Three Phases in the Western Study of Japanese Philosophy

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The western study of Japanese philosophy can be divided into three phases. The first phase, rather truncated and sporadic, ran through the end of the Pacific War. It demands little attention except as an explanation for how certain misunderstandings about Japanese philosophy arose in the West (and in Japan as well). The second phase began in the postwar period and continues in many respects up to today. I will argue that, to a great extent, it responds to major misunderstandings arising from the first phase. The third phase is still nascent. It not only continues the work of correcting false assumptions left over from Phase II, but is also beginning to explore new roles for Japanese philosophy in a global context. I have presented such a view in my most recent work, *Engaging Japanese Philosophy* (EJP), published in 2018. EJP maintains that we should not be fixated on how well Japanese philosophy fits established models of western philosophy. Instead we should explore how Japanese philosophy can challenge our assumptions about what philosophizing is and how it should proceed today. The last part of this article will summarize key ideas from that book as representing Phase III concerns.

Phase I: Not So Close Encounters

The focused western study of Japanese philosophy is a twentieth-century, indeed an especially postwar, phenomenon. That is what I call Phase II in the evolution of the discipline. To understand that scholarship and its context, however, a few brief remarks about Phase I and its legacy of false assumptions will set the stage.

In the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, European Roman Catholic missionaries were the western pioneers in the analysis of Japanese ideas, but that was in service of Christian dogmatics and the hope of proselytizing. The first task was acquiring fluency in the Japanese language and creating glossaries for translation. Using that foundation, priests studied primarily Buddhist philosophy (intellectually dominant in Japan at the time) for the purpose of debating Buddhist intellectuals in order to appeal to the higher echelons of Japanese society as part of a top-down conversion strategy. Politics doomed that strategy. Yet it was also clear that the philosophical issues of the priests trained in scholasticism's analysis of creation theory, theodicy, original sin, and redemptive history did not mesh with the Buddhist monks' concerns about karma, enlightenment, and delusion.[1]

The Tokugawa closure policy obstructed further western access to Japanese philosophical ideas until the latter half of the nineteenth century, but at that point the Meiji government was endorsing a newly minted State Shintō ideology as the official doctrine of the state. Consequently, when western intellectuals with their classical (and often Protestant) training inquired of Japanese officials about the "foundational texts" of their country's values and thought, they were directed to texts relevant to the government's agenda. Hence, among the earliest translations of major Japanese texts were William George Aston's translation of *Nihongi* in 1898 and Basil Hall Chamberlain's *Kojiki* in 1906. That left western readers with the false impression that those texts played a philosophical role in Japan comparable to, say, that of the *Upaniśāds* in India or *Analects* in China. Japanese Buddhist or Confucian texts would have been better parallels, but the political and social situation obscured their role in Japanese culture to the neophyte western interpreters.

In the late Meiji period the state was suspicious of Buddhism, making it a target of both state sanctions and public harassment. So westerners easily missed its philosophical contributions to Japanese culture. Even the English-language writings of Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙 (D. T. Suzuki) had limited impact in the West until after the Pacific War.[2] That left Confucianism as the likely site of premodern Japanese philosophy. Seeking the historical roots of Japanese ethics, Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 placed his primary emphasis for his National Morality theories on his concocted, romanticized theory of *bushidō.* For a more philosophical grounding,

[1] For example, Christian theology focuses on cosmogony and teleological history, a rare concern in Buddhist thought. Japanese Buddhist philosophy has shown more interest in source (*hon* 本) than origin (*gen* 元), the latter being more a Shintō emphasis, going back at least to Kitabatake Chikafusa 北畠親房 (1293–1354) *Collection on the Beginnings of Beginnings* (*Gengenshū* 元元集). There we find perhaps Japan's first argument that what is historically prior is necessarily also ontologically and axiologically superior.

