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Praxi-centric Phenomenology:
from Nāgārjuna through Dōgen to Martin Heidegger

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Submitted for the fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

University of Glasgow
Faculty of Arts and Divinity
School of Theology
December 2006

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Abstract

Buddhist practitioners in the Zen tradition have repeatedly located the tension between theory (*theoria*) and practice (*praxis*) when describing profound reality or the way things are/are becoming (*yathabhūtam*). The subjective stance is constantly challenged as not just a limiting but entirely mistaken perspective with which to approach reality/meaning. Although the Buddhist practitioners and teachers considered here propose teachings distinctive to each other, there is consistency in emphasising the necessity of practical experience expressed via *śūnyatā* and the ultimate realisation of egolessness or no-self (*anātman/nairātmya*). Nāgārjuna's logical critique works to free the mind from conceptual foundationalism so that practice is effective and unfettered by delusion. Practitioners within the Yogacāra school such as Asaṅga recognise the powerful effectiveness of meditation that highlights the tension between no-self and a perfected self necessary to the Bodhisattva-marga. Dōgen explores the relationship between the cosmic reality of Buddha-nature and personal participation in seated meditation such that letting go of ego-self is the very manifestation of the Buddha-self. I consider these Buddhist approaches to reality/meaning in relation to Western phenomenology, as especially borne out in Martin Heidegger's work to allow for an authentic attitude in and toward truth event (*Ereignis*). Ultimately, I argue that the Buddhist approach to reality embodies what I term a "praxi-centric phenomenology" that encourages Western phenomenological reflection to remain practical but egoless.

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I dedicate this work to my husband, Jeffrey F. Keuss,
and to my daughters,
Clara Ruth, Eilidh Elizabeth and Miriam Grace.

Additionally, I express my gratitude to my thesis advisor,
Dr. Kiyoshi Tsuchiya
and the members of the Faculty of Divinity
for their support of my research.

Introduction

This thesis will explore a particular phenomenological approach in Buddhist thought as found in the development of the Zen tradition from the teachings of Nāgārjuna, through Yogacāra and Dōgen that I will refer to as "praxi-centric phenomenology".¹ I will consider how Buddhist thought and teaching reflect this particular phenomenological approach which is similar, although not identical, to the course of thinking developed and labeled such in the West by Edmund Husserl and further reflected upon by Martin Heidegger. Recognizing certain phenomenological aspects of Buddhist thought is certainly not unique for a number of scholars, Kasulis, Laycock, King, Stambaugh, Kopf, among others, have demonstrated phenomenological overtones within Buddhist thinking. Buddhist thinking from a phenomenological perspective continually asks where meaning and essence can be encountered. Although the Buddhist sources I present express and/or describe the route to the heart of things in their own way, there is continuity and agreement that the individual actively engage in the truth event for there to be any encounter with ultimate meaning. Thus, praxis, the practical engagement in the truth event, is central to any phenomenological reflection. Furthermore, the passivity of "reflection" in context of phenomenological reflection, takes on the active nature of practical engagement instead of mere projected analysis.

The term "phenomenology" originates in Western philosophy and has been used to describe whole schools of thought; it generally describes an approach to philosophical investigation which is in direct contrast to positivist methods of investigation (Comte) and the enlightenment model (Kant). The phenomenological approach seeks to clear away the prejudices the subjective perspective brings to seeing/understanding experience so that reality, meaning, or things as they exist 'in themselves' are able to show themselves in an authentic manner. Auguste Comte, as the father of Positivism, set forth to organise and analyse the phenomenal world by scientific and measurable means. Because certainty lies only in the phenomenal realm of experience and in what is measurable, mystery and the undefinable are not recognised as valid and verifiable

¹ I introduce the phrase, "praxi-centric phenomenology," in order to better locate and clarify what I mean by 'a particular Buddhist phenomenological approach', being fully aware of the pitfalls and limitations of classification and categorization. There is often tension between praxis and theoria, and, particularly in the West, although I locate the same in Eastern thought, theory dominates and at some points obliterates practice in philosophy, religion and other disciplines, including phenomenological movements. To say "praxi-centric" is not to dismiss theory, but to locate theory as supportive rather than the dominating partner when considering the profundity of reality.

components of phenomenal reality. The subject, as the organiser of the information provided in the phenomenal realm, is in turn measured by how sophisticated he/she has become at interpreting such reality. Further, all meaning is located in the immanent realm. Society, as well as the human subject, is treated as a progressive science with ever increasing aptitude. One problem with this approach is the zeal with which the phenomenal world is considered without allowance for a deeper understanding of reality. Additionally, the subjective stance becomes evaluator and mediator of meaning (that is, information) which in turn ultimately demands perfection from the subject. Limiting meaning to the measurability of the phenomenal realm as well as relying solely on the perception of the subjective stance results in its trivialisation in the positivistic approach. The phenomenological approach recognises the limited perspective of the subject and works to clarify how the subject is able to evaluate information. Furthermore, phenomenology is no mere descriptive science, concerned with cataloguing the various appearances of reality. Rather phenomenology, as Jan Patočka states,

is about the meaning of existents and about being as the presupposition for the description carried out.²

Patočka continues to explain that phenomenology considers as its highest goal not

an explanation subordinated to the principle of sufficient reason ... but rather a comprehension of the thing, that is, of all that has to do with meaning, in the structured richness of its nature and substance.³

With this turn in philosophical investigation, reason that eschews from the subject is not allowed to subjugate the objective field of perspective. Instead, the subject-object split is set aside in order to consider where and how meaning itself speaks and abides. This approach destabilizes the foundational (ontological) assumptions at the root of most Western philosophical pursuits and allows for the possibility of movement so that truth or meaning may emerge.

In contrast to Comte's readiness to find the phenomenal realm a fully "real" situation in which to carry out scientific evaluation, Immanuel Kant proposed that there was a

² Patočka, Jan, *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd, Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 16

³ Patočka, Jan, *An Introduction to Husserl's Phenomenology*, trans. Erazim Kohák, ed. James Dodd, Chicago: Open Court, 1996, p. 16

difference between the “phenomenal” and the “noumenal.” He considered the phenomenal realm to be a ‘form of intuition,’ that is a shared condition for human experience to take place. Both time and place are forms of intuition; they are not “real” in-and-of-themselves, but *a priori* conditions that enable people to have comparable experiences.⁴ In fact, according to Kant, all human experience must take place in time and space, so that meaningful exchanges between different people may occur. Similarly, Edmund Husserl (as father of phenomenology), also speaks of a shared perspective on the phenomenal so that meaning is possible – he eventually locates this perspective in the transcendental realm and calls the vantage point a transcendental subjective one. For Kant, the noumenal, however, is separated from the phenomenal realm as it is the location of essence, or the things in-and-of-themselves. That is, the phenomenal realm of experience merely allows for descriptive experience, but not a participation in the essence of a thing. The noumenal realm cannot be experienced as such, but it must exist for the phenomenal realm to make sense. Where a platonic understanding of things and their ideal forms differ from Kant’s division between the phenomenal and noumenal understanding of reality is that Plato regarded the ideal forms as constant and immutable – one living among the world of things merely sees a shadow of the ideal. Kant eventually allows that the subject, in his discussion of free-will, not only must manipulate the information gleaned here in the phenomenal realm, but has the freedom to evaluate the noumenal realm (in which he places God and moral law). Although it may not have been Kant’s intention, that he insists the subject possesses free-will allows for the subject to impose will on both the phenomenal and noumenal realms. The subject is situated for a measure of will and control that has not been recognised in previous European philosophical discourse. Although Kant states in *Critique of Pure Reason* that he has allowed for faith in God through his philosophical position,⁵ the way Kant will be read by many thinkers following is through the critique of a powerful subject. Kant’s critiques bring to the forefront the capabilities and fundamental makeup of the subject oriented around categories of knowledge.⁶ Kant never suggested that the subject has knowledge

⁴ See for example the discussion of Kant’s understanding of phenomena and noumena in Melnick, Arthur’s “Kant on Things in Themselves,” *Themes in Kant’s Metaphysics and Ethics*, Washington D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2004, pp. 147-152.

⁵ Kant writes, “I have therefore found it necessary to deny knowledge, in order to make room for faith.” Quoted in Pinkard, Terry, *German Philosophy, 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 44.

⁶ See for example the discussions of spontaneity, autonomy and freedom with regard to the subject in “Part One: Kant and the Revolution in Philosophy,” Pinkard, Terry, *German Philosophy, 1760-1860: The Legacy of Idealism*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

of God, however, his allowance for free-will opens the door to the noumenal for the reasoning subject.

Distinctive from Kant's liberation of the subject to apply reason and all faculties of the mind to reality, phenomenological investigation places reason in a complementary role with praxis and discovery, and the limitation of the subjective perspective is emphasised. Sokolowski discriminates between the role of reason and the role of phenomenological reflection without denigrating one for the other, recognising the value each brings to the other. Reason, he states, is "the disclosure and the confirmation of what things are"; and that furthermore, "reason is ordered toward the truth of things."⁷ Reason is the tool by which we analyse and interpret the natural world and our experiences within it. Phenomenological reflection is also deeply concerned with truth, but approaches truth from a reflective stance that allows aspects of truth that may have been otherwise hidden or unrecognisable from the empirical standpoint of reason to show forth. He states that:

Phenomenology is the science that ... stands back from our rational involvement with things and marvels at the fact that there is disclosure, that things do appear, that the world can be understood, and that we in our life of thinking serve as datives for the manifestation of things. ...

Phenomenology also examines the limitations of truth: the inescapable "other sides" that keep things from ever being fully disclosed, the errors and vagueness that accompany evidence, and the sedimentation that makes it necessary for us always to remember again the things we already know. Phenomenology acknowledges these disturbances of truth, but it does not let them drive it to despair. ... It insists that along with these shadows, truth and evidence are achieved, and that reason finds its perfection in letting things come to light.⁸

The phenomenological approach also recognises that meaning and truth are more often illusive to the identifying mechanisms that methodologies depend on for revelation. The attitude of allowing meaning and truth "come to light" is contradistinctive to the subjectivistic attitudes of discovery in the enlightenment or positivistic models. Letting truth arise recognises the necessary movement involved in seeing or ascertaining truth/meaning. Furthermore, the subjective stance, rather than controlling or willing the event to take place, is participant in the activity of a truth or meaningful event. Despite the possibility for movement and the emergence of meaning within the

⁷ Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 185

⁸ Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 185-6

phenomenological approach, typically, Western philosophical investigation, even within the phenomenological tradition, slips back toward ontological grounding or subjectivistic prioritising. In chapter four, when discussing Martin Heidegger's philosophy, I will address the breakthrough thinking of Edmund Husserl, father of phenomenology, and the subsequent reverting to a subject oriented system. Even Heidegger struggles with tendencies towards an ontological rendering of reality that grounds movement.

Lester Embree sees within the phenomenological movement four "tendencies" which have marked the projection of phenomenological thinking unto the present. He calls these threads of phenomenological thought: 'realistic phenomenology,' which concentrates on the descriptive science of investigation; 'constitutive phenomenology,' which delves into the consciousness to account for objects in the phenomenal world; 'existential phenomenology,' which brings human existence and experience to the forefront; and 'hermeneutical phenomenology,' which sees interpretation as key to the subject's relation to the world.⁹ All these "tendencies," however, clearly find their roots in Husserl and the developments of Heidegger. With a praxi-centric focus to the phenomenological approach of certain Buddhist practitioners, I am suggesting that in contrast to the direction most phenomenological thought has developed in the West, there is a particular emphasis on practice that informs certain Buddhist thought and which ought to inform phenomenological thought. This emphasis on practice/praxis is often up against the overbearing emphasis that theory/theoria can claim in religious as well as philosophical thought. Repeatedly even in the history of Buddhist thought, certain doctrinal teachings take precedent and restrict effective practice. When a praxi-centric approach is reinstated, as these practitioners describe, then there is opening, opportunity and movement that allows for the release that Buddhism teaches. The religious emphasis to Buddhist thought is a defining factor to its development. Buddhist thought, particularly in the practitioners considered here, insists that religion is simply the authentic practice that opens for the practitioner an authentic participation in profound reality – an experience that defies description. This "description" of authenticity is remarkably complementary to the phenomenological approach Heidegger exemplifies in his philosophical thought. That Heidegger is careful to avoid the religious discourse and terminology of his Christian tradition belies a deep mistrust in the ability of this tradition

⁹ Craig, Edward, general editor, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, London/New York: Routledge Press, 1998, p. 334

to communicate his thought. However, Heidegger must use words and terminology to convey his thought and he chooses Greek metaphysical terminology and occasionally a mystical concept from Meister Eckhart to convey his meaning. Because of this reticence to use religious dialogue, but a clear indication that he wanted to speak of profound reality, or matters of ultimate concern,¹⁰ I have called him a 'reluctant priest' in the Heidegger chapter. Heidegger himself has allowed that the course of his thinking is in great debt to his early religious training,¹¹ and it can be seen that his desire as a 'thinker' was to lead students along a path of reflection that would transform their perspectives and create openings for truth and meaning.

As Martin Heidegger was dispensing of the term "phenomenology" itself as institutionalised and thereby unusable, Buddhist philosophers such as NISHIDA Kitarō were expressing an affinity for what the European "phenomenologists" were trying to achieve, although any real exchange between the two was mitigated at best.¹² NISHIDA penned his own philosophical appraisal of living authentically that he called "acting intuition" (*koiteki chokkan*) based on a rich history of Buddhist phenomenological thought, albeit not named as such. In the subsequent chapters I will show how this phenomenological bent embedded in Buddhist thought has informed and shaped the development of the Zen tradition and its roots¹³, in particular Nāgārjuna's interpretation of *śūnyata* and his "two truths" teaching which pose a radical relativism making possible Buddhist practice, the Yōgacārin "conversion of the basis" (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*) which generates movement between the ultimate and the subjective and again facilitates

¹⁰ See Tillich, Paul, "religion is ultimate concern," from "Religion & Secular Culture," 1946, cited in *Paul Tillich: theologian of the boundaries*, ed. Mark Kline Taylor, London: Collins, 1987, p. 123

¹¹ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 10

¹² OHASHI Ryōsuke asserts that NISHIDA did read Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*, published when NISHIDA was already 57 years old, but was not greatly impressed by the work. See *Japan and Heidegger: Gedenkschrift der Stadt Meßkirch zum hundertsten Geburtstag Martin Heideggers*, Hartmut Buchner (Hg.), Jan Thorbecke Verlag Sigmaringen, 1989, p. 33-34. YUASA Yasuo suggests that NISHIDA's student MIKI Kiyoshi, who did read Heidegger, may have influenced NISHIDA to a lesser extent. See, YUASA, Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, ed. T.P. Kasulis, translated by NAGATOMO Shigenori and T.P. Kasulis, SUNY Press, 1987, p. 53. Heidegger is said to have read D.T. Suzuki's Zen philosophy (see Barrett, William, "Zen for the West," in *Zen Buddhism, Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*, edited by William Barrett, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956, p. xi in which Heidegger reportedly comments that what Suzuki is saying, he has been trying to express his whole life) which is strongly influenced by Chinese thought including Taoism, and continuing his interest in Chinese thought he even attempted a joint translation of the text of the *Tao Te Ching* with a Chinese scholar. This project did not meet with much success as Heidegger never moved beyond the first couple stanzas.

¹³ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company 1988, p. 10, 34-35. Although Madhyamaka and Yogacara are not Zen, they are regarded as part of the Zen tradition by Zen Buddhists through the link of patriarchy.

Buddhist practice, and Dōgen's "*datsuraku-datsuraku*," a 'letting go of letting go', as a personal expression of enlightenment via a "trans-descendence"¹⁴ in which only Buddhist practice in the mundane sense reflects the true activity of the Buddha body.

Trends in current practical philosophy:

Pragmatism and practical philosophy, as understood from an American perspective¹⁵ through Thoreau and Dewey, is the realigning of philosophical inquiry to the immediate concerns of an individual living in the world in a specific political and social context. The individual, through philosophical inquiry and practice, is asked to evaluate the better course of action given societal pressures and demands and to face hardship over compromising values that exceed individual preference. This tradition has generally attempted to avoid the apparent metaphysical quagmires of continental philosophy and focused on living properly, uprightly, according to the best potential of the human. Current descendents of such pragmatic thought include Richard Shusterman and Lou Marinoff.

However, the pragmatic strain of current philosophy, although centering on experience and existential knowledge, tends also toward a humanistic idolatry and egocentric understanding of the world. Marinoff writes that the highest virtue a human may exhibit is *ahimsa*, non-violence¹⁶ for ultimately, in Marinoff's view, practical philosophy is applied ethics.¹⁷ And, Marinoff argues, the methods for cultivating human ethical behaviour are varied, including yoga, martial arts, biofeedback, etc.,¹⁸ for a quiescent mind generates the inclination toward ethical behaviour: "active insights ... rise from the depths of inactive clarity."¹⁹ Marinoff envisions this pragmatic ethical practice starting at a personal level

¹⁴ The term "trans-descendence" is suggested by TAKEUCHI Yoshinori in deference to NISHIDA's "immanent transcendence" (see NISHIDA, Kitarō, "*An Inquiry into the Good*, Trans. Masao Abe & Christopher Ives (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990, originally published by Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1921), p. xvii), however, I believe a fuller understanding of the concept can be found much earlier with Dōgen's "*datsuraku datsuraku*."

¹⁵ Both Shusterman and Marinoff see pragmatism as a specifically American contribution to philosophy. See Shusterman, Richard, *Practicing Philosophy: Pragmatism and Philosophical Life*, New York: Routledge, 1997 and Marinoff Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 44. Alternatively, Sukale suggests that the pragmatism of Dewey and the phenomenological existentialism of Heidegger are more in line philosophically than has been recognised, see Michael Sukale, *Comparative Studies in Phenomenology*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague, 1976, pp. 121-151

¹⁶ Marinoff, Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 35, note 12

¹⁷ Marinoff, Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 48

¹⁸ Marinoff, Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 63

¹⁹ Marinoff, Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 63

with active and inactive meditation techniques and moving outward in a “concentric”²⁰ manner to philosophical counselling of another, group philosophy (e.g. using the Nelsonian Socratic dialogue²¹), and finally the “summit” of practice, that of “organizational consulting.”²² His vision is that of a philosophical revolution starting small and working its way into the most powerful social institutions, corporate and governmental etc., and who could disagree that these institutions would benefit from ethical training. However, an emphasis that relies solely on social paradigms and human achievement (even if it is ethical achievement) is still not enough to impart or draw out some kind of meaning for human existence itself. What it encourages, subtly, is the valorising of the human and the human capability for improvement and achievement – in other words, it makes an idol of the human and grounds the ego in the “concentric” middle of the world.

Pierre Hadot suggests to Western philosophers the significance in taking up an existential approach to philosophical enquiry and, as reflected in the title of his book, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, he understands philosophy to be transformatively active. His indepth study of the ancient Greek and Latin philosophical texts provide Hadot a relief upon which to compare the modern attitude to philosophy and living, which has been heavily influenced by Scholastic segregating of spiritual matters to Christianity (i.e. religion) and theoretical matters to philosophy, and thence the structural and systematic efforts of 17th through 19th century philosophy.²³ Although Hadot does not suggest a return to the ancient philosophical worldview of the Stoics and Epicureans *per se*, he values their understanding of a philosophical approach that must necessarily bring out meaning and transformation in the human condition by seeking wisdom. Hadot claims that in fact, wisdom, as the ancients perceived it, is the “natural state” of humanity, that

... wisdom is nothing more than the vision of things as they are, the vision of the cosmos as it is in the light of reason, and wisdom is also nothing more than the mode of being and living that should correspond to this vision. But the philosopher also knows that this wisdom is an ideal state, almost inaccessible. For such a man, daily life ... must necessarily appear abnormal, like a state of madness ... nonetheless he must live this life every day, in this world in which he feels himself a

²⁰ Marinoff, Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 67

²¹ Marinoff, Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 129

²² Marinoff, Lou, *Philosophical Practice*, San Diego: Academic Press, 2002, p. 170

²³ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 107

stranger ... And it is precisely in this daily life that he must seek to attain that way of life which is utterly foreign to the everyday world.²⁴

Hadot claims that although difficult, it is nevertheless possible to be a “practitioner of the ever-fragile *exercice* of wisdom.”²⁵ How does one practice philosophy? Most ancient Greek schools of philosophy agree that human desire and fear²⁶ are the root of poor decisions and behaviour, bad living and that philosophy aims to change one’s “mode of seeing and being” by bringing the individual back to living in the present moment, not the past or future.²⁷ The exercises utilised by the ancient Greek schools are varied, e.g. meditational writing as exemplified by Marcus Aurelius or Socratic dialogue either with another or oneself, and Hadot does not view the specific means as pertinent, but rather concentrates on the intended results: the attainment of wisdom.²⁸ Philosophy lived as “a way of life” is marked by effort and spiritual exercise for the attainment of wisdom, not that humans can “know” things better, but the attainment of wisdom so that humans can “be” in a different way. Specifically, as understood by the ancient Greeks, wisdom gives (1) peace of mind, as philosophical inquiry is a “therapeutic” to address human “anguish,” (2) inner freedom so that the “ego depends only on itself,” and (3) cosmic consciousness, such that the finite nature of humanity is balanced within the infinite nature of the cosmos.²⁹ Thus, we learn from the ancient philosophers that philosophy ‘as a way of life’ is “living out” logic, physics and ethics instead of merely discussing them, that is, speaking and thinking well, contemplating the cosmos, and acting in a morally and just manner toward others.³⁰ Finally, wisdom offers the equilibrium between peace and passion necessary for living in this world properly: as Hadot claims, “inner peace is indispensable for efficacious actions.”³¹

Thus, it is evident that the current trend in practical philosophy regards human activity as best filtered through a quiescent mind, emphasises living in the present (not the past or future), sees the philosophical attitude as a way of life (not an academic subject of

²⁴ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 58

²⁵ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 211

²⁶ Notably, Buddhist scriptures also identify “desire” as one of the most significant problems in the human condition that relegates humanity to the sphere of *samā sara*, see *Samāyutta Nikāya* v. 421-2. And “fear” is another human condition that is overcome, especially via meditation; see *Digha Nikāya* 11.156, “the fearless, calm and self-controlled state of meditation.”

²⁷ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 83

²⁸ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 265

²⁹ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 266

³⁰ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 267

³¹ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 274

investigation), and realises that proper philosophy transforms the way people see the world around them. In this regard, current trends in practical philosophy remain phenomenologically attuned. However, some of the pragmatically minded philosophical thought would continue to invest the ego with substantive qualities, including a centering ground. For although Hadot criticises Foucault's "techniques of the self" as far too focused on self cultivation and self concern, his corrective is to reorient the focus outward, an "exteriorization": "In this way, one identifies oneself with an "Other": nature, or universal reason, as it is present within each individual. This implies a radical transformation of perspective, and contains a universalist, cosmic dimension ..."³² Hadot's transformation of perspective, dependent upon the universalising of the personal or individual, is grounded in a totalising universal reason which, if 'tapped into' invigorates the individual to a sage-like being-in-the-world. Thus, although Hadot argues that each human must live those "truths whose meaning will never be exhausted by the generations of man"³³ – that meaning is born in the existential moment and runs through the course of human existence but certainly cannot be captured and hardly categorised – he is still bound to the ego-centric attitude that characterises much of Western philosophy. Therefore, Hadot, in his claim that the pursuit of wisdom calls the human out of a mundane and meaningless attitude toward the world, still retains the canopy of the human mind and holds tightly to reason as a guiding principle and cannot enter the Buddhist concept of emptiness or no-self, and perhaps not even Heidegger's living into the void. Hadot clearly draws distinction between a Buddhist understanding of meditation, which he characterises as a "corporeal attitude" and what he means by meditation, which he calls an "exercise of reason."³⁴ And though he does not regard theory as an end in itself, but the avenue to "nature and life itself,"³⁵ unlike Nāgārjuna he does not use rational exercises to move the mind beyond itself.

What is Zen?

The American Academy of Religion meeting in Washington D.C. in 1993 provided one of the first venues in the English-speaking academy for the voicing of "Critical Buddhism," recent Japanese scholarship critical of certain Japanese Buddhist teachings, particularly Zen Buddhist teachings. The text, *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, published in 1997 in

³² Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 211

³³ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 108

³⁴ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 59

³⁵ Hadot, Pierre, ed. by Arnold I. Davidson, *Philosophy as a Way of Life*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 60

response to the AAR forum, begins with the chapter, "Why They Say Zen is Not Buddhism."³⁶ Critical Buddhism was coined by HAKAYAMA³⁷ Noriaki who, with additional support from colleague MATSUMOTO Shirō, penned a number of papers reviewing Buddhism from a critical standpoint.³⁸ According to Jamie Hubbard and Paul Swanson, Critical Buddhism addresses the following: on a sectarian level, the *hongaku* (original enlightenment) issue that has engendered certain discriminatory thinking; on a Buddhological level, that *hongaku* thinking attaches more weight to an enlightenment experience than an intellectual standpoint and favours an authoritarian standpoint; on a social critical level, that certain Buddhist thought has been aligned with Nationalistic tendencies; and SUEKI Fumihiko adds a fourth level, the philosophical, whereby Critical Buddhism has aligned itself with the critical approach in contradistinction to the topical (*topos*).³⁹ As SUEKI points out, the "critical" attitude of Critical Buddhism is one that corresponds more with modern rationalism than "pre-modern irrational approaches" or "post-modern criticism"⁴⁰ and ultimately, the objective of Critical Buddhism is to determine which doctrines are truly Buddhist ones (i.e. *pratitya-samutpāda*) and which doctrines are clearly non-Buddhist (i.e. *hongaku* or *tathāgata-garbhā*). SUEKI finds both constructive and disturbing aspects in the aims of Critical Buddhism as he says:

One of the great achievements of Critical Buddhism is that it has challenged the tradition of objective, value-free, positivistic Buddhist studies. The main concern of religion is not with objective facts of the outside world but with a way of life. Critical Buddhism is right to have insisted on this point, but it is inconsistent to turn around then and insist on the objectivity of their historical and doctrinal claims without falling into the very objectivism they set out to criticise.⁴¹

³⁶ *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997

³⁷ All Japanese surnames will be presented in small caps to avoid confusion between given and family names.

³⁸ See SUEKI, Fumihiko, "A Reexamination of Critical Buddhism," *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, and Heine, Steven, "Critical Buddhism" (*Hiban Bukkyō*) and the Debate Concerning the 75-fascicle and 12-fascicle *Shōbōgenzō* Texts," *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*, 1994 21/1

³⁹ SUEKI, Fumihiko, "A Reexamination of Critical Buddhism," *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, pp. 324-326

⁴⁰ SUEKI, Fumihiko, "A Reexamination of Critical Buddhism," *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. 325

⁴¹ SUEKI, Fumihiko, "A Reexamination of Critical Buddhism," *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. 334

With this debate currently underway, one might ask in earnest, 'what is Zen?' – an offshoot of Buddhism? a school of Buddhism? its own religion? SUEKI'S suggestion that Buddhism be approached as a "method"⁴² rather than a set of doctrine or religious institution is certainly helpful. As a method, Buddhism is repeatedly brought back to its praxi-centric roots, and Zen falls squarely into this same praxi-centric phenomenological tradition.

Respected scholar and historian of Zen Buddhism Heinrich Dumoulin begins his two volume work, *Zen Buddhism: A History* with the following description of Zen:

Zen (Chin., Ch'an, an abbreviation of *ch'an-na*, which transliterates the Sanskrit term *dhyāna* or its Pāli cognate *jhāna*, terms meaning "meditation") is the name of a Mahāyāna Buddhist school of meditation originating in China and characterized by the practice of meditation in the lotus position (Jpn., *zazen*, Chin., *tso-ch'an*) and the use of the *koan* (Chin., *kung-an*), as well as by the enlightenment experience of *satori*.⁴³

Dumoulin goes on to state that as much as Zen is rooted in Buddhist teachings originating with Gautama (or Śakyāmunī, as favoured by the Zen tradition), Zen has also richly enhanced Buddhism – that, in fact, "Zen represents one of the purest manifestations of the religious essence of Buddhism; it is the fruit and flower of that larger tree."⁴⁴ Dumoulin speaks of Zen as a historical sect within Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhism with its own set of original religious characteristics, the significance of which rivals the tradition from which it sprung. Dumoulin's historical approach to describing Zen is useful, but lacks a critical edge that is necessary for the fuller elucidation of Zen practice.

Daisetz T. SUZUKI is most credited with introducing Zen to the West and he writes,

The basic principle ... underlying the whole fabric of Zen is directed towards the growth or self-maturing of the inner experience.

⁴² SUEKI, Fumihiko, "A Reexamination of Critical Buddhism," *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, edited by Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. 334

⁴³ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China*, trans. James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, p. xvii

⁴⁴ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China*, trans. James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, p. xvii

He also maintains that as much as we would like to describe Zen objectively as philosophers, this is no way to have "an effective and all-satisfying understanding" which is only possible by living within the tradition itself.⁴⁵ He further writes that

Zen defies all ... designations ... there is no object in Zen upon which to fix the thought. Zen is a wafting cloud in the sky. No screw fastens it, no string holds it ...⁴⁶

This mystical rendering of Zen places it outside philosophical categories, and spurns a collective religious description of experience or knowledge. Ironically, however, the focus here must return to the subjective self to whom the unique revelation of 'self' is made and which individual experience confirms.

Joan Tollifson provides this description of the experience within Zen meditation and how the experience works to adjust reason:

Flower, carhorn, rain, contractions, headache, person, word, thought, wheelchair. What is it? Zen invited me to listen to each moment and wonder. The mind divides and evaluates. It provides answers. It imagines bondage and liberation, desirable and undesirable. In sitting quietly and listening without explanation or ideas, I discovered that there is no body. If there is just listening and experiencing, what is the body? Where is it? Where does it begin and end? Meditation reveals that the body is just a painting that appears and disappears in imagination. It seems solid when we think about it, or if we look into a mirror (and think), but in quiet sitting we can actually experience the body as permeable, borderless, empty space. And we can experience how nothing is separate from this space.⁴⁷

Tollifson's experience in breaking down the barriers between one's own body and the objective space of other bodies and reality is one of the first steps towards realising the Buddhist 'no self' where the subjective ego lets go of not only the barriers of the physical realm but also of the psychological and social. Her emphasis on meditation is in line with the classical description of meditation levels in which subject-object boundaries are among the first to dissipate. From this stage, one looks to achieve also the great

⁴⁵ SUZUKI, Daisetz T., *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, edited and forward by Bernard Phillips, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1962, p. 26

⁴⁶ as quoted in Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China*, translated by James W. Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1988, p. xix

⁴⁷ Tollifson, Joan, "Enjoying the Perfection of Imperfection," in *Being Bodies: Buddhist Women on the Paradox of Embodiment*, edited by Lenore Friedman and Susan Moon, Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1997 p. 20

experience of transcendent association such that compassion radiates outward and one's experience is no longer singular but corporate or connected.

Zen master YASUTANI Hakuun, in a recently translated commentary of Dōgen's *Genjōkoan*, criticises those who study Dōgen's work – and by extension, Zen – conceptually, calling such a pursuit idiotic for, “philosophy and the Buddha way are as different as the moon and a snapping turtle,” and “thought and reality are as different as clouds and mud.” In laying out what the Zen life or Buddha way means, he writes,

For philosophy it may be all right to miss the point, but as for the Buddha way, it's meaningless. In the end [philosophical pursuits] are conceptual amusements and not guideposts for practising the Buddha way, for experiencing great enlightenment, or for daily life.⁴⁸

YASUTANI re-emphasises here the connection between daily life and enlightenment: the commingling of immanent and transcendent.

For ABE Masao, prominent Japanese Zen philosopher of what is known as the Kyoto School of Philosophy and respected Dōgen scholar, Zen both is and isn't a form of Buddhism. ABE deems what he terms “traditional Zen” a particular school of Buddhism in that it has developed its own doctrines and methods. However, he also speaks of Zen as the “root-source” of all Buddhism, for Zen cannot be contained in doctrine but “directly points to one's mind as the universal Buddha Mind” and therefore is independent of any particular *sūtra* or doctrinal teaching.⁴⁹ ABE quotes the famous verse attributed to Bodhidharma, the Zen patriarch credited with bringing Buddhist scriptures to China, to back-up this assertion:

Not relying on words or letters,
An independent self-transmitting apart from any teaching;
Directly pointing to the human Mind,
Awakening one's Original Nature, thereby actualizing Buddhahood.

ABE explains that in remaining independent of scriptural fundamentalism, Zen does not ignore the *sūtras* but seeks to “return to the source” of the *sūtras*. In other words, in the likeness of Śakyāmuni's self-awakening, Zen seeks to “transmit this Mind of self-

⁴⁸ YASUTANI, Hakuun, *Flowers Fall: A Commentary on Dōgen's Genjōkoan*, translated by Paul Jaffe, Boston & London: Shambhala Press, 1996, p. 12

⁴⁹ ABE, Masao, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, edited by Steven Heine, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997, p. xiii

awakening from person to person, from generation to generation.”⁵⁰ ABE argues that this special transmission “outside” the teachings actually points to the inner essence of the teachings, that is, religious realisation. Thus, that Zen may appear heretical at times should not be threatening to Buddhism, rather the Zen way is meant to pierce the dogmatism and philosophical speculation clouding the real essence of the religion.

T. P. Kasulis relates the following conversation at the beginning of his book, *Zen Action/Zen Person*:

“You have asked permission to practice Zen meditation in this temple, but tell me: What is Zen?”
 After some hesitation and embarrassed smiling, I said something about Zen’s being a way of life rather than a set of dogmas.
 Laughter filled the tatami-matted reception room. “Everyone comes here to study Zen, but none of them knows what Zen is. Zen is ... knowing thyself. You are a Western philosopher and you know of Socrates’ quest. Did you assume Zen would be something different?”⁵¹

What the Zen master in the conversation above means by “knowing thyself” is indeed the crucial question. But this story also illustrates both the fascination and naïveté that surrounds Zen. Aspects of Zen which have reached Western hearers and sparked a searching response include ideas of mystical oneness, of enigmatic *koan* sayings which drive students to frustrated silence, and esoteric wisdom not found in Western philosophy or religion. Kasulis works from this introductory statement on Zen, stressing the integration of the transformative activity of *zazen* and this activity’s ultimate transformation of ‘self,’ which in Buddhist terminology is rendered ‘no self.’ The activity of *zazen* is transformative of both perception and experience of the perception.

In addition to those like Kasulis who describes Zen experience as the “prereflective experience” at the ground of all experience,⁵² NISHIDA, Kitarō, founder of the Kyoto School of Philosophy, speaks of the [Zen] Buddhist worldview as an “immanent transcendence” in which the individual encounters the absolute by

⁵⁰ ABE, Masao, *Zen and Comparative Studies*, edited by Steven Heine, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1997, p. 19

⁵¹ Kasulis, T.P., *Zen Action/Zen Person*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1981, p. ix

⁵² Kasulis, T.P., *Zen Action/Zen Person*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1981, p. 146

transcending the self inwardly, in the temporal direction – in the direction of the absolute's subjectivity.⁵³

NISHIDA's description seeks to arrest the inclination to desire transcendence from temporality to an atemporal or eternal realm.

In these brief descriptions, Zen is spoken of in historical, mystical-religious, philosophical, existential and phenomenological terms. That there are certain core Buddhist teachings such as dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) and no-self (*anātman*) that Zen is also characterised by, the authors cited above would recognise. Similarly, Zen can certainly be characterized as a sect of Mahāyāna Buddhism as Zen shares specific Mahāyāna teachings such as expedient means (*upāya*) and Buddha nature (*buddhō*) in all sentient beings (although interpretations within Mahāyāna vary). And Zen itself is marked by its own teachings, such as the direct transmission of Buddha-mind from teacher to student. And yet, this kind of categorising does little to fully elucidate Zen. By investigating the formative background teachers and schools to Zen, including a comparison chapter on Heidegger, I intend to show that viewing Zen as the 'root and marrow' of Buddhism or criticising Zen as not a valid form of Buddhism at all, is eventually transcended by just Zen, itself; that is, *zazen*.

Western and Buddhist approaches to phenomenology:

How, then, does introducing the philosophical category of 'phenomenology' assist in clearing away designations of sect and parameters of orthodoxy that would obscure the promise of liberation that Gautama Buddha taught? As I will elucidate in the chapters to follow, Buddhism is rooted firmly in daily experiential existence with all of its fears and joys, pain and pleasure, while simultaneously promising liberation from the attachment to any of these fleeting emotions and experiences, that is, ultimate bliss and rest. From the founder of Buddhism, Gautama Buddha, through some of the seminal Buddhist teachers and schools, certain means are proposed by which seekers of this liberation may attain their goal. The means presented here, when understood and lived into, strike a chord with the Western school or method of phenomenological investigation. Out of a strong metaphysical and ontological tradition within Western philosophy, the phenomenological approach comes closest to challenging the foundational tendencies exhibited along the

⁵³ NISHIDA, Kitarō, *Last Writings: Nothingness and the Religious Worldview*, translated and introduction by David Dilworth, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987, p. 99

trajectory of Western thinking. Although it may appear as if Buddhism, a religion, and phenomenology, a philosophical approach, are categorically different, it has well been noted that Eastern thinking is less concerned with categorical classification than with the elucidation of truth so that philosophy and religion, science and spirituality, are merely different vantage points pointing to the 'way things are/are becoming' (*yathābhūtan*). Nāgārjuna's philosophical style and logical approach to religious truth is a clear example of how one may use a tradition such as philosophy to direct the individual to ultimate concerns. In a complementary way, phenomenology has worked in the Western tradition to destabilize foundational thinking so that when encountering a thinker such as Heidegger, the staid avenues of religious discourse are abandoned completely and yet, one encounters an undeniable awe and profundity in his philosophical musing that is generally associated with religious experience. This is to say that, investigating Buddhism, or the Zen tradition, through a strict categorical system would hardly be fruitful, and yet allowing a method to announce itself, moreover one which has similar aspects to a particular strain of Western investigation, suggests an approach to reality or truth that may be useful.

We will see in the discussion outlined in the chapters to follow that a praxi-centric phenomenology that bridges Buddhist and Western traditions shares a number of common concerns with the Western philosophers discussed here in terms of striking at the heart of meaning, where such meaning cannot be forced into view by pure reason alone. Both Western and Buddhist phenomenological methods are orientated to consider reality in a way that does not "negate the hidden or absent qualities" as Sokolowski has described of the phenomenological practice of 'reduction' and 'epoché' which considers the 'object' from its natural state and seeks to not negate the hidden or absent qualities encountered. Both Western and Buddhist phenomenological approaches critique the positivistic, purely logical, solely subjective methods of analysis when approaching meaning and profound reality. However, while in West it is the philosophical tools of reduction and epoché which work to recognize the hidden or obscured elements of reality, Buddhist practice ultimately turns to meditation, *zazen*, in which practice embraces the ineffable reality instead of describing or analysing it and through such embrace claims to actually experience the indescribable. Thus, both Western and Buddhist phenomenological methods emphasize a natural or intuitive approach to the phenomenal world in order to find authenticity, although it may be

argued that the Buddhist approach, with its unapologetic religious agenda, will embrace the ineffable mystical aspects of arrival more readily than will the Western philosophers. Heidegger fights the term "mystical" because of its non-philosophic or unserious connotations, however, in the same way that Heidegger abandons traditional religious discourse but speaks of experience best described as "religious," he also spurns the label "mystical" but effectively argues for what can be described as a "mystical" experience.

