as proposed in the idea of *tathāgata-garbha* propagated by a certain celebrated Chinese Ch’an master called Mo-ho-yen at the bSam yas debate in ninth century Tibet, we should all suspend life and rush to become plants and stones and relics.” (Shiro Matsumoto, “The Lotus Sutra and Japanese Culture,” *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 402-403). However, it is probable that such an understanding is not admitted by the thinkers who consider that “thinking” is the unique privilege of “the Western people.”

National Entity of Japan) published in March 1937.²³

Moreover, in order to understand the ideas of Dōgen and Japanese Pure Land Buddhism, it seems important to know that “the attainment of Buddhahood by grasses and trees” was denied in the *Sanjūshika no Kotogaki* 三十四箇事書, a most important text of the Tendai Original Enlightenment thought, as follows:

[37] 実に草木不成仏と習ふ事、深義なり²⁴。

[37e] In fact, to understand that grasses and trees do not become Buddhas is [to understand] the deep meaning.

Although in this passage “the attainment of Buddhahood by grasses and trees,” or literally “the becoming Buddhas by grasses and trees” is denied, it is inappropriate to understand that Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is rejected here. Namely, in this passage, Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is advocated by means of the logic more developed than that stated in the *Shinnyo Kan*. The logic can be recognized in the following passages of the *Sanjūshika no Kotogaki*.

[38] 常住の仏界を全く改むることなく、草木も常住なり、衆生も常住なり²⁵。

[38e] Without changing the permanent Buddha’s realm, grasses and trees are permanent, and sentient being are permanent.

In this passage, all beings, i.e. both insentient beings and sentient beings, are stated to be permanent. However, the word “permanent” 常住 here does not express the normal meaning. It means not “temporally permanent” but “absolute” or “absolute reality.” Such an interpretation of the word “permanent” 常住 is based on the following sentence of the Kumārajīva’s translation of the Lotus Sutra, i.e. *Miaofalianhua jing* 妙法蓮華經.

[39] 世間相常住²⁶。(Taisho 9, 9b)

[39e] The form of the world is permanent.

²³ In my understanding, the idea of “harmony,” which was emphasized in the *Kokutai no Hongi*, had supported the wartime totalitarianism in Japan. And it seems evident that the idea itself was based on the theory of “mutual dependence of all things” as advocated in the Huayan philosophy. Cf. Shiro Matsumoto, *Engi to Kū* 縁起と空 (Dependent-arising and Emptiness), Daizō Shuppan 大蔵出版, Tokyo, 1989, pp. 114-116, n. 11.

²⁴ *Tendai Hongakuron*, p. 167.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p.167.

This sentence is interpreted in the *Sanjūshika no Kotogaki* as follows:

[40] 世間相常住と云ふは、堅固不動なるを常住と云ふにはあらず。世間とは無常の義なり。--- 無常は無常ながら、常住を失はず²⁷。

[40e] What is the meaning of the sentence “the form of the world is permanent” ? The word “permanent” does not mean “firm and immovable,” because the word “world” (*loka*) means “impermanent.” --- Impermanent things, just as they are, do not lose their permanence.

Moreover, the following passage of the *Sanjūshika no Kotogaki* is to be noted.

[41] 円教の意は、衆生を転じて仏身と成るとは云はざるなり。衆生は衆生ながら、仏界は仏界ながら、俱に常住と覚るなり²⁸。

[41e] The intention of the Perfect Teaching [of *Tendai* school] is to understand that sentient beings do not change themselves to become Buddhas, because sentient beings are permanent, just as they are, and Buddha’s realms are permanent, just as they are.

In this passage, it is stated that sentient beings need not become Buddhas, because sentient beings are, just as they are, already absolute realities. In other words, all phenomenal things are regarded as absolute realities, just as they are. Such an idea seems to be recognized also in the following sentence of Dōgen.