[2] I discuss the shifts in the impact of Suzuki's English-language works on the West, especially on the United States, from the beginning to the end of the twentieth century in my article "Reading D. T. Suzuki Today", *The Eastern Buddhist* 38.1&2 (2007): 41–57.

though, he had also written a three-volume study on Edo-period Confucianism.[3] That interpretation was a major resource for Robert Cornell Armstrong's *Light from Asia: Studies in Japanese Confucianism* (1914)*,* one of the first notable western works to follow Inoue in speaking of premodern Japan as having a developed *philosophical* tradition.

In summation: the first phase of western studies of Japanese philosophy was erratic, idiosyncratic, and often inaccurate.[4] That problematic nature of Phase I scholarship helped set the agenda for the next stage of western scholarship in the postwar period.

Phase II: Postwar Correctives

Phase I left the western reader with four false assumptions about Japanese philosophy that would be addressed in Phase II, starting in the 1950s and continuing in many respects up to today. Those problematic premises can be summarized as follows:

> **False assumption 1.** *Japanese culture lacks philosophical thinking.* In 1967 Charles A. Moore edited three anthologies of essays collected from a series of East-West Philosophers Conferences held in Honolulu from 1939 to 1964: *The Indian Mind*, *The Chinese Mind*, and *The Japanese Mind*. The titles of his editor's essays for each volume suggest the western view of the traditions at the time: "The Comprehensive Indian Mind", "The Humanistic Chinese Mind", and "The Enigmatic Japanese Mind". Japanese thinkers helped foster that image of being philosophically inscrutable. D. T. Suzuki spoke of the Japanese as "nonrational" and "ante-scientific"; Nakamura Hajime 中村元 as

[3] *Philosophy of the Japanese Wang Yangming School* (日本陽明学派の哲学, 1900), *Philosophy of the Japanese Classicist (Confucian) School* (日本古学派の哲学, 1902), and *Philosophy of the Japanese Zhu Xi School* (日本朱子学派の哲学, 1905).

[4] For example, Anesaki Masaharu's thorough review of *Light from Asia* points out multitudinous errors and distortions, especially its lack of appreciation for the Japanese neo-Confucian emphasis on the psychological and pedagogical teachings in relation to ethical development. Anesaki attributes some problems to Inoue himself, but also shows how Armstrong often perverts Inoue in support of a Christian agenda. See *Harvard Theological Review*, v8 n.4 (Oct 1915): 563–571. Other reviewers pointed out that Armstrong, despite his claims, made no analysis of what was *Japanese* about Japanese Confucianism in the Edo period.

"phenomenalistic" rather than "logical"; and even the Nobel physicist Yukawa Hideki 湯川秀樹 spoke of Japanese as being "unfit for abstract thinking". Those claims were being made, it should be remembered, when Japan was already becoming a world leader in optics, electronics, ship-building, computers, and automotive engineering. So the paradox ran deep.

False assumption 2. *To the extent it has philosophy, Japan either borrowed it from the West since the Meiji period or it created a hybrid modern philosophy developed from that borrowing mixed with some traditional ideas and values.* This premise assumes that premodern Japanese thought was not "philosophical". The Japanese themselves have debated this issue since minting the neologism *tetsugaku* in the Meiji period to refer to the philosophies newly introduced from the West.[5] The erroneous premise accrued greater esteem when Kuwaki Gen'yoku 桑木嚴翼 (1874–1946) succeeded Inoue Tetsujirō as chair of the Tokyo university philosophy department in 1914. He steered the curriculum completely toward western philosophy or, as he liked to call it, "pure philosophy", the so-called De-Kan-Sho of Descartes-Kant-Schopenhauer.

Kuwaki undermined Inoue's inclination to consider *tetsugaku* as including at least aspects of the Asian tradition by not only excluding Japanese thought from the Tōdai philosophy department (as Inoue himself had done, relegating it to cultural studies in ethics, aesthetics, and history of thought), but also by placing Indian and Chinese philosophy in their own programs. That bias against Japanese philosophy's being treated as "philosophy" at Tōdai persevered into the postwar period, even affecting the department and, by extension, the Japanese philosophical academy at large today.[6]

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[5] See the discussion by John C. Maraldo and Nakajima Takahiro in James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo (eds.), *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011), 553–82.