When finally encountering meaning or ultimate truth, the Buddhist approach criticizes the West for reifying meaning and thus robbing it of its efficacy. NISHIDA asserts that pure experience has "no meaning," which is not to claim its insignificance, but to liberate the pre-reflective ineffable knowledge/experience from the confines of language and conceptual categories. Heidegger, incidentally, agrees as he claims that the authentic occurs because it occurs, and he quotes from the mystic poet Angelus Silesius to support this claim: "The rose is without why; it blooms because it blooms".⁵⁴

In other areas there will be complementary concerns but different emphasis. Both Western phenomenologists and Buddhist practitioners recognize the unique and essential role of time. Sokolowski describes within a phenomenological understanding of time, the "internal time consciousness" which provides the clearing or opening for meaning or truth (*alethia*) so that one relies neither solely on the subject (which would indicate a lapse into the psychological) nor the object (a lapse into worldly processes or phenomenalism).⁵⁵ Both Husserl and Heidegger recognise that temporality is part of how meaning intersects with the human life, that time and being are inextricably connected, and yet unlike the Western thrust, in the Buddhist pursuit there is generally not the same emphasis on historicity or import of the historical moment.⁵⁶ Interestingly, despite a mutual recognition of the import of time, the Buddhist approach criticizes the West for undervaluing or ignoring altogether the role place (*basho*) plays. WATSUJI's meditations on *basho* and climate in *Fudo* highlight the import of place as a necessary

⁵⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Der Satz vom Grund*, 4. Auflage. Pfullingen: Günther Neske, 1971, p. 68, cited by Zimmerman, Michael F., *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, rev. ed., Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981, p. 238.

⁵⁵ Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 15

⁵⁶ An exception may be a portion of NISHIDA's writings and others from the modern Kyoto School of Philosophy in which the political climate of WWII surrounding their philosophical writing encouraged an historical interpretation not reflected in Nāgārjuna, the Yogācāra school or Dōgen. Once Buddhist phenomenological methods meet the twentieth century and the advent of the Kyoto School of Philosophy, there is clear indication that historicity is a more significant factor.

component in understanding the relation between human existence and the lived world.⁵⁷ The necessity of place is also implicitly important in Dōgen's reflections and NISHIDA later develops the concept of place and meaning when he writes of *mu no basho* or the "basho [place or topos] vis-à-vis nothing."⁵⁸

Further, in common with Husserl and Heidegger, Buddhist praxi-centric phenomenology accepts human existence as a given. However, there is strict warning against cultivating an ego-self so that Buddhists will reject the Western model of mitigating meaning through a transcendental ego-self. Husserl, and even to a certain degree Heidegger, was determined to recover the transcendental subject. Husserl tried to clear away or suspend the filtering impurities which obscure subject and object participating in the same reality, and eventually proposed a transcendental subject much in the same vein as Kant did before him. Heidegger tried to find the ground in which subject returns to itself, authentically, and found that the object has always already been there, at the origin of the subject bound together with the unity of *being*. But Buddhist phenomenology will deny the subject-object split fundamentally, for the ultimate expression of a self is the realisation of *anātta* "no-self" by means of *sūnyatā* or emptiness at the basis of every assertion. Dōgen's discussion of *uji* or "being-time" exemplifies this non-dual rendering of being and time.

Finally, as Husserl and Heidegger perhaps only began to explore, a Buddhist praxi-centric phenomenological approach will see meaning expressed in the existential-onto-phenomenological rather than in a transcendental subjectivistic ego-consciousness which perceives reality as existing dualistically in the phenomenal world. The Buddhist phenomenological approach will take a more radical approach to the Husserlian *Lebenswelt*, an approach in which praxis *is* the transcendent noumenal reality, and only here can the duality of two worlds disappear. In broad generalities, Western philosophy presupposes the subject, the ego, and wonders how to reconcile that subject to the lived world and any other transcendent reality such as God or "the good" or "the beautiful." After Descartes, transcendence is claimed for the subject, the ego, but the problem of

⁵⁷ WATSUJI Tetsurō, *I'ndo* (Climate and Culture), 1935, as cited in *Japanese Philosophy* by H. Gene Blocker and Christopher L. Staring, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001, p. 128

⁵⁸ As YUASA states, "Nishida's basho vis-à-vis nothing is the basho that can be reached by letting ego-consciousness disappear." YUASA, Yasuo, *The Body: Toward an Eastern Mind-body Theory*, edited by Thomas P. Kasulis, translated by NAGATOMO Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis, Albany: State University of New York, 1987, p. 61

reconciling the now transcendent subject to the lived world and any "other" in it is no nearer a resolution. Furthermore, although Husserl and Heidegger return to the phenomenal realm in search for authentic meaning, they still presuppose the ego, either in the form of the transcendental subject, or in Da-sein who finds itself "thrown" into this world of beings.

Generally speaking, Buddhist thought recognises the subject-object split as fundamentally mistaken. NISHIDA attempts to explain how the subject (ego) recognises the structure of reality in which prior to the problematic assertion of the ego there is unity, and thus effects the disappearance of the ego. In this way, the Western movement to "transcend" or cross back over the boundary or gap between subject and object is described by Eastern thinkers from the opposite perspective, as a trans-descendence prior to any possible split between a supposed subject and object.

Chapter Outline

In Chapter One I address Nāgārjuna's criticism of the Abhidharma scholars to present "an inventory of objects as they appear to our pre-reflective consciousness (phenomenology)" but which later became a way to talk ontologically about the way things really are/exist.⁵⁹ Nāgārjuna's critique is levelled against any kind of foundationalism whether it is external and ontological in nature or internal and psychological in nature. Ontological investigations, such as exhibited by the Abhidharma scholars, as well as a psychologised internalisation of reality, a criticism levied against the Yogācāra school, will according to Nāgārjuna's critique ultimately dead-end in their attempts to lay a foundation for Buddhist practice. Obviously neither the Abhidharma scholars nor the Yogācāra school intended to institute any form of foundationalism, however Nāgārjuna's critique forces the trajectory of each approach in order to show a propensity within each toward a foundationalism that was never present in the original message of Buddhism. Nāgārjuna claimed to have offered no new doctrine and no new interpretation of the Buddha's teachings, rather he sought to strike to the heart of the Buddha's message with a deconstructive dialectic and radical emptiness (*tīnyatā*) that intends to ultimately free one to Buddhist practice, the activities carried out in the mundane sphere which provide movement to realise the supramundane or ultimate.

⁵⁹ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 84

Despite the critical appraisal of Nāgārjuna against what appears to be psychological ontologising by the Yogācāra school, in Chapter Two I critically examine thinkers within the Yogācāra tradition, such as Asanga and to a degree Vasubandhu, who offer a view of meditative practice which again pushes the practitioner beyond the psychologically-essentialist parameters of the mind via a phenomenological approach which moves the practitioner to a breakthrough in which not only is there no actor nor other acted upon, but there is “no mind that knows.” Only “direct cognition” (*jñāna*) or an intuitive behaviour can move to this point beyond (or before) cognition.

In Chapter Three I show how Dōgen moves the philosophical discussion from the anonymity of paradigms to the personal narrative by means of *koan* and another rendering of radical emptiness (*śūnyatā*) that involves letting go or casting off (*datsuraken-datsuraku*) the ego-self so that a “traceless enlightenment” is manifest eternally. For Dōgen, praxis is the participation of the individual in the cosmic revealing of Buddha-nature. Time and place, for Dōgen, reflect the law of *pratītya-samutpāda* (conditioned arising or co-dependent origination); but rather than transcend the world or arising and passing away, Dōgen’s practice is located there purposefully in order that Buddha-dharma is manifest.

Given the criticisms Buddhist thinkers assert against Western phenomenologists, many have turned to Martin Heidegger, a philosopher who began his career under Edmund Husserl, founder and father of the phenomenological method, and who publicly “gave up” the descriptor “phenomenology” but who continued to operate along the phenomenological vein of investigation. I consider Heidegger’s thought and methods in Chapter Four as well as the parallels of his thought to Buddhist thinkers in the Zen tradition whom I consider to exhibit a particular phenomenological emphasis in their approach to profound reality.

Chapter 1.

Nāgārjuna and the Working of Emptiness

In this chapter I will explore the way in which Nāgārjuna's logical critique of *svabhāva* or self-nature and his introduction of the concept of "two-truths" work to challenge substantialist thought and a strict ontological concern that is not evident in the original teachings of Gautama. Specifically, Nāgārjuna engaged in debate a contingent of abhidharma scholars whose *dharmā* matrices reflect a move from identifying and working out its cessation in a process of *dhyānic* meditation to the strictly ontological concern of identifying *dharmā* elements. This indicates a move by the abhidharma scholars towards a metaphysical thinking which concentrates on the cultivation process of good *dharmā* in contrast to the more mystical emphasis of quieting the mind and bringing discursive thought (*prapañcā*) to an end. Nāgārjuna proposes as the only effective possibility for Buddhist practice a radical relativism couched in paradoxical language, for language is necessarily derivative and always problematic. What Nāgārjuna effectively questions is whether one may realise no-self (*anātman*) doctrinally or solely through praxis. He ultimately argues that liberation (realising no-self) can only be experienced as a result of Buddhist practice; once the doctrine has been heard, a Buddhist practitioner must learn how to effectively internalise the truth therein, and dispense with the structure which would bind the mind anew. As with what I term Buddhist praxi-centric phenomenology, Nāgārjuna's critique aims to discourage and disengage the grasping mind so that practice is meaningful and effective. Nāgārjuna's signature tools for accomplishing such critique are (1) a radical employment of *śūnyatā* such that not only external objects in the phenomenal world are accepted as empty, but self, the perceiving subject, is also emptied, and (2) the two-truths teaching in which Nāgārjuna collapses the understanding of transcendental truth and mundane reality such that the practitioner is freed to participate meaningfully in the Buddhist activities of release.

Named among the patriarchs of a number of later Buddhist schools, including the Zen sect's tradition of *Dharma* lineage, Nāgārjuna is championed as one of Buddhism's philosophers *par excellence*, and has undeniably shaped the Mahāyāna strain of Buddhism through to the modern era.⁶⁶ Nāgārjuna lived and taught at some point between the first

⁶⁶ Heinrich Dumoulin emphasises Nāgārjuna's important place within the Zen tradition in *Zen Buddhism: A History, India and China*, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York, 1988, p. 10, 34-35.

and third century CE, and is arguably best known for writing the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās* (translated *Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way*,⁶¹ abbreviated hereafter as MMK)⁶² the contribution of which helped establish what has become known as Madhyamaka thought.⁶³ Although scholars are not in agreement over how many of the other treatises and hymns may be reliably attributed to him, there is no convincing reason for why a greater corpus of writing, including the hymns of praise, may not also be considered valid. Ruegg argues that the strictly philosophical *prasaṅga*⁶⁴ arguments in the MMK and *Vigrahavyāvartanī* do not necessarily preclude the possibility of Nāgārjuna using other genres of writing, including the more cataphatic approach found in the hymns, and thus genre alone should not dictate the authenticity of Nāgārjuna's authorship.⁶⁵ I argue that that Nāgārjuna's deconstructive or *prasaṅga* type writing, such as exhibited in the MMK, is only validated within the larger context of Buddhist practice. Otherwise, without the element of practice, and purely as an exercise in logic, the MMK may be justifiably accused of attempting to totally annihilate the precepts of the Buddha. What Nāgārjuna does attempt with the MMK is a refutation of the theoretical and philosophical grounding that he sees supplanting true Buddhist practice.

Nāgārjuna sought to rekindle the essence of the Buddha's message with his radical criticism of any theory of "self-nature" (*svabhāva*).⁶⁶ His critique deconstructs the conventional descriptors of subject and object insisting that the law of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) makes for radical relativism. No respecter of dogma, Nāgārjuna subjects the very tenets of the Buddhist doctrine to his deconstruction process

⁶¹ Garfield, Jay L., trans and commentary, *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, Oxford University Press: Oxford/New York 1995

⁶² Ruegg names five "minor" works after the MMK, the *Yuktisaastikā*, the *Śūnyatāsaptati*, the *Vaidalya-Sūtra*, the *Vigrahavyāvartanī* and the *Ratnāvalī*, in Ruegg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981. Lindtner considers the following works "authentic" to Nāgārjuna: MMK, *Śūnyatāsaptati* (ŚS), *Vigrahavyāvartanī* (VV), *Vaidalyaprakaraṇa* (VP), **Vyavahārasiddhi* (VS), *Yuktisaastikā* (YS), *Catuhstava* (CS), *Ratnāvalī* (RĀ), *Pratītyasamutpādayakārikā* (PK), *Sūtrasamuccaya* (SS), *Bodhicittavivarana* (BV), *Subhlekha* (SL), **Bodhisambhāra* (BS), in Lindtner, Chr., *Nagarjuna: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag Press, 1982, p. 11.

⁶³ Although it is noted that he does not use the term "Madhyamaka" in any of his writings.

⁶⁴ *Prasaṅga* is the Sanskrit term for the logic which leads to *reductio ad absurdum*. The Indian school of logic that bears the name *Prāsaṅgika* reflects their usage of this particular logic. See *Sources of Indian Tradition*, Vol. 1, Gen. Ed. Wm. Theodore De Bary, New York: Columbia University Press, 1958, p.156

⁶⁵ Ruegg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981, p. 35. Tucci agrees, stating in regard to the Hymns of the Catuh-stava that there can be "little doubt" as to Nāgārjuna's authorship, Tucci, Guisepppe, "Two Hymns of the Catuh-stava of Nāgārjuna," *International Royal Asiatic Society*, 1932, p. 309.

⁶⁶ Nāgārjuna engaged in a thorough deconstruction of the prevalent ontological arguments championed by such non-Buddhist schools as the Nyāya and similar tendencies towards forms of foundationalism in some Buddhist schools, namely those scholars enmeshed in the Abhidharma literature and the emerging doctrine of the Yogācāra school.

in order to reveal the original intention of the Buddha of a complete liberation, re-cast by Nāgārjuna in his verse of dedication to Buddha as “no birth nor death; no annihilation nor persistence; no unity nor plurality; no coming in nor going out.”⁶⁷ One might note the similarity of Nāgārjuna’s verse to the later well-known verse from the Heart Sutra (*Prajñāpāramitā Hṛdaya Sūtra*) that *dharmas* are empty of own-being, without marks, neither produced nor stopped.⁶⁸ Nāgārjuna insists on the absence of any kind of self-nature or essence (*svabhāva*), even within the *dharmas* themselves. All existents are empty of such essence, for all are completely co-dependent and radically relative. Nāgārjuna intends to lead his adherents through a logical process of release that parallels the yogins’ steps to a deep formless state of meditation.⁶⁹ In this way, as Nāgārjuna also insists, there is no ultimate position or argument, not even the Buddha’s “teaching,” as such. Practice is beyond any mundane doctrinal teaching, beyond and much more profound than the metaphysical and logical explanations for how the transitory ego-consciousness can make sense of the nature of things; and yet true Buddhist practice takes place nowhere else than among the skandhas and in a transitory world, just as described in the scriptures. Nāgārjuna’s purpose is to remind his followers of the true “essence” of the Buddha’s message by driving them away from the apparent safety of a bordered knowledge of the true path to the ultimate freedom and release that has no proper description but which is experienced as *nirva*, “blissful”. He operates by laying out these tenets of the Buddha for re-interpretation in order to preserve them, ultimately, from reification and the perils of foundationalism. In order to contextually situate Nāgārjuna’s praxi-centric paradigm shift, it is necessary to review the praxiological instantiation of the Buddhist teaching within the Four Noble Truths.

Background: establishment of key Buddhist teachings

Four Noble Truths

What has been called Gautama Buddha’s “enlightenment” can accentuate the epistemological breakthrough to the detriment of recognising what was the Buddha’s

⁶⁷ from MMK as quoted by Herman, A. L., *An Introduction to Buddhist Thought: A Philosophic History of Indian Buddhism*, Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1983, p.289

⁶⁸ “Here, O Sariputra, all dharmas are marked with emptiness; they are not produced or stopped, not defiled or immaculate, not deficient or complete.” *The Heart Sutra in Buddhist Scriptures*, selected and translated by Edward Conze, London: Penguin Books, 1959, p. 163

⁶⁹ see Schmidt-Leukel, Perry, “Mystische Erfahrung und logische Kritik bei Nāgārjuna,” *Religiöse Erfahrung und theologische Reflexion: Festschrift für Heinrich Döring*, Armin Kreiner and Perry Schmidt-Leukel (Hg.), Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1993, p. 386; and Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 232

profound experience of release. In a similar vein Nāgārjuna has been viewed as one of Buddhism's greatest philosophers, but this has also the possibility for gravely misunderstanding his purpose in engaging in debate, what in Buddhist terminology would be called the skilful means by which he engages in teaching. What both these teachers, Buddha and later Nāgārjuna as reviver of the spirit of his teaching, sought to deliver was a way of living into true reality such that the experience of living is completely transformed. The Buddha's teaching of the four noble truths and eight-fold noble path was aimed at identifying what was problematic about life and setting out the prescription for the transformation. He never intended that these instructions become the basis for a religious/philosophical system. That Nāgārjuna subjects these hallowed teachings to rigorous critique is his condemnation not of the Buddhist path itself but of how the path has been corrupted by the constructing thrust of the ego-consciousness. With this in mind it would be beneficial to revisit the Buddha's teachings before considering Nāgārjuna's critique.

The Buddha's first sermon at Benares, the setting out of the four noble truths, and his teaching of the "law" of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*), was based on Gautama's individual experience of universal truths. Gautama's long journey to enlightenment came via saturation in the world, examining the limits of pleasure and pain, comfort and extreme denial, and his eventual penetrating insight was borne out of what truths were presented to him during a prolonged session of meditation. His understanding did not come from outside the world itself nor from beyond his personal experience in and of this world. The nature of things, how things really are/are becoming (*yathābhūtam*)⁷⁰ was revealed to him in the moment of his enlightenment experience.

The first noble truth, he taught, is that people experience *duḥkha* in their daily life.

This is the noble truth of suffering (*dukkha*): birth is suffering (*dukkha*), ageing is suffering (*dukkha*), sickness is suffering (*dukkha*), dying is suffering (*dukkha*), sorrow, grief, pain, unhappiness, and uncase are suffering (*dukkha*); being united with what is not liked is suffering (*dukkha*), separation from what is liked is suffering (*dukkha*); not to get

⁷⁰ see Herman, A. L., *An Introduction to Buddhist Thought: A Philosophic History of Indian Buddhism*, Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1983, p. 55

what one wants is suffering (*dukkha*); in short, the five aggregates of grasping are suffering (*dukkha*).⁷¹

“*Dukkha*” (*dukkha*) is pain or dissatisfaction; human life is fraught with the existential angst of uncertainty during good times, and the pain of sickness and death during the worst times. A person must come to an existential awareness of *dukkha* before any kind of religious understanding makes sense. Driven by the angst of *dukkha*, humans reach out for stability in either the physical or metaphysical realm but what is grasped in these efforts merely leads back to *dukkha* again for the act of grasping itself is what binds the human to this desperate cycle of pain (*samsāra*), not the object “grasped.” It ought to be noted, however, that the experience of *dukkha* is universal to human life and thus works simultaneously to position humans for liberation from the experience *dukkha*.

The second noble truth identifies the origin of *dukkha*, that it arises directly out of the individual, specifically the desires or thirst (*taṇhā*) of that individual.

This is the noble truth of the origin of suffering (*dukkha*); the thirst for repeated existence which, associated with delight and greed, delights in this and that, namely the thirst for the objects of sense desire, the thirst for existence, and the thirst for non-existence.⁷²

Humans tend to grasp onto (this is what is meant by “thirst”) what looks stable and satisfying, to desire pleasing things and feelings and to avoid the unpleasant aspects of life. Humans tend to look either for the comforts of eternity, that human existence may transcend death and dying, or humans tend to grasp and thirst for annihilation to cancel the experience of *dukkha*. Both these extremes, that of eternity and annihilation, are objects or states of being/non-being that seduce human grasping but neither are ultimately obtainable for the truth that the Buddha discovered lies in the relinquishing of all grasping. Any “grasping” after objects or states of being is the activity of denial and cannot lead to release.

However, as noted already, *dukkha*, or existential angst can act as the signal in human experience which points out the limitations of the world (“lived world”, *Lebenswelt*), and

⁷¹ *Saṃyutta Nikāya* v. 421-2, as quoted in Gethin, Rupert, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998, p. 59-60

⁷² *Saṃyutta Nikāya* v. 421-2, as quoted in Gethin, Rupert, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998, p. 59-60

thereby suggests the possibility of rest, of satisfaction, of letting go of the activity of grasping and thirsting. The third noble truth assures that there is a release from *duḥkha*, called elsewhere *nirvāṇa*, literally “expiration:”

This is the noble truth of the cessation of suffering (*duḥkha*): the complete fading away and cessation of this very thirst – its abandoning, relinquishing, releasing, letting go.⁷³

Finally, the fourth noble truth details the way in which an individual masters desire so that *nirvāṇa* may be experienced. As such, the fourth truth, which is the noble eight-fold path, is the way of practising and living which can quiet and eventually put out the fires of desire and passion which give rise to the thoughts and actions which manifest themselves in the world as *duḥkha*. The noble eight-fold path is taken and applied to the life dedicated to finding release from the cycle of *duḥkha*-laden existence. This path is described as a list of beneficial activities, both psychological and ethical behaviour, which would address the problems of *duḥkha*. By training oneself to see where the paths of pain and release are charted in life’s experiences and activities, one embarks on the path to liberation. The aspects of *duḥkha* and liberation are classified as *dharmas* by practitioners. Are the thoughts and actions themselves *dharmas*? Once monks began to identify thoughts and actions as *dharmas*, as existents separated from the cyclical reality of life (*samsāra*), the thrust of the Buddha’s teaching is dramatically changed. This very change was borne out in the proliferation of abhidharma literature which will be addressed later in this chapter.

Dependent Origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*), No Self (*anātman*), Emptiness (*śūnyatā*)

In addition to the Buddha’s sermon at Benares, his teaching of the “law” of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*), also translated ‘conditioned causality,’ ‘conditioned arising’ or ‘co-dependent origination,’ is essential to Buddhist practice. The Buddha’s experience in the world underscores the relativity of phenomena, including thoughts, actions and matter. When Nāgārjuna reinforces the importance of seeing phenomena as radically relative, instead of working with what had become a reified conceptual model, the “law of dependent origination”, he recasts the argument in terms of *śūnyatā*. First, a look at the original teaching and context out of which Nāgārjuna’s *śūnyatā* teaching arose.

⁷³ *Saṅgutta Nikāya* v. 421-2, as quoted in Gethin, Rupert, *The Foundations of Buddhism*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 1998, p. 59-60

Dependent origination denies the substantial/eternal existence of anything and is abstractly stated in the *Samyutta Nikāya* (II .28): "That being, this comes to be; from the arising of that, this arises; that being absent, this is not, from the cessation of that, this ceases."⁷⁴ The first noble truth underscores the transitoriness of all things, good and evil, formed or unformed. Not only does the life cycle in botany and biology reflect this "law" but even what appears static, like mountains and a concept of "self", conform to dependent origination.⁷⁵

The Buddha teaches that this "self" is actually a conglomerate of five groupings (*skandhas*): form, feeling, cognition, character aspects, and consciousness.⁷⁶ What we call "self" is merely a conventional use of language, and indicates nothing beyond the everchanging *skandhas*. According to the earliest Buddhist teachings, *skandhas* are characterised by impermanence (*anitya*), which effectively undermines a sense of stability and permanence. *Pratītya-samutpāda* indicates that there is nothing which can be said to originate of itself; all is bound to give rise to further phenomena.

Part of the teaching behind the four noble truths is that the human conglomerate of *skandha* delivers pain and suffering *duḥkha* and any pleasure or happiness one perceives is always only "fleeting" (*anitya*). The psycho-corporeal entity that is conveniently called a "self" cannot deliver itself either into eternal existence or non-existence – the eternalising or annihilation of this grouping of *skandhas* is not within the "control" of a so-called acting subject. With this in mind, the Buddha advocates letting go (cease grasping) the ego-self as it can never ultimately be grasped. The effort to do so is misspent and futile.

Instead of a centring immutable essence, the Buddha taught that the human, like any other existent, is simply a composite of *skandha*, or aggregates that have arisen and come together in accordance with the karmic direction of previous *skandha*. The five

⁷⁴ as cited in Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990, p. 54.

⁷⁵ Dōgen brings this out in his writing when he speaks of mountains walking and proclaiming Buddha-nature in the *Sansūigyo* Fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō*. See *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, pp. 167-179

⁷⁶ Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990, pp. 49-50

aggregates that compose a human are form or material shape (*rūpa*),⁷⁷ feeling (*vedanā*), cognition which includes recognition and interpretation (*samjñā*, *p. sammā*), constructing activities for the character (*samskāra*, *p. sankhāra*), and discriminative consciousness (*viññāna*, *p. vinnāna*).⁷⁸ These *skandha* are constantly being formed and unformed, and cannot be said to construct a reliable "self." As recorded in the *Majjhimanikāya*:

Wherefore, monks, whatever is material shape, past, future, present, subjective or objective, gross or subtle, mean or excellent, whether it is far or near — all material shape should be seen thus by perfect intuitive wisdom as it really is: This is not mine, this am I not, this is not myself. Whatever is feeling ... whatever is perception ... whatever are the habitual tendencies ... whatever is consciousness ... all ... should be seen thus by perfect intuitive wisdom as it really is: This is not mine, this am I not, This is not myself.⁷⁹

Although clearly based on the Buddha's early teaching of the mutable, changeable nature of *skandha* that compose a so-called "self," the Buddhist doctrine of no-self (*anātman*) can easily become antithetical to the Hindu self (*ātman*) and lose the flexibility and relativity of the Buddha's original teaching. Buddhism taught *anātman* against the 'fallacy' of the Hindu *ātman* prevalent in scriptures such as the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*:

Verily, this body (*śarīra*) is mortal. It has been appropriated by Death. But it is the standing ground of the deathless, bodiless Self (*ātman*).⁸⁰

Thus, it becomes clear that Nāgārjuna has not introduced a new term when he speaks of *śūnyatā* but has revived and in some senses radicalised one of the Buddha's original teachings. The term *śūnyatā*⁸¹ can be traced back to the Nikāyas in connection with the

⁷⁷ As HIRAKAWA points out, this is the meaning of *rūpa* in the early texts; however, later in the Āgamas, *rūpa* comes to refer to all material things, and a distinction is drawn between impermanent phenomena, called "conditioned dharmas" (*samskṛta dharmā*, *p. sankhata dhammā*), and the unchanging or eternal existents (*asamskṛta dharmā*, *p. assankhata-dhammā*), in HIRAKAWA, Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism from Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, translated and edited by Paul Groner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990, p. 44

⁷⁸ Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, History and Practices*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1990, pp. 49-50

⁷⁹ *Majjhima-Nikāya* 22, *The Collection of The Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya)*, Vol. 1: *The First Fifty Discourses (Mūlapannāsa)*, trans. I. B. Horner, M.A., London: Pali Text Society, Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1954, p. 178

⁸⁰ *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* VIII, XII, 1, cited in Klostermaier, Klaus, *A Survey of Hinduism*, Albany: State University of New York, 1989, p. 195.

⁸¹ Ruegg makes the following clarifying note with regard to the usage of *śūnya*, *śūnyatva* and *śūnyatā*: "*Śūnya* is an epithet of all *dharmas*, and *śūnyatā* designates emptiness as the quality characterizing all *dharmas*. *Śūnyatva* on the other hand is the fact, or truth, of the emptiness of all *dharmas*. Thus the words *śūnya* and *śūnyatva* pertain to the conventional surface level of *samvṛti*; while *śūnyatā* is used to indicate or point to the level of ultimate reality (*paramārtha*) (to the extent that this is at all possible in terms of language and

idea of no-self (*anātman*) and denotes the impermanent nature of all phenomena.⁸² In the *Samyutta Nikāya*, (S.N. IV 54), the Buddha explains, "Because the world is void [*śūnya*] of the self, Ānanda, or of what belongs to the self, therefore, it is said: 'Void is the world.'"⁸³ In the *Majjhima Nikāya* (*Cūḷa Sūññala Suttā*), the Buddha describes to Ānanda what he means by "abiding in the void [*śūnyatā*]" and encourages Ānanda that a monk may also abide there. He describes a detachment in which a monk may gradually let go of the sense perceptions of "village" and "people," etcetera, to eventually find himself concentrating only on the "signless." The monk may then reflect that "This concentration of mind that is signless, is effected and thought out. But whatever is effected and thought out, that is impermanent and liable to cease." And the Buddha summarises that, other than the "disturbances" which indicate that the monk is still alive, this practice is "the true, unperverted, pure and supreme descent into voidness."⁸⁴ That is, *śūnyatā* is tied to an experience and is described most adequately in this passage as an experience resulting from a deep form of meditation. Here, exhibited in the earliest literature, is a connection between *śūnyatā* and *anātman*, which is likewise expanded to all *dharma* – the world of form and cognition -- thus implying *pralīya-samutpāda*. Further, *śūnyatā* is tied to the specific practice of deep meditation in which one practices going beyond the distinctions that inform everyday life to the "signless" – to "seeing" or perceiving that what seems to exist in separation, in a duality of being and non-being, is not so. And it is clearly not sufficient to remain here, for still the mind is at work making observations and analysing this new stage. The monk realises that all the work of the analytical mind is, like the *dharma* of the world, "impermanent and liable to cease". Thus, only when the practitioner can get beyond an analytical mind to an intuitive or pre-cognitive mind can he/she experience the "true" or "pure" sense of *śūnyatā*. Different Buddhist schools take this experience and recommend alternative modes of activity or interpretation for how it impacts daily life. In Nāgārjuna's case, he chooses to see this as preparation for re-entering the mundane world of "people" and "villages", as is taught in the Bodhisattva-ideal – at least for those who are qualified to teach. It may be that this was the impetus for Nāgārjuna himself to become a teacher. For, in addition to the

discursivity)." Ruegg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981, p. 3

⁸² Ornatowski, Gregory K., "Transformations of "Emptiness": On the Idea of *śūnyatā* and the Thought of Abe and the Kyoto School of Philosophy," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, (34:1, 1997), p. 94

⁸³ Nānananda, *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought*, Kandy Sri Lanka: Buddhist Publication Society, 1976, p. 101

⁸⁴ Nānananda, *Concept and Reality in Early Buddhist Thought*, Buddhist Publication Society, Kandy Sri Lanka, 1976, p. 92

highly sophisticated arguments in the MMK, there are also the orthodox hymns of the *Catuh-stava* considered an authentic document of Nāgārjuna's by David S. Ruegg and Giuseppe Tucci⁸⁵ as well as the Buddhist treatises addressed to the regional king, Gautamiputra, *To A Good Friend (Subrlekhā)* and *Precious Garland (Ratnavali)*. How does this fit with the sophisticated and challenging deconstructive methods of the MMK? The Buddha's teaching of skilful means (*upāya*), a technique or teaching device highly praised in the Mahāyāna schools that was developed more fully after Nāgārjuna, however must have been recognised during Nāgārjuna's time, may offer the appropriate link to explain such divergence in one teacher's approach. Or, as demonstrated later in this chapter, one may view Nāgārjuna's choice to adopt both the apophatic and cataphatic methods of teaching as indication that he believed that living into the extreme of emptiness yields simply the practice of orthodox Buddhism which is the heart of praxi-centric phenomenology.

In addition to "emptiness", *śūnyatā* has been translated as "relativity," "undifferentiatedness," and "non-duality" in addition to "nothingness" and "voidness."⁸⁶ Part of the difficulty in translating this term is the way the term has been given different emphasis throughout various Buddhist literature and traditions. And, depending on the intention of the Mahayanist, the term will certainly be nuanced. Nāgārjuna's use and development of *śūnyatā* emphasises relativity, emptiness of own-nature (*svabhāva*), and undifferentiatedness, sometimes in surprising ways as evidenced in the way he characterises both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* with *śūnyatā*.

After its introduction in the Nikayas, the next radical interpretation of *śūnyatā* is found in the *Prajñāpāramitā* (usually translated, "The Perfection of Wisdom") literature where the

idea of the non-substantive or "empty" character of self and phenomena came to be extended to include everything, including the *dharmas*, the causal factors of existence that the Abhidharma school viewed as substantive.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ See Ruegg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981, p. 32 and Tucci, Giuseppe, "Two Hymns of the Catuh-stava of Nāgārjuna," *International Royal Asiatic Society*, (1932) p. 309.

⁸⁶ Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 11, 156

⁸⁷ Ornatowski, Gregory K., "Transformations of "Emptiness": On the Idea of *śūnyatā* and the Thought of ABE and the Kyoto School of Philosophy," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, (34:1, 1997) p. 94

Although clearly found in the earlier literature (as discussed above), this concept of emptiness extended to all *dharmas* is now given emphasis and status from which it will influence not only Nāgārjuna's thought but the development of the greater Mahāyāna school of thought. Ruegg comments that Nāgārjuna is the first to

give a systematic scholastic exposition of the theory of emptiness (*sūnyatā*) and non-substantiality (*niḥsvabhāvatā*) not only of the self (*ātman*) or individual (*pudgala*) but also of all factors of existence (*dharma*), one of the most fundamental ideas of the Mahāyānasūtras.⁸⁸

And Ruegg connects Nāgārjuna's emphasis on emptiness of all *dharmas* to that same overarching theme of emptiness in the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtras* as he asserts that Nāgārjuna "is indeed credited with having rescued parts of them from oblivion."⁸⁹ Lindtner describes the tenets of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature thus:

Their *view of the world* is that fundamentally all phenomena (*dharmā*) are void of substance, i.e. illusory or empty. Their *view of the individual* is that as a bodhisattva gradually recognizing this fact one should, accordingly, live in the equanimity of universal emptiness, and, at the same time, through compassion, devote oneself to the task of liberating all other beings without scorning any means for the achievement of that ideal (*upāyakaṅśalyā*).⁹⁰

There are echoes of the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature in Nāgārjuna's work as he compels his listeners to reject the categorical and difference-bound language of description and embrace instead reality wholly defined by *sūnyatā*. Moreover, as Battacharya points out, Nāgārjuna uses terminology in, for example, his *Vigrahavyāvartanī* which clearly originate from the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.⁹¹ It is this development of *sūnyatā* that Nāgārjuna chooses to further when he uses *sūnyatā* as a synonym for the Buddha's *pratītya-samutpāda*. In effect, Nāgārjuna is asserting that what the Buddha really meant by his teachings of *pratītya-samutpāda* and *anītya* can be understood through Nāgārjuna's use of *sūnyatā*.⁹²

Abhidharma response

⁸⁸ Ruegg, David Seyfort, "The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India," in *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. VII, Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, p. 5-6

⁸⁹ Ruegg, David Seyfort, "The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India," in *A History of Indian Literature*, vol. VII, Weisbaden: Otto Harrassowitz, 1981, p. 6

⁹⁰ Lindtner, Chr., *Nagarjuna: Studies in the Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982, p. 261

⁹¹ Battacharya, K., *The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978, p. 24

⁹² as will be seen later in this chapter during a closer look at MMK 24:36 and 24:40

Before engaging fully in Nāgārjuna's arguments, it is necessary to introduce the doctrine contained in the abhidharma literature, for it is in response to this literature that Nāgārjuna levies some of his severest critique. Several hundred years after the Buddha's death, the first Buddhist literature was recorded and collected into three groupings or "baskets" (*pitaka*): the rules for the Buddhist monastic communities (*Vinaya-pitaka*), the discourses of the Buddha (the *sūtras*), and the systematised doctrines of the Buddha (*Abhidharma-pitaka*).⁹³ Although originally the abhidharma literature was created out of what can be called a phenomenological concern – to "provide an accurate account of the way objects appear to our pre-reflective consciousness" that would aid in memorisation and meditation practice⁹⁴ – by the 3rd century BCE the *Abhidharma-pitaka* was an elaborate collection of *dharma* lists systematically categorised according to distinctive characteristics.⁹⁵ What the Buddha taught his disciples in terms of an existential approach to the liberation from *duḥkha* becomes in the approach of the abhidharmacists a systematic and dogmatic approach to categorising *dharma* elements. This re-orientation to the Buddha's teaching meant for Buddhist practitioners such as Nāgārjuna, the compromise of the very essence of the truth to which the Buddha had awakened. Systematic doctrinisation of the Buddha's message moved the emphasis from lived practice and internalisation of the values and behaviours suggested in the eight-fold path to the ontological concern of *dharma* as objects to keep or reject. The phenomenal world gains an essence quality, doctrinal teaching and ideas are reified, and behaviour is externalised to levy the necessary *dharma* elements.

Dharma

"*Dharma*," indicates (1) the Buddha's teachings or (2) phenomena, mental and physical, that constitute the elements of existence as they are perceived. *Dharma* (Pali *dhamma*), has the root "dhr," meaning "to hold or keep." In early Indian culture the term *dharma* meant "that which does not change" and was used to describe certain customs and duties that upheld the social and moral order based on such crucial ideas as the good, what is

⁹³ Herman, A. L., *An Introduction to Buddhist Thought: A Philosophic History of Indian Buddhism*, Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1983 p. 81

⁹⁴ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 84

⁹⁵ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 85.

virtue, and truth.⁹⁶ Thus, the Buddha teaches the true Dharma, the eternal truth or insight into the way things really are. When Buddhism began to employ the term *dharmā* in their teachings, the term was broadened in two ways: (1) to include even defilements (*klesā-dharma*) and evils (*pāpakā-akusala-dharmāḥ*), and (2) *dharmā* became associated with an element of existence (*bhāva*).⁹⁷ In the metaphysical system of the *Abhidharma-pitaka*, mental and physical phenomena are considered to be composed of certain *dharmā*. The five aggregates (*skandha*) that make up an individual are themselves *dharmā* components, and each individual aggregate can be divided into further groups of *dharmā* until the elemental *dharmā* is ascertained. At this point, the Abhidharma scholars considered the elemental *dharmā* the lowest denominator, and attributed to that *dharmā* characteristics whereby it might be classified. The material world is also said to be composed of five categories: forms, sounds, smells, tastes and tangible objects, all of which may again be broken into *dharmā* components. The Buddhist practitioner who studied the Abhidharma matrices hoped to approach reality with the discernment of one who can see through the confusing mass of conglomerates to the very base building blocks of reality in order to see the true order and nature of those building blocks. Such discernment would allow the practitioner to concentrate on the cultivation of the path, that is right views, right speech etc, and through such cultivation cool the passions which cause the accumulation of *karma*, which in its turn causes the advent of further rebirth.⁹⁸ The practitioner wished to reverse this build-up of *karma* to the moment in which all such proliferation comes to a stop and the equanimity of *nirvāṇa* is experienced. Vasubandhu recorded in the *Abhidharmakośa* (translated *Treasury of Metaphysics*) the emphasis of such investigation:

Apart from close investigation of existents [*dharmas*] there is no means of pacifying the passions; and it is because of passions that the world

⁹⁶ HIRAKAWA points to the Dhammapada for evidence of this understanding of *dharmā*. "Enmity is not eliminated by enmity. Only when enmity is abandoned, is it eliminated. This is an unchanging and eternal truth. (Pali *dharmasamantano*)." HIRAKAWA, Akira *A History of Indian Buddhism from Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, translated and edited by Paul Groner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990, p. 45

⁹⁷ HIRAKAWA observes: "Dharma is used to refer to that aspect of phenomena that has a lasting, enduring quality, the quality of truth. To "see the Dharma" is to see "self as dharmas" or "self made up of dharmas" ..." HIRAKAWA, Akira, *A History of Indian Buddhism from Śākyamuni to Early Mahāyāna*, translated and edited Paul Groner, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1990, p. 45

⁹⁸ Lindtner, Chr., *Nāgārjuna: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982, p. 252. Lindtner explains that "... while the ingenious device laid down in Abhidharma on one hand had the advantage of forming, so to speak, a highway to *mokṣa*, its abstract and systematic spirit did, on the other, inevitably embody a tendency to dogmatism, an attitude which, in the end, was to render it unfaithful to the original intention of the founder."

wanders in this ocean of being. Hence, they say that the teacher spoke this [text].⁹⁹

The commentary accompanying the verse reads:

Because there is no means of pacifying the passions without close investigation of existents, and because it is the passions that cause the world to wander in the great ocean of transmigration, therefore they say that the teacher – which means the Buddha – spoke this metaphysical system aimed at the close examination of existents. For a student is not able to closely investigate existents without teaching in metaphysics.¹⁰⁰

Teachings such as these indicate a shift away from the phenomenological emphasis on clarity of perceptions for meditation purposes, to the ontological task of identifying and classifying *dharmas*. Focusing on *dharmas* themselves, as elements of reality, externalises the activity of meditation and encourages the practitioner to see reality in a dualistic manner. This externalisation undermines the purpose of meditation as exemplified by the Buddha whereby meditation is an exercise that gives the practitioner an ever-clearer understanding of the mutability of existence. Externalising one's understanding of reality through the categorisation of *dharma* elements emphasises the activity of an ego-self and establishes the duality of release and bondage. Nāgārjuna will address this issue when he deconstructs the fundamentalist or essentialist view.