[42] 土石砂礫は土石砂礫なり。(『正法眼蔵』「仏教」巻, ShG, p. 308)

[42e] Soils, stones and sands are soils, stones and sands.

²⁶ The Sanskrit text corresponding to Passage [39] is difficult to understand. In the Kern-Nanjio edition (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīka*, H. Kern & B. Nanjio eds., St. Petersburg, 1908-1912), the corresponding text to the passage 是法住法位、世間相常住 of the Kumārajīva’s translation is “dharmasthitim dharmaniyāmatām ca nityasthitām loki imām akampyām” (p. 53, l.9). At least it seems evident that an origin of *tathāgatagarbha* thought is advocated in the verses 102 and 103 of Chapter II of the Kern-Nanjio edition (p. 53, ll. 7-10), in which the corresponding text is included.

On the significance of the two verses, cf. Shiro Matsumoto, *Hokekyō Shisōron* 法華經思想論 (*On the Thought of the Lotus Sutra*), Daizō Shuppan 大蔵出版, 2010, pp. 556-562.

²⁷ *Tendai Hongakuron*, p. 157. The original Japanized Chinese text of my reading 常住を失はず is 常住不失 (ibid., p. 358), which was read as 常住にして失せず by the editor, Yoshiro Tamura 田村芳朗.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 176.

In this sentence, individual phenomenal things are regarded, just as they are, as absolute realities. The same idea seems to be recognized in the following passage of the *Yunmen Guanglu* 雲門広録.

[43] 山是山、水是水。(Taisho 47, 547c)

[43e] Mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers.

Although it is definite that, in these passages, Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is stated, the word “Buddha-nature” is no more needed here, because, without resorting to the permanent reality like Buddha-nature, impermanent phenomenal things are considered to be absolute realities, just as they are. Therefore, the structure of this extreme type of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory can be expressed as “phenomenal things = phenomenal things” 現象即現象, as contrasted with “phenomenal things = absolute realities” 現象即實在 in the normal type of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory

However, it seems evident that the extreme type necessarily entails a grave problem. Namely, if it is asserted that sentient beings need not become Buddhas because they are already absolute realities, as stated in Passage [41], such an assertion will inevitably involve so-called “so-what logic,” or *hirakinaori no ronri* 開き直りの論理 in my terminology.²⁹ In fact, in my understanding, such a logic can be recognized in the following passage of the *Sanjin Ryōken no koto* 三心料簡事 chapter of the *Daigohon Hōnenshōnin Denki* 醍醐本法然上人伝記, an important text of Japanese Pure Land Buddhism.³⁰

[44] 念仏申サム者ハ、只生レ付キノママニテ申スベシ。善人ハ善人ナガラ、悪人ハ悪人ナガラ、本ノママニテ申スベシ³¹。

[44e] The Persons who recite Nenbutsu 念 仏 (recitation of Amida’s name) should recite Nenbutsu only by nature. Good persons, just as they are, and evil persons, just as they are, should recite Nenbutsu.

²⁹ The word *hirakinaori* 開き直り or *inaori* 居直り is difficult to translate into English. Anyway, I would like to characterize the idea that we need not abstain from doing evil deeds as “so-what logic.”

³⁰ Cf. Shiro Matsumoto, *Hōnen Shinran Shisōron* 法然親鸞思想論 (Essay on the Thoughts of Hōnen and Shinran), Daizō Shuppan 大蔵出版, Tokyo, 2001, pp. 52-54, n. 4.

In this passage, the need for evil persons to become good persons is denied with the same expression *nagara* ながら “just as they are” as found in Passage [41]. Therefore, in the *Sanjin Ryōken no koto*, evil persons 悪人 are stated to be the main object of Amida’s salvation, as follows:

[45] 此ノ宗ハ悪人ヲ手本ト為シ、善人ニテモ撰ス也³²。

[45e] In this doctrine, evil persons are considered to be the role models [of Amida’s salvation], and good persons also are included.