[6] See my *Engaging Japanese Philosophy* (2018) 544–5 and 578–80 for further discussion of this issue. It is also worth mentioning the practical value in Kuwaki's exclusivism inasmuch as the University of Tokyo lay in the shadows of the political, religious, and ideological centers of State Shintō. He might have wanted to keep philosophy free of associations with Shintō's rivals, Buddhism and Confucianism, fearing censorship or government retaliation. In the postwar context, on the other hand, philosophers may have wanted to follow the lead of intellectuals like Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 who wanted to distance themselves from Inoue's wartime blending of Confucian values with the Way of the warrior (*bushidō* 武士道) and National Morality (*kokumin dōtoku* 国民道徳).

False Assumption 3. *To the extent there was philosophy in premodern Japan it was a set of individual themes and ideas by solitary thinkers without a clear trajectory of progress in arguments or opposing theoretical positions.* The implication is that premodern Japanese thinkers can be understood in isolation and ahistorically. One apparently need not take their ideas as responses to an ongoing sequence of themes and theories spanning decades or even centuries. The historical and social contextualization of Japanese philosophers is, consequently, left to intellectual historians who tend to see them as representatives of ideological movements without considering their contributions as creative theorists.

Another implication of assumption #3 is that ideas from China, Korea, or the West are the principal agents of change in Japanese philosophy. That interpretation often overlooks how change can arise from trajectories of thought internal to Japan that mine those foreign resources when they serve already developing needs. Put in Hegelian terms, one could say, the false assumption is that the historical development of Japanese philosophy has had no discernible "*Logik*" driving it.

The tenacity of this (misleading) assumption has prevailed partly because Japanese scholars themselves have avoided writing comprehensive histories of Japanese philosophy. There is no work comparable to, say, Fung Yu-lan's *History of Chinese Philosophy* (original 1931, English translation 1937) or Surendranath Dasgupta's *History of Indian Philosophy* (1922), texts well regarded in the West as well as in their home countries.[7] This is perhaps not surprising since the study of Japanese philosophy has been distributed across several disciplines in the Japanese university including ethics, aesthetics, Indian and Buddhist Studies, history of Japanese ideas, and so forth. Thus, within Japan the study of Japanese philosophy is an interdepartmental and interdisciplinary study, a situation unlike that of any other country's treatment of its own tradition. The interdepartmental diffusion of Japanese philosophy in Japan may be a cultural *cause* for not producing histories of Japanese philosophy, but that is hardly a philosophical *reason* for not having them. The lack of scholarly histories

[7] Nakamura Hajime's 1967 *History of the Development of Japanese Thought A.D.* 592–1868 is about the only exception in English for premodern Japanese thought. It is quite short, however, and despite its value is really more a collection of seven essays rather than a comprehensive work. For the modern period it simply refers the reader to Piovesana's *Contemporary Japanese Philosophical Thought* mentioned later in this essay.

of Japanese philosophy does not mean Japanese philosophy does not have a history.

False Assumption 4. *Modern Japanese philosophy signals a rupture from the past so strong that to understand modern Japanese philosophy, one need not study premodern Japanese philosophy.* If Kuwaki bears the blame for being a major impetus behind the idea that the only philosophy in Japan is western philosophy, Nishida Kitarō 西田幾多郎 is a perpetrator of the idea that modern Japanese philosophy need not reference nor draw on premodern Japanese philosophy. However much Asian philosophy might have been his inspiration, Nishida (except toward the end of his life) made few explicit references to premodern Japanese thinkers in his major published writings. That is, his *style of writing* helped fuel the misperception that to understand him, you needed to know Fichte, Kant, Hegel, Natorp, James, Aristotle, and a host of other western philosophers, but not necessarily any premodern Japanese philosophers, indeed only a few Asian thinkers at all, if even that. Later I will explain how I address this problem in EJP.