The strong adherence to the teaching of “no self”, as provided in the Buddha's early teaching, was part of the impetus of the Abhidharma scholars for creating their matrices.¹⁰¹ However, in their turn toward an ontological categorising of *dharma* elements, they in fact worked out a system by which to locate the fundamental elements that make up that very “no self” and in this way undermined the teaching. This gravitation towards explanation and categorisation exhibits the tendency of “grasping” pointed out in the four noble truths which binds instead of working toward a “letting go.”

⁹⁹ As quoted in Griffiths, Paul J., *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-body Problem*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986, p. 49.

¹⁰⁰ As quoted in Griffiths, Paul J., *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-body Problem*, La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1986, p. 49.

¹⁰¹ Sutton, Florin Giripescu, *Existence and Enlightenment in the Lankāvatāra-Sūtra*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991, p.97

Importantly, although the Abhidharma scholars did not consider *dharma*s themselves substantial or eternal (for *dharma*s clearly arise through dependent co-origination), still their use of *dharma* matrices suggested an element of truth. Takeuchi writes that *dharma*

carried the sense of a conceptual unity, permanently maintaining its own essential provisions in a self-identical way, these essential provisions in turn serving as a norm to make other things (phenomenal existence) intelligible. Accordingly, even though the fact of impermanence is accepted and thus all phenomena subject to the law of impermanence are transient and liable to change, the law of impermanence itself is taken as eternal, unperishing, and constant.¹⁰²

This being the case, as the Abhidharma scholars systematically broke existents down into the *dharma*-elements to ascertain their quality of help or hindrance along the path to perfection, the very teaching of *anitya* and *pratītya-samutpāda* is compromised. Lindtner also points to this shift:

Through the exercise and gradual development of his intellectual faculty (*prajñā*) the monk was thus enabled in a most rationalized manner to become thoroughly conversant with those *dharma*s to be developed and those to be abandoned.¹⁰³

The *dharma* elements are given far more attention than aspects of the path such as right *samādhi*.¹⁰⁴ The metaphysical speculation into the make-up of *dharma*-elements for the destruction of hindrances pursued with the best intentions to find and cultivate the noble eightfold path undermines the very teaching of the Buddha in establishing such a path. Identification is no longer helpful when concentration is directed solely towards the externalising activity of cultivating “good” *dharma* instead of toward the liberating activity of letting go. The Buddha’s teaching of the four noble truths, eight-fold noble path, and dependent origination aimed at the practical realisation of no-self (*anātman*) through the ceasing of grasping and Nāgārjuna’s reinterpretation via *śūnyatā* hold the same goal of liberation. What they both promote is abandoning the misguided notion of finding and ultimately grasping after an essential self.

¹⁰² TAKEUCHI, Yoshinori, *The Heart of Buddhism: In Search of the Timeless Spirit of Primitive Buddhism*, edited and translated by James W. Heisig, New York: Crossroad, 1991, p. 71

¹⁰³ Lindtner, Chr., *Nagarjuniana: Studies in the Writings and Philosophy of Nāgārjuna*, Copenhagen: Akademisk Forlag, 1982, p. 252

¹⁰⁴ *Samādhi* understood as a general term indicating the various forms of meditation, TAKEUCHI, Yoshinori, *The Heart of Buddhism: In Search of the Timeless Spirit of Primitive Buddhism*, edited and translated by James W. Heisig, New York: Crossroad, 1991, p. 161

Svabhāva

The term *svabhāva* can be translated “self-nature” or “self-essence.” As Paul Williams describes of the Abhidharmic texts, there *svabhāva* is the defining characteristic which differentiates the category of primary existents from that of secondary existents. Primary existents (or *dharmas*) are said to possess self-nature which marks these entities as fundamental in contradistinction to secondary existents which may be conglomerates of primary existents or even non-existents (or as Williams puts it, quasi-nonexistents).¹⁰⁵ However, this characteristic of self-nature in *dharmas* did not effect a change in ontological status in the primary existent, for the fundamental law of impermanence still applied, so that determining whether or not the primary existent could be located in the present time and space was not a question of it being primary, but instead a question of whether or not it had a function.¹⁰⁶ Without a “function” the *dharma* still “exists” just not in time and space. As Williams points out, the categorising of the *dharmas* into primary and secondary existents was a critical process of clarification for a religious community which concentrated on contemplative rather than physical activity.¹⁰⁷ For, as already noted, Abhidharma matrices aided in the memorisation of the early Buddhist teachings and served as “headings” for meditational reflection.¹⁰⁸ Further, and most interestingly, Williams explains that for Saṃghabhadra, who made an effort to better explain the Sarvastivādin position “that all exists,”¹⁰⁹ the categorisation into primary and secondary existents was to be conducted under the general umbrella of existence (*sat*) and “the distinction between primary and secondary existence corresponds to that between ultimate and conventional truth (*paramārtikasatya* and *samvrtīsatya*).”¹¹⁰

A few things emerge from this analysis. First, it appears that the analysis of existence or reality is in fact three-fold: primary or ultimate, which is usually understood to be ineffable; conventional or relative, generally taken to be unenlightened or *samsāric* existence; and finally, the descriptive category of “existence” which claims to speak to both the ultimate and conventional realities. In a similar vein, Stecherbatsky explains *svabhāva* (“own existence, essence”) as understood in Indian philosophical and philological terms:

¹⁰⁵ Williams, Paul, “On the Abhidharma Ontology,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 9 (1981), p. 234

¹⁰⁶ Williams, Paul, “On the Abhidharma Ontology,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 9 (1981), p. 243

¹⁰⁷ Williams, Paul, “On the Abhidharma Ontology,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 9 (1981), 244

¹⁰⁸ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 84

¹⁰⁹ Williams, Paul, “On the Abhidharma Ontology,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 9 (1981), p. 230

¹¹⁰ Williams, Paul, “On the Abhidharma Ontology,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 9 (1981), p. 237

One thing, e.g., *śimsāpā*, is said to be the “own existence” of the other, e.g., “tree”, when it contains the latter in its intention (comprehension, connotation) and is itself contained under the latter’s extension, being subaltern (*vyāpya*) to the latter. Both are then said to be “existentially identical” (*tadātman*) and become subject and predicate of an analytical judgement, e.g. “Asoka is a tree”. According to the Buddhist conception it is not a judgement or a proposition with two terms, but an inference with three terms, since a point-instant of reality, a localisation in time-space, must be added, or understood, in order to make it a real cognition, or a cognition of Reality.¹¹¹

It is interesting to note that Husserl’s investigation of time yielded a triad as well, for how better to reconcile the subject/object split but with a defining or grounding third? Similarly, the Yogacāra system also suggests a nebulous “source” although there are no grounds for assuming that this “source” has ontological or idealistic aspects (see next section). Nāgārjuna also will refer to the distinction between ultimate and conventional truth, but instead of finding an ontological ground for the two (that of existence), he will apply *śūnyatā*, emptiness, to both.

Second, the association of primary existents, those existents which can be said to possess *svabhāva*, with the ultimate (*paramārtha*) truth has implications for the perception and/or conception of such existents. If ultimate truth is ineffable, then the nature of the *dharmas* (those existents with *svabhāva*) would be beyond conception and/or perception in the realm of conventional truth. And yet, according to the above, secondary existents are often conglomerates of *dharmas*. Nāgārjuna will argue in his *Mūlamadhyamikakārikās* that the endeavour to identify discreet primary existents, either ontologically or epistemologically, results in the establishment of false or empty metaphysical categories. Once embarked upon this line of thinking, there is no satisfactory answer, but an infinite regression precisely because of the nature of reified language and thought: it cannot hold ultimate truth and is not a promising way to approach ultimate truth or enlightenment.

Moving from the Abhidharma analysis to the Mādhyamika critique, Huntington finds two different but related uses of the term *svabhāva* in Mādhyamika texts: *svabhāva* as

¹¹¹ Sticherbatsky, F. Th., *Buddhist Logic: In Two Volumes*, vol. II, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1962 p. 60-1 fn. 5

“intrinsic being” and *svabhāva* as “intrinsic nature”.¹¹² When the morally and spiritually neutral concept of “relative being”, a description in everyday reality of “being as opposed to nonbeing,”¹¹³ is reified or abstracted so that it becomes a “metaconcept” and thus is used to re-interpret the everyday reality from which it was taken, it can be called “intrinsic being.” It is this use of *svabhāva* as “intrinsic being” which

operates as the unexamined presupposition behind idealist and rationalist philosophies and, drawing on the power of the natural interpretation at its core, it serves as a filter for all of everyday experience, exerting a profoundly detrimental influence on both the individual and society.¹¹⁴

A very similar propensity among Western philosophers who presumed “being” without examination prompted Heidegger to begin his philosophical meditations on “being”. But where Heidegger would initially like to recapture the meaning of “being,” Nāgārjuna’s critique aims at isolating that assumption logically and then destroying it.

The second connotation for *svabhāva* in Mādhyamika writings is that of “intrinsic nature” which is simply another way of expressing the idea of “relative being.”¹¹⁵ In other words, that phenomena are to be found in the world points to their existence as it is “manifest through their participation in the nexus of cause and effect” or the Buddhist concept of dependent origination. Common to both connotations of *svabhāva* is a “fundamental natural interpretation that finds expression in both the conception and the perception of individuality.”¹¹⁶ *Svabhāva* is identified as the defining characteristic of a *dharma*, as its essence, as that which gives the *dharma* its individuality. The abhidharmists’ dependence on *dharma* and its *svabhāva* betrays a dualistic view of reality where *svabhāva* is used to ground Buddhist doctrine and practice and is as such the very undermining of both doctrine and practice.

¹¹² Huntington, C.W., Jr. with Geshé Nangyal Wanchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989, p. 48

¹¹³ Candrakīrti’s definition of “relative being”, as cited by Huntington, C.W., Jr. with Geshé Nangyal Wanchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989, p. 48

¹¹⁴ Huntington, C.W., Jr. with Geshé Nangyal Wanchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989, p. 49

¹¹⁵ Huntington, C.W., Jr. with Geshé Nangyal Wanchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989, p. 49

¹¹⁶ Huntington, C.W., Jr. with Geshé Nangyal Wanchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989, p. 48

Nāgārjuna's critique

I prostrate to the Perfect Buddha,
 The best of teachers, who taught that
 Whatever is dependently arisen [*pratītya-samutpāda*] is
 Unceasing, unborn,
 Unannihilated, not permanent,
 Not coming, not going,
 Without distinction, without identity,
 And free from conceptual construction [*prapañca*].¹⁷

Nāgārjuna critiqued the ontological basis of the Abhidharma investigation by showing that what those scholars perceived as distinctions between the *dharmas* was logically impossible given the “law” of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). Nāgārjuna is indiscriminate in his application of this teaching and whereas the Buddha’s teaching may be seen as existentially founded and fully practical, Nāgārjuna drives the teaching to its extreme logical conclusion. By doing so, however, Nāgārjuna is intent on recovering that very existential and practical nature of Buddhist practice. In Nāgārjuna’s thesis, nothing has foundation, all is empty (*śūnya*); all is radically relative so as to make any strict ontological investigation ultimately futile. The “law” of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) points directly to the fact that everything is empty (*śūnya*) of any possibility of stability or static self-nature. Nāgārjuna subjects the most revered Buddhist tenets to his critique, including the idea of no-self (*anātta*), *nirvāṇa* and the holy *Dharma*, or true teaching of the Buddha. He insists that the Buddha’s intention does not lie in dismantling the self in a way that it can be re-built differently. The Buddha’s teaching of no-self is aimed at encouraging his followers, steeped in the Hindu doctrine of an immutable transmigratory “self” to let go of this additional fetter and prepare instead for the great liberation. The Abhidharmists furthered this line of thought by attempting to drive backward toward the very source material for the complicated activities and composition that makes up what appears to be a person. Nāgārjuna saw, however, in the Abhidharma language the pursuit of a ground of being, the stable element that might be reversed and stopped through diligence in meditation and cultivation of the virtues. This kind of thinking, Nāgārjuna argues, is no better than the non-Buddhist idea of an immutable self, which as Nāgārjuna points out via a *reductio ad absurdum*, is absolutely unworkable.

¹⁷ *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, translated by Jay Garfield, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 2

Nāgārjuna's use of the tetralemma (*catuḥskoti*)

Nāgārjuna, working out of the environment of logical and philosophical argument, utilises the tetralemma (*catuḥskoti*), both positive and negative, with purpose. The tetralemma, a common Indian logic tool, recalls the early dialogues with the Buddha himself, famously the account of the poisoned arrow. In *Majjhimanikāya* 63, a monk is dissatisfied with having accepted the Buddhist path after he realises that the Buddha never bothered to explain to him a number of "speculative views," namely, whether the world is eternal or not and whether the Tathāgata lives after dying or not. The Buddha responds by telling a parable of a man pierced by a poisoned arrow who will not take it out until he is told who shot him: a tall or short man, a black, brown or golden man? Or he demands to know what kind of arrow or shaft from which it was shot: spring-bow or cross-bow, swallow-wort, reed, sinew or hemp? The man might die before all these questions are answered satisfactorily. The Buddha returns to the questions at hand and declares (using the form of a tetralemma) that there are a number of things he has not explained, for example whether after dying the Tathāgata ("thus-gone one" or enlightened being) is, is not, both is and is not, neither is nor is not. Why haven't these things been explained? The pursuit of such knowledge and information is not connected in any way to the goals of the Buddhist path. The Buddha declares that what he *has* taught and explained are the Four Noble Truths, for it is embarking on the Buddhist path that is related to an awakening and the attainment of *nirvāṇa*. The tetralemma embedded in the dialogue above concerning the Tathāgata takes the conventional form of:

A

Not (A)

Both (A) and (Not A)

Neither (A) nor (Not A)

The purpose of using the device conveys that the monk is searching for thorough knowledge, but more importantly, that the monk's search is fundamentally misguided. The monk is concerned with questions and information that are completely irrelevant to knowledge that will ultimately 'save' him from the poisoned arrow already lodged in him. The four-fold negation exhibits the path of linear logic, and in the *Majjhimanikāya* this

framework is juxtaposed against the Buddha's Four Noble Truths which culminate in the Eight-fold Noble path of release that is aimed at a wisdom gained through purposeful practice. Thorough but linear knowledge is not sufficient or even applicable to what is of ultimate meaning, that is, what triggers the calming and quieting of the mind that allows for significant understanding and wisdom which allows for an awakening and realisation of *nirvāṇa*.

Just like the Buddha, Nāgārjuna also makes use of the tetralemma to reveal what is essential and ultimately meaningful as opposed to what is misguided searching. However, as Garfield notes, Nāgārjuna draws a distinction between the "positive tetralemma" and "negative tetralemma" and the effective utilisation of each.¹¹⁸ Nāgārjuna will actually assert the knowability of conventional reality utilising a "positive tetralemma", but when it comes to ultimate reality Nāgārjuna will employ a "negative tetralemma." Garfield cites MMK 18:8 for an example of a "positive tetralemma," in which Nāgārjuna claims that "Everything is real and is not real, /Both real and not real, /Neither real nor not real. /This is the Lord Buddha's teaching."¹¹⁹ According to Garfield, Nāgārjuna intends to assert a level of analysis of the conventional realm from the conventional perspective:

- (1) Everything is conventionally real. (2) Everything is ultimately not real.
- (3) Everything is both conventionally real and ultimately not real. (4) Everything is neither ultimately real nor completely unreal.¹²⁰

When regarding reality from an ultimate perspective, however, all manner of assertions are misguided for the ultimate perspective cannot be described or otherwise analysed by conventional thinking. Garfield cites as example of a "negative tetralemma" MMK 22:11 in which emptiness is regarded in context of the nature of Buddhahood:

- "Empty" should not be asserted.
 "Non-empty" should not be asserted.
 Neither both nor neither should be asserted.
 They are only used nominally. (MK 22:11)¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 57

¹¹⁹ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 57

¹²⁰ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 57

¹²¹ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 57

Here, as Garfield argues, Nāgārjuna strongly cautions against making assertions for conventional wisdom is deficient in describing an ultimate perspective. The form of the negative tetralemma then is:

Not {A}

Not {Not A}

Not {Both A and (Not A)}

Not {Neither A nor (Not A)}

Garfield notes that

. . . Nāgārjuna is drawing a logical distinction between two epistemological standpoints: as long as we remain within the conventional standpoint, we can, providing that we are careful, say many things, mundane and philosophical. But once we transcend that standpoint, no matter what we try to say, and no matter how carefully we hew to a *via negativa*, we can say nothing at all consistent with the *via media* Nāgārjuna is determined to limn. This will provide a valuable clue to the sense in which Madhyamaka philosophy requires us to regard emptiness not as an entity, and to relinquish all views when we understand emptiness.¹²²

As Garfield reads Nāgārjuna's use of the negative tetralemma, it is meant to push one beyond the realm of discursive identity, beyond the mundane view of the world in which statements of any kind are useful.

Radical Relativity

Nāgārjuna begins the MMK in chapter one, *An Analysis of Conditioning Causes (pratyaaya)*, with an argument aimed at shaking the foundational thinking of those who had taken the Buddha's teaching of dependent origination (*pratitya-samutpāda*) as a descriptive analysis of the origin of *duḥkha* whereby one could see the development and locate the causal factors. Nāgārjuna's thesis statement for the chapter utilises the tetralemma (*caturskoti*) and sets his premise for the remaining chapters of the MMK that nothing, no element or activity, no sensation or holy teaching stands independent and self-sufficient, can be defined, described or isolated apart from the relative web of what surrounds it: all is radically relative. Indeed, all is empty, including emptiness itself.

¹²² Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 57-8

Garfield argues that Nāgārjuna, in beginning the MMK with an argument against efficient causes but in defence of dependent origination, is setting in place the argument for the whole of the MMK, to culminate in in chapter 24:18 (“Whatever is dependently co-arisen,/That is explained to be emptiness./That, being a dependent designation,/Is itself the middle way.”). Garfield calls this Nāgārjuna’s “doctrine of the emptiness of causation.”¹²³ Nāgārjuna begins the MMK with the following two verses:

Neither from itself nor from another,
Nor from both,
Nor without a cause,
Does anything whatever, anywhere arise.

There are four conditions: efficient condition;
Percept-object condition; immediate condition;
Dominant condition, just so.
There is no fifth condition.¹²⁴

Nāgārjuna draws distinction between an efficient cause (described in verse 1) and a condition (described in verse 2). Garfield suggests that when Nāgārjuna speaks of “a cause,” he means an efficient cause which possesses a self-nature and the power to bring about an effect; however, when he speaks of a “condition” he is describing an “event, state or process” that might explain another event, state or process.¹²⁵ The former Nāgārjuna denies as logically possible, and the latter Nāgārjuna supports as the correct understanding of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*). Nāgārjuna denies the operation of efficient causes – they themselves cannot have conditioning causes for that would contradict the definition of “efficient”: for an efficient cause to support a conditioning cause it is then correctly defined as a conditioning cause. In fact, an “efficient cause” can not be located, and one is lost in a *reductio ad absurdum*. This argument is developed in the following chapter addressing movement and indeed throughout the MMK. In contrast, the way Nāgārjuna describes a “condition” is in line with his description of the two-fold truth. Garfield explains:

¹²³ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 26-7

¹²⁴ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 28

¹²⁵ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 27

... if one views [phenomena] as having and as emerging from casual powers, one views them as having essences and as being connected to the essences of other phenomena. This, Nāgārjuna suggests, is ultimately incoherent, since it forces one at the same time to assert the *inherent existence* of these things, in virtue of their essential identity, and to assert their *dependence* and *productive* character, in virtue of their causal history and power. But such dependence and relational character, he suggests, are incompatible with their inherent existence. If, on the other hand, one regards things as dependent merely on conditions, one regards them as merely conventionally existent. And to regard something as merely conventionally existent is to regard it as without essence and without power. And this is to regard it as existing dependently. This provides a coherent mundane understanding of phenomena as an alternative to the metaphysics of reification Nāgārjuna criticizes.¹²⁶

And in fact, Nāgārjuna is driving toward one of the crucial arguments of the chapter: if one accepts an essentialist or efficient cause, one would not be able to accept the foundational Buddhist teaching of dependent origination (*pratitya-samutpāda*). Nāgārjuna writes:

If things did not exist
Without essence,
The phrase, "When this exists so this will be,"
Would not be acceptable.

Nāgārjuna's point here is that we are only able to make assertions and observations in an everyday sense if indeed all things are empty, and are not independent in and of themselves. Our assertions about the phenomenal world around us, and our experiences as well, are described as dependently arising by the Buddha and Nāgārjuna:

He who rejects the emptiness
Of dependent origination,
He rejects all
Worldly conventions.¹²⁷

As Garfield explains: "Common sense holds the world to be a network of dependently arisen phenomena. So common sense holds the world to be empty. Again, the standpoint of emptiness is not at odds with the conventional standpoint, only with a particular philosophical understanding of it – that which takes the conventional to be

¹²⁶ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 30

¹²⁷ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 37

more than merely conventional.¹²⁸ Nāgārjuna is working to destroy the logical constructs which seek to show the ontological foundations for Buddhism such as suggested by the abhidharma matrixes. He sees as the outcome of such foundationalism a deeply dualistic view of the world which is contradictory and counter-productive the Buddhist goal of liberation. Although the abhidharma scholar would never propose that one view reality in a dualistic manner, nevertheless, as suggested above, the very externalising activity of analysing *dharma*s for either rejection or assimilation creates a dualistic stance between the acting subject (ego self) and his/her activities, and ultimately this dualistic perspective is applied to salvation and bondage. Nāgārjuna will argue against this ontologising of the Buddha's message for it creates a dualistic approach that divides and separates what cannot be taken apart (even in the extreme example of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*), and even more damaging, encourages the kind of mindset (which is to be examined later as *prapañca*) that moves out of meditative practice to engage in analysis, an activity dependent upon distinction and duality. In fact, as Nāgārjuna has stated in his dedicatory remarks, the truly 'dependently arisen' is 'without identity' and thus the activity of searching for explanation, origin and the rest of the analytical investigation will surely fail.

In the fifteenth chapter of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, Nāgārjuna introduces the categories of self-existence and other-existence to examine the ontology of being and nonbeing. For there to be distinctions, there must be self-existence and other-existence. However, it is not logical that something with self-existence could be produced by something else, for then it would be not self-existent, but something produced. Nāgārjuna writes that:

Those who perceive self-existence and other-existence, and an existent thing and a non-existent thing,
Do not perceive the true nature of the Buddha's teaching.¹²⁹

Nothing can be said to hold a discrete identity in and of itself without being relative to some other factor. This critique holds to phenomena, relationships, time and religious doctrine.

¹²⁸ Garfield, Jay L., *Empty Words: Buddhist Philosophy and Cross-Cultural Interpretation*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 37

¹²⁹ MMK 15:6, translated by Streng, Frederick J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 199

Nāgārjuna's use of *śūnyatā*

Key to understanding Nāgārjuna's unequivocal denial of "self-nature" and radical relativism is his description of how emptiness works within the Buddhist context. One accusation among the contemporaries of Nāgārjuna was that with his critique, Nāgārjuna has denied the existence of the four noble truths, the monastic community and the Buddha himself, what are known as the three "jewels" of Buddhism that the aspiring monk would take refuge in – in other words, the very foundation of the Buddhist religion.¹³⁰ Nāgārjuna's response includes at least two important aspects that must be understood for his general critique to hold any meaning and not be classified as an expression of nihilism.

First, Nāgārjuna reinforces his argument of emptiness, and insists that the very "law" of dependent origination is exactly what he means by "emptiness" (v. 18).¹³¹ He states that (v. 19-20):

Since there is no *dharmas* whatever originating independently,
No *dharmas* whatever exists which is not empty.
If all existence is not empty, there is neither origination nor destruction.
You must wrongly conclude then that the four holy truths do not exist.¹³²

That is, *dharmas*, as Nāgārjuna shows, do not originate "independent" of another factor. In other words, they have no self-nature (*svabhāva*). Having no self-nature, *dharmas* should be designated as "empty" (*śūnyatā*). Only seen thus, as originating dependently hence empty of self-nature, can Buddhist practice be 'practiced'. The very act of positing that the noble truths exist as such, in fact denies them outright. For only when existents are recognised as empty of "self-nature" (that is, be seen as dependently originating) can they engage in the act of becoming and thereby participate in the conventional world.

¹³⁰ MMK 24, translated by Streng, Frederick J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press: 1967, p. 213

¹³¹ Matilal points out that "*śūnya* means zero in mathematics" thus, "To say that a concept is *śūnya* means that it is like the zero because it has no absolute value of its own but has a value only with respect to a position in a system." This rendering of *śūnyatā* works so well with his critique, Matilal wonders if Nāgārjuna developed his argument around *śūnyatā* with this mathematical sense in mind. Matilal, Bimal Krishna, *Epistemology, Logic, and Grammar in Indian Philosophical Analysis*, The Hague: Mouton, 1971, p. 152. D. Seyfort Rugg denies this possibility stating that the usage of *śūnyatā* for the mathematical zero place came later than Nāgārjuna and certainly later than the canonical literature from whence the term first appears. Rugg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981, p. 3

¹³² MMK 25:19-20, as translated by Streng, Frederick, in Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 217

Nāgārjuna also insists that his understanding of the emptiness of existents is crucial for undertaking the path to enlightenment, for without the movement allowed in dependent origination, there would be no avenue towards liberation. An essentialist or strictly ontological understanding of the Buddhist doctrines renders them ineffectual and impossible to act upon. Arguing for the concrete existence of something delivers it into the realm of the absolute that can not be "touched" and certainly cannot, by virtue of its definition as absolute and immutable, sustain the fluid activity of religious practice. The only way to avoid this problem is to accept the non-foundational stance of *śūnyatā* that opens up the possibility for practice. In like manner that the Buddha sets up the possibility of freedom and release out of the dissatisfaction (*duḥkha*) of the conventional world, Nāgārjuna sets up transformation (not ontologically, but practically) within the necessary condition of *samsāra*. Nāgārjuna states near the end of the chapter that:

You deny all mundane and customary activities
When you deny emptiness [in the sense of] dependent co-origination
(*pratītya-samutpāda*).¹³³

and a few verses later:

He who perceives dependent co-origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*)
Also understands sorrow, origination, and destruction as well as the path
[of release].¹³⁴

That is to say, the Buddha's teaching in light of the non-foundational stance of *śūnyatā* makes possible all of the activity of the *saṅgha*, the instruction of the noble truths, participation along the eight-fold noble path, and any liberation that the Buddha experienced. Nāgārjuna brings his followers back to the Buddha's teaching of *pratītya-samutpāda* by reinterpreting it in the light of the radical relativism of *śūnyatā*.

Nāgārjuna's introduction of two truths

This leads directly into the second major point that Nāgārjuna makes to those accusing him of denying the three jewels of Buddhism. He introduces the concept of two truths, conventional truth (*samvṛti-satya*) and ultimate truth (*paramārtha-satya*). He asserts that without conventional truth, there is no access to ultimate truth, and of course without

¹³³ MMK 24:36, as translated by Streng, Frederick, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 215

¹³⁴ MMK 24:40, as translated by Streng, Frederick, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 215

ultimate truth it is impossible to understand *nirvāṇa*.¹³⁵ The teaching of the two truths is one of the key ways in which Nāgārjuna avoids a total deconstruction of the Buddhist doctrine and allows for meaning within the full retinue of Buddhist teaching. Nāgārjuna introduces the two truths in order to demonstrate that his aim is not to destroy Buddhist practice, which is carried out in the realm of “mundane and customary activities,” but to re-invigorate it – free it from the ontological quagmire so as to be realised in its full import which carries with it a soteriological message. Nāgārjuna’s attacks on the rhetoric of the religious groups, taken within the context of the two truths, now reveals his motive for teaching and writing. Nāgārjuna is hopeful that those who mistakenly looked among *dharmā* matrices for the path to enlightenment will abandon such a limited approach and enter instead the path of releasement.

Nāgārjuna suggests that his detractors not only do not understand *śūnyatā* but do not understand how *śūnyatā* “works” with the Buddha’s *dharmā* which is as dangerous as grasping a snake from the wrong end (MMK 24:11). Nāgārjuna explains that in order to understand the “profound ‘point’” (*latvā*) of the Buddha’s teaching, one must realise the “distribution (*vibhāgam*) of the two kinds of truth.”¹³⁶ Much scholarly discussion has taken place over what Nāgārjuna meant by “two truths” which seems to suggest an utterly dualistic understanding of reality. What Nāgārjuna is really proposing, however, is the participation of the Buddhist practitioner in profound reality¹³⁷ through the everyday “mundane” activity of the eight-fold path. The verses in MMK 24 read:

The explanation of the true nature of things by the Buddhas has recourse
to two kinds of truth:

The delimiting (*samvṛti*) truth and the highest (*paramārtha*) truth. Those
who do not know the distribution of the two kinds of truth

Do not know the profound reality of the Buddha’s teaching.

¹³⁵ MMK 24:10, as translated by Streng, Frederick, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 213

¹³⁶ MMK 24:9, as translated by Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 213

¹³⁷ *Paramārtha* is translated “ultimate” as in “ultimate reality” by D. Seyfort Ruegg (*The Literature of the Mādhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden, 1981, p. 3), and “highest” as in “highest truth” by Frederick Streng (“The Process of Ultimate Transformation in Nāgārjuna’s Mādhyamika,” *Eastern Buddhist* 11(1978), p.13). The intention is to differentiate between *samvṛti* (the limited or delimited) realm and *paramārtha* (an ultimate or transcendent) realm. It is awkward to discuss Nāgārjuna’s thought in terms of an “ultimate” given his injunction against such substantialist ideas. However, even the discussion of “two truths” is awkward until Nāgārjuna applies *śūnyatā* in order to empty both polemics. I will use the optional phrase “profound reality” that Streng has used to describe the Buddha’s understanding of the argument (Streng, Frederick, J., “The Process of Ultimate Transformation in Nāgārjuna’s Mādhyamika,” *Eastern Buddhist* 11(1978), p.13).

The highest truth is not taught apart from conventional practice,
And without having understood the highest truth one cannot attain
nirvana.¹³⁸

This description of the two levels of truth or reality in chapter 24 of the MMK is followed by one of Nāgārjuna's most influential verses to the later schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism where in chapter 25, he relates *nirvāṇa* directly with *samsāra*:

There is nothing whatever which differentiates the existence-in-flux
(*samsāra*) from *nirvāṇa*;/And there is nothing whatever which
differentiates *nirvāṇa* from existence-in-flux.¹³⁹

Streng understands Nāgārjuna's teaching of two truths as one of "ultimate transformation": one perceives "the highest truth [which] is the realization that all distinctions are "empty." This realization requires a transformation of self-awareness."¹⁴⁰ Streng is basically saying that knowing the truth is a state of mind. This interpretation is problematic, however, for it suggests a metaphysical understanding of the subject (ego-self) in which the subject is privileged as master of knowledge or truth; it is a dualistic and subjectivistic understanding of Nāgārjuna's two-truths.

Shlomo Biderman, in his discussion of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, suggests that we understand Nāgārjuna's two-fold truth as "a performance' of a change of status."¹⁴¹ In this way, Biderman maintains, Nāgārjuna is addressing neither metaphysics nor psychology in asserting that *samsāra* is no different from *nirvāṇa*. What Biderman seems to suggest by proposing that one understand the two-fold truth as a change of status is that the relationship between the self/subject and the world changes while all other phenomena remain unchanged. He says, "When the philosopher ceases to search for the fixed and stable, *samsāra* remains *samsāra* just as before, but ceases to cause suffering."¹⁴² Furthermore, and most interestingly, he calls the change of status a "performance" of a change of status. Thus, Nāgārjuna encourages us to change our view of reality from one

¹³⁸ MMK 24:8-10, as translated by Streng, Frederick, J., "The Process of Ultimate Transformation in Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika," *Eastern Buddhist* 11(1978), p.13

¹³⁹ MMK 25:19, as translated by Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 217

¹⁴⁰ Streng, Frederick, J., "The Process of Ultimate Transformation in Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika," *Eastern Buddhist* 11(1978), p.25

¹⁴¹ Biderman, Shlomo, "Scepticism and Religion: On the Interpretation of Nāgārjuna," *Indian Philosophy of Religion* (1989), p. 73

¹⁴² Biderman, Shlomo, "Scepticism and Religion: On the Interpretation of Nāgārjuna," *Indian Philosophy of Religion* (1989), p. 73

of *svabhava* to one of *sūnyatā* and this “transition” comes about via a kind of “performance.” One thinks of performing the usual Buddhist activities, studying sutras, meditating, cultivating aspects of the path, as what is meant here by “performance” so that the mundane activities of the Buddhist practitioner can, via such performance, be transformed into the perfected activities of a Buddha or Bodhisattva. This is a closer description of what is meant in the meeting/merging of practice and profound reality/truth.

NAGAO Gadjin addresses Buddhist practice in his analysis of Nāgārjuna’s two truths and endeavours to bring out the importance of motion or movement in Nāgārjuna’s understanding of how mundane or *samsāric* practice interacts with profound reality or *nirvāṇa*. Although certain aspects are fascinating, NAGAO’s analysis is not without problems. In addressing the two-fold truth construct, NAGAO analyses the term, *samvṛti*, in contrast with *paramārtha* and shows the gradual development of paradoxical meaning surrounding the term *samvṛti*. *Samvṛti* usually “refers to being conventional, mundane, profane, worldly,” in contrast to “*paramārtha*, which means being super-worldly, super-mundane, absolute.”¹⁴³ NAGAO shows that one root of the term *samvṛti*, *vr*, can mean to come into being, manifesting or clarifying truth, while in contrast the root, *v*, indicates a covering or darkening of the truth. When tracing the term through uses of these roots, NAGAO shows a fascinating development of the term *samvṛti* differentiated by Candrakīrti¹⁴⁴ and Sthiramati.¹⁴⁵ NAGAO notes that Candrakīrti tends to choose only the negative perspective of *samvṛti* so that effectively, “*paramārtha* can never be seen: to look at *paramārtha* is not to see it at all,” while on the other hand, Sthiramati “affirms the value of *samvṛti* as the sole medium through which *paramārtha* can manifest itself.”¹⁴⁶ Candrakīrti’s usage of “concealment” and Sthiramati’s usage of “manifested” are combined by the Chinese founder of the Vijnānavāda School, Tz’u-en, who uses *samvṛti-satyā* to convey a “covering-and-manifesting truth” in his *Chapter on the Two-fold Truth*.¹⁴⁷ According to NAGAO, the paradoxicality in “covering-manifesting” is essential to the Bodhisattva-mārga for it describes the compassion of the Bodhisattva who, “not abiding

¹⁴³ NAGAO, Gadjin M., *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 13

¹⁴⁴ follower of Nāgārjuna and founder of the Mādhyamika school of the Prasāngika

¹⁴⁵ disciple of Vasubhandhu

¹⁴⁶ NAGAO, Gadjin M., *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 21

¹⁴⁷ NAGAO, Gadjin M., *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 19

in Nirvāna,” returns to this world and “dwells in the very midst of defilement.”¹⁴⁸ Therefore, according to NAGAO, Nāgārjuna’s achievement in his use of *śūnyatā*, was the negation of this world – proving the “non-existence” of this world. This, however, is only half the equation for Nagao; non-existence only achieves the “upward movement,” that of transcending this world. The completion of this movement for NAGAO can be found in the Yogācāra method, especially exhibited in Asanga, who speaks of the “existence of non-existence” which is the complementary “downward movement” and affirmation of this world. This is the completion of the Bodhisattva ideal. This is part of the groundwork for NAGAO’s proposition of the “two-directional activity” in which he asserts that:

The identification of dependent co-origination with *śūnyatā* is the activity in the direction of ascent, and the identification of *śūnyatā* with designation based upon some material (which designation, I think, is another name for dependent co-origination) is the activity in the direction of descent ... The final situation, called the “middle path,” synthesizes the two directions ...¹⁴⁹

Here one sees that *śūnyatā*, associated with dependent co-origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*), contains the activity of both ascent and descent. This is what NAGAO means when he asserts that dependent origination (*pratītyasamutpāda*) is “the ground or basis on which final deliverance takes place.”¹⁵⁰ I agree that it is fruitful to consider Nāgārjuna in relation to the Yogācāra school rather than view both as antithetical to each other. However, although Nāgārjuna may not state it as emphatically as the Yogācarins, Nāgārjuna’s positive view of *saṃvṛti* is exhibited by the ultimately positive attitude he has for *samsāric* existence, for the Bodhisattva-*marya* is directed towards this existence. The ultimate response to Nāgārjuna’s negative logic is that of bodhisattva practice which takes place in this mundane existence. Therefore, I question NAGAO’s portrayal of Nāgārjuna’s *śūnyatā* moving dependent origination only in the direction of ascent. Furthermore, elsewhere NAGAO speaks of *śūnyatā* as the abstract which lacks a personal and practical aspect; the practical aspect is fulfilled, according to NAGAO, by the

¹⁴⁸ NAGAO, Gadjin M., *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 22

¹⁴⁹ NAGAO, Gadjin M., “Ascent and Descent: Two-directional Activity in Buddhist Thought,” in *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 205

¹⁵⁰ NAGAO, Gadjin M., “Buddhist Subjectivity,” in *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 8.