Moreover, it is noteworthy that in the *Sanjin Ryōken no koto* the following thesis is stated as an oral transmission.

[46] 善人尚以往生況悪人乎事³³。

[46b] The thesis that even good persons can be born in the Pure Land, how much more so the evil persons.

Needless to say, this sentence agrees with the following passage in the third chapter of the *Tannishō* 歎異抄 compiled by Yuien 唯円, a disciple of Shinran 親鸞.

[47] 善人なをもて往生をとぐ、いはんや悪人をや³⁴。

[47e] Even good persons can be born in the Pure Land, how much more so the evil persons.

Although I know that the message stated in this passage is often understood as a climax of Japanese religious teachings, I am skeptical of the understanding, because, in the message, which seems to be summarized by the expression *akunin jōbutsu* 悪人成佛³⁵ “evil persons [can] become Buddhas” found in the same chapter, the inclination of accepting or affirming evils as they are seems to be recognized.

However, the inclination of accepting or affirming evils, I think, is severely criticized by Hōnen 法然 himself, as follows:

[48] 念仏門において戒行無しと号して、専ら姪酒肉食を勧め、たまたま律儀

³¹ *Jōdoshūtensekikenkyū Shiryōhen* 浄土宗典籍研究 資料編 (*Studies on the Texts of Jōdo School — Materials*), Dōhōsha Shuppan 同朋舎出版, Kyoto, 1988, p. 195.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 213

³⁴ *Teihon Shiran Shōnin Zenshū* 定本親鸞聖人全集, 4-1, Hōzōkan 法蔵館, Kyoto, 1969, p. 6.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

を守る者を雑行人の人と名づけて、弥陀の本願を憑む者は造悪を恐るることなかれと説くことを停止すべき事³⁶。

[48e] I prohibit some people, who assert that there is no good conducts in the Nenbutsu teaching and who, encouraging people to have sexual intercourses, to drink wines and to eat meats, call the people keeping precepts the persons of various practices, from stating that the persons who rely on Amida's original vow should not fear doing evil deeds.

To return to our subject, i.e. Dōgen's thought, it is necessary to understand that his thought was fundamentally changed after his unsuccessful visit to Kamakura (August 1247 - March 1248). So I consider Dōgen's thought in his later period, i.e. the period after his visit to Kamakura, to be fundamentally different from his thought in his earlier period, i.e. the period before the visit. And the most grave problem in studying Dōgen's thought is that, up to the present time, only his thought in his earlier period has been advocated or interpreted by Sōtō scholars as well as non- Sōtō scholars and philosophers.

Dōgen's thought in his later period is clearly expressed in the *Twelve Fascicle Shōbōgenzō* 十二卷本正法眼藏, which, although written in his later period, was discovered in 1930 and, as such, unknown until then even to Sōtō scholars and priests. The most remarkable characteristic of the *Twelve Fascicle Shōbōgenzō* is that the word "Buddha-nature" 仏性 was never used at all in the text, although the *Seventy-five Fascicle Shōbōgenzō* 七十五卷本正法眼藏, which was written in the earlier period and has been traditionally regarded as the most authoritative text in the Sōtō School, was full of the occurrences of the word "Buddha-nature." Therefore, according to the traditional understanding in the Sōtō school, the essence of the *Seventy-five Fascicle Shōbōgenzō* is considered to be expressed by just one word, i.e. "Buddha-nature." In fact, both Passages [26] and [34], in which Buddha-nature Manifestation theory is advocated, are found in the *Seventy-five Fascicle Shōbōgenzō*. Meanwhile, because there is no occurrences of the term "Buddha-nature" in the *Twelve Fascicle*

³⁶ *Shōwa Shinshū Hōnenshōnin Zenshū* 昭和新修法然上人全集, Heirakuji Shoten 平楽寺書店, 1955, p. 788.