Phase II of the study of Japanese philosophy in the West has been an assault to varying degrees on those four false assumptions. As for disproving the first, for identifying a philosophical tradition in Japan, the focus was initially on where the proof was the most obvious. Specifically, it was relatively easy to debunk the claim that Japan totally lacks philosophy since so much of modern Japanese thought draws on and interacts with western philosophy. For this point, the pioneering work in English was Gino K. Piovesana's *Contemporary Japanese Philosophical Thought* published in 1969. It became a template for understanding modern Japanese philosophy in the West for many years.

Although Piovesana's classic was rather broad in scope, the immediately subsequent western work focused more narrowly on Nishida and the Kyoto School as well as, to a much lesser extent, a few other key figures like Watsuji Tetsurō 和辻哲郎. Before Piovesana's book, UNESCO had already supported the translations of Nishida's *Zen no kenkyū* (translated as A *Study of Good*) in 1960 and Watsuji's *Fūdo* in 1961 (translated originally as *A Climate*). After that slow start in the 1960s, however, Japanese philosophical writings have been translated into western languages at an exponential rate. So much so, books and essays from the Kyoto

School alone now number over four hundred.[8] Meanwhile hundreds more of the writings by modern non-Kyoto School figures have been translated as well. The sheer bulk of that output has dispelled the notion that there is no philosophical activity in Japan, at least in the modern period. What of premodern Japan?

Postwar Japan became a western ally as East Asia's model for a successful capitalist democracy. As a result, the western attitude toward Japan shifted from suspicion to appreciative curiosity about its culture and traditions, especially the arts and literature, but also the spiritual traditions, particularly Buddhism.[9] The 1930s English writings of Suzuki Daisetsu (better known to the West as D. T. Suzuki) were reprinted by major U.S. and British publishers. Western readers accepted his purported direct link between Japanese aesthetics and Zen Buddhism without critical reflection and the "Zen boom" in the West was underway, eventually affecting even Japan. That popularity led to an explosion in Buddhist, not just Zen, studies in the West. That study of Japanese Buddhism was initially buddhological, that is, philological and historical rather than philosophical. That would begin to change in the mid-1970s, however.

As the interest in modern Japanese philosophy increased, western scholars noted that unlike Nishida, some seminal modern Japanese philosophers had taken an explicit interest in premodern thinkers. Not only was there the early example of Inoue Tetsujirō's writings on Edo Confucian philosophy and the classification of global philosophies by Inoue Enryō 井上円了 but in 1926 Watsuji Tetsurō had written a groundbreaking work on Dōgen, *Shamon Dōgen.* Even within the Kyoto School, Tanabe Hajime 田辺元, Miki Kiyoshi 三木清, Takeuchi Yoshinori 武内義範, and Nishitani Keiji 西谷啓治 all diverged from Nishida in writing major philosophical appreciations of premodern thinkers like Dōgen and Shinran. Those efforts encouraged western philosophers with Buddhist and Japanese language training to follow suit.

The philosophical study of Dōgen presents an excellent example. In the late 1970s westerners began to analyze Dōgen at least partially through the lens of western philosophical categories: Hee-jin Kim's *Dōgen Kigen: Mystical Realist* (1975) and my 1975 Yale dissertation in philosophy *Action Performs Man: On Becoming a Person in Japanese Zen Person* (revised as the book, *Zen Action/Zen*

[8] For a near up-to-date list, see the posting on the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture website: https://nirc.nanzan-u.ac.jp/en/files/2018/10/Kyoto-School-translations.pdf.

[9] Somewhat naively, many westerners had associated Japan's militarism, *bushidō* value system, and National Morality with Shintō and Confucianism, but considered Buddhism more or less innocent.

Person, 1981) are early examples. This opened the door to more explicit thematic comparisons between Dōgen and specific western philosophers such as Steven Heine's *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen* (1985), David Edward Shaner's *The Bodymind Experience in Japanese Buddhism: A Phenomenological Perspective of Kūkai and Dōgen* (1985), and Rolf Elberfeld's 2004 *Phänomenologie der Zeit im Buddhismus: Methoden interkulturellen Philosophierens*. Accompanying this rising interest in Dōgen, there are now multiple complete English translations of *Shōbōgenzō,* including two especially good ones: the English translation of the modern Japanese translation of Gudo Wafu Nishijima, *The True Dharma Eye Treasury* and Tanahashi Kazuaki's (ed.) *Treasury of the True Dharma Eye* (2010). Similar projects have occurred with other premodern philosophers like Shinran, Kūkai, and various Confucian thinkers.