Yogācāra teachings.¹⁵¹ This is why NAGAO prefers to consider Nāgārjuna and the Yogācāra school as fulfilment to each other rather than totally at odds theoretically; the Yogācāra school balances Nāgārjuna's negative, abstract *śūnyatā*. Is this a valid reading of Nāgārjuna's *śūnyatā*? In a strong sense, one might argue the opposite for it is Nāgārjuna's *śūnyatā* which, as an agent of relativity, acts as a leveller and indeed elevates the practical purpose of *samsāra* so that *pratitya-samutpāda* has relevance again as Buddha's teaching. As will be discussed in the following chapter on Yogācāra, views are split as to where the Yogācāra teachings lead, either back to a substantive view of consciousness, or furthering the teaching of Nāgārjuna that only a radical employment of *śūnyatā* is effective in providing proper preparation for praxis. I believe that the latter teaching is clearly exhibited in the Yogācāra school and works conjunctively with Nāgārjuna's *śūnyatā*. I find NAGAO's negative treatment of Nāgārjuna's *śūnyatā* to call into question the possibility that Nāgārjuna intends a practical way to enter the living reality of *śūnyatā*.

Understanding Nāgārjuna's two truths is key to interpreting his dialectic within his religious intentions. In his commentary, Garfield maintains that the two truths, conventional and ultimate, are ontically one, however, he claims that the "ultimate truth is epistemologically and soteriologically more significant than the conventional."¹⁵² He then goes on to lay out Nāgārjuna's argument in MMK chapter 24 to climax with vs. 18 in which he sees Nāgārjuna constructing a "critical three-way relation between emptiness, dependent origination and verbal convention" which, according to Garfield, is itself the "middle way."¹⁵³ The verse in question, from MMK 24:18 is:

What is originating co-dependently, we call emptiness.
It is a designation based upon (some material). Only this is the Middle
Path.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ NAGAO, Gadjin M., "Yogācāra – A Reappraisal," in *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 221

¹⁵² *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, translated with commentary by Jay L. Garfield, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 297

¹⁵³ *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, translated with commentary by Jay L. Garfield, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 304

¹⁵⁴ As translated by NAGAO, Gadjin, "From Mādhyamika to Yogācāra: An Analysis of MMK, XXIV.18 and MV, I.1-2," in *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 190. Garfield criticises NAGAO's interpretation of "material" in the way NAGAO shows the descending direction of *śūnyatā* in *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, translated with commentary by Jay L. Garfield, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p.306

In this relationship, conventional reality dependently arisen has no identity outside of the verbal designations made about it: it is clearly empty. Emptiness, too, has no essential identity and is seen to be designated dependently and is therefore also empty. That the conventional world and emptiness are “designated dependently” make the very relationship between the two empty – this is ultimately the middle way, hanging between the two extremes of essentialism/absolutism and nihilistic emptiness/nothingness. The problem with Garfield’s proposal that verbal convention could be a middle way between emptiness and dependent origination is that Buddhist release clearly transcends verbal designations. Nāgārjuna only seeks to move the practitioner beyond verbal convention that creates verbal designations (*prapañca*), not to create a dependency on them. What Nāgārjuna allows for instead is the possibility for practice. Dependent origination, relativised by emptiness, becomes the movement necessary for true praxi-centric engagement.

The apparent duality of Nāgārjuna’s two truths is rather the non-dual recognition that activity in the mundane world strikes directly at the so-called “transcendent” truth. “The highest truth is not taught apart from conventional practice, /And without having understood the highest truth one cannot attain *nirvāṇa*.” Remarkably, with the suggestion of two truths Nāgārjuna challenges the problematic dualistic approach to reality which sees the mundane world and interprets the phenomena therein either just as it appears to the discerning conscious, which has exactly and only its self-conscious viewpoint, or as an image with neither substance nor meaning that the conscious must deny to remain honest. In other words, seeing phenomena only from the viewpoint of *samvṛti* pushes the self-conscious to choose either eternalism or nihilism. Paraphrased from the *Ratnāvalī*:

Because he resorts to neither existence nor non-existence he who is not fixed in duality (*advayaṅīrita*) is released ... On the contrary, if one erroneously takes the world – which is at the same time causally conditioned and mirage-like (*marīcipratīma*) – to be either existence or non-existence of something (like water in a mirage), one is not released.¹⁵⁵

Rather, Nāgārjuna suggests approaching the phenomenal world through the lens of *śūnyatā* so that the undeniable reality of *samvṛti* does not snare the conscious, but encourages the conscious to let go even of the idea of self-conscious. The importance

¹⁵⁵ Ruegg paraphrasing the *Ratnāvalī* vs 51-57 in Ruegg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Mādhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981, p. 24-25

now does not lie in the way the subject conceives of phenomena, but whether the subject can then apply the understanding of *śūnyatā* to the conscious perceiving subject. Only then can phenomena be just phenomena, and the subject is obliged to neither affirm nor deny that reality; no judging activity is necessary. The apparent dualism of *samvṛti* and *paramārtha* cannot be sustained if both are characterised by *śūnyatā*. Likewise, and equally importantly, although this logic leaves us room to say that “nothing whatever ... differentiates ... (*samsāra*) from *nirvāṇa*,” truth is not the great equaliser in terms of erasing distinctions. *Śūnyatā* allows for the kind of practical approach to the world which doesn't seek to grasp but intuitively ‘touch’ the ineffable wonder of profound reality. With the two truths, Nāgārjuna recalls the Buddha's message within the four noble truths to respond to the *duḥkha*, the dissatisfaction in daily life, with practical, transformational activity. Buddhist practice, wholly in the realm of the mundane, is the proper way by which one experiences ultimate transformation, realises the highest truth. Yet, importantly, this does not entail departing from one reality into another, but letting go of the empty categories *samvṛti* and *paramārtha* and abiding in the totally ineffable state that cannot be reduced to such verbal designations. “‘All things are void’ is not a ‘proposition.’ It only expresses the Inexpressible, with the help of the conventional truth ...”⁵⁶ Thus, Nāgārjuna is proposing with his two truths a kind of praxi-centric phenomenology in which clarity of vision and understanding gained through the practical activity of the Buddhist path yields a transformation within the practitioner that cannot be fully explained nor described, but which makes all the difference between continually wandering through *samsāric* existence and full liberation.

Conceptual Diffusion (*prapañca*) and Bliss (*śiva*)

One could note that Nāgārjuna's philosophical might and his use of *prāsaṅga* argument is ironic considering his desire to push thinkers out of disputation and into practice. It shows that at some level, an awareness is necessary, not of self-as-an-end, but the insightful knowledge (or wisdom, *prajñā*) that enables one to see reality for what it is – empty of self, empty of own-being. It also shows the practical usefulness of “argument,” in itself a dead end, as a means of prompting one to that understanding. In Buddhapaṇita's commentary on the MMK verses 22:15 (“Those who verbally elaborate the incessant Buddha who has transcended verbal elaboration [*prapañca*] – none of them, impaired by verbal elaboration, can see the Tathāgata”), he explains that the term

⁵⁶ Battacharya, K., *The Dialectical Method of Nāgārjuna*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1978, p. 24

prapañca, or “verbal elaboration” in this text, points to the mistaken perception of ‘existence and non-existence,’ ‘permanence and impermanence,’ and so forth brought on by ‘passionate craving.’ Thus, *prapañca* suggests “divisive crosspurposes” (*dvandva*), or “two things when there are really one” so that one does not see objects ‘as they are’.¹⁵⁷ Candrakīrti, in his commentary on MMK 18:5, states that the purpose for the *śūnya* “doctrine” is to:

... Erradicate the innate tendency of conceptual thought to construct reified notions of being (*bhāva*) and nonbeing (*abhāva*). Such reified notions generate philosophical positions referred to as absolutism and nihilism ... [T]hese positions are representations of exactly the sort of conceptual diffusion (*prapañca*) that lies at the root of clinging and antipathy and therefore all forms of fear and suffering.¹⁵⁸

Ñāṇananda suggests that *prapañca*:

... refers to both ontic and to epistemic diffusion – both to the universe as the totality of the contents of perception and to language and conceptual thought. Thus, when conceptual thought becomes confused and diffuse, so does the external world.¹⁵⁹

That is, allowing oneself to be drawn into the activity of searching for sources, foundational teachings and premises, all of which characterise the philosopher’s mode, is a kind of mental fog which produces illusions of answers and prevents the true seeker from seeking clarity of mind, a quieting of the mind, which properly developed yields liberation. It may be said that there is a fine line between teaching the *dharma* and engaging in “verbal elaboration” or *prapañca*. Nāgārjuna ends the MMK with the verse:

I prostrate to Gautama
Who through compassion

¹⁵⁷ in Wayman, Alex, *Untying the Knots in Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1997, p. 185. Streng translates *prapañca* “phenomenal extension” (as in MMK 18:5, “On account of the destruction of the pains (*kleśā*) of action there is release;/For pains of action exist for him who constructs them./These pains result from phenomenal extension (*prapañca*); but this phenomenal extension comes to a stop by emptiness”), Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 204. And Garfield uses “mental fabrication” (MMK 18:5, “Action and misery having ceased, there is nirvāna./Action and misery come from conceptual thought./This comes from mental fabrication [*prapañca*]/Fabrication ceases through emptiness.”) in *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna’s Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, translated with commentary by Jay L Garfield, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 48

¹⁵⁸ Candrakīrti, *Prasannapada* 490 as quoted by Huntington, C.W., Jr. with Geshé Nangyal Wanchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989, p. 30

¹⁵⁹ Ñāṇananda, as quoted in Huntington, C.W., Jr. with Geshé Nangyal Wanchen, *The Emptiness of Emptiness: An Introduction to Early Indian Mādhyamika*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1989, p. 209

Taught me the true doctrine,
Which leads to the relinquishing of all views.¹⁶⁰

As Nāgārjuna intimates that the true doctrine is no doctrine, Ruegg suggests that Nāgārjuna's approach to reality is comparable to the *epoché*,

according to which only silence – a philosophically motivated refraining from the conceptualization and verbalization that belong to the discursive level of relativity and transactional usage – is considered to correspond in the last analysis to the paramārtha, which is as such inconceivable and inexpressible in terms of discursivity. While no doubt related to apophaticism this latter approach goes beyond negative or positive theory, and in Madhyamaka it is distinguishable from both.¹⁶¹

Thus, when Nāgārjuna makes the statement that “no dharma was ever taught by Buddha to anybody anywhere” (MMK 25:24) or makes the assertion that on the level of absolute reality (*paramārtha*), “designata and discursive development have come to a stop,”¹⁶² he approaches the sceptic's *epoché*. Gomez rightfully cautions against such a privileged stance which as a “classical religious maneuver of claiming ineffability for foundational beliefs” results in a shift of authority from the public domain to the “hidden, protected realm of unquestioned authority” whereby the “ārya's silence” is truly “aryan ... authoritative ... hence unassailable.”¹⁶³ Instead of viewing the ineffable nature of the ultimate truth Nāgārjuna points to as an authoritarian manoeuvre of exclusivity, Gomez affirms Nāgārjuna's dialectic which he argues “creates space for the unsayable that will carry in its train the vast and complex retinue of Buddhist doctrines, practices and institutions.”¹⁶⁴ So that, despite the ineffable nature of ultimate truth, Nāgārjuna's teaching reclaims, in a way, the mundane “public domain” in which Buddhist practice occurs and as such, works against elitist foundational authority.

¹⁶⁰ *The Fundamental Wisdom of the Middle Way: Nāgārjuna's Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, translated by Jay L. Garfield, Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1995, p. 83

¹⁶¹ Ruegg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981, p. 34

¹⁶² Ruegg, D. Seyfort, *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India*, Harrassowitz: Wiesbaden 1981, p. 34

¹⁶³ Gomez, Luis O., “Two Jars on 'Two' Tables: Reflections on the “Two Truths,” Silk, Jonathan A. ed. *Wisdom, Compassion, and the Search for Understanding*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000, p.107

¹⁶⁴ Gomez, Luis O., “Two Jars on Two Tables: Reflections on the “Two Truths,” Silk, Jonathan A. ed. *Wisdom, Compassion, and the Search for Understanding*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000, p. 108

It has been recorded that after the Buddha's enlightenment, he sat in meditation another 49 days contemplating what he had gained in his moment of penetrating insight.¹⁶⁵ As canonical records indicate, what motivated the Buddha to return to the "lived world" instead of departing fully into *nirvāṇa* was his feeling of loving-kindness, or compassion, toward all suffering individuals whom he desired should also experience this same liberation (*mokṣa*). In other words, the Buddha was compelled to attempt to teach the *Dharma*, the saving truth, to others in order that his experience would be emulated and all who seek release from *duḥkha* would at the very least have a roadmap, a guide to such release. That is to say, far from being dogmatic, the four noble truths aim to be the insightful observations of one who has seen things for what they are (or are becoming, *yathābhūtam*), and who has experienced liberation. His statement elsewhere in the collected sayings, "I only teach suffering and the release from suffering" is just the kind of statement which overshadows the dogmatic tendencies of his followers who would have the Buddhist system nailed down in concrete terms. It is perhaps telling that the Buddha himself never recorded any of his own teachings, but intended them as words to be lived into practice and eventually discarded, as in the well-known parable in which a raft is abandoned once the traveller has successfully crossed the stream. Deconstructing the self into constituent parts, as the Abhidharmists have done, can only be useful when situated in the realm of practice. It is not that the ontology of the Abhidharma efforts was fundamentally wrong, but that the ontology was not moved into the active realm of compassion, a move which both empties the ontological concerns and in a way redeems them by re-establishing such deconstruction within the functional realm of practice. It is this understanding that Nāgārjuna wanted to move his students into and he pursued with them the rigorous path of logic as a means by which they were to let go of the "grounding" elements of knowledge and move instead into the active and more mystical realm of wisdom. True *prajñā* is not merely knowing limits and parameters but practically living into true reality where all notions of ego-consciousness are surpassed by a wiser approach. In this respect, *prajñā* cannot be separated from *dhyāna* for the acquisition of *prajñā* depends on the practical activity of *dhyāna*. Alex Wayman suggests that Nāgārjuna's intent behind writing the MMK is in the tradition of skilful-means (*upāya*) combined with wisdom (*prajñā*) according to the *Bodhisattva-bhūmi*; that Nāgārjuna

¹⁶⁵ Herman, A. L., *An Introduction to Buddhist Thought: A Philosophic History of Indian Buddhism*, Lanham: University Press of America, Inc., 1983, p. 55

meant his MMK to be “a kind of discerning to be combined with calming (the mind).” Wayman cites from the Mādhyamika text, *Śri-mālādevīsimbhunāda*:

When he matures any sentient beings by meditation (*dhyana*), he matures them by having an undisturbed mind, his mind not straying outside and having no mistake of mindfulness. By not being side-tracked though he acts for a long time or speaks for a long time, he protects and matures their minds. They having been so matured stay in the Illustrious Doctrine. This is his Perfection of Meditation.¹⁶⁶

Wayman concludes his remarks on Nāgārjuna’s purpose behind writing the MMK by asserting that “the text of practice of the MMK is that Nāgārjuna does not give up, rather stays with it to the end without straying from his purposeful discourse. The MMK kind of contemplation aims at a fruit ...”¹⁶⁷

As suggested at the outset of this chapter, Nāgārjuna’s method has been compared to the *ūrupa-jhāna* meditational program¹⁶⁸ in which the practitioner is encouraged to relinquish the constructing activity of the mind through deep formless meditation stages. It is quite plausible that Nāgārjuna is again reverting back to the example of the Buddha’s own enlightenment experience through his repetitive use of the *catuḥskoti*, the fourfold negation, as a means by which one quiets the mind of arguments, by negating each logical possibility. The *Suttas* record how Gautama gradually developed a meditation program from techniques he learned while studying under various famous teachers¹⁶⁹ until he exhausted the techniques practiced by the religious aspirants of his day, but he had not yet achieved enlightenment. It is recorded that Gautama attempted, while practicing extreme asceticism, to control the sense sensations through an act of the will. A poignant inhibitor Gautama cited was that although he was able to achieve impressive meditation stages, he was plagued by physical pains and an untranquil mind.¹⁷⁰ What has

¹⁶⁶ Wayman, Alex and Hideko, *The Lion’s Roar of Queen Śrīmālā*, (A Buddhist Scripture on the Tathāgatagarbha Theory), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1974, p.42

¹⁶⁷ Wayman, Alex, *Untying the Knots in Buddhism*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1997, p. 77

¹⁶⁸ see Schmidt-Leukel, Perry, “Mystische Erfahrung und logische Kritik bei Nāgārjuna,” *Religiöse Erfahrung und theologische Reflexion: Festschrift für Heinrich Döring*, Armin Kreiner and Perry Schmidt-Leukel (Hg.), Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1993, p. 386; and Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 232

¹⁶⁹ He achieved the meditation stage, “the sphere of nothingness” while studying under Ālāra the Kālāma (M.L.163 ff), the “sphere of neither-cognition-nor-non-cognition” from Uddaka the son of Rāma. See Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 18

¹⁷⁰ M.L.240 ff, Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 19

become known as the four “formless attainments” (*arūpa-samāpatti* or *arūpa-jhānas*) are described as follows¹⁷¹:

1. passing beyond the perception of sense-reactions (leaving the perception of the realm of manifold phenomena), one abides in the sphere of infinite space
2. passing beyond the sphere of infinite space, one focuses on being aware: one concentrates on infinite consciousness
3. passing beyond the consciousness one encounters the nothingness that remains
4. passing beyond nothingness (leaving even this cognition) one abides in the sphere of neither perception nor non-perception

The *Anguttara-Nikāya* (IX, 32. AN IV 276f.) records that beyond the four *arūpa-jhānas* one may experience the ending of perception and feeling, or as recorded in the *Visuddhimagga*, one achieves the “attainment of cessation” (*nirodha-samāpatti*).¹⁷² The Buddha’s death, in which he moves on to *parinibbāna*, has been described in the *Dīgha Nikāya* (D.11.156) as his “exit from the world, in the fearless, calm and self-controlled state of meditation” in which he passed through the four formless modes of meditation and then returned to the four *jhānas* of form meditation before passing on to *parinibbāna*. This death record indicates that the Buddha, instead of conquering some kind of ultimate meditation test (as he attempted in his ascetic practices), has acquired skill over his mind, but in passing to *parinibbāna* from the form meditation suggests practice that is natural, positive and perhaps even indicates compassion.

One notices the similarity of the deep level of formless meditation in which one moves beyond contemplating the infinity of space, the infinity of consciousness, the sphere of nothingness, finally arriving at “neither perception nor non-perception” and Nāgārjuna’s methodical use of the four-fold negation to disrupt and release his followers from their perceptions, their conceptual diffusion (*prapañca*). Beyond such perceptions is the ultimate cessation – the realisation of profound reality. Description fails completely, and only negative or paradoxical language can be used to “point” to this stage, yet the

¹⁷¹ paraphrased from the *Anguttara-Nikāya* IX, 32. AN IV 276f. and Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 252

¹⁷² Harvey, Peter, *An Introduction to Buddhism: Teachings, history and practices*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 252

experience of such realisation is suggested as “bliss,” complete calm. Nāgārjuna seems to approve of this existential indication of ultimate truth/reality:

“Not caused by something else,” “peaceful,” [*śānta*] “not elaborated by discursive thought,” “Indeterminate,” “undifferentiated”: such are the characteristics of true reality (*tattva*).¹⁷³

In this passage, the only positive characteristic listed in an otherwise completely negative description of true or profound reality is “peaceful” (or “blissful” *śiva* / “tranquil” *śānta*). It has already been suggested that Nāgārjuna uses *prasanga* type argument to move the student beyond discursive and analytical thought, but that Nāgārjuna never suggests nihilistic nothingness. Moreover, in line with accepting that Nāgārjuna has also written songs of praise and training manuals for those embarking on the Buddhist path, he surely would not advocate a catatonic immobility. Following the example, again, of the Buddha’s return to form meditation after he successfully moves through the *arāpa-jhanas*, it may be suggested that beyond Nāgārjuna’s negating philosophical campaign there lies the possibility for engaging in true practice. The bodhisattva-marga is active caring in the world of form, but this activity is pursued via the wisdom and insight of a bodhisattva.

Perhaps the beginning point for later Mahāyāna developments in substantialist tendencies, Nāgārjuna has used “true reality” (*tattva*) as synonymous with *nirvāṇa*. It is clearly *śūnyatā* which characterises and enables this insight into *nirvāṇa* reality. That is, to follow Nāgārjuna’s thought development, *śūnyatā* is what the Buddha meant by *pratītya-samutpāda*. But in supplanting or reinterpreting *pratītya-samutpāda* as *śūnyatā* as the crucial characteristic of *nirvāṇa*, Nāgārjuna perhaps instigates a new train of thought, as Nagao has suggested, which again pushes to find an absolute/abstract aspect in profound reality, what is described in later Mahāyāna thought with terms such as “suchness” (*tathatā*) and real nature (*dharmatā*). As Nagao and others have suggested, Nāgārjuna’s *śūnyatā* is seen by the Yogācāra school as providing the philosophical basis for understanding that “emptiness is not merely “non-being” but also the “being of non-being””.¹⁷⁴ This paradoxical understanding of *śūnyatā*, of which the Yogācāra school was fully aware, was adopted by the Chinese schools of Buddhism including the later Ch’an and Pure Land

¹⁷³ MMK 18:9, Streng’s translation in Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 204

¹⁷⁴ NAGAO, Gadjin M., *Mādhyanika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 215

schools where "true emptiness" is equated with "wondrous being".¹⁷⁵ It seems clear that Nāgārjuna certainly does not mean for his use of *śūnyatā* to be misconstrued this way as he submits even *śūnyatā* to the fourfold negation to warn against the reification of any concept including *śūnyatā*:

One may not say that there is "emptiness" (*śūnya*), nor that there is "non-emptiness"

Nor that both [exist simultaneously], nor that neither exists; the purpose for saying ["emptiness"] is for the purpose of conveying knowledge.¹⁷⁶

That is, although there is a clear purpose behind teaching *śūnyatā* there is no more foundational concept here than the illusory *svabhāva* of *dharma*. And yet it appears clear that future developments in Buddhist thought were influenced through Nāgārjuna's unique use of *śūnyatā*. Again, an example of Nāgārjuna's reticence to assert anything beyond the blissful experience of ultimate truth/reality:

Since all *dharmas* are empty, what is finite? What is infinite?

What is both finite and infinite? What is neither finite nor infinite?

Is there anything which is this or something else, which is permanent or impermanent,

Which is both permanent and impermanent, or which is neither?

'The cessation of accepting everything [as real] is a salutary (*śiva*) ["blissful"] cessation of phenomenal development (*prapañca*);

No *dharma* anywhere has been taught by the Buddha of anything.¹⁷⁷

Nāgārjuna's message, like the Buddha's, emphasises a different knowledge from closed-system substantialist thinking. The systematic approach may offer insightful analysis into the construction of itself, but it cannot move outside itself. Once the *dharma* or mind is located, the system is complete. True Buddhist practice does not operate within the confines of such a pursuit. It is the openness and groundlessness of practice based on emptiness, on dependent origination, which gives opportunity for further practice and eventually a path to liberation. This is the "working of emptiness". It would seem that both Nāgārjuna and the Buddha had experienced that the world opens up to a mind in meditation. Beyond this, nothing can be said about the nature or reality of *nirvāṇa* or the experience of liberation.

¹⁷⁵ NAGAO, Gadjin M., *Mādhyamika and Yogācāra*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, p. 216-217

¹⁷⁶ Streng's translation, MMK 22:11, in Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967 p. 210

¹⁷⁷ Streng's translation, MMK 25:22-24, in Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 217

Nāgārjuna begins MMK 22 by questioning any attempt to define the *tathāgata*: it is not one composed or defined by the five *skandhas* nor can it be one who is other than the very five *skandhas* (vs. 1). One defined by the five *skandhas* is clearly a dependent being still in the *samsāric* realm and yet, one not defined or composed of the five *skandhas* would be self-dependent and clearly in no relation to the five *skandhas*. In this case, there would be no possible connection between the two: how could the fully completed One *become so* if not ever dependent and defined according to the five *skandhas* (vs. 6)? When engaged in this kind of pursuit, one is simply working in the realm of identity/difference (*tattva/anyatva*) which has only limited relevance or effectiveness. A *tathāgata* cannot be adequately expressed as either existing or not existing (vs. 13) and any attempt to do so is a “crude” attempt (vs. 13) and further one liable to “complete defeat” (vs. 15). When trying to categorise, as Streng points out, one must always speak in worldly designations.¹⁷⁸ Murti attempts to describe the *tathāgata* as a “mediator” between the absolute (*tathatā*) and the realm of phenomena: “Though free [a *Tathāgata*], one still has enough of the phenomenal in one to feel kinship with fellow human beings and help them out of *samsāra*.”¹⁷⁹ The problem with this account is the absolute understanding of profound reality. Murti sees *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* as two ontologically different realms and the *tathāgata* as participating in both for awhile before eventually disappearing into the transcendental Real. It is this understanding of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* that Nāgārjuna sought to overturn with his use of *śūnyatā*. Hence, Nāgārjuna’s assessment of *nirvāṇa* in which he can deny the differential between *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra* and insist that the “extreme limit (*koṭi*) of *nirvāṇa* is also the extreme limit of existence-in-flux [*samsāra*]” (25:20). That is, the same fallible categories of mundane thought and speech have applied such difference. Further, Nāgārjuna may prepare the way for, but is certainly not suggesting, the Japanese Buddhist understanding of ‘identity in difference’ (i.e. ABE, NISHIDA, NISHITANI).

Perhaps it is telling that Nāgārjuna prefers the descriptors *śānta*, “peaceful”, or *śiva*, “blissful” which is beyond the mental constructing activity (*prapañca*) of the ego when he speaks of *nirvāṇa* instead of using this term itself replete with its reified images, because

¹⁷⁸ Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967, p. 74

¹⁷⁹ Murti, T.R.V., *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of the Mādhyamika System*, Tinling & Co., Ltd., London, 1955, p. 279

bliss speaks of concrete experience.¹⁸⁰ Or, as Lusthaus explains, Nāgārjuna's "Diamond-truth shredder" negational logic "gives way to aporetic living, to that special type of indeterminacy that is freedom."¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ suggested by Perry Schmidt-Leukel during a Buddhist philosophy seminar in the Centre for Inter-Faith Studies, University of Glasgow. See also, Schmidt-Leukel, Perry, "Mystische Erfahrung und logische Kritik bei Nāgārjuna," *Religiöse Erfahrung und theologische Reflexion: Festschrift für Heinrich Döring, Armin Kreiner and Perry Schmidt-Leukel* (Hg.), Paderborn: Bonifatius, 1993, p. 384-5

¹⁸¹ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 235

Chapter 2.

Yogācāra: No Mind that Knows

That indeed is the supramundane knowledge [*jñāna*]
When one has no mind [*acitta*] that knows,
And no object for its support [*anupalambha*];
It follows the revulsion [*parāvṛtti*] of basis¹⁸²

The emergence of what has come to be known as the Yogācāra school, or the Consciousness/Mind-only (*vijñāna-vāda/vittamātrā*) school within the Mahāyāna tradition is difficult to date, generally accepted as arising between the third and fifth century CE. The Yogācāra school, in presenting what appears to be a systematic rendering of the subjective subconscious through teachings such as the “three natures” doctrine (*trisvabhāva*) and the seed- or store-consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*) has received criticism for undermining the radical relativity Nāgārjuna demanded with *śūnyatā*. However, the Yogācāra school is also well-defined by its insistence on the practice of yoga meditation and its paradoxical assertions such as realisation comes when one has “no mind that knows” (*Trīṃśatikā* 29). Instead of reading Yogācāra teachings as re-asserting foundationalism or idealism, I suggest through the course of this chapter that Yogācāra is attempting to come to terms with the personal aspects of liberation by following the path of release through layers of subconscious. Nāgārjuna pursued liberation by means of a rigorous dialectic aimed at frustrating the logical and constructive activity of the intellect; however, once this intellectual frustration has been achieved, he has little to say about the personal experience or working of liberation in the realm of the psyche. Yogācāra, on the other hand, is deeply concerned with the personal experience and the way in which liberation is worked out such that the school aims to deconstruct the ego-self through the rigors of meditation practice even into the latent areas of the psyche in the subconscious realm – all in order to overcome this latent tendency to construct the ego-consciousness. As will be discussed in this chapter, the tension between the establishment of an origin and location for the ego-self through the systematisation of meditation skills and the assertion that the ego-self itself must be “founded” on *śūnyatā* will continually destabilise the doctrinal teachings of the ‘three natures’ and the ‘store-consciousness’ of this school.

¹⁸² *Trīṃśatikā* 29, translated by Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 160

The brothers Vasubandhu and Asanga, of the fourth or fifth century CE, are credited for authoring many of the important texts which provide the philosophical and analytical foundation of what is called Yogācāra Buddhism. It is clear, however, that proto-Yogācāra texts were already in existence before Asanga and Vasubandhu's contributions worked to establish the movement as a proper school, most notably, the *Samdhinirmocana Sutra* (*Elucidating the Hidden Connections, or Unravelling the Mystery*) from the third or fourth century CE.¹⁸³ Although contested by most scholars, tradition states that Yogācāra's Vasubandhu is the self-same Vasubandhu who entered first class Indian Buddhist thinkers with his seminal work in cataloguing the Vaibhāṣika tradition, the *Abhidharmakosa*, which proved foundational for the Abhidharma scholastic argument.¹⁸⁴ According to tradition, Vasubandhu's brother, Asanga, deeply impressed with Vasubandhu's achievements as an Abhidharma scholar, however also deeply concerned that Vasubandhu was missing an integral revelation into the Buddha's teaching, eventually converted him to the Yogācāra approach with the divinely inspired teachings of Maitreya who appeared to Asanga while he was in deep meditation. From this point of conversion into the Yogācāra school, all Vasubandhu's subsequent writing and teaching efforts contributed to the Yogācāra tradition. In light of the investigation here in this chapter, the issue of one or more Vasubandhus is largely irrelevant. Further, whether or not Asanga owes his writing to the appearance of celestial Maitreya whilst in meditation, or to a human teacher named Maitreya, is also not the concern here, and those works generally attributed to Asanga, or Asanga via Maitreya, will be treated as Asanga's texts. What can be said in response to the tradition which upholds a converted Vasubandhu is that the Yogācāra scholars recognised the achievements of the Abhidharma scholastic tradition, but felt that it did not provide the skilful means necessary for expounding the Buddha's teaching. What the Yogācāra scholars undertook in developing the doctrinal tenants of the eventual school was a fresh clarification of the Buddha's teaching in their unique language and systematic understanding of the

¹⁸³ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 65

¹⁸⁴ In fact, there is suggested as many as three Vasubandhus: the Vasubandhu who wrote the *Abhidharmakosa* and lived in Peshawar (Gandhara), the Vasubandhu who wrote the commentary of that work, the *Abhidharmakosa-bhāṣya* who lived in Ayodhya, and the teacher Vasubandhu also brother of Asanga who worked to establish the teachings of the Yogācāra school. See Frauwallner, Erich, *On the Date of the Buddhist Master of the Law Vasubandhu*, Rome: Is. M.E.O., 1951 and www.dharmafellowship.org/library/essays/yogacara-part1.htm

established Buddhist doctrines of *karma*, *pratītya-samutpada*, *nairātmya* or *anātman*, and ultimate release and elemental to an understanding of a praxi-centric phenomenology.

The school is known as the *vijñāna-vāda* (consciousness only) or *cittamātra* (mind only) school because the doctrine developed by its teachers is a systematic rendering of the working of the mind or consciousness. However, in addition to its doctrine, the school was also deeply committed to the practice of seated meditation, and thus also is known by its practical name, *yogācāra* (practice of yoga meditation). Thus, even with the naming of the school, there is introduced a tension between the doctrinal and practical for what is considered the effective Buddhist path and this tension will be evident throughout both teaching and interpretation surrounding the Yogācāra school. The multiple names of the school say much about its practical emphasis and the extent it has been understood and interpreted both by contemporary students of the school as well as modern scholars. Davidson argues that part of the issue surrounding the multiple interpretations of Yogācāra Buddhism is the fact that although material began to appear which supported what developed into a proper school, early on there was much less doctrinal cohesiveness to the movement. This is a tradition inspired by multiple sources, hence there exist multiple emphases.¹⁸⁵ This may certainly be true to the extent that most movements and schools arise out of a multitude of voices. However, it is also possible to recognise, especially with the pairing of Vasubandhu and Asanga, the complementary voices of a new vision of the Buddha's Dharma. Yogācāra can be translated "practice of yoga"¹⁸⁶ which reinforces and renews the emphasis on meditation that has been an important aspect of Buddhism since its inception.¹⁸⁷ The term *yogācāra* is not unique to Buddhism and has denoted "the practice or observance of Yoga" in Classical Sanskrit.¹⁸⁸ It is not at all clear how or why the term *yogacara* was adopted by the school of Buddhism that bears the name, however, the emphasis it brings of *dhyānic* or yogic meditation practice is undeniable.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Davidson, Ronald Mark, *Buddhist Systems of Transformation: Āsraya-parivṛtti/parāvṛtti Among the Yogācāra*, unpublished doctoral thesis conferred by University of California, Berkeley, 1985, p. 126

¹⁸⁶ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999 p. 96

¹⁸⁷ This foundational practice was explored in the previous chapter in connection with the Buddha's enlightenment experience.

¹⁸⁸ see Silk, Jonathan A., "The Yogācāra Bhikṣu," *Wisdom, Compassion, and the Search for Understanding: The Buddhist Studies Legacy of Gadṣin M. Nagao*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000, p. 266

¹⁸⁹ for a synopsis of scholarly positions on the origins of the Yogācāra school's name, see Silk, Jonathan A., "The Yogācāra Bhikṣu," *Wisdom, Compassion, and the Search for Understanding: The Buddhist Studies Legacy of Gadṣin M. Nagao*, ed. Jonathan A. Silk, University of Honolulu: Hawai'i Press, 2000, p. 273

Furthermore, in connection with its emphasis on practice and meditation, the Yogācāra school developed the doctrine of the “conversion of the basis” (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*) in order to describe the generation of the movement necessary to transform the ego-consciousness to the point beyond cognition in which “no-mind” is realised. This Yogācāra doctrine, “conversion of the basis” so to realise the “true self,” however, has two distinct interpretations and each has powerfully influenced the trajectory of Mahāyāna Buddhist teaching and the way it treats self-nature (*svabhāva*). King refers to the dichotomous understanding of “true self” as ‘No-Mind’ versus ‘Pure Mind’:

There is evidence of considerable doctrinal diversity within the Yogācāra school in India. Some strands emphasise what one might call a ‘No-Mind’ (*acitta*) interpretation, seeing the ‘revolution of the foundation’ (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*) as the cessation rather than the transformation of the *ālaya-vijñāna* or store-consciousness. From this perspective the final goal involves a transcendence of mental activity and the attainment of a non-conceptual awareness (*nirvikalpa jñāna*) of reality as it is. On the other hand, there is also much in the early Yogācāra literature which is suggestive of a ‘Pure Mind’ interpretation. On this view the goal of Yogācāra practice is to purify the store-consciousness of defilements rather than to eradicate it. The ‘revolution of the foundation’ does not require the cessation of the mind but rather the uncovering of the intrinsic purity of consciousness, which then shines through. Non-conceptual awareness on this view is pure consciousness reflecting reality like a mirror that has been cleaned of all defilements.¹⁹⁰

However, this school has also been called the “doctrine of consciousness” school (*vijñāna-vāda*), “doctrine of cognitive-representations only” school (*vijñaptimātrata*) (the term *vijñāna* means “cognition” or “consciousness” while the term *vijñapti* means “representation”), or “mind-only” school (*cittamātra*)¹⁹¹ descriptions which encourage interpretation towards idealist tendencies and the “positive” use of language that contrasts so poignantly with the “negative” approach of the Madhyamika. It has been argued that the Yogācāra school internalised the Abhidharma ontology to the psychologised working of the consciousness.¹⁹² The Yogācāra school also wished to stop the build-up of *karma*, in particular what they described as the seed-consciousness

¹⁹⁰ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 101

¹⁹¹ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 96

¹⁹² both Lusthaus and King suggest this linking; see Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, and King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999

(*ālayavijñāna*), or the location within the psyche, the dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*), where the intentions and impulses begin and eventually bear the fruit of action and/or manifestation of *dharmas*. Before they are manifested, actions and consequently *dharmas* exist only as hidden seeds in the consciousness. Drying up this store of seeds is one effort of the Yogācāra Buddhist school. This “pure mind” emphasis of the Yogācāra school, according to King, creates a tension between the seemingly contradictory goals of realising “no mind” and the endeavour to “purify the store consciousness of defilements rather than eradicate it.” In this sense, “non-conceptual awareness” is “pure consciousness reflecting reality like a mirror cleaned of defilements”.¹⁹³ This understanding of a “pure mind” which merely needs to be cleansed of defilement is picked up by Dharmapāla’s disciple, Hsüang-Tsang and brought to China where it was developed and solidified by the Fa-Hsiang school of Chinese Yogācāra.¹⁹⁴ Both emphases, that of a school bent on engaging meditative practice in order to transcend the paradoxical realm of language and concepts brought about via the working of the mind, and that of a school searching to uncover the purity of the original mind through meditative practice, will be brought to bear here in investigating the Yogācāra teachings. Further, whether or not these emphases are fundamentally at odds with each other will be investigated in this chapter.

If the Yogācāra school is proposing that the end of illusion lies within the reach of the mind or ego-consciousness itself, Yogācāra begs the question of acute subjectivity and the idealism the school has been charged with. The choice of the Yogācāra school to employ positive language and work with the concept *svabhāva* that Nāgārjuna condemned as dangerous and misleading, has caused schisms of thought in ancient as well as modern scholarship with a distinct contingent who view the school’s doctrine as an expression of idealism. Although there are many convincing arguments for why this would be an anathema to the Yogācāra practitioners, it is the specific choice of language which makes the school particularly susceptible to this interpretation. In choosing, for example, to describe the levels of consciousness until one locates at its base the source of the ego-consciousness that is to be converted, or furthermore, to describe the “ultimate” in positive terms, such as “eternal”, “good”, and “pure”, it is all too easy to slip back into

¹⁹³ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 101

¹⁹⁴ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 101

ontological or idealistic thinking as the emergence of the Chinese Fa-Hsiang school proves. When one approaches the Yogācāra teachings from this perspective one sees a methodological similarity between the Abhidharma and Yogācāra scholars. As the *Abhidharmakosa* revealed the Abhidharma scholars' meticulous and analytical approach to categorising the *dharmas* into those beneficial aspects to be cultivated, and the defilements to be stopped, the Yogācāra doctrine can be described as an internalisation of the Abhidharma ontology to the epistemological and psychological concerns of consciousness whereby on a subconscious level the seeds of release are cultivated and the seeds of defilement are dried up. Earlier I suggested that the abhidharma system of categorising *dharmas* 'externalised' the Buddhist path such that a dualistic rendering of reality emerged. Should the Yogācāra School be internalising the abhidharma method of investigating, then it too will suffer from a dualistic perspective of reality whereby instead of a fragmented rendering of reality in which the ego-self is set up against external existents, there results a fragmented self, the core of which is the existent ego-self. Either way, the ego-self is not destroyed nor seen for what it is, and this remains the crucial flaw according to the historical Buddha.