Shōbōgenzō, it seems quite evident that Dōgen's thought, expressed in the text written in his later period, cannot be understood as a theory of "Buddha-nature." Not only that, it is quite noteworthy that, in the *Twelve Fascicle Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen criticized Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, i.e. his own theory of "Buddha-nature" in his earlier period, as follows:

[49] あるがいはく --- 山河をみるは如来をみるなり。 --- しかあれども、このともがら --- おほよそ仏祖の道をしらざるなり。(『正法眼蔵』「四禪比丘」巻, ShG, p. 711)

[49e] Some people say that --- to see mountains and rivers is to see *Tathāgatas* (Buddhas). However, these people --- do not know the awakening of the Buddhas and Patriarchs.

It seems evident that the message that "to see mountains and trees is to see Buddha-nature" in Passage [34] is denied by this passage. Therefore, although Dōgen did not declare that he had rejected his own former theory, i.e. Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, it seems appropriate to consider that he had totally forsaken the theory of Buddha-nature in his later period. What, then, was his position in his later period? Dōgen emphatically advocated the theory of causality (因果) as the essence of Buddhist teaching, as follows:

[50] 世間出世の因果を破するは、外道なるべし。(『正法眼蔵』「深信因果」巻, ShG, p. 678)

[50e] The denial of the worldly causality and the religious causality is the teaching of non-Buddhists.

[51] 仏法のために仏法を習学せんともがらは、古徳ごとく因果をあきらむべきなり。因なし果なしといふは、すなはちこれ外道なり。(『正法眼蔵』「深信因果」巻, ShG, p. 679)

[51e] Persons who intend to study Buddhism for the sake of Buddhism should, like the ancient saints, understand causality. Those who say that there are neither causes nor effects are non-Buddhists.

The causality emphasized by Dōgen in his later period is not "the mutual dependence of all things" as advocated in Huayan 華嚴 philosophy in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism but the temporal and religious causality as expressed by the theory of dependent-arising (*prāṭīyasamutpāda*, 縁起) in early Buddhism. Therefore, in my understanding,

Dōgen in his later period, rejecting all forms of Buddha-nature theory which itself was a Buddhist version of *ātman* theory of Hinduism, finally returned to the original message of Buddhism.

Hitherto I have not fully dealt with the advocators of Buddha-nature Immanence theory. But, needless to say, there are many thinkers who advocated the theory in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism. Among them, Linji 臨濟 was a most influential master and philosopher. According to the *Linjilu* 臨濟錄, he is reported to have said as follows:

[52] 赤肉团上、有一無位真人。

[52e] There is a true man of no rank on the red lump of flesh.

Because it seems clear that “the red lump of flesh” 赤肉团 means “heart” (*hrdaya*), and because it was generally considered in Hinduism that *ātman* is found in man’s “heart” which was described by Śāṅkara as “the lotus-formed lump of flesh” (*punḍarikākāro māmsapiṇḍas*),³⁷ it seems quite evident that “a true man” means *ātman* or *puruṣa* (man), a synonym of *ātman*. Because, as I explained above, Buddha-nature Immanence theory is a Buddhist version of the *ātman* theory in Hinduism, what is stated in Passage [52] is clearly a Buddha-nature Immanence theory.

And the theory advocated by Linji seems to have become the philosophical basis for Nishida’s ideas.³⁸ In fact, Nishida states in Passage [3] that “Buddhism calls it *kenshō*.” The word *kenshō* 見性 means literally “seeing the nature,” but it virtually means “seeing Buddha-nature.” So it is evident that Nishida understands the theory of Buddha-nature as impeccably Buddhist. However, in the passage, Nishida at the same time advocates the identity of “the true self” and “the ultimate reality or the essence of the universe,” which is nothing other than the identity of *ātman* and *brahman*, asserted by himself in Passage [2]. Therefore, we can ask Nishida whether his theory of the

³⁷ *Ten Principal Upanishads with Śāṅkarabhāṣya*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1964, p. 894, l. 22.