As translations have multiplied, western philosophical readers have been able to read and philosophically evaluate Japan's major premodern texts for themselves, aided by a growing number of philosophical works thematic in approach. A few examples chosen from among many include Dennis Hirota's 2006 work on Shinran, *Asura's Harp: Engagement with Language as Buddhist Path;* an excellent German translation and commentary on selections from Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* co-authored in 2006 by Ōhashi Ryōsuke and Rolf Elberfeld as *Shōbōgenzō: Ausgewählte Schriften. Anders Philosophieren aus dem Zen*; Shingen Takagi and Thomas Eijō Dreitlein's *Kūkai on the Philosophy of Language* (2010); Dennis Gira's 1985 *Le sens de la conversion dans l'enseignement de Shinran*; and John A. Tucker's translation and commentary (2006) *Ogyū Sorai's Philosophical Masterworks*.

The most striking publication along these lines has been *Japanese Philosophy: A Sourcebook* (JPS) in 2011, edited by James W. Heisig, Thomas P. Kasulis, and John C. Maraldo. With the aid of several dozen translators from around the world, JPS is 1340 pages of selected readings from over a hundred philosophical writers spanning the entire history of Japanese philosophy from Shōtoku's *Constitution* to the turn of the twenty-first century. It includes a glossary of key terms with a concordance of their occurrences, a detailed bibliography of original sources as well as references to further translations, and a "Thematic Index" that allows themes to be investigated in ways truer to Japanese than the typical western categories. For example, if readers wish to research "epistemology" in Japanese philosophy, the Index directs them to the Thematic Index section on "comprehending reality". There readers find references to such subheadings as "meditation, rectifying the mind, stages of knowing, esoteric knowing, divination, scholarly knowing", and the "teacher-student relation" as well as the expected western epistemology-related categories like "truth, doubt, reason, logic, scientific knowing", and so forth.

In light of such developments, since the 1990s the term "Japanese philosophy" has increasingly been assumed in the West to include the premodern as well as modern traditions. As evidence of that change, the two most comprehensive and widely used encyclopedias of philosophy published in the West today, *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1998) and *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (an online encyclopedia continuously updated since 1995), both recognize in their entries that Japanese philosophy includes premodern as well as modern thinkers. So does the latest edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. In fact, that recognition seems to be more clearly the case in the West than in Japan where "Japanese philosophy" (*nihon tetsugaku* 日本哲学) is often still assumed to refer only to the modern period.

In short: by the end of the twentieth century, the western study of Japanese philosophy had refuted the first two of the erroneous assumptions of Phase I by proving there is philosophy in Japan and it did not begin with imported western thought. We also find in the latter years of Phase II initial efforts at addressing the errors in the final two assumptions—that there is no development of themes and arguments in the history of Japanese philosophy and that modern Japanese philosophy can be understood independently of the premodern. This has been mainly through comparisons between modern and premodern Japanese philosophers. Two early examples include Shigenori Nagatomo's *Attunement through the Body* (1992) with its innovative theory of the body that blends the modern somatic theories of Ichikawa Hiroshi 市川浩 and Yuasa Yasuo 湯浅泰雄 with the classic philosophy of Dōgen followed by Gereon Kopf's *Beyond Personal Identity: Dōgen, Nishida, and a Phenomenology of No-self* (2001).

Such comparisons alone do not completely refute assumptions #3 and #4, however, as they show only that connections can be made between the premodern and modern. To fully refute those assumptions, we need to show actual *continuity* between the premodern and modern. As a central part of the agenda for western scholarship, this suggests the point where Phase II opens into Phase III.