Yogācāra Vaipulya – 3rd Turning of Dharma-wheel

As almost all schools of Buddhism, Yogācāra too sees itself well established in the orthodox teachings of the Buddha. However, in introducing their unique Yogācāra interpretation of such teaching, the school found it necessary to propose an expansion, or formal "development", to what had become the established Buddhist canon. This "development" literature was called by the school the Vaipulya, and was justified by introducing the first two major "developments" in the history of Buddhism, the recording of the *nikāyas* coupled with the vast cataloguing work of the Abhidharma scholars, and second, the emergence of the Madhyamika school, as the first two turnings of the wheel of Dharma. The third turning of the Dharma-wheel is claimed by the Yogācāra school to be their own teachings of the "doctrine of consciousness" (*vijñāna-vāda*).¹⁹⁵

Vasubandhu's *Trimsatika*¹⁹⁶, or *Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only*, introduces the Yogācāra extension of the traditional six levels of consciousness in Buddhist thought to

¹⁹⁵ See Williams, Paul, *Madhyāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London: Routledge, 1989, p. 79

¹⁹⁶ Unless specifically indicated, the translation used is from: *Three Texts on Consciousness Only: Demonstration of Consciousness Only* by Hsüan-tsang, *The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only* by Vasubandhu, *The Treatise in Twenty*

eight. The traditional Buddhist levels of consciousness¹⁹⁷ are described in the treatise as the “perception” of the object with a “sixfold distinction” (vs. 8-14). Underneath such perception lies the level of thought (*manas*) and supporting thought and all perceptions is the store consciousness (*ālayavijñāna*), the holder of all seeds (*bija*) (vs 2). The store consciousness, the treatise explains, “evolves like a flowing stream” (vs. 2) while the perceptions (the traditional sixfold sense perceptions or consciousnesses) are due to “conditions” and are like “waves supported by water” (vs 15-16). The suggestion may be: quiet the water (the *ālaya*, or subconscious stream of consciousness) and the waves (cognitions and sensations) disappear. However, another possible interpretation is: stop the stream altogether so that there is no further “material” for the mind to generate and entertain perceptions. This divergent interpretation for what the Yogācāra “goal” for the *ālaya* consciousness is again reiterates the tension between divergent threads of thought within the tradition.

Part of the justification behind introducing the different turnings of the Dharma wheel is based on the rapidly popular idea of skilful means (*upāya*). If this doctrine is implied in Nāgārjuna’s use and development of *sūnyatā*, it is explicit in the Yogācāra school’s introduction of the three turnings of the Dharma Wheel. As Lusthaus explains of the introduction of the third turning of the Dharma wheel in the *Samdhinirmocana Sātra*, the first two turnings (the teaching of the four noble truths in the *nīkāyas* and Abhidharma Buddhism, and of *sūnyatā* by the Madhyamaka school) “had expressed the dharma through incomplete formulations that required further elucidation (*neyārtha*) to be properly understood and thus effective.”¹⁹⁸ In the wake of the previous turnings of the wheel, in which first *sūnyatā* and next the “positive qualities of the dharma” were “hidden”, the Yogācāra school endeavoured to “leave nothing hidden”.¹⁹⁹ This desire to “uncover” is well established in Yogācāra texts as the levels of consciousness are plumbed to discover and remedy what we call the subconscious (normally “hidden”) level of consciousness, the seed/store consciousness, *ālayavijñāna*. Further, in light of the meditative practice assumed by the school, one can read *samādhi* as *sam* (bring together) +

Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu, translated by Francis H. Cook, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1999

¹⁹⁷ The six consciousnesses are described as the activity of the five sense-organs plus the mind (*mano*), see King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 97

¹⁹⁸ Lusthaus, Dan, “Buddhism, Yogācāra School of,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 2, General Editor Edward Craig, London & New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 68

¹⁹⁹ Lusthaus, Dan, “Buddhism, Yogācāra School of,” *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 2, General Editor Edward Craig, London & New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 69

ādhi (to place on, put, to impregnate, to give, to receive) whereby *samādhi* “brings together the cognitive conditions such that the mind is “impregnated” and brings to term deep seeded conditions.”²⁰⁰ In other words, even Yogācāra meditation emphasises bringing what has been obscured or hidden to light as objects of cognition. Thus, on the basis of their own grounds for introducing the Yogācāra interpretations, one ought to consider where the probing search to uncover even the subconscious level of consciousness in order to reverse the construction of images and perceptions until there is “no mind that knows” has led as well as how effective this turning of the wheel has been and can be in establishing the clearly fundamental Buddhist “no-self” (*nairātmya/anāiman*).

In light of their own claims to provide clarification we can ask of the Yogācāra movement at least three related questions of efficacy. First, by psychologising the Abhidharma systematics, have the Yogācāra masters provided a clearer path to a transformative experience of enlightenment? Second, have the Yogācāra doctrines provided a necessary clarification and justification for the Mahāyāna Bodhisattva ideal not previously found in the Mādhyamika apophatic approach? Finally, through fusing the experiential aspect of praxis with systematic explanation, have the Yogācāra scholars provided a clearer path for personal liberation or merely established a self-defeating systematics?

Concerning the origins of Yogācāra doctrine

Many scholars have traced the development of the Yogācāra terminology in order to ascertain not only what the Yogācāra scholars meant in their teaching, but also to determine how close to the original Buddhist teachings the Yogācāra teachers remained. As the Madhyamaka, led by Nāgārjuna, used *śūnyatā* as a radical interpretive tool for the Buddha’s no-self (*nairātmya, anātman*), Rahula argues that Asanga and Vasubandhu chose *cittamātra* and *viśvāptimātra* to establish the very same teaching of *nairātmya*. Rahula points to the “early” texts in the Buddhist canon to authenticate the Yogācāra starting point of the constructing or imaginative working of the mind. The *Anguttara-nikāya* states that “... the world is led by thought (*citta*). By thought it is drawn along ...” (AN, II (PTS), p. 177, see also: *Samyutta-nikāya*, I (PTS), p. 39) and Asanga quotes this reference in his *Mahāyānasūtrāṅkāra*.²⁰¹ Additionally, in reference to the passage from *Samyutta-nikāya*

²⁰⁰ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 113

²⁰¹ Rahula, Walpola, *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*, London: Gordon Fraser, 1978, p. 81

“Nothing exists more than a name” (SN, I (PTS), p. 39), Rahula suggests that Asanga interprets *nāma-mātra* (“only a name”) to mean *viññaptimātra* (“only a conception”), again in the *Mahāyānasūtrālanakāra*.²⁰² Further to the references and development of mind and concept, Rahula makes the case that Asanga’s development of the *ālayavijñāna* is also based on early or orthodox Buddhist texts. In the *Mahāvaggavannanā* (Colombo 1900, p. 153) *alaya* is associated with an ‘attachment to the five sense-pleasures’.²⁰³ Rahula further draws attention to the similar “goals” in the following contexts: the Yogācāra “goal” is *āśraya-parāvṛtti* or a “revolution of *ālayavijñāna*” which points to *nirvāṇa*; in the *Angullaranikāya*, *ālayasamuggāṭa* or an “uprooting of *ālaya*” points to *nirvāṇa*; and the Pali term *khīṇabhīja* (here we are to recognise the reference to *bīja* “seed”, which suggests the Yogācāra *ālayavijñāna* as the seed storehouse) referring to an Arhat whose “seeds of defilements are destroyed”.²⁰⁴ These connection points are all plausible seed ideas from which the Yogācāra school developed their doctrine or “extension” teaching, the *Vaiśiṣṭya*. However, critics remain sceptical of the idea of seed-consciousness; Griffiths, for example, does not see evidence of a clear development of this doctrine in early Buddhist writings, and has described it as a “philosophical construct”²⁰⁵ of Yogācāra to explain how the early Buddhist doctrine of ‘no enduring self’ can co-exist philosophically with the equally foundational doctrine of *karma* in which the actions one performs in life are causally connected to the arising of further phenomena.

Schmithausen’s in-depth investigation into the origins of the Yogācāra *ālayavijñāna* shows the gradual growth and maturation of this ‘doctrine of the mind’ which in early literature lies hidden in the material sense-faculties but which gradually gains importance until it is established as a “fundamental constituent of personality, on a par with corporeal matter” and then eventually “superseding the latter [corporeal matter] in its function of basis [-of-personal-existence] (*āśraya*).”²⁰⁶ Accordingly, we see in Schmithausen’s analysis the gradual emphasis of the psychological and personal aspect of personhood taking precedence over the physical components. This shift in emphasis supports the suggestion that although the Abhidharma and Yogācāra teaching is different in content,

²⁰² Rahula, Walpola, *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*, London: Gordon Fraser, 1978, p. 82

²⁰³ Rahula, Walpola, *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*, London: Gordon Fraser, 1978, p. 82

²⁰⁴ Rahula, Walpola, *Zen and the Taming of the Bull*, London: Gordon Fraser, 1978, p. 99

²⁰⁵ Griffiths, Paul J., *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-body Problem*, La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1986, p. 93. Griffiths goes on to criticise the seed-consciousness doctrine for being incongruent with the early Buddhist understanding of consciousness which, like all other *dharma* is transitory. The seed-consciousness, he contends, contains the tendency for permanence (p. 95).

²⁰⁶ Schmithausen, Lambert, *Ālayavijñāna: On the Origin and the Early Development of a Central Concept of Yogācāra Philosophy*, Tokyo: Studia Philologica Buddhica, 1987, p. 29 and 51

their systematic approach is complementary. Furthermore, the shift away from physical elements, *dharmas*, to the multi-layered psyche/mind, *citta*, allows Yogācāra to explore questions of personal liberation and the plausibility of the *bodhisattva-marga*. Thus, the tension between a doctrinal systematic and liberative praxis is carried into even modern scholarly interpretation of the school.

Three Natures (*trisvabhāva*)

From the Mādhyamika perspective, the choice of the Yogācāra school to employ the very term *svabhāva*, specifically condemned by Nāgārjuna and the Madhyamika school, requires a certain justification, given the ongoing debate between Buddhist schools. The Mādhyamika had criticised the concept of *svabhāva* for, as they argued, it led to an ontological grounding which has no basis in Buddhist teaching, and furthermore it represented the end of any practical aspect of Buddhism for absolutes subvert the activity of liberation.²⁰⁷ The Yogācāra school not only employed the term, but developed out of it a theory concerning the psychological make-up of the self, the *ātman* and the world with which that self engages.

The theory of the three natures (*trisvabhāva*), or “the three forms of being (*svabhāva*)”²⁰⁸ is elucidated in Vasubandhu’s *Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa*²⁰⁹ in which the three natures are analysed in terms of their reality, existence, and their relation to the other two for ultimately, according to this treatise, they cannot be described independent of each other. As the treatise explains, the three-natures consist of: the imaginary nature (*parikalpita-svabhāva*), the dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*) and the ultimate or “absolutely accomplished”²¹⁰ nature (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*). The imaginary nature (*parikalpita-svabhāva*) is the fully illusionary “reality,” generated by the untrained mind, which constitutes the empirical world of duality (*samsāra*). The dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*) is the “unreal mental creation” (*asaṅkalpa*), the mind (*citta*), and is ultimately the cause or generator of the imaginary nature. The ultimate nature or “perfected aspect of

²⁰⁷ see chapter One on Nāgārjuna

²⁰⁸ Tola, F. and Dragonetti, C., “The Trisvabhavakatika of Vasubandhu,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 11 (1983), p. 232

²⁰⁹ Wood expresses doubt that the *Tri-svabhava-nirdeśa* is in fact an authentic work of Vasubandhu’s in Wood, Thomas F., *Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñānavāda*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, p. 31

²¹⁰ Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 90

experience"²¹¹ (*parinispāna-svabhāva*) is that "inalterable" reality which is the non-existence of duality, the perception of the wise, the enlightened, the buddha.

The dependent nature (*paratantra-svabhāva*) is the working of the mind (*citta*) which is divided conceptually into two parts, the seed or store-consciousness (*alayavijñāna*) and the active consciousness (*pravṛtтивijñāna*). The active consciousness is made up of the seven variant manifestations of consciousness, e.g. sensory data and mental cognition discussed above as part of the eight levels of consciousness. The seed-consciousness "holds" or "contains" the residue of conscious thought created by the mind; and this residue is "subliminal"²¹² in that it is not consciously registered by the active conscious. Eventually, the residual elements are "reactivated"²¹³ or "transformed"²¹⁴ as they pass from the seed-consciousness into the active consciousness and become manifest.

The three natures doctrine is metaphorically described in the example of an "elephant" conjured from a magic spell using pieces of wood. In this metaphor, Vasubandhu explains that the "elephant" is the "imagined aspect of experience"²¹⁵, the "image" or the "illusion" (the *parikalpita-svabhāva*). Its (the elephant's) appearance is the other-dependent nature or the "relative aspect" of mind which allows for dualistic rendering (the *paratantra-svabhāva*). This other-dependent or "relative aspect" of mind arises out of the store-consciousness and uses the activity of the seven remaining levels of consciousness to create or generate the illusion of the elephant. The "non-existence of the elephant" is the perfected view or the absolutely accomplished nature (*parinispāna-svabhāva*) which does not operate with a perception of duality and therefore does not "see" an elephant. The nature of the pieces of wood is not explored in this metaphor for it is irrelevant to the point at hand, namely the false constructing activity of the dependent nature.

²¹¹ Griffiths, Paul J., *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-body Problem*, La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1986, p. 89-90. He also translates it "perfected experience," *ibid*, p. 88.

²¹² Tola and Dragonetti's term from "The Trisvabhavakarika of Vasubandhu," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 11 (1983), p. 232

²¹³ Tola and Dragonetti's term from "The Trisvabhavakarika of Vasubandhu," *Journal of Indian Philosophy*, 11 (1983), p. 232

²¹⁴ Kochumuttom's term from Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982 p. 95

²¹⁵ Vasubandhu, verse 28 of the *Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa* translated by Griffiths, Paul J., *On Being Mindless: Buddhist Meditation and the Mind-body Problem*, La Salle, Ill: Open Court, 1986, p. 89

Vasubandhu further explains in the *Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa* that the appropriate approach to the three natures doctrine is a three-fold application of knowledge (*parijñā*), rejection (*parijñā*), and attainment (*prāpti*) whereby one comes to correctly understand that the subject-object reality is only imagined, at which point one ceases to participate in the duality of perceptions and effects a “direct realisation” (*sāksāt-kriyā*) into the three natures doctrine itself which is to say, one perceives reality as a Buddha.

What can be gained by viewing the self from the three-natures perspective? Why did the Yogācāra school put forward such a teaching, which at the outset appears problematic to the other Buddhist schools? This “positive” investigation of the mind, coupled with an intricate system of self-nature to contextualise the mind-only teaching, is set up in clear contrast to the sceptical Madhyamika approach of Nāgārjuna and his students. Asanga, in the *Dharmavinīscaya* (section concerning teaching) of the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (Compendium of Higher Teaching), addresses the issue of the value of language and concepts by cataloguing and analysing “four searches (*paryesanaā*)”. Asanga identifies (1) the search for names for which it must be concluded that the “own-characteristics (*svatadsanā*)” of names, phrases and consonants are “not absolute (*apariniṣpannā*)”; (2) the search for substances for which it must be concluded that the characteristics of the “aggregates (*skandhā*), elements (*dhātū*) and spheres (*āyatana*)” are “not absolute”; (3) the search for the “designation of own-nature (*svabhāvaṇṇaprajñāptiparyesana*)” for which it must be concluded that “with regard to the relationship between the name (*abhidhāna*) and the thing named (*abhidheya*), own-nature is only a designation (*prajñāptimātra*) in as much as it is a linguistic sign (*vyavahāranimitta*)”; and (4) the search for particularities for which it must be concluded that “with regard to the relationship between the name and the thing named, particularities are only designations in as much as they are linguistic signs.”²¹⁶ Asanga seems fully aware of the Madhyamika concern with the limitations of language to convey the Higher Teaching and clearly takes the view that a skilful approach to language as a medium for conveying Higher Teaching is the only recourse one has to lead a student toward a realisation of the Higher Teaching. In the same chapter, Asanga cautions that it is possible to appreciate and desire to penetrate the Higher Teaching and still fail specifically because of an “adherence to the meaning of the sound (letter) (*yathārutārthābhiniवेशā*)”. Further, even a bodhisattva may take a “superficial” approach to

²¹⁶ *Abhidharmasamuccaya: The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy)* by Asanga, trans. into French by Walpola Rahula, English by Sara Boin-Webb, Asian Humanities Press: Fremont CA 2001, p.185-6

the teaching (the Vaipulya) and consider it only according to “the meaning of the sound (letter) (*yatharūta*)”. In doing so, Asanga charges, the bodhisattva exhibits as many as twenty-eight false ideas, including the idea of “grasping”, “misapprehension”, “intense delusion”, even “repudiation of practice”.²¹⁷ Also included in the list of twenty-eight false ideas is the problem of the “idea of signs (*nimittadrsti*)” (*nimitta* means “external causes”²¹⁸) which is described in an explanatory note as

... grasp[ing] superficial signs and characteristics without understanding the profound meaning of the teaching ... one conforms to words, one clings to words. One arouses *abhiviveśa* “attachment”. One says *nihsvabhāvāḥ sarvadharmāḥ*, etc., but one is attached to superficial signs and characteristics.²¹⁹

Taking “signs and characteristics” for anything other than the empty pointers that they are is akin to giving them agency. The problem with an “external cause” in the Yogācāra system is that such a suggestion allows for a “real” subject-object duality when the Yogācāra school is arguing for a totally internal construction based on the grasper-grasped duality of consciousness. Lusthaus explains that *nimitta* “signifies the characteristic sensorial marks of an object (c.g. a snake’s color or shape), especially in the sense that such marks serve as the efficient cause (*nimitta-kāraṇa*) of the cognition of something that is observable.”²²⁰ Asanga is reinforcing that there is a correct and skilful approach to the Yogācāra Vaipulya, in which one is fully aware of the limitations and ultimate failure of language and conceptual-based teaching to generate the movement or change necessary in the mind for understanding the “profound meaning of the teaching”. Asanga therefore suggests that systems and elaborate doctrine (including that of the Yogācāra) are means that are never sufficient on their own for they are ultimately just signs, lacking any efficacy of their own. One is reminded of the caution that Nāgārjuna gives his students who might take his teaching utilising *śūnyatā* wrongly – it is as dangerous as handling a snake from the wrong end.

Dharmas are natureless (*nihsvabhāva*)

²¹⁷ *Abhidharmasamuccaya: The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy)* by Asanga, trans. into French by Walpola Rahula, English by Sara Boin-Webb, Asian Humanities Press: Fremont CA 2001, p. 190-1

²¹⁸ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 160

²¹⁹ *Abhidharmasamuccaya: The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy)* by Asanga, trans. into French by Walpola Rahula, English by Sara Boin-Webb, Asian Humanities Press: Fremont CA 2001, p. 190

²²⁰ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology. A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 227

In addition to the necessary awareness of a limitation in language, there is the question of where the teaching endeavours to lead and if it is successful in its method. Vasubandhu's *Trīṃśatikā* (Treatise in Thirty Stanzas) begins with a verse that suggests that all discussion of self (*ātman*) and *dharmas* is carried out in a metaphorical sense and is coherent only within the context of the activity of the consciousness:

The metaphor of self [*ātman*] and dharmas
Evolves in various ways
Upon the transformation of consciousness.²²¹

Kochumuttom suggests that Vasubandhu employs the terms *atman* and *dharmas* as broad categories meant to encompass all representations of subjectivity (*atman*) and objectivity (*dharmas*) and understands Vasubandhu to be establishing this wide array of subject-object duality in reference to the "transformations of consciousness."²²² That is, all creation of subject-object reality arises directly out of, and it wholly dependent upon the activity of the consciousness. Indeed, concepts (as the subject-object reality created by the mind) are really not different from the consciousness itself.²²³ Again, verse 17

This [threefold] transformation of consciousness
Is [just] the distinction [between subject and object];
What is thus distinguished,
Does not exist as [subject and object]
Therefore this is all mere representation of consciousness.²²⁴

Lusthaus prefers to speak of the problem of grasper/grasped duality rather than a subject/object duality lest we are led to think in ontological categories not addressed in Yogācāra Buddhism. The Yogācāra school of thought would insist that it is not an external subject-object struggle that the practitioner is engaged in, but the internal epistemological one of perception where the ego-consciousness, the mind, is deluded into creating a reality for itself to engage with. What both Kochumuttom and Lusthaus

²²¹ *Trīṃśatikā* vs. 1, *Three Texts on Consciousness Only: Demonstration of Consciousness Only by Hsüan-tsang, The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu, The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu*, translated by Francis H. Cook, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1999, p. 377

²²² Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 128-133

²²³ Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 133

²²⁴ *Trīṃśatikā* vs. 17, Kochumuttom's translation in Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 146

agree on, however, is the propensity toward a false duality that the ego-consciousness engages in when "reality" is decidedly non-dual. The subsequent verses explain that the "transformation of consciousness" consists of the *ālaya* or store consciousness, the *manas* or thought consciousness, and the 'perception of the object' consciousness with its sixfold distinctions. In other words, the treatise is speaking of what the Yogācāra tradition has called the eight-fold consciousness, as discussed above. Thus, when engaging in the "world" of the consciousness, one utilises the concepts of self and *dharmas* metaphorically and not as expressions of profound reality. That is, the world of duality in which "grasper" and the "object grasped" encounter each other is seen by the Yogācāra school as evolving out of the activity of the eight-fold consciousness. The treatise emphasises this fact by first describing the make-up and working of the three natures in some detail, and then in verses 23 through 25 announces that the whole purpose of the teaching of the three-natures theory is to arrive at the realisation that *dharmas* are truly natureless in their profound reality:

On the basis of these three natures
 The threefold naturelessness is established.
 Therefore, the Buddha taught with a hidden intention
 That all dharmas are natureless.²²⁵

That is, *dharmas* are wholly dependent upon the movement (transformation) of the mind (*citta*), and their appearance, as established by the three-natures doctrine, arises ultimately from the *ālaya* or store consciousness. In other words, *dharmas* have no nature of their own, but depend upon the activity of the *citta*. Thus, the three-natures doctrine establishes the naturelessness of *dharmas* by demonstrating their origin in the ego-consciousness, which is itself, according to orthodox Buddhist teaching and reinforced by the Yogācāra texts, natureless. Verse 24 shows this progression of naturelessness, implying the coordinate three natures:

The first is naturelessness of characteristics [*lakṣana*];
 The next is naturelessness of self-existence;
 The last is the nature that results from the privation of the former
 Self and dharmas that are grasped.²²⁶

²²⁵ *Trīṃśatikā* vs. 23, *Three Texts on Consciousness Only: Demonstration of Consciousness Only by Hsüan-tsang, The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu, The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu*, translated by Francis H. Cook, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1999, p. 381

²²⁶ *Trīṃśatikā* vs. 24, *Three Texts on Consciousness Only: Demonstration of Consciousness Only by Hsüan-tsang, The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu, The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only by*

The imaginary nature (*parikalpita*) is the “illusion” that there are characteristics to perceptions. The dependent nature (*paratantra*) works from the activity of duality which generates the material which “substantiates” the *parikalpita*. And the ultimate or accomplished nature (*pariniṣpanna*) is the direct realisation into the ultimate nature of the three natures: that they are all empty (*śūnya*), natureless (*nibsvabhāva*).

This is the ultimate truth of all dharmas
 And is also the same as true suchness,
 Because it is eternally so in its nature.
 It is the true nature of consciousness only.²²⁷

Kochumuttom views the discussion of the three-natures doctrine as the establishment of the concept of non-duality as the ultimate description of no-self. The *Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa* (*A Treatise on the Three Natures*) explains that the three-natures doctrine is not a description of three independent realities, rather, the three natures are “not mutually different in definition.”²²⁸ Through implementing a dialect of existence/non-existence and duality/non-duality, Kochumuttom reads Vasubandhu as showing that the three natures ultimately share a conceptual basis, that is, non-duality:

All these three natures
 Depend for their definition
 On [the concept of] non-duality;
 For, [with reference to the imagined nature],
 There is the unreality of duality,
 [With reference to the other-dependent nature],
 It is not in the dual form in which it appears,
 And, [with reference to the absolutely accomplished nature],
 It is by its nature the absence of that duality.²²⁹

Similarly, in the *Trīṃśatikā* the “absolutely accomplished nature” (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*), Vasubandhu explains, relates to the “other-dependent nature” (*parikalpita-svabhāva*) as the

Vasubandhu, translated by Francis H. Cook, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1999, p. 381-2

²²⁷ *Trīṃśatikā* vs. 25, *Three Texts on Consciousness Only: Demonstration of Consciousness Only by Hsüan-tsang, The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu, The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu*, translated by Francis H. Cook, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1999, p. 382

²²⁸ *Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa* vs. 10, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 98

²²⁹ *Tri-svabhāva-nirdeśa* vs. 26, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 111

“perpetual devoidness” of such other dependency, or duality.²³⁰ One must “realise” that the “subject-object designations” are all “mere representation of consciousness” to move out of such a mundane perception and achieve supramundane knowledge.²³¹ Again, Sthiramati’s commentary explains that this “realization of mere representation of consciousness is equated with ‘seeing the thing as such’ (*yathā-bhūta-darśana*)”.²³² Thus, profound reality as such is not equated with “mind” nor “mind activity” but with the realisation that all form perceived in a pre-enlightened state is “mind only” or entirely unreal. What *is* real can only be perceived by the “great sage” who utilises “supramundane knowledge” and “has no mind that knows”:

That indeed is the supramundane knowledge [*jñāna*]
 When one has no mind [*acitta*] that knows,
 And no object for its support [*anupalambhā*];
 It follows the revulsion [*parāvṛtti*] of basis
 Through the twofold removal of wickedness;

That itself is the pure source-reality [*dhātu*],
 Incomprehensible, auspicious and unchangeable;
 Being delightful, it is the emancipated body [*vimukti-kāya*],
 Which is also called the truth[-body] [*dharmakāya*] of the great sage.²³³

Thus, the distinction is made between the functioning of the eight levels of consciousness, which is both dependent upon and generates the dualistic construct of language and a dualistic construct of the lived-world, and the functioning of the true nature of consciousness-only which does not construct a dualistic lived-world, but penetrates the “ultimate truth of all dharmas”, emptiness or naturelessness itself. What seems to be suggested is a “two-fold truth” of consciousness in which, as in Nāgārjuna’s understanding, emptiness or naturelessness is the common defining “character” of each level, what Kochumuttom calls non-dualism. Not creating a dualistic lived-world via the eight-fold working of the consciousness is what is meant by “no-mind” or “there is no mind that knows”. Directly realising emptiness is an experience beyond the mundane categories of knowledge and perception. What is *not* meant by this description of the

²³⁰ *Triṃśatikā* vs. 21, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 154

²³¹ *Triṃśatikā* vs. 26-28, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 158-159

²³² Sthiramati, *Triṃśatikā* Bb. 28, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 160

²³³ *Triṃśatikā* 29-30, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogacarin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 160

“true nature of consciousness only” is that there is no profound reality beyond what the mind creates. Recalling the metaphor of conjuring an elephant out of pieces of wood, the Yogācāra school is not as concerned with the nature of the pieces of wood as penetrating the true nature of consciousness through which liberation comes. Whatever the nature of the pieces of wood, the important factor for the accomplished nature is that the elephant is not perceived as an ultimately real entity. Perhaps seeing things as they are, *yathābhūtam*, is for the accomplished nature “no-perception” or what is meant by a “non-conceptual” (*nirvikalpa*) perception. Or again in the example from Vasubandhu’s *Vimsatikā* of the person suffering from cataracts of the eye who sees a hair across his/her vision: there is no hair, and the hair perceived is not ontologically “created” by the individual’s mind, but is merely an illusionary perception by the person suffering from the vision problem. The illusionary perception will necessarily be brought to bear on the existential experience of the person and it is at this level that one can muse about the “creation” of something. For indeed, although the hair does not ontologically enter the realm of profound reality, it does alter the way the subject is able to interact, understand and engage profound reality. In this way, it is clear that Yogācāra concern lies within the realm of the existential rather than idealistic. Lusthaus claims that Yogācāra exposes the solipsism and narcissism of the mundane cognitive world; that arriving at “no-self” for Yogācāra Buddhism is to undermine the narcissistic ego-consciousness by negating the object (*artha*). Without an object, the self is thereby negated.²³⁴ Yogācāra then uses naturelessness as an expression of *sūnyatā* to establish no-self, not in the manner of expressing physical substancelessness but rather to convert the ego that lies at the base of the human conglomeration of *skandhas* and consciousness.

Tension between “no-self” and perfected self

Wood suggests that verses 25 and 29-30 of the *Trimsikā* contradict each other in defining what is meant by “mind only” or “the nature of mind only” (*viññaptimātratā/vijñānamātratva*). In verse 25, it is stated that “The true nature of mind only (*viññaptimātratā*) is the true nature (*paramārtha*) of all *dharma*s, because, remaining as it is at all times (*sarvakālam tathā-bhāvāt*) it is suchness (*tathatā*).” This suggests that “mind only” refers to what is immutable, to the suchness of reality (and also *sūnyatā* as Wood

²³⁴ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 539

points out)²³⁵. Contrast this to verses 29-30, stated above, in which it is suggested that in the realm of no mind (*acitta*) and no perception is the source reality or “pure realm” (*dhātu*) and one is confronted with, what is for Wood, the “unacceptable conclusion” that “mind only” in its pure form is really “no mind,” that it both reflects the immutable aspects of reality as well as arises dependent on causes and conditions. Wood cites what he describes as Sthiramati’s “murky” commentary on this passage to underline his thesis that Vasubandhu is attempting to line up the Mahāyāna idea of the unoriginating, unchanging nature of things (*paramārtha*) with the orthodox Buddhist teaching that the mind, like any other *skandha*, is based on the reality of mutability and change.²³⁶ Sthiramati says,

The self nature of the perfected nature is the true nature of things. Since the perfected nature is the true nature of the *dharmas* which are essentially dependent on causes and conditions – that is, because such is the very nature of things (*dharmatā*) – the perfected nature alone is the self nature of things. In truth, everything lacks a self nature (*paramārtha-niḥsvabhāvatā*) in virtue of the non-existent self nature (*abhāva-svabhāvatvāt*) of the perfected nature.²³⁷

Wood identifies a struggle in the Yogācārin texts between a Mahāyāna teaching of essence and immutability with the classic Buddhist doctrine of dependent co-origination (*pratitya-samutpāda*). Thus, the Yogācārin texts provide the conceptual groundwork for the working out of what Wood has identified as a tension between the doctrine of *pratitya-samutpāda* and that of *dharmadātu* and *tathāgatagarbha*, the concept of immutable essence that takes different forms in Mahāyāna texts.

UEDA, conversely, returns to Sthiramati’s commentary on *karika* 28 to elucidate Vasubandhu’s meaning, part of which reads:

... the Yogin ... sees an object as it really is (*yathābhūtārtha*) ... and the mind is established in the state of being aware of everything as well as of itself as they

²³⁵ Wood, Thomas E., *Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñānavāda*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, p. 56. Wood also finds that the understanding of *śūnyatā* in the Yogācārin texts deviates from the earlier Buddhist concept of the emptiness of all *dharma*. What Wood calls the “other emptiness” in Yogācāra may point toward the reality that mind is *asaṁ* in that mind is “false or deceptive”, however, this does not achieve the same effect as the Mahāyāna doctrine “that all *dharmas* are void (*sarva-dharma-śūnyatā*).” p. 26

²³⁶ Wood, Thomas E., *Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñānavāda*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, p. 59

²³⁷ Wood, Thomas E., *Mind Only: A Philosophical and Doctrinal Analysis of the Vijñānavāda*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1991, p. 59

really are. There is not only (no object) to be grasped (and there is no grasping consciousness either) but also there arises the super-mundane, non-conceptualizing vision in which subject and object (*ālambhya-ālambhaka*) are identical with each other without nullifying and extinguishing their distinction (*sama-sama*).²³⁸

UEDA's understanding is that Vasubandhu and Sthiramati describe with the doctrine *vijñaptimātratā* nothing other than reality as it is: non-duality *realised*. This is to say, the mind, as "grasper," does not see objects to be grasped as such, but in fact the mind must "become identified" with the "object" so that whatever takes place through this new non-dual "perception" is experienced in an entirely different way.²³⁹ As UEDA illustrates:

... the mountain is seen from within, or by itself without the seer outside it ... thus, when the mind sees a thing as it really is, it is the mind seeing itself as it really is, and, at the same time, by losing itself in the mountain (no-mind), the mind sees the mountain from within, or, as it were, the mountain is seen by the mountain. There is no seer outside except for the mountain.²⁴⁰

What UEDA describes as the *identification* of subject and object seems to be related to what is meant by "non-conceptual" (*nirvikalpa*) perception, or "non-conceptual awareness" (*nirvikalpa jñāna*) which has its roots in the Indian Nyaya school of philosophy. Sponberg notes that the meaning of *nirvikalpa jñāna* can be rendered "non-discriminating" but also carries the positive connotations of "direct and intuitive cognition of the Absolute", or more simply, "intuitive wisdom".²⁴¹ The Nyaya school made a distinction between "determinate conceptual perceptions" (*vikalpa*), which include sensory and consciousness data expressed via language and other determined routes, and "indeterminate, non-conceptual perceptions" (*nirvikalpa jñāna*) which constitute the initial contact a subject has with reality. These non-conceptual perceptions create experience which is ineffable and without the possibility of error. Error can only occur once the subject engages in sensory and/or mind activity.²⁴² Asanga's *The Summary of the Great Vehicle* devotes a chapter to explaining the degrees of *nirvikalpa jñāna* (there are three) and the way this intuitive wisdom works to achieve what Sponberg considers the

²³⁸ UEDA, Yoshifumi, "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 17 (1967) Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, p. 163-4

²³⁹ UEDA, Yoshifumi, "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 17 (1967) Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, p. 164

²⁴⁰ UEDA, Yoshifumi, "Two Main Streams of Thought in Yogācāra Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 17 (1967) Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, p. 164-5

²⁴¹ Sponberg, Alan, "Dynamic Liberation in Yogācāra Buddhism," *JLABS* 1979:2, p. 52

²⁴² see King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 151

“characteristic Yogācāra innovation of an explicitly dynamic notion of liberation.”²⁴³ The three degrees of *nirvikalpa jñāna* are 1) the preliminary stage in which the bodhisattva endeavours to pursue this intuitive wisdom upon the faith of hearing about it from others who have achieved it; 2) the fundamental or root stage in which the bodhisattva achieves this intuitive wisdom personally; 3) and a “subsequently-acquired” stage which is the “fruit” of the second or fundamental stage.²⁴⁴ In other words, it is not enough in Yogācāra Buddhism for a bodhisattva to achieve intuitive wisdom personally, but the true bodhisattva must commit this break-through to practical activity. Compassionate activity comes on the heels of the personal achievements of those who would emulate the Buddha.

Interestingly, here the Yogācāra school is using a concept which establishes the direction that is taken by subsequent Chinese/Japanese schools of *returning to* or attempting to *recover* the initial error-free perceptual experience. This effort is seen in Chinese idealism and exposed with the parable of the 6th patriarch who likens the error of attempting to recover the pure self to one who would polish a mirror clean of dirt and find the true unblemished surface beneath.²⁴⁵ What the movement of *return* and *reversal* indicate is the circular nature of religious awakening whereby the boundaries of experiencing truth and untruth are blurred to allow the movement between them to occur. What the image of a circle doesn't allow for is the absolute boundarilessness of the Buddhist direct penetrating experience of awakening, an experience completely non-graspable. Once the direction of ‘return’ is suggested, it is a short step to idealistic and ontological arguments which pull away from the more uncertain space of how *nirvikalpa jñāna* is used in some Yogācāra texts as an expression of “no self” in nonduality, ultimately beyond the scope of language and open only to the realm of experience. The nonduality expressed through a “direct and intuitive cognition of the Absolute” balances the apparent opposite poles of “no-self” and “perfected self” by establishing no-self in the realm of experience. By working to keep no-self in the realm of activity, whereby a bodhisattva will continue to engage in ‘perfecting’ levels of meditation and practice whilst engaged in the compassionate activity of leading others to liberation, the tension between ‘no-self’ and ‘perfected self’ will not and should not be reconciled, but remain a paradoxical reality.

²⁴³ Sponberg, Alan, “Dynamic Liberation in Yogācāra Buddhism,” *JLABS* (1979:2), p. 53

²⁴⁴ Sponberg, Alan, “Dynamic Liberation in Yogācāra Buddhism,” *JLABS* (1979:2), p. 53

²⁴⁵ The direction of reversal is also exhibited in NISHIDA's philosophy whereby he attempts to recover an “intuitive” experience of reality through cultivation, best accomplished via the arts or religion.

Dan Lusthaus states that, in general “Buddhism is concerned with seeing, not being, that is, epistemology rather than ontology” for questioning being is “a misleading category error.”²⁴⁶ Furthermore, he argues that “Yogācāra may be deemed a type of epistemological idealism” in that it insists “we shift our attention to the epistemological and psychological conditions that compel us to construct and attach to ontological theories.”²⁴⁷ Likewise, when Kochumuttom analyses the *vijñapti-mātrata* (consciousness only) doctrine, he concludes that “basically, *vijñapti-mātrata* is an epistemological theory” in which “one’s (empirical) experience of objects is determined by one’s psychic dispositions, especially the idiosyncrasy for subject-object distinction, and that, therefore, one in the state of *samsāra* can not know the things in their suchness (*tathatā*). Kochumuttom further explains that Sthirimati’s explanation that “*śūnyatā* is considered defiled or purified depending upon whether it is looked at from the sphere of *samsāra* [or] *nirvāna* (MK 1.22)”²⁴⁸ reinforces the epistemological argument. However, it must be recognised that this is a different approach to *śūnyatā* than what is put forward in Nāgārjuna’s teaching. What lies “beyond” conceptualisation for Nāgārjuna is never described in such absolute terms. At most, there is the suggestion that the bliss of experiencing the ultimate can be anticipated. However, nothing like the descriptions of “pure” and/or “eternal” are entertained by the Madhyamika contingent. Further, there has occurred a shift in the understanding of *śūnyatā* by Sthirimati from the relativising tool of deconstruction used against any and every concept, including itself, to a kind of realm, an ultimate in and of itself. What Nāgārjuna explicitly warns against, that is, using or entertaining “self-nature” in any instance, seems to have snared at least the rhetoric of some Yogācāra masters. Perhaps care was taken after the systematic explanation of the three-natures (*tri-svabhāva*) to eloquently drive the narrative toward “no-self” and paradoxically step beyond self-nature with “empty self-nature” (*niḥsvabhāva*); however, have and can the same steps be taken in reference to *śūnyatā*, *tathāgata*, etc? This is the troubling legacy which the language, in addition to the interpretation, of the Yogācāra school, has helped establish.