³⁸ The influence of Linji on Nishida is quite obvious. In fact, Passage [52] of the *Linjilu* was quoted in Nishida’s last writing “The Logic of Place and a Religious World-view” (NKZ, 11, p. 431). It seems noteworthy that, in the same writing (NKZ, 11, p. 410), Nishida also quoted Passage [47] of the *Tannishō*, the message of which, I think, is based on so-called “so-what logic,” which itself can be understood as an extreme development of Buddha-nature theory.

identity of *brahman* and *ātman* does contradict “Buddhist” theory of Buddha-nature or not. Needless to say, Nishida does not recognize any contradiction in the two theories. And I think he is right in considering that there is no difference between *ātman* theory and Buddha-nature Immanence theory, while he is wrong in understanding Buddha-nature Immanence theory as truly “Buddhist.”

It is evident that Nishida’s theory of Buddha-nature was not Buddha-nature Manifestation theory but Buddha-nature Immanence theory, because the idea of *kenshō* or “seeing Buddha-nature” is generally rejected by the followers of Buddha-nature Manifestation theory. In fact, the idea was severely criticized by Dōgen as follows:

[53] 六祖壇經に見性の言あり。かの書これ偽書なり。(『正法眼藏』「四禪比丘」卷, ShG, p.708)

[53e] The word *kenshō* is found in the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. [Therefore] the book is a forgery.

Although this passage is found in the *Twelve Fascicle Shōbōgenzō* written in Dogen’s later period, his critical attitude towards Buddha-nature Immanence theory was consistently recognized from his earlier period. In other words, Dōgen’s philosophical position in his earlier period was Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, by means of which he criticized Buddha-nature Immanence theory.

For example, in the following passage of the volume “Buddha-nature,” a representative writing in his earlier period, he writes as follows:

[54] 無始劫來は痴人おほく識神を認じて仏性とせり --- 笑殺人なり。さらに仏性を道取するに、--- 牆壁瓦礫なり。(『正法眼藏』「仏性」卷, ShG, p. 34)

[54e] From the beginningless past, foolish people, for the most part, have considered the spirit (*ātman*) to be Buddha-nature. --- That’s a laugh. To state more clearly about Buddha-nature, it is a wall or a stone.

In this passage, not only his own theory of Buddha-nature, i.e. Buddha-nature Manifestation theory, is expressed by the latter sentence “it is a wall or a stone,” but also his criticism of Buddha-nature Immanence theory is stated by the former sentence “foolish people, for the most part, have considered the spirit (*ātman*) to be Buddha-nature.” It is evidently indicated by this passage that Dōgen was so keen that he could understand exactly that Buddha-nature asserted in Buddha-nature Immanence theory was nothing other than *ātman* in Hinduism.

To conclude my talk, I would like to emphasize the importance to know about the distinction between the two types of Buddha-nature theory in order to understand accurately “Japanese” philosophy influenced by Buddhist ideas, or possibly non-Buddhist ideas.

Abbreviations:

- IG *An Inquiry into the Good*, Kitarō Nishida, translated by Masao Abe & Christopher Ives, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1990.
- NKZ *Nishida Kitarō Zenshū* 西田幾多郎全集, Iwanami Shoten 岩波書店, Tokyo, 1947-1953.
- ShG *Kohonkōtei Shōbōgenzō* 古本校定 正法眼藏, Ōkubo Dōshū 大久保道舟 ed., Chikuma Shobō 筑摩書房, Tokyo, 1971.
- Taisho *Taishō Shinshū Daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經, J. Takakusu & K. Watanabe eds., Tokyo, 1924-1929.

[A Keynote Speech at the International Conference *Problems and Perspectives for Japan in a Changing World: Thirty Years of Japanese Studies in Poznan*, at Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Poland, December 7-9, 2017]

(I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Dr. Maciej Kanert for kindly inviting me to the very important international conference.)

Keywords: Nishida, Dogen, ātman, Buddha-nature