Phase III: Finding Connections

In organizing JPS we editors wanted to highlight how ideas developed over the centuries and the controversies that spawned their evolution. We discovered the philosophically most sophisticated and astute arguments often occurred within, rather than across, traditions. Thus, Buddhist-Shintō or Buddhist-Confucian controversies were often more polemical or even *ad hominem* by nature, whereas arguments within, say, the Pure Land tradition about the metaphysical nature of Amida or the psychology of faith were often more nuanced and sophisticated. Moreover, the same themes persisted in shifting forms from medieval times up through the twentieth century. In the Kamakura period, for example, the limits of reason might be posed in contrast to the assumptions of Tendai comprehensiveness, but in the twentieth century in contrast to scientism. Similarly within Zen there were persistent issues about thinking, meaning, and agency. Or in Confucianism about the nature of textuality, interpretation, tradition, the justification of ethical principles, and authority. Thus, we organized the bulk of JPS by traditions, juxtaposing the texts within each tradition in historical sequence from origins up to the present.

That historical approach by tradition highlighted progress in the analysis of themes and arguments across time, thereby disproving assumption #3. For example, writers like Kiyozawa Manshi 清沢満之, Soga Ryōjin 曽我量深, and Yasuda Rijin 安田理深 were decidedly modern philosophers, well-trained in western thought, but they were also addressing themes and continuing lines of argument tracing back to Shinran and Hōnen. The same could be said for Hisamatsu Shin'ichi 久松真一 and medieval Rinzai Zen or Ueda Kenji 上田賢治 and medieval Watarai Shintō or late Edo-period *kokugaku.*

Although JPS made a strong case for the historical continuity of themes and arguments, it did not directly address assumption #4, however. That was because JPS followed a convention of considering modern Japanese philosophy (what the book calls the "modern academic tradition") as a discrete lineage in the newly formed secular universities parallel to those of traditional Buddhism, Shintō, and Confucianism. So the continuities between the modern philosophers and the premodern philosophies were not always fully visible. To expose those connections and demonstrate how assumption #4 is misleading, a continuous history that cuts across traditions from ancient times to the near present would be necessary.

That was a main goal in my writing *Engaging Japanese Philosophy: A Short History (EJP*) in 2018. EPS signals a new initiative in the field and envisions avenues for its future. First, it treats Japanese philosophy as a continuous philosophical heritage from the time of Shōtoku Taishi to the present, making it comparable to histories of philosophies from both the West and other Asian countries. In doing so it builds on JPS, even including in its page margins references to relevant page numbers from JPS so the two texts can be companion volumes. Yet, inasmuch as EJP, unlike JPS, follows a chronology across traditions it adds a further dimension to our understanding of the modern Japanese philosophers.

Consider the case of Nishida. I point out that his argument for the "logic of the sentential predicate" over that of the "logic of the sentential subject" allies him with a sequence of language theories tracing back to Motoori Norinaga and eventually to the *waka*-theory of Fujiwara Teika. Similarly, his account of the performative intuition (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直観) for explaining knowing-acting without a discrete ego-agent is akin to Kūkai's esoteric formulation of "[reality-buddha] enters me/I enter [reality-buddha]" (*nyūga ganyū* 入我我入). Or consider his "field of absolute nothing" (*zettai mu no basho* 絶対無の場所) which is the source both of self and object as well as of I and other, but which eludes definition as either. That bears some resemblance to Shinran's *jinen hōni* 自然法爾, the reality that underlies the dynamic between *jiriki* 自力 and *tariki* 他力 and the agentless activity that remains when *shinjin* 信心 overcomes the distinction between self and Amida. Finally, we find Nishida's use of his logic to relegate the *basho* of empiricism by enveloping it within the *basho* of idealism and then enveloping that within the discursively inexpressible *basho* of absolute nothing. The structure of that enterprise parallels Kūkai's theory of the ten mindsets (*jūjūshinron* 十住心論) which subordinates the materialism of hedonism to the analysis of sensations in Hīnayāna Buddhism. Those perception-based mindsets are then subordinated within the mentalistic mindsets of exoteric Mahāyāna Buddhism. Then Kūkai's system subordinates all that under the discursively inexpressive mindset of esoteric Shingon Buddhism which is known only through the experience of *nyūga ganyū*. As I mentioned earlier, Nishida does not mention those premodern predecessors. Indeed I wonder if he even consciously knew or thought about them.