Conversion of the basis (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*)

²⁴⁶ Lusthaus, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1989; <http://www.rep.routledge.com>

²⁴⁷ Lusthaus, *Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 1989; <http://www.rep.routledge.com>

²⁴⁸ Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 84

Convinced that there is a much stronger alliance between the Mādhyamaka and Yogācāra schools, NAGAO writes that because of the emphasis on *vijñāna* (cognition) of the Yogācāra school, “to the universal [Mādhyamika *sūnyatā*] there was added the particular, the individual, and thereby the concrete seen in yogic practices emerged on the stage of *sūnyatā*, the abstract.”²⁴⁹ In addition to bringing forward the individual through concrete practice, NAGAO sees the Yogācāra doctrine of the conversion of the basis (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*) as the counter-balance to Mādhyamika negativity, specifically Nāgārjuna’s *sūnyatā*. I have already discussed in the previous chapter the problem and misunderstanding of *sūnyatā* viewed solely from a negative perspective, as NAGAO purports. However, NAGAO’s suggestion that the Yogācāra school engages the individual in perhaps a more concrete manner, through the insistence of a concrete practice and hence an existential transformative experience is worth investigating. Interpretations based around epistemological idealism or realism, or non-duality make no more sense in Yogācāra than in any Buddhist school when existentially one confronts *duḥkha*. The Yogācāra “conversion of the basis” is key in locating the school’s Vaipulya in the larger context of Buddhist practice.

Vasubandhu describes in the *Triṃśatikā* the workings of the three-natures doctrine and concludes by stating that only through a “transmutation of support” (*āśraya-parāvṛtti*) or a “conversion of the basis” (Nagao’s rendering)²⁵⁰ does one cease creating unreal images with the mind. At this point, one has attained the supra-mundane knowledge which is nothing short of the source reality (*dhātu*), the truth-body (*dharmakāya*) of the Tathāgata. When Asanga writes in the *Summary* of the Dharma body (the *dharmakāya* of the Tathāgata), he also describes the “conversion of support” whereby “the dependent pattern with impurities is eliminated” and converted instead to a “dependent pattern in pure aspect.”²⁵¹ In Asanga’s Dharma body all the outward manifestations of a conventional body have been “converted” so that the *skandhas* such as form, sensation,

²⁴⁹ NAGAO, Gadjin M., *Mādhyamika and Yogavara*, edited and translated by L.S. KAWAMURA, Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991, 123

²⁵⁰ Francis Cook translates *āśraya-parāvṛtti* “transmutation of the support” and defines it as a “crucial change in the nature and function of ordinary consciousness and personality. It ends delusion and error and precipitates a pristine, nondeluded cognition of events, which is the awakened perception of a Buddha.” *Three Texts on Consciousness Only: Demonstration of Consciousness Only by Hsüan-tsang, The Thirty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu, The Treatise in Twenty Verses on Consciousness Only by Vasubandhu*, trans. Francis H. Cook, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 1999, p. 374

²⁵¹ Asanga, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, trans. from the Chinese of Paramārtha (Taishō, Volume 31, Number 1593) by John P. Keenan, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: California, 1992, p. 105

conceptualisation etc. are expressions of purification or mastery.²⁵² And yet, lest one think of this “conversion” in a dualistic manner in which impurities are systematically scrubbed clean, Asanga also insists that “There is nothing that can be awakened, but it is not the case that there is no perfectly awakened one at all. At every moment [Buddhas] are immeasurable and are manifested through the non-existence of existence.”²⁵³ In the *Trimsatika*, “abiding in perfect bodhi *changes* beings forever” (my emphasis). After the “transformation of support” the “liberation body” is realised.

Quite noticeable in these descriptions of the conversion of the *alaya* consciousness is the emphasis placed on “body”, even a proper working of *skandhas* which operate in and among the world of form, *rūpa*. Lusthaus supports this understanding of the conversion of the *alaya* consciousness which necessarily depends on the realm of form with his analysis of how the Yogācāra *tri-svabhāva* system parallels one version of the *arūpya-jñāna* progression. Although the subject of contention in early Buddhist dialogue, and continued scholarly dispute,²⁵⁴ one version of the story of the Buddha’s death suggests that he progressed through the *rūpa-jñāna* and then *arūpya-jñāna* levels of meditation, only to then descend completely and pass through the *rūpa-jñāna* levels once more before he died. This story, if accepted by the Yogācāra school, supports according to Lusthaus, the idea of the *rūpa-dhātu* as the typically Mahāyāna “middle way” between extremes such that the ideal is not *arūpya* but instead a purified or converted *rūpa*.²⁵⁵ This is how the *alaya* consciousness should be approached, that is, not as something to be annihilated or as the stream that should be completely dried up, but as the consciousness which needs to be penetrated, all aspects unveiled, and the working of the mind seen for exactly what it is as a dependent nature. This seeing things for what they are/are becoming (*yathā-bhūtam*) is the ultimate goal for the Yogācāra and it does not entail leaving one realm of existence (the existence of *vijñāpti-mātra*) for another (some transcendental ultimate realm). Sponberg notes that in Asvabhāva’s commentary on Asanga’s *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, Asvabhāva identifies as the “antidote” which instigates the revolution involved in *āśraya-*

²⁵² Asanga, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, trans. from the Chinese of Paramārtha (Taishō, Volume 31, Number 1593) by John P. Keenan, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: California, 1992, p. 107

²⁵³ Asanga, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, trans. from the Chinese of Paramārtha (Taishō, Volume 31, Number 1593) by John P. Keenan, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: California, 1992, p. 113

²⁵⁴ Schmithausen and Schmit-Leukel for example do not recognize this version of the Buddha’s enlightenment

²⁵⁵ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch’eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 99

paravṛtti, “non-discriminating cognition (*nirvikalpa jñāna*)”.²⁵⁶ Sponberg goes on to assert that to support the teaching that a bodhisattva could be free from *samsāric* conditioning yet continue to work actively in the realm of *samsāra* to free other humans, the Yogācāra school promoted the working of *nirvikalpa jñāna* which would allow for a direct seeing into *samsāra* without partaking of the cognitive activity of *samsāra*. This view of Yogācāra teaching – the penetrating experience of *nairātmya* – brings together what was earlier identified as the two emphases that create tension in the development of the school’s doctrine, that of realising “no mind” and that of purifying the mind.

To return to the *Triṃśikā* verse 22:

As long as this absolutely accomplished nature
Is not seen,
That other-dependent nature, too,
Is not seen.²⁵⁷

Which is to say, without the perspective of the ultimate vantage point, one does not see the dependent nature as it is, in its suchness, i.e. as a mind which engages in constructing imaginary cognitive structures. Only the perspective from the absolutely accomplished nature can make it clear. And verse 25 clarifies how the absolutely accomplished nature “sees”:

That from which all elements have their ultimate reality,
[Is the third naturelessness,]
It is also called suchness,²⁵⁸

Suchness, *tathatā*, is that direct knowledge of reality in its imaginary and other forms which signifies an awakening. As Lusthaus asserts:

... *tathatā* does not so much involve the eradication of delusion as such, as much as it involves seeing delusion *as delusion* ... When a delusion is recognized as a delusion, in an important sense it no longer functions as a delusion. Instead its delusive power is neutralized and it is understood simply as a phenomenon. A phenomenon, however, is understood by the

²⁵⁶ Sponberg, Alan, “Dynamic Liberation in Yogācāra Buddhism”, *JIAS* (1979, 2:1), p. 51

²⁵⁷ *Triṃśatikā* vs. 22, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 156

²⁵⁸ *Triṃśatikā* vs. 25, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 157

Buddhist as a complex web of conditionality. Thus, properly understood, *tathatā* is synonymous with *pratītya-samutpāda*, i.e., conditionality.²⁵⁹

So, although the epistemological edge of *Yogācāra* is evident and forcefully argued by both Kochumuttom and Lusthaus, still there is the insistence that what is meant by direct knowledge (*nirvikalpa jñāna*), or “seeing things for what they are/becoming” *tathatā* or *yathā-bhūtam*, as Lusthaus admits above, cannot be extricated from experience. Again, the *Trisūka* verse 27-8:

One does not abide in the realization
Of mere representations of consciousness
Just on account of the [theoretical] perception
That all this is mere representation of consciousness,
If one places [=sees] something before oneself.

One does abide in the realization
Of mere [representation of] consciousness
When one does not perceive also a supporting consciousness,
For, the graspable objects being absent,
There cannot either be the grasping of that,
[Namely, the grasping of the supporting consciousness].²⁶⁰

In short, theory does not give release. Only the true experience of the accomplished nature, in which one is released from the activity of grasping, can account for direct knowledge. Thus, even though the *Yogācāra* school has certainly developed and established an intricate theory of cognition, this is not to supplant experience and praxis.

Meditation

With regard to the importance of meditation within the context of teaching, Asanga states unequivocally that the person striving to “dwell in the teachings” cannot rely on the teachings alone but must engage in meditation and that, vice-versa, engaging in meditation is not sufficient in itself but must be coupled with listening and reflecting on the teachings for its full value.²⁶¹ Asanga makes it clear that the systematic teaching of the *Yogācāra* school is not meant to stand in the place of Buddhist practice, but rather that both aspects of theory and praxis are complementary and indeed co-dependent on

²⁵⁹ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 255-6

²⁶⁰ *Trisūka* vs 27-28, Kochumuttom, Thomas, A., *A Buddhist Doctrine of Experience: A New Translation and Interpretation of the Works of Vasubandhu the Yogācārin*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 1982, p. 159

²⁶¹ *Abhidharmasamuccaya: The Compendium of the Higher Teaching (Philosophy)* by Asanga, trans. into French by Walpola Rahula, English by Sara Boin-Webb, Asian Humanities Press: Fremont CA 2001, p. 188

each other for full value, to move intellectual understanding toward the “profound meaning of the teaching,” knowledge toward penetrating insight.

Asanga, in *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, investigates how meditation moves the bodhisattva forward in attaining the stages of perfection which allow for spiritual maturing. There is a point at which the bodhisattva is ready to “once again become aware of conscious construction only” which Asanga describes as the moment meditation and the teaching fuse to achieve the same end:

Through a transcendent wisdom of quietude and insight focused on the all-pervading doctrine and through a wisdom characterized by a variety of images and conscious constructs attained subsequent to non-imaginative wisdom [nirvikalpa jnana], he eradicates all the causal seeds in his fundamental container consciousness and nurtures all the seeds that enable one to contact the Dharma body. He converts his support and comes to attain the true qualities of all Tathāgatas, and he attains the wisdom of omniscience. This is why he [again] becomes aware of conscious construction only.

Seeing magical illusions in all the constructs that arise from the container consciousness and all the images of those imagined constructs, that wisdom attained subsequently to non-imaginative wisdom is fundamentally exempt from error. Just as a magician is himself undecieved by his magic tricks, so the bodhisattva, when enunciating the path of cause and result, always remains free from error in all his descriptions.²⁶²

Thus, Asanga explains the bodhisattva’s ability, through the merging of perfect meditation and doctrine and the subsequent transformation that occurs to the bodhisattva, to remain and occupy the “space” of mind-only, yet not be deceived by the illusionary reality of mind-only.

Asanga further expands his discourse on the bodhisattva’s meditation practice by asserting that once the bodhisattva has achieved a concentration that “bring[s] to presence the truth not mediated through language” and further “intensifies his meditative practices in order to bring about an attainment of the three Buddha bodies”,²⁶³ that

²⁶² Asanga, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, trans. from the Chinese of Paramārtha (Taishō, Volume 31, Number 1593) by John P. Keenan, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: California, 1992, p. 68

²⁶³ Asanga, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, trans. from the Chinese of Paramārtha (Taishō, Volume 31, Number 1593) by John P. Keenan, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: California, 1992, p. 69

meditation is more than a means to an end. Asanga quotes from the *Treatise on Meditating on Conscious Construction*:

In states of quiescence the bodhisattva
 Understands that images exist only in his mind,
 And, abandoning externalized ideas of objects,
 He assuredly understands them to be only his own thoughts.
 Abiding within himself, the bodhisattva
 Understands that the objective realm does not exist,
 And also that the subjective realm is empty.
 He then directly experiences the unobtainability of both.²⁶⁴

This can be read as an abbreviated description of how the Yogācāra path internalises the Abhidharma concern with *dharma* elements to describe the working of the psyche, clarifies the Madhyamika emptiness, and maintains the experiential component of awakening, for without this last practical aspect the bodhisattva cannot pursue the compassionate work of instructing and freeing others.

Furthermore, this passage highlights the similarity Yogācāra thought has with Nāgārjuna's two-truths whereby emptiness renders both realms of *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa* relative and reverses any action of transcendence. Here, the Yogācāra practitioner internalises the argument so that neither the subjective ego realm nor an objective external realm of dharma activity can claim transcendence. The non-duality described by the Yogācāra text is not the opposite of duality but rather "neither-nor" which is how the super-mundane is commonly described by language which always falls short. King maintains that

For the Yogācāra school the doctrine of emptiness (*sūnyatā*) is 're-located' into a phenomenological and meditative context. To realise that everything is empty is to understand that the entirety of one's experience is devoid of subject (*grāhaka*, 'one who grasps') and an object (*grāhya*, 'that which is grasped'). This does not mean that there is nothing at all but rather to clarify precisely what is real and in what sense it is so.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁴ Asanga, *The Summary of the Great Vehicle*, trans. from the Chinese of Paramārtha (Taishō, Volume 31, Number 1593) by John P. Keenan, Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research: California, 1992, p. 69

²⁶⁵ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 99

King also identifies in the Yogācāra path the reality that “We are only truly aware of our own perceptions, not sure of anything external; all we can depend on is our experience.”²⁶⁶

Clearly the Yogācāra doctrine is not intended to substitute the Abhidharma material *dharma*s for the psychologised and internalised substrata of the mind, or *ālaya*, yet the parallels in systematic development are obvious. Anacker points out the tension in Vasubandhu whom he sees as both asserting “nothing” along with the Madhyamaka *śūnyavāda* and at the same time prescribing a “therapeutic course of action (*ācāra*) rooted in meditation (*yoga*).”²⁶⁷ This tension is not confined to Vasubandhu’s treatises, but is also evident in Asaṅga, as has been shown in the texts above. And the tension is not debilitating to the Yogācāra argument but in fact integral to it in that *śūnyatā* and meditation therapy come together to define the individual liberation experience. Thus, Yogācāra asserts criticism both on the Abhidharma pre-occupation with the material realm which is not how it appears, and on Madhyamika *śūnyatā* for not recognising how *śūnyatā* redefines individual experience, actualising it so that the Dharma can properly be worked out.

Lusthaus’ summary of the Yogācāra position is useful to these concluding remarks:

The mind doesn’t create the physical world, but it produces the interpretative categories through which we know and classify the physical world, and it does this so seamlessly that we mistake our interpretations for the world itself. Those interpretations, which are projections of our desires and anxieties, become obstructions (*āvaraṇa*) preventing us from seeing what is actually the case. In simple terms we are blinded by our own self-interests, our own prejudices (which means what is already prejudged), our desires. Unenlightened cognition is an appropriative act. Yogācāra does not speak about subjects and objects; instead it analyzes perception in terms of graspers (*grāhaka*) and what is grasped (*grāhya*).

Consciousness projects and constructs a cognitive object in such a way that it disowns its own creation – pretending the object is “out there” – in order to render that object capable of being appropriated ... That self-deception folded into the very act of cognition is what Yogācārins term *abhūta-parikalpa*. Realization of *vijñāpti-mātra* exposes this trick intrinsic to consciousness’s workings, catching it in the act, so to speak, thereby

²⁶⁶ King, Richard, *Indian Philosophy: An Introduction to Hindu and Buddhist Thought*, Edinburgh University Press, 1999, p. 98

²⁶⁷ Anacker, Stefan, *Seven Works of Vasubandhu: the Buddhist Psychological Doctor*, Motilal Banarsidass: Delhi, 1984, p. 194.

eliminating it. When that deception is removed one's mode of cognition is no longer termed *vijñāna* (consciousness); it has become direct cognition (*jñāna*).²⁶⁸

One might say, then, that the activity generating experience is as much in question for Yogācāra Buddhism as the epistemological foundation of reality. "Seeing" things correctly is better defined within an experiential field, at least for Mahāyāna Buddhism which in its different forms is always concerned with how the bodhisattva teaches or otherwise relates to the unenlightened. As explored in the previous chapter, Nāgārjuna implemented a deconstructive four-fold negation, paralleling an *arūpya-jñāna* progression of meditation, in order to lead the practitioner out of the realms of limitation, field by field, until there is nothing left by which to define and characterise experience; his method has completely transformed traditional Buddhist activities and teaching. According to his own assertions, the Four Noble Truths and entirety of the Buddha's teaching can only be implemented and acted upon in light of *śūnyatā*. Similar in motive, yet differently oriented, is the Yogācāra endeavour to uncover the working of the mind, layer by layer, until there is "no mind that knows", which is to say, an utterly transformed mind which does not create its own objects for consumption. Nāgārjuna attempts to recover samsaric activity through a mystical apophatic approach whereas the Yogācāra school is prepared to be much more descriptive in their approach.

²⁶⁸ Lusthaus, Dan, *Buddhist Phenomenology: A Philosophical Investigation of Yogācāra Buddhism and the Ch'eng Wei-shih lun*, Routledge Curzon, 2002, p. 538

Chapter 3.

Dōgen's Datsuraku-datsuraku

Mastering the Way in sitting meditation is awakening the mind for enlightenment. Awakening the mind is not one or different, sitting meditation is not one or different ...²⁶⁹

Dōgen takes the physical activity of seated meditation and applies this practice to the metaphysical speculation of the mind. The body-mind/mind-body unit is bound together for Dōgen and is the ego-self that must be put aside before true practice is possible. As will be examined in this chapter, Dōgen is not satisfied to merely transcend the ego-self, rather the more profound movement is a 'trans-descendence' to the simple practice in the here and now that lacks all vestiges of self and ego.

As an exemplar of praxi-centric phenomenology, Dōgen introduces, out of the historical discussions and teachings of twelfth century China and Japan, a unique interpretation of the issue of *hongaku* (original awakening) which he expresses as 'original realisation and wondrous practice' (*honsō myōshū*) or as the 'unity of practice and realisation' (*shūsō ittō*). In order to denote a dynamic non-dual rendering of praxis and theory, Dōgen offers a renewed presentation of the concept of Buddha-nature (*bushō*) whereby being-time (*uji*) is integral in expressing, instead of transcendence, the direction of trans-descendence. For Dōgen, trans-descendence recalls Buddha-nature that is expressed mutually with a personal manifestation of no-self through a particularly phenomenological approach to awakening (expressed stylistically *datsuraku-datsuraku*). His contribution to the development of Buddhist thought and practice has been recently recovered by the 20th century philosophers of the "Kyoto School"²⁷⁰ and since that time he has gained an ever-widening audience inclusive of Buddhist practitioners and philosophers East and West alike. Modern philosophical scholarship has noted his discussions surrounding being-time (*uji*), ceaseless practice (*gyōji*), total dynamism (*zenkei*), total exertion (*gyōjin*) and compared these discussions with Western existential and phenomenological thinkers, including Jean-Paul Sartre and Martin Heidegger. However, it must be noted that Dōgen wrote and taught for the express purpose of making clear the Buddha path for others so

²⁶⁹ Cleary, Thomas, *Rational Zen: The Mind of Dōgen Zenji*, Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992, p. 100

²⁷⁰ namely, WATSUJI Tetsurō, NISHIDA Kitarō, TANABE Hajime, NISHITANI Keiji, KARAKI Junzō, IENAGA Saburō, TAMAKI Kōshirō, HISAMATSU Shin'ichi, and ABE Masao, see Editor's Introduction to ABE, Masao, *A Study of Dōgen*, ed. Steven Heine, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 1-3

that his soteriological intentions should not be lightly separated from what may be termed his “philosophy.” Dōgen is clear about his reasons for writing, as he records in one of his first essays, the *Bendōwa* (*Discourse on Practice*):

I decided to compile a record of the customs and standards that I experienced first-hand in the Zen monasteries of the great Kingdom of Sung together with a record of profound instruction from a [good] counselor which I have received and maintained. I will leave this record to people who learn in practice and are easy in the truth, so that they can know the right Dharma of the Buddha’s lineage.²⁷¹

This testimony, which occurs early on in Dōgen’s prolific writing career, emphasises another aspect to Dōgen’s teaching in addition to his penetrating philosophical essays and religious instruction, that is the personal and autobiographical nature of Dōgen’s teaching which works to break down the systematic development of dogma and enforces the phenomenological aspect of Dōgen’s presentation of reality and one’s participation in that reality.

Development of Buddha-nature (Jp. *Bushō*)

To prepare for the way in which Dōgen treats Buddha-nature, it is helpful to trace the development and history of this term and its relation to the concept of *dharmakāya*. As discussed in the Nāgārjuna chapter, *Dharma*, literally represented by the Chinese character for “law,” is a Sanskrit word with a variety of nuanced meanings that may best be understood in context. The “myriad *dharmas*” often indicate physical and mental phenomena, the multiplicity of things in the world.²⁷² However, from the earliest Buddhist texts, *dharma* also indicates the teaching of the Buddha himself, the “eternal truth.” Later Mahāyāna developments, in particular, the treatment of the Buddha’s *Dharma* in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature, is taken to mean ‘the way things are’ in their own nature (*tatbatā* or *dharmata*) and it is referred to as the *dharmakāya* or the body of his truth, his teaching, and not in a personal sense at all. The Buddha himself is no longer with the community, but his teachings, the *dharmakāya*, are what sustain the community. As discussed briefly in the Nāgārjuna chapter, the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature strongly emphasised that ultimate reality or the nature of things was in fact empty (*śūnya*). Williams notes that as the

²⁷¹ Dogen, *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo: Book 1*, translated by Guido Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 3

²⁷² The ‘myriad dharmas’ can also indicate the teachings of the myriad Buddhas and bodhisattvas in the Mahāyāna structure of the Buddha realms.

... *dharmakāya* was taken to equal the essential ultimates (*dharmas*) which, possessed to a full degree, make up the Buddha's realization, in the *Perfection of Wisdom* literature the *dharmakāya* comes to refer not only to the Doctrine which sets forth the true nature of things, but also the realization and the true nature of things itself.²⁷³

In this way, a shift occurs away from understanding the *Dharma* strictly in terms of the teaching of the Buddha, his "Doctrine," to the notion of the all encompassing nature of the Buddha's *Dharma* which is called the *dharmakāya*. Directly corresponding to this shift is the development of the three bodies of Buddha. Through Nāgārjuna, there is accepted a two-body system, the Buddha's historical body and the eternal truth of his teaching.²⁷⁴ However, with the development of the Yogācāra, a three-body system is introduced that corresponds with the tri-partite aspect of selfnature (*trisvabhāva*). The *dharmakāya* (or *svabhāvikakāya*) as described in Asanga's *Mahāyānasamgraha* is the "purified Thusness or Suchness," the "true nature of things taken as a body (10:1)"²⁷⁵ and is the basis for the other bodies because it has undergone the "revolution of the basis" and is thus "pure revealed."²⁷⁶ Important for understanding Dōgen's Buddha-nature in this development of *dharmakāya* is to note a gradual move toward a cosmic understanding of Buddha reality, one in which Buddha's teaching infuses all of reality, and the significance that the *dharmakāya* is interpreted through *śūnyata*.

Another teaching introduced in Mahāyāna scriptures is that of *tathāgatagarbha* or the "womb of the Perfected One" (or "womb of Buddhahood"²⁷⁷) which, according to the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, functions in the same fashion as the storehouse-consciousness (*ālaya vijñāna*), storing the "seeds" of previous actions and thoughts.²⁷⁸ The *Tathāgatagarbha Sūtra* claims that "all the living beings, though they are among the defilements of hatred,

²⁷³ Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 173

²⁷⁴ Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 175

²⁷⁵ Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 176

²⁷⁶ Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 176. The other two bodies are the *Sambhogikakāya* or the Body of Complete Enjoyment, a physical body (*rūpakāya*) and impermanent, it is considered by the Mahāyānists to be the "actual Buddha in his supramundane form"²⁷⁶ and the Transformation Bodies or *Nirmāṇikakāya* which occur throughout history, such as the historical figure of Siddhārtha Gautama, and work as "a mere image manifesting becoming enlightened for the benefit of beings." See Williams, p. 178

²⁷⁷ Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 36

²⁷⁸ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Volume One: India and China*, Indiana: World Wisdom Inc., p. 52

anger and ignorance, have the Buddha's wisdom, Buddha's eye, Buddha's Body sitting firmly in the form of meditation" that they "are possessed of the Matrix of the Tathāgata [*tathāgatagarbha*], endowed with virtues, always pure ..."²⁷⁹ Additionally, the Mahāyāna *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* teaches that enlightenment is a universal reality and that there is the presence of the *tathāgatagarbha*, eventual Buddhahood, in even the unforgivably wicked people (*icchāntikas*), a concept not accepted in previous Buddhist teaching.²⁸⁰ In the *Śrīmālādevīsīmhanādu Sūtra*, the *tathāgatagarbha* is equated with *dharmakāya*, as the unenlightened, "defiled" mode of the "permanent, steadfast, calm, eternal" Dharmakāya: "The Dharmakāya of the Tathāgata when not free from the store of defilement is referred to as the Tathāgatagarbha."²⁸¹ Although most of these scriptures also assert that the *dharmakāya* must be understood in terms of *śūnyata*, this assertion loses effectiveness in the context of teachings that strongly suggest permanence as either Mind (consciousness) or even some ontological realm of Self. Williams notes of the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* that although the Buddha teaches no-self, in a manner of speaking this teaching may as well be stated: the very Buddha-nature is Self.²⁸² This teaching is not intended to exhibit the unreliability of language, as did certain Madhyamika teaching; rather, it is bent on portraying the indisputable reality of Buddha-nature which can be spoken of negatively or positively.

The foregoing scriptures teaching *dharmakāya* and *tathāgatagarbha* doctrine were part of the basis for the Chinese schools of Buddhism, finally by the T'ang Dynasty flourishing sufficiently separate from Taoism (although certainly influenced by Taoist thinking) as to be a thoroughly Chinese interpretation of Buddhism.²⁸³ The Hua-yen School (Flower Ornament School) takes its name from the Flower Ornament Scripture, the *Avatamsaka Sūtra* and its systematizer, the third patriarch of Hua-yen, Fa-tsang's writings are influenced by both the *Avatamsaka* as well as the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* (Fa-

²⁷⁹ Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 97

²⁸⁰ Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 98

²⁸¹ Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 101

²⁸² Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p. 99

²⁸³ See Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 8, 30 and Williams, Paul, *Mahāyāna Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations*, London and New York: Routledge, 1989, p.119-20

ch'eng ch'i hsin lun).²⁸⁴ As Cook notes, Hua-yen thought sought to "syncretise various Buddhist doctrines, primarily those of emptiness and *tathāgatarbha*," such that in the cosmic understanding of reality, "[t]here is nothing mean or inferior, or anything to be despised in the whole of existence, when it is properly seen apart from self-interest."²⁸⁵ In fact, Cook claims that ultimately, the Hua-yen philosophical system is "an elaborate reworking of the Indian concept of emptiness" through the understanding of a "conditional interdependence" of all phenomena.²⁸⁶ The famous example of the Hua-yen understanding of the interdependent and "mutually causative"²⁸⁷ nature of reality is the Jewel Net of Indra, in which a great net of infinite dimensions is studded with an infinite number of jewels that are positioned such that they reflect each other perfectly *ad infinitum*. Thus, the one jewel holds the entirety of the whole net in its face, and the whole net dependent upon the one jewel. That the Hua-yen school called itself the "school of the "interdependent origination of the universe" (*dharmadhātu pratīyasamutpāda*)"²⁸⁸ is further evidence of their concern. The understanding of the *tathāgatarbha* doctrine (synonymous with *dharmakāya* as discussed above) that equates phenomenal and noumenal reality as portrayed in the *Awakening of Faith*, is seen by Fa-tsang through "mutual identity" and "interdependence" as the equating of phenomenon with phenomenon. In this way, Buddha-nature is expanded from the One Mind as consciousness only, to a cosmic Mind (*dharmadhātu*) such that nothing in the vast universe is without Buddha-nature, including "ants, grass, and dirt."²⁸⁹

A prolific writer, Dōgen's collection of writings entitled the *Shōbōgenzō* is his seminal teaching studied and revered by both religious practitioners as well as philosophers. The *Shōbōgenzō* has the distinction of being the first significant writing composed in Japanese during an era in which scholarly work was written solely in Chinese. Dōgen also composed poetry, and compiled in the *Shinji-shōbōgenzō*, a stylistic collection of *kōan*

²⁸⁴ Cook notes that the *Awakening of Faith* scripture, although claimed to be written by Aśvaghosa, is most likely a Chinese document, in Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 51

²⁸⁵ Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 55

²⁸⁶ Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 30-1

²⁸⁷ Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 2

²⁸⁸ Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 30

²⁸⁹ Cook, Francis H., *Hua-Yen Buddhism: The Jewel Net of Indra*, University Park and London: Pennsylvania State University Press, p. 52-3

composed in Chinese. The term *Shōbōgenzō* is composed of four Chinese characters, Truth-Law-Eye-Treasure, and is commonly translated as “the treasury of the true dharma eye.” However, Dumoulin points out that a meaningful translation is difficult to ascertain and he cites Wilhelm Gundert, who indicates that these characters point to “all the precious things that fill the eye which beholds the real, true law [Dharma] of Buddha.” It has already been noted that *dharmas/Dharma* can be used to convey both the mundane, i.e. aspects of phenomena, as well as the supramundane, i.e. the teachings of the Buddha(s). Dōgen allows for the word-play to express the ambiguity exhibited between these “categories”. Buddha-Dharma is reality and ‘the way things are’ manifested in the Universe in the myriad forms or *dharmas*. Thus, according to Tsujimura Kōichi, *Shōbōgenzō* can be rendered “the eye of the authentic law (subjective and objective genitive) that contains in its vision the all – that is, everything in the entire world.”²⁹⁰ Tsujimura’s translation recognises the possibility of word-play that Dōgen may have had in mind: the *Dharma* as manifested through the myriad *dharmas*. Echoing the Hua-yen school, Dōgen says in the *Bendōwa*,

... everything in the Universe in ten directions – soil, earth, grass, and trees; fences, walls, tiles, and pebbles – performs the Buddha’s work.²⁹¹

And further,

The grass, trees, soil, and earth ... all radiate great brightness, and their preaching of the deep and fine Dharma is without end.²⁹²

In other words, to separate the world of objects, the world of multiplicity, as delusion from an ideal Buddha reality is to misunderstand Buddha *Dharma*. This attitude towards everyday existence is one repeated through the history of Zen anecdotes and *keōan*. Barrett records this familiar Zen saying:

Before you have studied Zen, mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers; while you are studying it, mountains are no longer mountains and

²⁹⁰ Tsujimura, Kōichi, as cited in Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Vol. 2: Japan*, trans. James Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing company, 1990, p. 74

²⁹¹ Dōgen, *Master Dogen’s Shōbōgenzō: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 5

²⁹² Dōgen, *Master Dogen’s Shōbōgenzō: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 6

rivers are no longer rivers; but once you have had Enlightenment, mountains are once again mountains and rivers are rivers.²⁹³

Also brought to bear in this title is the occurrence of the “eye” which sees the *Dharma* made manifest through myriad *dharmas*. A human eye has limited vision, in scope and depth, but the Buddha eye sees perfectly and renders reality transparent to the truth. As will become apparent, Dōgen emphasises a praxi-centric phenomenological approach to enlightenment and his inclusion of the image of an eye serves to reinforce the existentiality of this approach. He was not, of course, the first to utilise the image, however, it factors into the title of his *magnum opus* appropriately. Finally, the etymology of the term *Dharma* also carries the meaning of method or practice.²⁹⁴ Again in the *Bendōwa*, Dōgen describes the Buddha’s *Dharma* as the transmission of the “right-Dharma-eye treasury” according to the “supreme and great method” – that is, the method of *zazen*.²⁹⁵ Therefore, Dōgen’s writings in the *Shōbōgenzō* are his efforts to reveal the treasury such that one may dynamically see the Buddha-Dharma made manifest throughout the myriad dharmas by means of skilful praxis, *zazen*.

Original Awakening (*hongaku*) thought in Tendai

Born in 1200 during the Kamakura era in Japan, Dōgen began his Buddhist training as a young acolyte of the Tendai Buddhist order on Mt. Hiei and upon his ordination as a monk was given the name “Dōgen” (Foundation of the Way).²⁹⁶ Scholarship surrounding medieval Japanese Buddhism and the remarkable development of Kamakura era schools that have survived and flourished to this modern day have generated a number of theories regarding the intellectual and religious environment of that period. It is certainly remarkable that from the training ground of Mt. Hiei’s Tendai sect came the influential religious leaders Eisai, Hōnen, Shinran, Dōgen and Nichiren and speculation both sectarian and non-sectarian agree that a strong catalyst creating the divergence of

²⁹³ Barrett, William, “Zen for the West,” in *Zen Buddhism: Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*, edited by William Barrett, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956, p. xvi-xvii

²⁹⁴ NISHIJIMA and Cross reference the *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (arranged by Sir Monier-Williams, Oxford: Oxford Press, 1899) in *Master Dogen’s Shōbōgenzō: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 329

²⁹⁵ Dogen, *Master Dogen’s Shōbōgenzō: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 12

²⁹⁶ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Vol. 2: Japan*, translated by James Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing company, 1990, p. 52

views and eventual schools of these monks was the issue of *hongaku* thought.²⁹⁷ *Hongaku* or “original enlightenment” thought has its primary origins of influence in the *Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyāna* treatise and the *Mahāyānamahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra*, in which the *ālaya-vijñāna* consciousness of the Yogācāra school is redefined to fit within the concept of *tathāgatagarbha* (the seed or womb of Buddha nature) so that conventional and ultimate truth are found to have the same ontologically grounded place in the pure mind.²⁹⁸ As noted, the Chinese Hua-yen school adopted the *Awakening of Faith* treatise along side the *Flower Ornament Sūtra* as basic texts. Developing parallel to the Hua-yen school was the Chinese T’ien-T’ai sect which is established in Japan as the Tendai sect by Saichō (767-822)²⁹⁹. In Japan, *hongaku* thought is developed in terms of Tendai’s recognition of the primacy of the *Saddharmapundarīka Sūtra* or *Lotus Sūtra* which subsumes all previous vehicles under the over-arching superiority of the *Lotus Sūtra*, the understanding that perfect bodhisattva precepts are an “expression of innate Buddhahood and also the direct cause for its realisation,”³⁰⁰ and the establishment of esoteric ritual which effected both “spiritual liberation” as well as “practical, worldly ends” (such as good harvests, healings etc) and thus reflected the monistic non-duality of ultimate and mundane truth.³⁰¹ Following Saichō’s establishment of the Tendai doctrinal direction, Jacqueline Stone identifies five noteworthy developments instigated by his disciples and further shaping the sect in which Dōgen would eventually begin his training. These developments are 1) amalgamating esoteric teaching with the *Lotus Sūtra*, which contains no such overt teachings, with the result that the *Lotus* became recognised as the “one great perfect teaching” transcending both time and space; 2) redefining the historical Buddha within an esoteric reading of the *Lotus* so that the historical Buddha becomes a timeless, cosmic Buddha who preaches continuously throughout time and space; 3) the “valorising” of the phenomenal world in which all being both sentient and non-sentient is imbued with Buddha-nature, hence all form participates in the same ontological reality which is Buddhahood; 4) the shortening of the length of time in which one might attain

²⁹⁷ see Stone, Jacqueline I., *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, Chapter Two: Tendai *Hongaku* Thought and the New Kamakura Buddhism: Rival Theories

²⁹⁸ Stone, Jacqueline I., *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, p. 6-7

²⁹⁹ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Volume 2: Japan*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1990, p. 6

³⁰⁰ Stone, Jacqueline I., *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, p. 18

³⁰¹ Stone, Jacqueline I., *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, p. 20

Buddhahood from the aeons described in earlier doctrine to the possibility of attainment in a moment by either monk or common layperson; 5) the introduction of the Pure Land *nembutsu* practice of “constantly walking samādhi” as a ritual institution on Mt. Hiei.³⁰²

Dōgen’s *keōan*

This background concerning the question of “original enlightenment” helps establish a portion of the religious and intellectual environment that Dōgen stepped into as a young monk training on Mt. Hiei. Biographical sources record that Dōgen eventually confronted the issue of *hongaku* with the zeal of attempting to bring what seemed to be contradiction within the teaching to existential reconciliation. Dōgen confronted the problem personally, by travelling to China for more input into the teachings. This move to resolve a matter of theory existentially establishes early Dōgen’s inclination toward experiential learning, and paves the way for the development of his praxi-centric phenomenological approach.

According to the biography *Kenzeiki*, recorded by his disciple after Dōgen’s death, Dōgen left Mt. Hiei consumed by “great doubt,” dissatisfied that no teacher could explain how original enlightenment could be reconciled with the practices pursued by the bodhisattva.³⁰³ Although Dōgen’s own writings do not mention his “great doubt” as the reason for leaving Mt. Hiei, and some modern scholars credit this reading to sectarian interests in creating a break between medieval Tendai original awakening thought and the new Kamakura era Buddhist thought,³⁰⁴ he did express the contradiction himself early in his career, shortly after returning from China, in the *Tuikanzuzengi* (*General Teachings for the Promotion of Zazen*):

The Way is basically perfect and all-prevading. How could it be contingent upon practice and realization? The Dharma vehicle is free and untrammelled. What need is there for man’s [sic] concentrated effort?³⁰⁵

³⁰² Stone, Jacqueline I., *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, p. 21-34

³⁰³ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Vol. 2: Japan*, translated by James Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing company, 1990, p. 52

³⁰⁴ see Stone, Jacqueline I., *Original Enlightenment and the Transformation of Medieval Japanese Buddhism*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1999, p. 72-3

³⁰⁵ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Vol. 2: Japan*, translated by James Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing company, 1990, p. 57

Further, that the question of enlightenment and practice become such an integral theme in Dōgen's life-long writings should clearly indicate that reconciling the issue of original enlightenment (*hongaku*) with the alternative Mahāyāna path of acquired awakening (*shikaku*) was core to his own enlightenment experience and crucial to the development of his teaching.