Yet philosophical ideas form part of one's cultural heritage. When an American sports coach speaks of a player's "potential", he or she does not have to think about or even know the Aristotelian source of the idea of *potential*. I suspect that when Nishida uses *western* philosophical ideas, he is thinking *about* them explicitly and so he cites them. But when he draws on Asian or specifically premodern Japanese philosophical ideas, he engages them implicitly insofar as they have been incorporated into the sinews of his bodymind activity in his daily cultural life. He lives and thinks *through* them not about them. Those continuities with tradition that were not explicitly cited in his writings were perhaps sighted by his students in his personal behavior and ways of teaching. That might explain why so many of them like Nishitani, Miki, Takeuchi, and Ueda chose to write explicitly about premodern Japanese philosophers.

The approach of EJP and its ability to draw out such connections to the past with modern thinkers refute the fourth and last of the erroneous assumptions inherited from Phase I of the western study of Japanese philosophy. The rest of my comments about Phase III will take us beyond that corrective project to the prospective one of envisioning where the study of Japanese philosophy may take us henceforth. One of those prospects—a special emphasis in the concluding argument of EJP—relates to metaphilosophy: rediscovering the true nature and purpose of philosophizing itself.

EJP rejects the Japanist notion of there being an essential quality that makes Japanese philosophy "Japanese". Instead it follows Wittgenstein's suggestion (*Philosophical Investigations* §67) of seeking *family resemblances* among most Japanese philosophers that make them seem more kindred spirits to each other than members of other philosophical families. Of course, as with real families, there are non-Japanese people who as philosophers may sometimes resemble the Japanese family members more than do some native-born Japanese who are philosophers. That is to be expected and the book points out such exceptions or outliers.

Some characteristics to examine in looking for resemblances include whether relations are assumed to be internal or external, whether the body and mind (or the affective and intellectual) are originally bifurcated or only abstractions out of an originally unified field, whether psychophysical praxis plays a role in the methodology for acquiring knowledge, whether the parts contain the pattern of the whole (in a holographic or recursive manner), whether knowledge transforms both the knower and the known in some way, and so forth.[10] The broadest commonality found among most Japanese philosophers is their privileging engaged knowing over detached knowing, the last point on which I will focus because of its metaphilosophical implications.

[10] Much of the analysis here builds on distinctions originating in my 1998 Gilbert Ryle Lectures published as *Intimacy or Integrity: Philosophy and Cultural Difference* (2002). Those lectures are not specifically about Japan, but are a general exploration of how any culture's understanding of relations will affect its approach to epistemology, analysis/argument, metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, and politics.

Most Japanese philosophers have assumed the relation between knower and known is an interactive conjunction between the two rather than a bridge connecting the disjunction between what is in the knower's mind with the known which stands outside it. The Japanese philosopher is thus more likely someone who tries to fathom reality by working within it rather than someone who tries to understand it by standing apart from it. In other words, the Japanese philosopher's project more often involves personal engagement than impersonal detachment. This distinction is by no means unique to Japan, of course.[11] Yet, one of the recurring points of family resemblance among Japanese philosophers is the stress on engagement rather than detachment (again with the caveat that there are exceptions).

When they first encountered western philosophy in the form of utilitarianism, positivism, Kantianism, and German idealism, many leading Japanese intellectuals in the Meiji period sensed the difference between those enterprises and what had occurred in Japan up to then. In deciding what to call "philosophers", they chose not to use a traditional term like *tetsujin* 哲人 ("wise person") which might resonate well with the original Greek sense of "lover of wisdom", but instead to coin a new word *tetsugakusha* 哲学者 ("a scholar of wisdom" or "wisdom-ologist"). In so doing, the Japanese were distinguishing two species of understanding and two forms of philosophizing or—to use Wittgenstein's analogy—two families of philosophers.