Dōgen's struggle over the issue of *hongaku* and the simultaneous need for practice, and the way the question played into his own enlightenment experience has been aptly called by Joan Stambaugh, his *koan*. As Dōgen was to become identified as the founder of the Sōtō sect of Zen Buddhism in Japan which emphasises the practice of *zazen* (seated meditation) in contrast to the Rinzai sect of Zen which utilises *koan* practice as a primary method of inspiring enlightenment, it is not perhaps an obvious association; however, it is surprisingly appropriate. Dōgen himself compiled a collection of *koan*. Understood primarily as an enlightenment device, a *koan* is an enigmatic story or saying that a teacher gives a monk in training to ponder and meditate over until the monk discovers the key, unlocks the mystery and gains an enlightenment experience (*satori*). However, considered only within these parameters, *koan* practice becomes formulaic and restrictive, causing enlightenment to take on a linear, goal-driven manner which all but undermines the enlightenment. SHIMANO Eido defines *koan* as "the time and place where Truth is manifest" which suggests a dynamic aspect to the *koan* and further, that there is an experiential expectation, SHIMANO asserts that "every place, every day, every event, every thought, every deed, and every person is a *koan*. In that sense, *koans* are neither obscure nor enigmatic."³⁰⁶ Thich Nhat Hanh also emphasises the inseparability between the personal and practical nature of *koan* as he states:

In Zen, practitioners use kung-an [kōan] as subjects for meditation until their mind come to awakening. There is a big difference between a kung-an and a math problem - the solution of the math problem is included in the problem itself, while the response to the kung-an lies in the life of the practitioner. The kung-an is a useful instrument in the work of awakening, just as a pick is a useful instrument in working on the ground. What is accomplished from working on the ground depends on the person doing the work and not just on the pick. The kung-an is not an enigma to resolve; this is why we cannot say that it is a theme or subject of meditation.³⁰⁷

³⁰⁶ SHIMANO, Eido T., "Zen Koans," in *Zen: Tradition and Transition - An Overview of Zen in the Modern World*, edited by Kenneth Kraft, London and Melbourne: Rider, 1988, p. 70

³⁰⁷ Nhat Hanh, Thich, *Zen Keys*, New York and London: Doubleday, 1995, p. 57

Dōgen's *kōan* consists of his efforts to reconcile what he had learned from his Tendai Buddhist teachers at Mt. Hiei, that all sentient beings have Buddha-nature and yet that the monks must engage in *zazen* and recite the scriptures. Dōgen is caught in the classical argument which had split school from school in China and eventually would do so in Japan, the opposition between the doctrine of original awakening (本覺, *hongaku*) and that of acquired awakening (始覺, *shikaku*)³⁰⁸. In philosophical terms, as Abe points out, Dōgen is caught in a dualistic-minded struggle to idealise Buddha-nature by subscribing to either the doctrine of original awakening or that of acquired awakening, thereby making one primordial and subjecting the other to it. Indeed, by subscribing to either the doctrine of original awakening or acquired awakening, one understands Buddha-nature "as a reality arising directly beyond time and space, something with a real existence independent of all practice."³⁰⁹ From the perspective of "original enlightenment" alone, one possesses an innate Buddha-nature which is more valuable than any scripture or practice merely pointing toward Buddha-nature. Considered thus, the question of practice becomes moot, it is out-weighted by the essential and/or ontological reality of Buddha-nature. From the perspective of acquired awakening, one dedicates oneself to arduous practice and study with the hopes of obtaining or partaking in Buddha-nature. In this case, Buddha-nature is dualistically separated from the practitioner as an idealised "other" reality to be obtained through effort and human activity. Both views, argues Abe, "abstract equally in taking as an object the Reality of the Buddha-nature or awakening, which is fundamentally unobjectifiable and cannot be idealized."³¹⁰ Possessing an innate Buddha-nature or striving to achieve or realise Buddha-nature are views which equally idealise as ontological or essential the Buddha reality.

Dōgen's great awakening (*daigo*)

Dōgen's "great awakening" (*daigo*) came during a meditation session and is recorded in the Meishu version (1538) of the biography, the *Kenzeiki*, as follows:

³⁰⁸ The Japanese character for "shikaku" is 始覺. The first portion of the character, 始 ("shi"), literally means "beginning" in a temporal sense.

³⁰⁹ ABE, Masao, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion*, edited by Steven Heine, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 19

³¹⁰ ABE, Masao, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion*, edited by Steven Heine, New York: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 21

... Ju-ching chided the monk sitting next to Dōgen, who had fallen asleep during a prolonged and intensive meditation session, "To study Zen is to cast off body-mind. Why are you engaged in single-minded seated (*zā*) slumber rather than single-minded seated meditation (*zazen*)? Upon hearing this reprimand, Dōgen attained a "great awakening" (*daigo*) from his previous doubts concerning the relation between meditation [or practice] and enlightenment. He later entered Ju-ching's quarters and burned incense, reporting, "I have come because body-mind is cast off." Ju-ching responded approvingly, "Body-mind is cast off (*shinjin datsuraku*); cast off body-mind (*datsuraku shinjin*)." When Dōgen cautioned, "Do not grant the Seal [of transmission] indiscriminately," Ju-ching replied, "Cast off casting off" (*datsuraku datsuraku*)!"³¹¹

Heine points out that this version of Dōgen's enlightenment dialogue is supported also by the account in the early 14th century biographical material, the *Eibeiji sanso gyōgo-ki*. However, the latest version of the *Kenzeiki* (the Menzan text of 1738) ends Dōgen's enlightenment dialogue with the phrase, "cast off body-mind" instead of the tautological "cast off casting off" of the earlier manuscript.³¹² As will become apparent, however, the climax of the instruction, *datsuraku datsuraku*, poignantly locates the enlightened "self" within Buddhist emptiness (*śūnyatā*), effectively resolving the *hongaku* – *shikaku* impasse through a trans-descendence which redefines the nature of practice. The English term "trans-descendence" was used by Takeuchi Yoshinori to describe NISHIDA Kitarō's concept of "immanent transcendence,"³¹³ however, it is clear that Dōgen exhibits an even deeper understanding of this concept when he introduces his *datsuraku datsuraku*. As exhibited below, Dōgen works through the transcendent activity of abandoning one's ego-self and circles back to reclaim the mundane through the very event of enlightenment; this movement is a trans-descendence.

Dōgen's enlightenment story begins with the tension between the mundane activity of slumber (*zā*) juxtaposed with the activity of enlightenment (*zazen*). And the master's question, why would one prefer to engage in slumber when one could be participating in the activity of the Buddha's, recalls Dōgen's first encounter of the "Way" upon arriving in China. Dōgen had recently arrived in Ming-chou and met a monk from Mt. A-yu-

³¹¹ Heine proposes that *shinjin datsuraku* is "perhaps the single most compelling and characteristic doctrine in Dōgen's philosophy of Zen," Heine, Steven, "Dōgen Casts off "What": An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*," *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, (9:1), p. 53

³¹² Heine, Steven, "Dōgen Casts off "What": An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*," *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, (9:1), p. 67

³¹³ see NISHIDA, Kitarō, *An Inquiry into the Good*, translated by Masao ABE and Christopher Ives, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990 (originally published by Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1921), p.xvii

wang monastery in charge of making meals. Dōgen, restricted to the boat for immigration reasons, wanted to continue his discussion with this monk whom he found compelling. Dumoulin describes the encounter thus:

Dōgen implored the worthy monk to stay aboard a while but he declined because he had to return to his work in the monastery. When Dōgen asked what was so pressing about his work, the monk explained that kitchen work was his form of Zen practice. Surprised, Dōgen inquired why in his advanced years he did not prefer to devote himself to meditation and kōan practice. At that the old monk laughed out loud. "My good fellow from a foreign land," he said, "you do not yet know what practice (Chin., *pan-tao*; Jpn., *hendō*) means, nor do you yet understand words and scriptures (Chin., *wen-tzu*; Jpn., *monji*)." Abruptly bidding good-bye he vanished into the dusk. Later that year, Dōgen was to meet the cook a second time ... Taking up where they had left off, Dōgen asked him what he meant by "practice" and "words and scriptures." The monk replied, "Words and scriptures are: one, two, three, four, five. Practice means: nothing in the universe is hidden."³¹⁴

The tension that is introduced into the setting of Dōgen's enlightenment account between the obviously disparate realities of sleep and meditation echoes the profound encounter Dōgen had with this enlightened monk in that the transformation of the activity of just cooking to Zen practice has less to do with the apparent activity itself and much more to do with the personal experience out of which it flows. In this regard, until Dōgen is able to actively realise what Buddha-nature is, his *zazen* has all the efficacy of mere *za*.

While overhearing Ju-Ching admonish the sleeping monk, Dōgen himself experienced a great awakening which he shared to his master as "body-mind is cast off" (*shinjin-datsuraku*). One may interpret body-mind (*shinjin*)³¹⁵ as the simplest description of the two aspects in Dōgen's *kōan*. 'Body' is the temporal and transient form, a mere collection of *skandha*, in which one acts out religious practices such as reading the scriptures, engaging in *kōan* practice, and meditation (*zazen*). 'Mind,' as discussed in the previous chapter, underwent a slow transformation from being merely another *skandha* to housing the seed-consciousness (*ālaya-vijñāna*), a transformation which gave increasing importance to the mind as the source of Buddha-nature, or at least the potentiality for

³¹⁴ Dumoulin, Heinrich, *Zen Buddhism: A History, Vol. 2: Japan*, translated by James Heisig and Paul Knitter, New York: Macmillan Publishing company, 1990, p. 53-4

³¹⁵ In the Japanese the two characters that make up *shinjin* 心身 are *shin* (心, mind) and *jin* (body, 身).

realising Buddha-nature. This trend of *hongaku* thought inherited by the Tendai sect, as discussed above, eventually matured into the teaching of an innate Buddha-nature in every sentient, if not also insentient, being. Consequently, 'mind' in Dōgen's *shinjin* can be understood as representing original enlightenment, the innate or all-pervasive Buddha-nature. Essentially, body-mind (*shinjin*) refers to the "whole self" in Dōgen's terminology. Thus, the most appropriate way to read "*shinjin*" is 'body-mind,' not 'body and mind.' The phrase body-mind (*shinjin*) repeatedly occurs in Dōgen's writings throughout his teaching career and clearly indicates his understanding that practice and enlightenment belong inseparably to the experience of the individual and that neither aspect can endure alone. Elsewhere he expresses the integrated relationship between body and mind with the phrase *shinjin ichinyo* (oneness of body-mind). Consequently, by emphasising this inseparable relationship between mind-body/body-mind (*shinjin*), Dōgen brings his original problem of original enlightenment (*shin* – mind) and acquired enlightenment (*jin* – body) together in order to finally shed them both. Thus, I disagree with Tamaki Kōshirō's interpretation of Dōgen's fascicle, *Studying the Way with the Body-mind* (*Shinjingakudō*), in which he suggests that because Dōgen places body before mind in the title, and discusses body after mind in the text, he is thereby "indicating that the body is rather more important than the mind."³¹⁶ On the contrary, Dōgen makes every effort to present the concepts of body and mind as inseparable before he asks searchers on the Way to shed the body-mind.

For Dōgen affirms to his teacher that he has "cast off" (*datsuraku*) body-mind. *Datsuraku* is a great challenge to translators, for "cast off" in English sounds like an action arising purely out of the will, which is unsuccessful in capturing the nuance of the term. Words such as "molt," "drop off," or "shed" have also been used to avoid the problem of the will³¹⁷ and yet, according to Heine, they still fall short of conveying both the active and passive subtleties of the term: cast off body-mind, body-mind is cast off. Heine proposes the alternative translation "letting cast off"³¹⁸ which comes close to the way Heidegger uses the term *Gelassenheit* to describe the way Da-sein lets Being be. Literally "letting-

³¹⁶ YUASA, Yasuo, *The Body: Toward and Eastern Mind-Body Theory*, ed. Thomas P. Kasulis, trans. NAGATOMO Shigenori and Thomas P. Kasulis, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987, p. 118

³¹⁷ Heine, Steven, "Dōgen Casts off "What": An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*," *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, (9:1), p. 55

³¹⁸ Heine, Steven, "Dōgen Casts off "What": An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*," *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, (9:1), p. 55

ness" in English, *Gelassenheit* can be translated as "the 'releasement' of the will to will as well as the will to not-will."³¹⁹

Surprisingly, after affirming the inseparability of body-mind with the integration of the term *shinjin*, it is now suggested that this body-mind is cast-off (*shinjin-datsuraku*) in its entirety. As reflected in the Buddhist doctrine of no-self (*anātman*), this "whole self" must be let go. "Letting go" is an encouragement to molt or drop away the "whole self" which may enforce the duality that Abe identified as the idealising of Buddha-nature either as a goal of practice, or as the innate possession of all beings. According to Dōgen's suggestion of *shinjin-datsuraku*, the true "gain" is not finding and asserting one's whole self, it is allowing the whole-self, the body-mind, to be let go.

However, Dōgen's enlightenment story takes a further step: "cast off casting off" (*daturaku datsuraku*), as Dōgen's teacher Ju-ching instructed him. *Datsuraku-datsuraku* indicates a letting go of the step of transcendence one took away from the ego-self. It is, in fact, a movement of trans-descendence in which the oneness of body-mind is finally fully realised through ultimate emptiness. This tautological teaching recalls the "emptiness of emptiness" of Nagārjuna, but within Dōgen's phenomenological paradigm, acts as a kind of return to one's Buddha-nature in the plain authentic way one is, in this body at this time. Dōgen suggests that as ego-selves, we merely slumber in this world. Dōgen's enlightenment story, concluding with a trans-descendence, *datsuraku datsuraku*, is the relinquishing of any spiritual high place and establishes Dōgen's future teaching as operating out of an existential realisation of *śūnyatā*.

Genjō-kōan

In the *Genjō-kōan* fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen reinforces the process of his own enlightenment story discussed above in terms of an existential realisation of *śūnyatā*. Although Nishijima and Cross translate *genjō-kōan* "The Realised Universe," Kasulis notes the diverse interpretations of what Dōgen intended by the title. *Genjō* has been understood to mean "manifestation," "being present already in its completed form," and "to presence" (this latter Kasulis favours because of its active connotations). *Kōan* has

³¹⁹ Heine, Steven, "Dōgen Casts off "What": An Analysis of *Shinjin Datsuraku*," *Journal of International Association of Buddhist Studies*, (9:1), p. 57; Newman Robert Glass proposes that *Gelassenheit* means for Heidegger's purposes, "A spacing in which there is no "thing" in the usual sense; it might be called a spacing or clearing or no thingness." Glass, Newman Robert, *Working Emptiness: Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995, p. 17

either been interpreted from its literal meaning of “public notice” thus rendering the entire phrase “the presence of public (or objective) reality”; or the *kō* has been translated “equality” and the *an* translated “keeping to one’s own sphere” whereby the entire phrase is understood to mean “the individuality of things manifesting themselves equally.” This latter translation is favoured by Waddell and Abe. However, there is also the possibility of taking *kōan* to indicate a paradox, such as given to students as an object of meditation (Waddell/Abe and Dumoulin reject this possibility while Masunaga Reihō, Deshimaru Taisen, Kim Hee-jin and Kasulis are willing to consider it plausible) and thus the phrase *genjōkōan* can be understood to indicate that “presence itself” can be a *kōan*. That one may become “directly aware of impermanence”³²⁰ contains a kind of existential paradox and is further indication of Dōgen’s phenomenological approach to enlightenment. Outside of the fact that modern or medieval Japanese can be an ambiguous written language, Dōgen often engages in wordplay and wilful manipulation of language in order to free up meaning or disrupt conventional images. That Dōgen might intend for the title to be ambiguous, or at least be aware of the multivalent nuances is certainly within the realm of possibility. However, in the context of Dōgen’s enlightenment story recorded above, the suggestion that becoming directly aware of impermanence contains the elements of an existential *kōan* is compelling.

The *Genjōkōan* fascicle begins with the introduction of the categories of Buddha-dharma and the myriad dharmas, illusion and enlightenment, buddhas and ordinary beings, and insists that the practitioner enter into this seeming duality. He writes:

When all dharmas are [seen as]³²¹ the Buddha-dharma, there is illusion and enlightenment, contemplation and action, birth and Death, buddhas and sentient beings.

When myriad dharmas are of the nonself, there is no illusion or enlightenment, no buddhas or sentient beings, no arising or perishing.

Because the Buddha-way intrinsically leaps out of plentitude and dearth, there is arising and perishing, illusion and enlightenment, sentient beings and buddhas. Still do flowers fall to our pity and weeds grow to our displeasure.³²²

³²⁰ Kasulis, Thomas, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 1985, pp. 83-6

³²¹ NISHIJIMA and Cross insert “[seen as]” in their translation of this passage in *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 33

³²² as cited in Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 3

According to Stambaugh, Dōgen has introduced a “dialectic” in this first paragraph in order to suggest that “form, duality, and emptiness (nonduality) are still present”.³²³ She sees the first statement to be a positive “thesis” statement, an “is”, in which myriad dharmas denote differentiation. The second statement she likens to an anti-thesis statement, an “is not”, in which, although it does not simply negate the thesis, it proposes that nonduality is exhibited through nonself. The third statement, she asserts, is not a synthesis but a transcendence, a “neither is nor is not” in that the Buddha-way “leaps out” of both the categories of plentitude (myriad dharmas) and dearth (emptiness, nonduality). Finally, the last statement that flowers fall and weeds grow she sees as the ‘resolution’ of Dōgen’s dialectic, a “both is and is not,” a paradoxical situation of “suchness” in which one must grapple with the presenced reality of form and emptiness.³²⁴ Interestingly, Dōgen’s “dialectic” as suggested by Stambaugh seems to contain an inversion of the famous negative *catuskoti* dialectic employed in Indian philosophy and utilised by Nāgārjuna (see the discussion of positive and negative *catuskoti* in Chapter 2: Nāgārjuna), and thus proposes an altogether different outcome. The negative *catuskoti* is expressed:

Not {A}

Not {Not-A}

Not {Both (A) and (Not-A)}

Not {Neither (A) nor (Not A)}³²⁵

The negative *catuskoti* drives logic and understanding to its final and ultimate negation, a technique that Nāgārjuna used to push practitioners beyond the conceptual realm and into the practical, and ultimately “empty,” realm. Dōgen’s dialectic, as proposed by Stambaugh, turns Nāgārjuna’s dialectic of the four-fold negation on its head for emptiness (*śūnyatā*) is subsumed within a paradoxical “presencing” instead of extended as the (non)-foundational reality of all *dharmas*. To understand clearly what Dōgen is expressing in the *Genjōkōan* it is beneficial to consider more of the text. In the next section Dōgen writes:

³²³ Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 4

³²⁴ Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 4

³²⁵ See for example MMK 22:11: “One may not say that there is “emptiness”/ (*śūnyā*), nor that there is “non-emptiness”/ Nor that both [exist simultaneously], nor that neither exists; the purpose for saying [“emptiness”] is for the purpose of conveying knowledge.” Streng, Frederick, J., *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*, Nashville/New York: Abingdon Press, 1967 p. 210

Driving ourselves to practice and experience the myriad dharmas is delusion. When the myriad dharmas actively practice and experience ourselves, that is the state of realization. Those who greatly realize delusion are buddhas. Those who are greatly deluded about realization are ordinary beings ...³²⁶

In this paragraph, Dōgen critiques the single-minded wilful activity of the person who would attempt to create or bring into being individually the reality of the myriad *dharmas*. This is foolish for Dōgen has already asserted in the first passage the nonself of the *dharmas*, and thus attempting to bring forth their true nature (their Buddha-nature) via practice is simply delusional. And yet, when one allows the myriad *dharmas* to act according to their true nature (one that is in alignment with Buddha-Dharma) there occurs a mutual realisation. Letting the *dharmas* act according to their nature frees them to express the deepest reality in a way that is meaningful to the practitioner. This mutual awakening is brought out in other portions of the *Shōbōgenzō* and will be considered later. Again, Dōgen emphasises the distinction between buddha and a deluded being. Echoing the difference between slumber and *zazen*, the deluded being in the above verse is caught in a rote routine of practice whereas the buddha has pierced to the essence of practice.

In the next paragraph, Dōgen comments further on the experiential nature of awakening and cautions further against the one-sided activity of wilful exertion:

When we use the whole body-and-mind [*shinjin*] to look at forms, and when we use the whole body-and-mind to listen to sounds, even though we are sensing them directly, it is not like a mirror's reflection of an image, and not like water and the moon. While we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side.³²⁷

It is not enough to that we actively experience the surrounding world, even utilising the whole body-mind. The experience is one-sided and belies a problem of perception. This brings us to the much quoted and arguably the thesis statement of the entire fascicle:

³²⁶ Dogen, *Master Dogen's Shōbōgenzō: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Windbell Publications, Woking, Surrey, 1994, p. 33

³²⁷ Dogen, *Master Dogen's Shōbōgenzō: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Windbell Publications, Woking, Surrey, 1994, p. 34

To study the Buddha-way is to study the self; to study the self is to forget the self; to forget the self is to be verified by [or “experienced by”]³²⁸ myriad dharmas; and to be verified by [“experienced by”] myriad dharmas is to drop off the body-mind of the self as well as the body-mind of the other. There remains no trace of enlightenment, and one lets this traceless enlightenment come forth for ever and ever.³²⁹

Here Dōgen’s assertion of a true emptiness again comes to the forefront and we are able to consider the question of how presence and emptiness are meant to relate to one another. This seminal passage in the *Genjōkōan* echoes the existential expression of *śūnyatā* described in Dōgen’s enlightenment story (via *datsuraku-datsuraku*). Studying the Buddha-way, one is made aware of the dual importance of practice and enlightenment and, perhaps accepting the precepts of the bodhisattva-way, one vows to carry out this initial faith in the actions charged of the bodhisattva. Taking on the activity of the bodhisattva, one learns to put ego interests aside and concentrate on the precepts of giving, compassion, etc. In this body-mind frame, one is prepared to become aware of the activity in the body-mind frames of the surrounding phenomenal world whereby the body-mind structure, in its false duality, is no longer what sustains the bodhisattva’s activity nor the activity of the surrounding phenomenal world. No structure to maintain, mutually and directly experiencing profound reality, one rests on an enlightenment which is traceless, an enlightenment “based” on *śūnyatā*. And yet, that traceless enlightenment “come(s) forth” which is to say it participates in and through the dependently originated world of phenomena.

Returning to Stambaugh’s suggestion that Dōgen’s dialectic affirms that “form, duality, and emptiness (nonduality) are still present” we should be clear in understanding what “presence” or “presencing” means for Dōgen.³³⁰ Dōgen concludes the *Genjōkōan* fascicle with the re-telling of a famous *kōan* followed by his commentary on it. The story is recorded thus:

³²⁸ NISHIJIMA and Cross use “experienced by” in *Master Dogen’s Shobogenzo: Book 1*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Windbell Publications, Woking, Surrey, 1994, p. 34

³²⁹ Dogen, *Genjo-koan*, as cited in Joan Stambaugh *The Formless Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 1

³³⁰ Newman Robert Glass criticises Stambaugh (and others, including T.P. Kasulis, David Shaner, Michael Zimmerman, Francis Cook, Masao ABÉ, and Christopher Ives) for reading in Dōgen’s work a bias toward presencing, whereas Glass maintains that a proper reading identifies true emptiness, *śūnyatā*, as beyond presence or absence/difference. See Glass, Newman Robert, *Working Emptiness: Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995, p. 30

Zen Master Hotetsu of Mayoku-zan mountain is using a fan. A monk comes by and asks, "The nature of air is to be ever-present, and there is no place that [air] cannot reach. Why then does the Master use a fan?" The Master says, "You have only understood that the nature of air is to be ever-present, but you do not yet know the truth that there is no place that [air] cannot reach." The monk says, "What is the truth of there being no place [air] cannot reach?" At this, the Master just [carries on] using the fan. The monk does prostrations.³⁵¹

In this *kōan*, Dōgen speaks metaphorically of the Master's practice of *zazen*, despite of and because of his original awakened state, as an expression of true Dharma. The Master's actions have the effect of transmitting this true Dharma to his student who does prostrations to show his realisation. Dōgen's commentary following the story reads:

The real experience of the Buddha-Dharma, the vigorous road of the authentic transmission, is like this. Someone who says that because [the air] is ever-present we need not use a fan, or that even when we do not use [a fan] we can still feel air, does not know ever-presence, and does not know the nature of air. Because the nature of air is to be ever-present, the behaviour of Buddhists has made the Earth manifest itself as gold and has ripened the Long River into curds and whey.

As Dōgen states, the "behaviour of Buddhists," that is the practice of *zazen*, is according to the natural activity of Buddha-nature in phenomena - *zazen*, or practice, is a natural manifestation of 'the way things are' (*tathātā*), or Buddha-Dharma. A static "presence" does not allow for the manifestation of Buddha-Dharma, thus air as "ever-present" without the activity of the Master's fan is dead air. Only the dynamic unity of practice and realisation together (*shushō ittō*) can explain how the Buddha-Dharma is "ever-present." And "presence" can only be understood in the context of dependently originating phenomena. What Dōgen is suggesting is the mutual inter-dependence of mundane and profound reality, which is in fact an assertion beyond what Nāgārjuna proposes when he argues that *śūnyatā* is the (non)-foundational base for both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. However, practically speaking, these approaches may be closer together than they appear dialectically. Thus, Stambaugh perceptively notices that Dogen is comfortable with the paradoxical "resolution" of "both/and," however, although she may develop the nature of activity that the practitioner engages in she does not sufficiently clarify how Dōgen deals with the paradox of "presence" within the context of emptiness in the *Genjōkōan*.

³⁵¹ *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 1*, translated by Guido Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 37

Buddha-nature (*bussbō*) and Being-time (*uji*)

Dōgen's understanding of Buddha-nature *as it is* is a complete rejection of the picture of a transcendent, timeless, constant profound reality separate from mundane existence. Rather, Buddha-nature, expressed through the impermanence of the *skandhas* and *dharmas* is a dynamic penetration of everyday reality in which both Buddha-nature and its manifestation in ordinary beings celebrate together a mutual realisation, a "total existence" (*shitsu-u*). It is in the *Bussbō* fascicle of the *Shobōgenzō* that Dōgen performs what has become one of his most well-known reinterpretations of a Buddhist scripture. By manipulating the Chinese character *u* (有) within the phrase *shitsu-u* (悉有), Dōgen offers a profound commentary on Buddha-nature which has influenced Japanese Buddhist religion and Japanese philosophy alike. The sentence in question, from the *Mahāparinirvāṇa-sūtra*, reads: *All living beings totally have [shitsu-u] the Buddha-nature.*³³² Taking instead the noun form of *u* which means "being" or "existence" the sentence is re-phrased as: *All living beings totally are [or "totally exist as"] the Buddha-nature.* Or, as Dōgen re-states it again: "In short, *Total Existence is the Buddha-nature*, and the perfect totality of *Total Existence* is called "*living beings.*"³³³ However, Dōgen is concerned that he not be misunderstood to be suggesting that Buddha-nature and manifest beings are some kind of monistic ontology or ideology. Furthermore, what he has in mind with Total Existence is not a state or condition at all defined by the common understanding of time. He states:

Remember, the *Existence* [described] now, which is *totally possessed by the Buddha-nature*, is beyond the "existence" of existence and non-existence. *Total Existence* is the Buddha's words, the Buddha's tongue, the Buddhist patriarchs' eyes, and the nostrils of a patch-robed monk. The words, "*Total Existence*" are utterly beyond beginning existence, beyond original existence, beyond fine existence, and so on. How much less could they describe conditioned existence or illusory existence? They are not connected with "mind and circumstances" or with "essence and form" and the like. This being so, object-and-subject as *living beings-and-Total Existence* is completely beyond ability based on karmic accumulation, beyond the random occurrence of circumstances, beyond accordance with the Dharma, and beyond mystical powers and practice and experience ... [At the same time] "*The entire Universe is my possession*" is the

³³² *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 2*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 1

³³³ *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 2*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 2

wrong view of non-Buddhists. [Total Existence] is beyond originally-existing existence; for *it pervades the eternal past and pervades the eternal present*. It is beyond newly-appearing existence; for *it does not accept a single molecule*. It is beyond separate instances of existence; for it is inclusive perception. It is beyond the "existence" of "beginningless existence"; for *it is something ineffable coming like this*. It is beyond the "existence" of "newly arising existence"; for *the everyday mind is the truth*. Remember, in the midst of Total Existence it is difficult for living beings to meet easy convenience. When understanding of Total Existence is like this, Total Existence is the state of penetrating to the substance and getting free.³³⁴

Dōgen desires to free Buddha-nature from the philosophical categories of being and non-being, from the locations of mundane or ultimate, from the myths of past, present, future. Locating Buddha-nature, even with the Dharma itself, can never do justice to the true reality of Buddha-nature. In one sense, Buddha-nature is never something that one is able to pin down with definitions and descriptions. Thus, Dōgen's initial affirmation that Buddha-nature is Total Existence and that Total Existence is living beings, is tempered with the caution of approaching these descriptors carefully. Dōgen cautions that Total Existence is beyond the categories of time, substance, or place; it is beyond identities of real or illusory; and it is beyond the pure or mystical experience of practice.

However, unlike Nāgārjuna who would make no positive assertions for the very reasons that Dōgen points out, Dōgen makes a series of positive statements that he hopes will be guides to understanding how living beings encounter and participate in Buddha-nature, or inversely, how Buddha-nature participates in the world of beings. He claims that, as Total Existence, Buddha-nature pervades past and present, and is not reliant upon the future; that it is ineffable; that it recognises the everyday, mundane. When freed from categorical placement and the strict parameters of ontology or idealisation, only then can one explore the dynamic activity of "penetrating to the substance and getting free." Later in the fascicle, Dōgen describes the dynamic interdependence of Buddha-nature and living beings:

So now let us ask the National Master: "*Do all buddhas have the Buddha-nature, or not?*" We should question him and test him like this. We should research that he does not say "*All living beings are the Buddha-nature itself,*" but says "*All living beings have the Buddha-nature*. He needs to get rid [*datsuraku*] of the *have* in *have the Buddha-nature*. Getting rid [*datsuraku*] is

³³⁴ *Master Dogen's Shobogenzo: Book 2*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 2

the single track of iron, and the single track of iron is the way of the birds. Then the nature of all buddhas possesses living beings. This principle not only elucidates *living beings*, but also elucidates *the Buddha-nature*.³³⁵

Here Dōgen again stresses the importance of *datsuraku*, the “letting go” of dualism – in this case, the dualism of idealising Buddha-nature as innate possession, however, given the list of categories in the previous paragraph, Dōgen should now be stylistically understood as encouraging the “letting go” of all categorical parameters – so that the mutual manifestation and realisation of Buddha-nature and living beings is possible. In this dynamic and interdependent formula, “presence” can never become the subtle ground for either Buddha-nature or living beings. The freedom of letting go [*datsuraku*], and the trans-descendence of allowing the categorical parameters of both Buddha-nature and living beings be shed [*datsuraku-datsuraku*], begin to elucidate how “presence” and Buddha-nature can interpenetrate one another without cancelling or over-shadowing the other.

Once Dōgen has freed both Buddha-nature and living beings from the categorical parameters of ontology, epistemology and the like, establishing all of reality within the dynamic and paradoxical tension of “presence” and emptiness, he turns to elucidating how this paradox of “presence” and emptiness works to express and manifest Buddha-nature. In this discussion, he emphasises that the understanding of Buddha-nature is intimately connected to a proper conception of time and how time works.

The manifesting body preaching Buddha-nature is therefore open, clear, and bright – vast emptiness. The “preaching Buddha-nature” bodily manifesting is thereby expressing the original body of all buddhas. Nowhere is there even one buddha not making the “thereby expressing” his buddha-body. The buddha-body is the manifesting body, and there is always a body manifesting Buddha-nature. Even buddhas’ and patriarchs’ capacity of uttering and understanding that the four great elements and five skandhas [are Buddha-nature] is a moment-to-moment expression of the manifesting body.³³⁶

Uji or “being-time” is how Dōgen titles another *Shōbōgenzō* fascicle in which he discusses the dynamic way time is to be understood by the enlightened. Heine describes Dōgen’s

³³⁵ *Master Dogen's Shōbōgenzō: Book 2*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking, Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1994, p. 22

³³⁶ “Shōbōgenzō Buddha-Nature,” translated by Norman Waddell and Masao ABE, *The Eastern Buddhist*, Kyoto, (9:1, 1976), p. 98

distinction between a “derivative” view of time, whereby time is ignorantly thought of as dualistically separate from living beings as the expression “time flies” indicates, and a dynamic or “significant” view of time:

Dōgen accentuates the dynamic nature of movement and continuity, which is no longer statically conceived as time points “piled up on top of one another or lined up side by side” in a linear uni-directional fashion. Rather, movement is disclosed as the simultaneous interpenetration of all beings occurring right-now and throughout the unity of past, present and future. Dōgen distinguishes the genuine significance of passage (*kyōryaku*) from the derivative view that “time flies,” which is conceived of as “something like the wind and rain moving from east to west” ... *Kyōryaku* is not merely passing away. Rather, it signifies the comprehensive asymmetrical process of the True Man’s [sic] enlightened existential projection and ontological understanding right-now moving simultaneously in and through past, present and future, actively engaging the passenger and passageway as well as the full context of the experiential reality surrounding and permeating the movement.³³⁷

Exhibited in Dōgen’s description of a “moment-to-moment expression of the manifesting body” is what Heine describes as an “asymmetrical process” in which all of time is brought together meaningfully and significantly to provide expression of the Buddha-Dharma through form, through the dependently originating bodies of the buddhas and patriarchs. No uni-directional reduction occurs, whereby Buddha-nature is brought into the restricted realm of arising and subsiding phenomena, but rather the realm of arising and subsiding (*samsāra*) is permeated by the significance of Buddha-nature as those who actively practice (*zazen*) continually bring the two realms (the ultimate and the mundane) together through their active realisation (*shushō ittō*). In this way, time cannot be understood from the mundane perspective of a series of points marching from a distant past “beginning” point toward a distant future “ending” point by the enlightened practitioner, for at every moment time is dynamically struck through, permeated by the ultimate such that its fullness is represented at each and every moment as it enables the mundane arising and subsiding activity to continue. Dōgen’s view of dependent co-origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*) is far removed from the earlier systematic portrayal of a doomed cyclical existence recorded in the *Samyutta-Nikāya* (12,1. SN17f) such that Buddha-nature finds a natural manifestation within the very cycle of birth and death. However, this is not to say that Dōgen sees within “grasping” or “craving” a

³³⁷ Heine, Steven, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985, p. 54-5

shining Buddha-nature, as can be the outcome of some *tathāgatagarbha* thought. Rather, more in keeping with Nāgārjuna's understanding of *pratītya-samutpāda*, both the mundane and the ultimate share the "foundation" of *śūnyatā* which enables both practice and realisation.

Cosmic Buddha-nature

In contrast to the cosmic aspects of Tendai Buddhism which would regard the non-duality of sentient and insentient beings from a monistic standpoint, effectively erasing and denying individual aspects, Dōgen casts non-duality in the light of his discussion surrounding the Buddha-nature. Rather than viewing the participation of non-sentient phenomena in Buddha-nature as indicating the transcendence of an profound reality, that is, that somehow Buddha-nature has infused or resides in all phenomena, the non-dual relationship is more dynamic. Dōgen does not entertain transcendence but a transcendence so that there is no duality of sentient/non-sentient when regarding expressing profound reality. There are only different perspectives (e.g. a fish's view of the ocean).

In the *Bushō* fascicle, Dōgen reminds his readers of Bodhidharma's words: "Each mind is like wood and stone." And then he goes on to explain:

"Mind here spoken of is the suchness of mind (or mind of objective reality), it is the mind of the whole earth; therefore it is the mind of self and other. Each mind, of all the people on earth, as well as the enlightened ones in all worlds, and the celestials and dragons and so on, is wood and stone. There is no other mind outside of this. This wood and stone is of itself untrammelled by the realms of existence, nonexistence, emptiness, form, and so on."³³⁸

In her comments on Dōgen's nonanthropological perspective, Joan Stambaugh points out that for Dōgen, we humans are but one aspect of the myriad *dharma*s/phenomena. When discussing nature in the *Yama* (Mountain and Water Sutra), Dōgen "does not relegate mountains and waters to the dubious status of picturesque "landscapes," but considers them thoroughly alive in a manner not identical with human life, yet at the same time nondualistic with it. [T]he categories of identity and difference alone are not

³³⁸ Cleary, Thomas, *Rational Zen: The Mind of Dōgen Zenji*, Boston: Shambhala Publications, 1992, p.95

sufficiently subtle to encompass what Dōgen wants to convey.³³⁹ And, as Dōgen asserts in this chapter that the Green mountains walk, he also claims that:

Green mountains are neither sentient nor insentient. You are neither sentient nor insentient. At this moment, you cannot doubt the green mountains' walking.³⁴⁰

Thus, although humans exhibit the tendency to establish the human consciousness as interpreter of reality, this small-mindedness itself is in fact the inhibitor of our experience. According to Dōgen, "If you do not learn to be free from your superficial views, you will not be free from the body and mind of an ordinary person."³⁴¹ Stambaugh notes Dōgen's remarkable originality in proposing a "nonanthropomorphic way of experiencing."

Dōgen and phenomenology

Kasulis notes that the descriptor "phenomenological" can be meaningfully applied to Dōgen, albeit in a limited sense of the way Husserl introduced the science. That is, Kasulis recognises an element of "intentionality" in Dōgen's understanding of how situation and conditioning influence one's perceptions, however, Dōgen does not develop a theory of "intentionality" as did Husserl. Where Dōgen offers more development is in the particular way he proposes his own understanding of "bracketing." As Kasulis says of Dōgen's approach:

... Dōgen is not a naïve realist insofar as he is sensitive to the contribution of mind in the constituting of experience. Yet he is no subjective idealist either. Although mind cannot be separated from reality, reality cannot thereby be reduced to mind. Dōgen's tack is to concern himself only with what is experienced. Limiting himself to this, he is not concerned with notions of reality outside this process of experiencing consciousness. In *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen frequently takes a seemingly metaphysical statement from the T'ien-t'ai or Hua-yen traditions and interprets it as a descriptive statement about the structure of a specific experience; in effect, he suspends metaphysical and epistemological commitments outside the realm of things as experienced. In this respect, Dōgen is implicitly carrying out his own form of

³³⁹ Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 41

³⁴⁰ Dōgen, "Mountain and Waters Sutra" as cited in Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 43

³⁴¹ Dōgen, "Mountain and Waters Sutra" as cited in Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999, p. 47

bracketing and the term *phenomenological* is surprisingly appropriate to characterize the nature of his methodology.³⁴²

A meaningful and direct “seeing” of phenomena as they are in themselves is not dependent upon the desires and efforts of beings, nor the inviolable essence of the phenomena themselves, but is rather the celebratory activity of a mutual realisation. Only Buddhist emptiness (*śūnyata*), which as Nāgārjuna exhibited is synonymous with the Buddhist doctrine of dependent origination (*pratītya-samutpāda*), allows this to take place. So, Dōgen’s “phenomenology” is a particularly Buddhist one in which seeing/realisation is mutually dependent with the arising of Buddha nature. It arises and is manifest in phenomena, but dynamically so – and becoming manifest in *dharma*s, it must necessarily retain the quality of emptiness and participate in the “form” of *pratītya-samutpāda*. Thus, it is natural that the rocks, mountains and hills proclaim the true Dharma, not because, as in earlier Tendai thought they *have* Buddha-nature, but because Buddha-nature is manifest thus, naturally in the ‘way things are’ co-dependently with active realisation. This distinction highlights Dōgen’s methodology as one of praxi-centric phenomenology. Glass makes the interesting suggestion that Dōgen’s re-writing/visioning of “all beings have Buddha nature” to “whole being is Buddha Nature” (Glass’ phrasing) can be viewed as a “switch from figure to field sensitivities. Buddha Nature is not a property of the figure within the field (the self is empty) but rather is the radiant and luminous force of the field itself (emptiness is the self). The “self” is re-located from figure to field.”³⁴³ This observation perceptively shifts emphasis away from the form itself and allows for a proper treatment of space. However, what is lacking in this understanding of emptiness and self is the praxiological emphasis that is so important to Dōgen.