One philosophical family aspires to a scholarly ("scientific") detachment that mutes personal affect with the aim of reflecting external affairs as they exist independently of human ideation. Such an understanding is the goal of the *Wissenschaften* that define departments in the academy alongside philosophy. The *tetsugakusha* belong to the family of sociologists, botanists, mathematicians, drama critics, and philologists.

On the other hand, we have the engaged-knowing family of philosophers (what for convenience I am calling the *tetsujin,* although such sagely masters go by a variety of names in their respective traditions). The *tetsujin* aspire to an understanding that personally engages reality, transforming themselves and reality

[11] In stressing the distinction between detachment and engagement, I am not claiming the Japanese are unique. Consider this passage from Henri Bergson written in 1903: "Philosophers, in spite of their apparent divergencies, agree in distinguishing two profoundly different ways of knowing a thing. The first implies that we move round the object; the second that we enter into it. . .". Henri Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, Thomas A. Goudge (tr.). (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1955), 21. Although a Frenchman, Bergson more resembled the family of Japanese philosophers than some philosophers today who are Japanese by birth who more resemble the family of western philosophers in their work.

together into a coherent and harmonious whole. The *tetsugakusha* might mistake the *tetsujin* for being mere technicians. Like a technician the *tetsujin* are rigorously disciplined in their early training by a master, (so are symbolic logicians for that matter), but eventually they go outside fixed templates and regimens to respond creatively to what-is. There is a profound difference between knowing how to throw a pot and being a master potter. When engaged understanding prevails, the knower and known collaborate in an act of innovation rather than simple discovery.

Tetsujin have their family resemblance not to sociologists who study societies but to architects and social workers who transform societies from within; not to botanists who study flowers but to *ikebana* flower arrangers who work together with flowers to create something new; not with pure mathematicians but with engineers and designers who use CAD and CGI to engage, analyze, and create; not with drama critics but with playwrights; not with philologists who study about words but with poets who discover or create words by working with them. For the *tetsugakusha*, philosophy bridges the philosopher's connection with reality; for the *tetsujin*, on the other hand, philosophy is the Way the philosopher and reality are engaged with each other and transform each other. For the *tetsugakusha* philosophy is a link the self creates to understand the world; for the *tetsujin* philosophy is a masterwork created from the mutual engagement between self and world.

That is not to say engaged knowing is superior to detached knowing, that the *tetsujin* is the true model of the philosopher and the *tetsugakusha* the sham. We undoubtedly need both families. Maybe intermarriage is even possible. The lament of EJP is that the western paradigms of the Enlightenment, the structure of the modern university around its silos of *Wissenschaften,* and the increasingly popular model of education as a delivery system of prepackaged bits of knowledge have all but eradicated the other way of knowing. We are left with a world Socrates would see as a world of sophists with no true philosophers. Gone are the respect for the bodymind praxis of learning from a master through emulation, the creativity that can arise only when affect and intellect work together in disciplined bodymind unity, the sensitivity of using words to open vistas rather than delineate boundaries and exclude possibilities.

Because of Japan's comparatively late encounter with Enlightenment thinking, because of its geographical isolation from even the Asian mainland, because of its prehistorical animistic sensitivities preserved through the centuries by esoteric Buddhist theory-praxis and Shintō, the engagement paradigm of traditional Japanese philosophy can be a resource for rekindling some of what has been lost.

Yet because of circumstances already mentioned, postwar philosophers in Japan are often the most blind to that resource within their own culture. So Phase III of the western study of Japanese philosophy may include the western discovery in Japanese philosophy of what its own tradition of philosophy has almost lost and the Japanese tradition is about to lose. Therefore, at least in the immediate future, the destiny of Japanese philosophy may be in the hands of its foreign interpreters. The Arabs preserved Aristotelian philosophy and it was later rediscovered by the West. Perhaps the West can help preserve the philosophies of Kūkai, Dōgen, Shinran, Sorai, and Norinaga so they can be rediscovered by Japan.