The following fascicle of the moon (*Tsuki*) exemplifies Dōgen’s suspension of metaphysical and epistemological concerns to strike directly at Buddha-nature *as it is*. In the *Tsuki* (Moon) chapter of the *Shōbōgenzō*, Dōgen asks his students to consider the non-duality of phenomena and our perception of them. Using the image of the moon on water as an example, he argues that this image, usually regarded an idealised abstracted

³⁴² Kasulis, Thomas, *Zen Action/Zen Person*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1985, p. 69

³⁴³ Glass, Newman Robert, *Working Emptiness: Toward a Third Reading of Emptiness in Buddhism and Postmodern Thought*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995, p. 99 Glass’ premise is that there are three ways to treat emptiness: (1) as presencing, (2) as absencing, taking away, or difference, (3) Buddha essence. Glass says of the third way, Buddha essence: “the third reading of the working of emptiness” is that “the realisation of emptiness is not the realization of things which are empty but the realization of emptiness alone. Forms, whether emptied or not, are not primary in this third understanding of emptiness.” (p. 63)

notion of the *real* moon in the sky, is in no way less *real* than the physical moon we see in its gradation of fullness in the sky at this very moment. He quotes Sakyamuni Buddha's words as recorded in the *Golden Light Sutra*: "*The Buddha's true Dharma-body/Is just like space.*"³⁴⁴ / *Manifesting its form according to things,/It is like the moon in water.*" Then Dōgen expounds on this verse:

"The *reality as it is* in this "*is like the moon in water*" may be the [oneness of] *water-and-moon*, or it may be the *water's reality*, or *the moon's reality*, or *being in reality*, or *the reality of being in*. "*Being like*" does not express resemblance; being like is concrete existence. "*The Buddha's true Dharma-body*" is the *reality itself* of *space*. This *space* is the *Buddha's true Dharma-body* or *reality itself*. Because [space] is the Buddha's true Dharma-body, the whole earth, the whole world, the whole Dharma, and the whole of *manifestation*, are themselves naturally space. The *reality itself* of the manifest hundred things and myriad phenomena is totally the true Dharma-body of Buddha, and it *is like the moon in water*."³⁴⁵

Dōgen's pairing of Dharma-body and space/emptiness in the context of perception and experience works paradoxically to validate experience in the context of "no-self." Dōgen's "bracketing" here indicates that categorical thinking and analysing miss the profound impact "no-self" has on experience; emptiness of self, emptiness of phenomena, work to make manifest the Dharma-body of Buddha. Dōgen is asserting that, regardless of how you wish to 'come at' reality, be it from the oneness of water-and-moon, be it from the water's perspective, or the moon's, whether you describe yourself from reality's perspective, or reality from yours, none of these angles, none of these expressions can deny by way of abstraction or idealised form the tangible reality that all shape. 'All' here includes anything we can think of and much more. Thinking, living, being, performing religious actions, are this same reality. None enjoys more reality. Dōgen describes the phenomenon of a cloud passing over the moon and our perception that the moon moves. Our inclination is to distinguish between the real movement of the cloud and the mistaken perception that the moon moves. However, in Dōgen's understanding of non-duality, all phenomena participate in the true Dharma-body of the Buddha (and inversely, the Dharma-body of the Buddha participates in all phenomena). Dōgen's discussion of "is like" is not to point out the essential unreality or illusion of phenomena, but to establish Buddhist "thusness" and the invitation for all phenomena to

³⁴⁴ The Chinese translation of *śūnyatā* is often rendered "space" in English. For example, the familiar verse from the Heart Sutra, "form is emptiness [*śūnyatā*], emptiness form," reads in Chinese "space is colour, colour space."

³⁴⁵ Dōgen, *Master Dōgen's Shōbōgenzō: Book 3*, translated by Gudo Wafu NISHIJIMA and Chodo Cross, Woking Surrey: Windbell Publications, 1997, p. 2

manifest the Buddha-Dharma. This openness to the world of phenomena and celebration of the mutual experience of realisation is conspicuously positive; however, Dōgen's purpose is not to establish the position of "presence" or "being" but to open up experience to the extent that Buddha-Dharma is able to be made manifest. Instead of delineating the distinction between real and unreal, Dōgen asks that the practitioner work with what has been given and see there the Buddha's true Dharma-body. This is the treasury that Dōgen means to help elucidate: ripe in the practice of *zazen* is the whole of profound reality. One must perceive it thus to realise its all pervasive existence.

Chapter 4.

Martin Heidegger the Reluctant Priest

This chapter will explore phenomenological thinking in the West, as exemplified in the work of Martin Heidegger. For Heidegger, the opening of Da-sein aligns with the action of becoming in the world – a journey that Da-sein engages via “pathways” that metaphorically wend around some of the thinking already discussed in earlier chapters with regards to certain Buddhist masters/schools. As laid out in previous chapters, the tension between theory (*theoria*) and practice (*praxis*) is a constant one throughout Buddhist history and although each master/school responds differently to the issue, it is one that demands renewed thinking as well as renewed practice. Theory, as a path/roadmap/guide to correct practice, for example the noble eight-fold path given by Siddhartha to his followers, draws the practitioner out of him/herself with the promise of transcending the egoself by pointing to the transcendent. Practice is the living into all that theory attempts to describe and point toward and the honing of the skills necessary to experience the transformation promised. The merging of theory and practice, where experience brings theory to life and lives are transformed, is often attempted in the religious calling; Buddhism calls such a nexus point enlightenment. Enlightenment therefore exemplifies the phenomenological nexus of seeing and experience in the Zen/Mahāyāna tradition. Perception is not just output of the mind and seeing enters the realm of living experience – it entails individual transformation that must be contextual, personal and never static. Similarly, Heidegger’s Da-sein moves, especially in his later work, in the direction of removing the barriers of subjectivity which would keep Da-sein in “control” of its “destiny” (and ultimately Being itself) through the avenue of “thinking” which has been compared to Mahāyāna “meditation” as a practice which constantly moves the individual into lived experience of ultimate meaning. This never static relation of the individual to ultimate meaning destabilizes the *cogito* reliant subject and provides opportunity for transformation. In both Zen meditation and Heidegger’s thinking, individual transformation occurs after a shift in the perception/perspective of the individual engaging actively in the present situation. The transformation that occurs in the individual has the effect of transforming all aspects of the individual in his/her situation recalling Dōgen’s teaching that a single enlightenment transforms the entire world. Paradoxically, of course, the world remains exactly as it has always been, and the activity of the individual continues ... in meditation, thinking, washing potatoes, walking

through the forest. In the Zen/Mahāyāna tradition, the enlightenment experience is a re-orientation to things in their suchness so that the practitioner's activity does not necessarily change but the new perspective brought to the activity unveils what is truly happening and the change is likened to a meditation practitioner deep asleep to one deep in meditation. For Heidegger, the re-orientation is the difference of allowing truth to become manifest by remaining open to the possibility and the occurrence is likened to the blooming of a rose, "without why."³⁴⁶ Heidegger refers to this cleared and open being *Da-sein*, "there-being".

Although Western philosophy made a break with the religious concerns of theology, more often than not, theology still provides philosophy with questions and philosophy often seeks to set theology straight. Martin Heidegger wrestled early in life with the concerns of theology, first with the Catholic church under which he studied towards a rectorate and soon after with the Protestant community. However, once he entered the philosopher's guild as a student under Husserl, he gave the appearance of giving up religion altogether, carefully writing around "God" as though participating fully in Husserl's dictum of reduction. But Heidegger's investigation of *being* in his first work of philosophy *Sein und Zeit* is indication of his lifelong concern with meaning and "ultimate" things such as the theologians struggled with in their overtly religious arenas. Furthermore, Heidegger's experience digesting Christian theology informs his own philosophical writing. In "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," Heidegger states that "without this theological background I should never have come upon the path of thinking"³⁴⁷ through the voice of the Inquirer *qua* Heidegger himself. In a 1935 lecture on Hölderlin, Heidegger speaks metaphorically of "two thorns" in the flesh (after the Apostle Paul), as Pöggler explains, "the alienation from the beliefs of his origins and the failure of his rectorate."³⁴⁸ Clearly influenced by Meister Eckhart, Heidegger employs certain terminology from the German mystical tradition to best describe the relationship between *Da-sein* and Being. This blending of mystical Christian influence, Heidegger's interest in Chinese Taoism, and his exposure to certain

³⁴⁶ In *Der Satz vom Grund*, Heidegger quotes from mystic poet Angelus Silesius: "the rose is without why; it blooms because it blooms;/It cares not for itself, asks not if it's seen" cited by Zimmerman, Michael E., *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, rev. ed., Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981, p. 238.

³⁴⁷ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 10

³⁴⁸ Pöggler, Otto, *The Paths of Heidegger's Life and Thought*, trans. John Bailiff, New Jersey: Humanities Press (originally published in German in 1992), 1997, p. 326

Zen texts,³⁴⁹ will be followed up with later in the chapter. Suffice it to say here that Heidegger did not scorn or deride the arena of the theologians, yet still chose to express himself carefully outside the "language" of religion. This bracketing of religious terminology (with the few exceptions noted above) gives him the appearance of attempting to become the philosopher *par excellence* and yet his writing does not come close to the systematic clarity of Hegel's for example, for he reworks language to attempt to express what is deep within him, what he knows/kens and thinks together. This manipulation of language is frustrating for the systematic philosopher and is much more empathetic to the expressions of the poet to whom Heidegger entrusts the utterance of the holy. Moreover, Heidegger's employment of language may be seen as a method itself for capturing the imagination of his readership and prompting not only academic critique, but individual response. So Heidegger may in fact be viewed as a reluctant priest in terms of how his philosophy beckons the individual to hearken and re-attune to the resounding call that issues forth from the deep. And regardless of Heidegger's own dismissal of the term "phenomenological," he exhibits in his life of thinking a phenomenological approach that supports praxi-centrism by example if not overtly.

The phenomenological response

The modern phenomenological movement was borne partly out of a reaction to the unresolved "gap" problem – that is, the gap between the immanent subject and transcendent eternal that provides the subject with meaning – never addressed satisfactorily by Western philosophy to date, although, the problem had been located by a number of thinkers, even pre-Socratics such as Parmenides. Husserl, in particular, reacted against the enlightenment model of ascertaining meaning from a purely transcendental subject, consequently he began to look more closely at the world, and the relationship between the individual and the world, in order to reveal the essences of things for he considered truth or meaning to be located at or with the essence of a thing. Meaning located outside the experienced world, the lived world (*Lebenswelt*), such as provided by Kantian transcendental idealism, is predicated on unverified data and, in the end, unreal. Considered the founder of modern phenomenology, and the champion of the phenomenological method, Edmund Husserl intended to get at truth which he saw as grounded in the phenomenal world and "visible" only through applying a method of

³⁴⁹ Heidegger read D.T. SUZUKI, see Barrett, William, "Zen for the West," *Zen Buddhism, Selected Writings of D.T. Suzuki*, edited by William Barrett, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1956, p. xi

investigation which endeavours to clear away all distracting preconceptions, so that truth in accordance to its nature as self-revealing, can be seen. Truth perceived under these conditions is tangible; it will present itself to the ready conscious. In viewing truth as tangible and available, Husserl suggests the collapsing of the dual worlds of the noumenon and phenomenon. Steven Laycock writes,

Husserlian phenomenology is ... a noumenology. Not only is the phenomenon to be comprehended as the object *in itself* precisely as it appears, but the phenomenon itself, in its immanence, is *in itself*, and, in its appearing, appears *as it is: in itself*. Its being (in itself) *is* its appearing. The Kantian noumenon, by contrast, does not, and cannot, appear. It is wholly occluded by the very phenomenon to which it gives birth.³⁵⁰

Husserl's intention, as Laycock points out, is that via a phenomenological method of approach, one is able to apprehend/comprehend the object totally as it is given us. Husserl introduces the *epoché* as the method whereby one reduces one's view of reality (called a horizon), by means of bracketing (*epoché*), to its essential elements. This approach seeks to understand the lived world (*Lebenswelt*) as opposed to the scientific world, by going to "the things themselves" (*Ding an sich*). Husserl's reading of Descartes in his *Cartesian Meditations* saw instead of individual ego a transcendental subjectivity that included objectivity. He employed the term "transcendental phenomenology" and eventually "transcendental phenomenological idealism" to describe the subject that has performed the *epoché* on the horizons of the outer world. In effect, Husserl applies a phenomenological reduction on the outer world so that a new transcendental subjectivity is able to analyse the meaning behind what has presented itself as the outer world. He describes the transcendental "phenomenologizing" subject applying the reduction in this way:

I deny myself the actions of inquiry, of thematic experience, of judgement, of axiological and practical projection, of deliberation, of decision, that insert into the horizon that pre-gives the world ... But with the inhibiting of this universal thematic domain, the possibility is opened of turning it around into a new kind of thematic arena. In unity with the *epoché* and as the one practicing it, I become precisely the "nonparticipant" onlooker of transcendental life in which the

³⁵⁰ Laycock, Steven W., *Mind as Mirror and the Mirroring of the Mind: Buddhist Reflections on Western Phenomenology*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, p. 53

acceptedness of the horizon, as giving the basis for all natural themes, and these themes themselves course on.³⁵¹

Only through this method of phenomenological bracketing (*epoché*) are subjectivity and objectivity on equal ground, a transcendental ground. Phenomenology establishes our conscious as “transcendental consciousness” and the world as phenomena.³⁵² This works to suspend the prejudices the normal conscious would carry around in every-day existence – this transcendental consciousness is a self-consciousness performing a careful and calculated mental process so as to make the *Lebenswelt* welcome as the meaning-laden phenomenal realm. In this readied state, the transcendental consciousness is prepared to encounter the phenomenal world as it is.

Husserl writes in *The Idea of Phenomenology*,

... phenomenological reduction ... entails a limitation to the sphere of things that are *purely self given*, to the sphere of those things which are not merely spoken about, meant, or perceived, but instead to the sphere of those things that are given in exactly the sense in which they are thought of, and moreover are self-given in the strictest sense - in such a way that nothing which is meant fails to be given.³⁵³

Hintikka comments on Husserl's statement by pointing out that what is “given” in his expression “self-given” is not the noumena, but the object itself. The phenomenological reduction is a bracketing of anything which is not given to us in immediate experience. In fact, as Hintikka points out, in Husserl's words “to be capable of being given belongs to the essence of being.” Thus, bracketing is the attempt to consider only what has been given, excluding all other things “merely spoken about, meant, or perceived.” This careful assessment of reality, and the caution against relying on the subject to produce a full account, or even an unbiased account, recalls the discussion earlier on *prapañca*. There is agreement that the subjective ego produces a screen of misinformation or skewed perception that in fact veils reality from view. This is called *prapañca* (conceptual

³⁵¹ Husserl, Edmund, Appendix 1 [to p. 42] in Fink, Eugen, *Sixth Cartesian Meditation: The Idea of a Transcendental Theory of Method*, with textual notations by Edmund Husserl, translated with introduction by Ronald Bruzina, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995 (German published 1988), p. 163

³⁵² Ströker, Elisabeth, “Phenomenology as First Philosophy: Reflections on Husserl,” from *Edmund Husserl and the Phenomenological Tradition*, ed. Robert Sokolowski, Washington D.C.: CUA Press, 1988, p. 257

³⁵³ Husserl, Edmund, *The Idea of Phenomenology*, trans. W.P. Alston and George Nakhnikian, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1964, pp. 48-49 as quoted in Jaakko Hintikka's article, “The Phenomenological Dimension,” *The Cambridge Companion to Husserl*, ed. Charles B. Guignon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 85

diffusion) by Nāgārjuna and his commentators. The phenomenological approach seeks to consider what is "self given" instead of what is brought out by the subjective ego. Heidegger will pick up the idea of "self-given" in his discussion of the way in which what presences or is made manifest is given "*Es gibt*". Further, both Husserl and Heidegger differentiate between "appearances" and "essence." Phenomenologists recognise the tendency for truth or essence to remain hidden/obscured and the need for another approach or activity on the part of the subject. Husserl maintains the necessity of reduction and pursues the avenue with the subject until he has re-established the transcendental ego. Heidegger works more on attitude and openness of the subject, recognising that no will is able to uncover or make appear truth, that it is already "given." Tugendhat offers the view that Heidegger does not discuss Husserl's famous epoché for he is writing from "within" the epoché – he has performed the reduction before picking up the pen.³⁵⁴ In other words, as Sukale explains, "as long as there is Dasein there are entities in the world because Dasein lives in experiences, the horizons of which constitute things in the world."³⁵⁵

The way in which the consciousness acts and thinks in regard to the world is described as "intentionality." A valid encounter of the world and the meaning that is revealed requires the activity of intuition. Intuition is the vehicle for "datum." When the consciousness thinks of an object, that object in the consciousness, although not identical with the physical object, never-the-less partakes in some of the reality. Although an abstraction from the physical, the object in the perception of the conscious still contains the reality of the experience. In fact, according to Husserl's method, the only way communication is possible is for two consciousnesses to abstract through experience the physical reality, and in the case where this experience is similar enough, communication can occur. Likewise, there are infinite possibilities for experience, which does not diminish from the reality of either the perceived object, or the perception. Furthermore, on the basis of further perceptions, the consciousness is permitted to "revise" earlier perceptions so that full understanding is something which can be built.

It can be seen, then, that Husserl's phenomenology is a method of understanding the *Lebenswelt* humans both are a part of and experience externally to themselves personally.

³⁵⁴ Sukale, Michael, *Comparative Studies in Phenomenology*, Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, 1976, p. 101

³⁵⁵ Sukale, Michael, *Comparative Studies in Phenomenology*, Martinus Nijhoff: The Hague, 1976, p. 119

This approach relies on an understanding of the intentionality of the subjective consciousness, using a method of reduction in order to view the outer world as pure phenomena by the transcendental consciousness. This method, by undergoing such eidetic reduction, positions the transcendental subjective consciousness to gain the perspective necessary from which to view the *Lebenswelt* as it truly is, as it presents itself to the subjective consciousness. Husserl sent the searching subject back “to the things themselves” to reflect on the lived world as it is without imposing preconceptions on it – to let the world of objects speak for itself. However, Husserl eventually settles on the privileged activity of a transcendental subject who cannot but reinforce the artificial gap that Kant brought forward. As with the philosophers of the enlightenment before him, Husserl’s transcendental consciousness sets itself up to be the interpreter of all experience/phenomena. This belies a wariness toward the phenomenal that may be found even among the phenomenologists – there is yet unease and mistrust if one must apprehend by first isolating the phenomena and limiting the data to measurables. Further, the problem of the “gap” remains in this model. For Husserl, and in most of the Western phenomenological enterprise, to rely on the synthesising activity of human consciousness to interpret and introduce meaning to the world at large ensures a subject-object relationship which cannot be bridged, the division of which causes the search for meaning to ever spiral on without any hope of touching it. Husserl’s method remains static and relies on a “seeing” which doesn’t necessarily involve active participation in the “objective” realm. This reserve keeps established the subjective-objective category of dualism that works so well within metaphysical structures.

Heidegger and the phenomenological movement

Martin Heidegger, although a student of Husserl, saw Husserl’s project revert back to the problem of unreliability and essences only detected from the standpoint of the transcendental ego – experience becomes reflective of the make-up of the subject. So, Heidegger instead focuses on what most philosophers presuppose, that is *being* as a place to begin contemplating meaning. By presupposing *being* in our effort to understand the world around us, we allow the very key to it all, the fact that anything exists at all, to recede and vanish from our vision. The absence of true contemplation leaves us engaged in idle chatter, focused on the mundane, interacting with the world-at-hand as we would a tool. Heidegger’s seminal work *Sein und Zeit* began with a call to remember *being* as it has been assumed and hence forgotten in our philosophical musings regarding meaning,

reason and logic. How is it that anything exists? How can one explain the multiplicity of beings which share in common being? In his 1919-20 lectures, Heidegger criticises Husserl's beginning point of the subject's intuition and suggests instead that one ought to begin to understand the factual life by beginning with understanding. Furthermore, Heidegger criticises Husserl's reliance on the phenomenological method, what has become a burdensome theory-based approach.

For Heidegger the theoretical orientation of the pure ego of Husserlian phenomenology sucks the blood out of the richly textured *Umwelt*, that "first-hand world" of lived experience in which one primarily exists and carries out practical tasks. In this first-hand world, things are not just "there," and they do not primarily have "value". They are not even just "things." They are "*the significant* – that's what is primary ... When you live in a first-hand world [*Umwelt*], everything comes at you loaded with meaning, all over the place and all the time, everything is enworlded, '*world happens*' ..." (p. 73) In this way of living, we do not know ourselves as egos who observe the entities lying around us. Rather (this was Heidegger's rereading of intentionality), we are the act of experientially "*living out unto something*" [*ein "Leben auf etwas zu"*], which has "absolutely nothing to do with an ego." (p. 68f)³⁵⁶

What was called transcendental phenomenology with Husserl may now be called hermeneutical phenomenology as Heidegger takes it up.³⁵⁷ Beginning with the intuition of the subjective "self" overly influences the relation the subject may have with the "objective." Contemplating 'understanding,' Heidegger begins his search for meaning by questioning how the subject gains an understanding of meaning.³⁵⁸ Thus, with Heidegger's beginning point, the subject is as much in question as the "objective world". Steffney notes that Heidegger initially locates Da-sein at the "heart of the ontological difference"³⁵⁹ as a sort of medium by which Being is able to show itself. Da-sein is the authentically tuned consciousness/subject which allows Being its voice and via such a role is transformed in the process. This early priority brought Heidegger criticism for

³⁵⁶ Sheehan, Thomas, "Husserl and Heidegger: The Making and Unmaking of a Relationship," in *Edmund Husserl: Psychological and Transcendental Phenomenology and the Confrontation with Heidegger (1927-1931)*, edited and translated by Thomas Sheehan and Richard E. Palmer, Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1997, p. 15

³⁵⁷ Pöggeler makes the observation that Heidegger has reversed Husserl's priority of 'things', or beings over *being*. Pöggeler, Otto, *The Paths of Heidegger's Life and Thought*, trans John Bailiff, New Jersey: Humanities Press (originally published in German in 1992), 1997, p. 54

³⁵⁸ In "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," Heidegger has the Inquirer say "... I dedicated *Being and Time* ... to Husserl, because phenomenology presented us with possibilities of a way" in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 6

³⁵⁹ Steffney, John, "Transmetaphysical Thinking in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, 27 (July, 1977) p. 325

privileging substance over essence – the ground of being over what kind of relationship Being and Da-sein might have together. Later, Heidegger speaks more of the “event” (*Ereignis*) in which Da-sein is cleared and Being “shows” or comes forward. Heidegger ultimately abandons the term “phenomenology” as an appropriate descriptor for his philosophy. Mere methods for capturing and quantifying reality are ultimately impotent in approaching the essence of something or describing meaning. As he later explains in *A Dialogue on Language* of ceasing to use either terms “hermeneutic” or “phenomenology”: “That was done, not – as it is often thought – in order to deny the significance of phenomenology, but in order to abandon my own path of thinking to namelessness.”³⁶⁰

However, before Heidegger abandons the term “phenomenology”, he describes and investigates the etymology of the term in order to clarify it more than define it in *Being and Time*. As he writes, a “phenomenon” is “what shows itself in itself, what is manifest,”³⁶¹ not to be confused with all the manifest “showings” which although do appear are not self-showings, but indicate something else entirely (c.g. the symptoms of a sickness in which “redness” should indicate “fever” but may convey something else entirely, like “embarrassment”). “Logos” is the means by which something can be seen and therefore contains no truth-statement as such; it may voice truth or falsity; it may facilitate uncovering or the covering up. Truth is not to be found in the statement but after the clearing, and Logos merely helps facilitate the communication of Truth. Truth, then is wrapped up with what is properly made manifest as a “self-showing”:

The expression “phenomenology” can be formulated in Greek as *legein ta phainomena*. But *legein* [logos: speaks, voices] means *apophainesthai* [appearing]. Hence, phenomenology means: *apophainesthai ta phainomena* – to let what shows itself be seen from itself, just as it shows itself from itself. That is the formal meaning of the type of research that calls itself “phenomenology”. But this expresses nothing other than the maxim formulated above: “To the things themselves!”³⁶²

Here, instead of Husserl’s understanding of phenomena as “things” Heidegger specifically indicates that the engagement of phenomenology is the pursuit of the *being* of

³⁶⁰ Heidegger, Martin, “A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer,” in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 29

³⁶¹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 25

³⁶² Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 30

beings which is more often than not concealed, covered up or distorted in some kind of illusion.³⁶³ Thus, *logos* works in a hermeneutical way through the existence (“*Existenz*”) of Da-sein, interpreting to Da-sein the very *being* of Da-sein. Da-sein itself becomes the hermeneutical key in glimpsing truth or essence. Heidegger relies on the Greek etymology of the word existence/*existenz* which conveys the meaning of “standing out or inside,” such that Olafson notes only the entities which have a world and uncover other entities other than themselves can be said to “exist” in the special way Heidegger means.³⁶⁴

The implications of Heidegger’s early definition of phenomenology are, in this study, the following: (1) Truth is often concealed, or only partially discernable. And rather than something/one *causing* its disclosure, it must participate in the moment of truth with a self-disclosure; the transcendental ego is not fully in control of the process. Indeed, as will become clearer after looking at Heidegger’s term *Ereignis* (event or truth event), the self-disclosing act is relational instead of one-sided. (2) The discernment of truth is a hermeneutical problem more than an ontological or epistemological one. In other words, truth is evident and willing to “show” itself, but meaning needs a delivery, and Da-sein, in relationship to Being, provides that entry point for both the self-showing of Being and the validation/authentication of Da-sein. *Existenz*, Da-sein’s unique participation in the world, is itself, part of the “hermeneutical key” in truth’s self-disclosure. That there is meaning (at all) depends on the manifestation of being in the world – through Da-sein, as a part of Da-sein.

Da-sein “in the world” (*in der Welt*)

Da-sein literally means “there-being” from the German and is Heidegger’s unique way of expressing human existence in its individual, particular manifestation. Da-sein, in addition to being defined as partaking both of the specific and the transcendent, must take into account that the way it finds itself is “in the world” (*in der Welt*); specifically, Da-sein finds itself “thrown” (*geworfen*) into the world.³⁶⁵ This “throwness” reveals that Da-

³⁶³ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 31

³⁶⁴ Olafson, Frederick A., “The unity of Heidegger’s thought,” *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 101

³⁶⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 202

sein is “in a definite world and together with a definite range of innerworldly beings”³⁶⁶ and indicates the “disclosedness” of Da-sein and of any other innerworldly being. Being “disclosed” is how one reveals the truth of being (or the “unconcealment” for which Heidegger uses the Greek *alētheia*³⁶⁷) and indicates as well that Da-sein is also defined as Mit-sein, that is, bound together with other beings in a relationship of care or concern (*Sorge*). How Da-sein positions itself in the world depends on whether Da-sein has chosen to be authentic or inauthentic – that is, Da-sein either treats the world-at-hand in an objectifying way, using things and others as one would a tool, or else Da-sein awakens to itself in its “potentiality-of-being” that is the “*truth of existence*”³⁶⁸ and Da-sein’s attitude toward the world and those others in it is transformed. Heidegger’s expression “potentiality-of-being” refers to authentic Da-sein which is fully disclosed, cleared and resolute in its attunement. Heidegger identifies *Angst* as a call which awakens Da-sein to its “potentiality-of-being” by revealing the death that Da-sein inevitably faces, in which Da-sein “must absolutely “take itself back””.³⁶⁹ This is in fact the moment of truth for Da-sein, for either Da-sein faces the certainty of death, and thereby puts into action its “potentiality-of-being” or else Da-sein in fear turns away from this certainty and slides back into an inauthentic mode of avoidance and ultimately, forgetfulness. Heidegger has grandly accused modern thought of “forgetfulness” in letting the reflection on “being” slip to lower concern. Heidegger is in effect calling for the re-attunement of our thinking.

Regardless of whether or not one chooses an authentic or inauthentic mode of being, being is ultimately bound up in the question of temporality. Heidegger has introduced Da-sein as a being which is specific, temporally and spatially, and at the same time defined as partaking of *being* which is “*the transcendens*”, thus Heidegger states: “*Phenomenological truth (disclosedness of being) is veritas transcendentalis*”.³⁷⁰ Heidegger’s use of *transcendens* is related to how he posits the *existence* of Dasein – Dasein can be said to be

³⁶⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 203

³⁶⁷ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 202

³⁶⁸ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 204

³⁶⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 284

³⁷⁰ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 34

transcendent not in the metaphysical sense, but in the way that Dasein's experiences are temporal and yet ecstatically reach beyond the "moment."³⁷¹ Heidegger explains,

The ecstatic unity of temporality — that is, the unity of the "outside-itself" in the raptures of the future, the having-been, and the present — is the condition of the possibility that there can be a being that exists as its "There." [Da-sein as "there-being"] The being that bears the name Da-sein is "cleared" ... What essentially clears this being, that is, makes it "open" as well as "bright" for itself, was defined as care, before any "temporal" interpretation ... We understand the light of this clearedness only if we do not look for an innate, objectively present power, but rather question the whole constitution of being of Da-sein, care, as to the unified ground of its existential possibility. *Ecstatic temporality clears the There primordially.* It is the primary regulator of the possible unity of all the essential existential structures of Da-sein.³⁷²

As Caputo notes, Heidegger returns to the word "ecstasy" in *Was ist Metaphysik* seemingly emphasising its religious-mystical etymology, *ek-stasis*: "Da-sein's existence is *ek-static*," it is "a standing out in (*aus-stehen*) the truth of Being, a standing open to the Open itself".³⁷³ The transcendent nature of being is expressed, and can only be expressed, when a being is cleared in this ecstatic unity of temporality; when the being, from within, realises the ultimate "outside itself" (ecstatic) mode which is defined by temporality. Da-sein lives into the temporal restriction of life itself and finds others there, too. Later, this happening is called *Ereignis*, an "event" or "self-spectacle" or "appropriation."³⁷⁴ Da-sein's existence and *being* depend on the ecstatic unity of temporality, what Heidegger describes as a horizon.³⁷⁵ Importantly, Young points out that Heidegger uses the horizon to expose modernity's "sickness," that is, metaphysics. For metaphysics, Young summarises, is the "absolutization of a horizon of disclosure"³⁷⁶ so that instead of realising that there are many horizons, one chooses to focus singularly on a particular disclosure, neglecting the multiplicity of horizons. This is part of what the phenomenologists sought to make clear — single perspectives can only yield partial truths. Young explains that metaphysics

³⁷¹ See Robert J. Dostal, "Time and phenomenology in Husserl and Heidegger," *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles Guignon, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993, p. 156

³⁷² Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 321

³⁷³ Heidegger, Martin, *Was ist Metaphysik*, translated and cited by John D. Caputo in *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 179

³⁷⁴ These definitions from Steffney, John, "Transcendental thinking in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East & West*, vol. 27, No. 3 (July 1977), p. 330

³⁷⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 333

³⁷⁶ Young, Julian, *Heidegger's Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 34

misses ... not the being of beings, not being, but rather the fact that that there are just these universal traits which have categorical status for us is dependent on the selection made from the smorgasbord of attributes possessed by reality itself ... And missing that, missing, *not* our horizon of disclosure but rather its *horizontal character* – the perspectival character of our basic perspective on things – it elevates its account of the being of beings into *the* (one and only) categorical account of reality itself.³⁷⁷

One of the most serious oversights of such a single-minded approach is the loss of depth or mystery, or in other words the “sublimity”³⁷⁸ or “holiness” of Being. As Heidegger writes in *The Question Concerning Technology*, the effect of absolutizing a horizon is to “drive out every other possibility of revealing ... Above all, that revealing which, in the sense of *poiesis*, lets what presences come forth into appearance”³⁷⁹ And here, Young points out, by suppressing the revealing in the sense of *poiesis*, one further misses the “Es gibt” sense of the world as “given.”³⁸⁰ So, in absolutizing a horizon one misses the multiplicity in perspective, the depth and mystery that other perspectives bring, and the natural sense in which the World is given.

Because of Da-sein’s constitution and the ecstatic unity of temporality, the world can never be conceived of as something “objectively present” for the world, Heidegger writes, ““is” “there” together with the outside-itself of the ecstasies. If no Da-sein exists, no world is “there” either.”³⁸¹

Self and world belong together in one being, Dasein. Self and world are not two beings, as subject and object, not as you and I, but are – in the unity of the structure of Being-in-the-world – the fundamental determination of Dasein itself.³⁸²

Or as Steffney makes clear, Heidegger’s Dasein is never a mere “self” but necessarily includes a world, and even Being. Steffney further interprets Dasein as the very bridge,

³⁷⁷ Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 29

³⁷⁸ Young’s term in Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 20

³⁷⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *The Question Concerning Technology*, as cited by Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 29

³⁸⁰ Young cites Heidegger, “... *poiesis* is the Greek sense of the manifest world as ‘brought forth’, ‘granted’ to us in Being’s self-disclosing act, the sense of ‘nature’, in the broadest sense, as the *self*-disclosure of Being (*What is Called Thinking* p. 237) in Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 29.

³⁸¹ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 334

³⁸² Heidegger, Martin, *Grundprobleme der Phänomenologie* as quoted by Zimmerman, Michael E., *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger’s Concept of Authenticity*, rev. ed., Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981, p. 27

the "heart of the ontological difference, the link between Being and beings, the ontological dimension that transmits the revelation of Being."³⁸³

Heidegger is often accused of single-minded concern for Da-sein and Da-sein's potentiality-of-being, but it is important to note that Da-sein is cleared and 'realised' not in isolation but in the community of others, that Da-sein in finding itself thrown into the world, is there with others in the same predicament so that rather than fending each for oneself, each self is defined by the givenness of the other, mit-sein.

The relations of significance that determine the structure of the world are not a network of forms that is imposed upon some material by a worldless subject. Rather, factual Da-sein, ecstatically understanding itself and its world in the unity of the There, comes back from these horizons to the beings encountered in them. Coming back to these beings understandingly is the existential meaning of letting them be encountered in making them present; for this reason they are called innerworldly. The world is, so to speak, already "further outside" than any object could ever be.³⁸⁴

The blending of subject and object comes when Da-sein retreats from the "horizon" of the ecstasy of time, and upon returning sees and understands itself and the world around more completely. The transcendent nature of *being* revealed in the ecstasy of temporality comes to Da-sein in an epiphanal sense, but not because Da-sein has moved beyond or out of itself. Instead, Da-sein comes back into the world of beings which reveals itself and Da-sein alike in opening fully in the present moment, like the rose opening in the fullness of time. Of course, "fullness" here is not meant to indicate linear, but the multidimensionality of time. As Caputo notes of Heidegger's later exposition, the rose is a model for Da-sein in that its blossoming arises "because" and not within the confines of external justification – "why" implies "time" (for Eckhart) and rational sciences (for Heidegger).³⁸⁵ There is no inside or outside, no subject to encounter an object so to speak. Truth or essence is a self-revealing which does not depend on the objectifying mission of gathering data; and viewed from this perspective, it acts out of its true nature,

³⁸³ Steffney, John, "Transmetaphysical Thinking in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, 27 (July, 1977) p. 325

³⁸⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *Being and Time: A Translation of Sein und Zeit*, trans. Joan Stambaugh, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996, p. 335

³⁸⁵ Caputo further explains: "Dasein must be without why, not in the sense of that which lies forth of itself (*das Vorliegende*), but in the sense of letting the being lie forth (*Vorliegen-lassen*). Dasein must suspend representational thinking in order to let Being arise, emerge, and stand forth. Otherwise Being becomes an object measured by the dimensions of the human subject." Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 191

“without why.” What Heidegger indicates by Da-sein “taking itself back” is the retrieval of the objectifying subject who would impose itself on the world of beings to use those around as one would a tool, in order to re-orientate itself to its primary constitution of “care” (*Sorge*). Although not entirely clear, Heidegger seems to be suggesting that part of what enables Da-sein to revert back to itself, after the resounding call of Angst, and not be self-consumed, is the constituent part of Da-sein that cares for others. Heidegger will use the image of a hermeneutic circle and tautology to reinforce this doubling back on itself of Da-sein and it is partly the assertion that Da-sein is defined by care that keeps the image from complete solipsism, egoism, or indeed Nietzschean will-to-power. Thus far, already in Heidegger’s early concerns, there is the attempt to posit Da-sein as one who is re-attuned to the depth and breadth of what it means to exist in the world. In time, and yet not fully defined by temporal concerns, Da-sein lives outwardly, and indeed is called out of itself by the holy mystery that eludes definition. But Da-sein is not alone – neither heroic nor desolate – Da-sein *is* because others *are*. Da-sein is wrapped up with others intimately such that to “be” is to care for others. Da-sein’s existence is not primarily a singular concern and secondarily concerned for others, but from the ‘beginning’ defined by *Sorge*. This orientation of Da-sein is not given the attention deserved. It is a mistake to place too much emphasis of Da-sein coming to a self-understanding in relation to Being when community is as “given” as the existence of Da-sein. As Caputo points out of Heidegger’s later emphasis in putting aside questioning “why” (which gives deference to reason) and looks more closely at “because” – Being is not an answer but a “gift”, a “favour.”³⁸⁶

Heidegger’s project in *Being and Time* has justifiably been criticized for being far too preoccupied with the ontological grounding of being (in Da-sein at the horizon of the ecstasy of time) and thus becoming as immobile as any predecessor’s Heidegger himself has criticized. He admits as much in discussing his famous “turning(s)” (*Kehre*). Further, speaking of “resoluteness” in the face of the certainty of death, or the historicity of Da-sein’s “potentiality-of-being” as shaped by the National Socialist Party of Germany proved beyond any doubt that this particular mode of expression was more than ineffective, but dangerous in the wrong treatment. It is a grim example of the tyranny of an absolutized horizon pursued with singular resoluteness. The “later” Heidegger moved

³⁸⁶ see *Was ist Metaphysik*, 49/358, as noted by John D. Caputo, *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 164

away from some of this more ontologically grounded thought. What can be seen in his early writing, however, is Heidegger's desire to further the collapse of the phenomena-noumena dualism that Husserl began, but did not follow through effectively. Heidegger locates the key to this collapse, in *Being and Time*, within Da-sein itself and this anthropological weighting has its own set of problems. However, as Heidegger continued to develop his understanding of Da-sein (to the point at which he nearly stopped using the term, "Da-sein"), he explores *Das Nichts* and the *Abyss* at the core of Da-sein and the issue of "grounding" becomes an "ungrounding", a radical interpretation of the 'ontology' of Da-sein. Heidegger's latest writings keep the idea of *Das Nichts* nearby as he explores the idea of "being on the way" and "thinking." These later writings seem to want to make up the deficit of movement that the earlier ontological grounding denied.

Eastern Heidegger

Reinhard May's text, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources*, attempts to bring to light the hardly dismissible, yet, curiously ignored, exposure Heidegger had with Chinese and Japanese texts and cultural emissaries in the form of students and visitors. May patiently draws together (historically) the work Heidegger did regarding the "way" and "being on the way" with his conversations and work with Paul Hsiao in translating the first chapter of the *Laozi* such that Heidegger freely re-words the verses in chapter 15: "Who is able by making tranquil to bring something into Being? The *tao* of heaven."³⁸⁷ Ultimately, May concludes, Heidegger's "Conversation" (elsewhere translated "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer") in *On the Way to Language* is a kind of "confession" that Heidegger had real interchange with the Eastern non-metaphysical tradition and owes more recognition to this tradition than he has publicly admitted or freely stated, and that indeed his silence speaks loudly in the matter. Graham Parkes relates the historical encounters of Heidegger with Japanese philosophers in the 1920's and 1930's (e.g. NISHIDA's student TANABE Hajime, the political thinker MIKI Kiyoshi, and Professor KUKI Shūzō who features in the "Dialogue").³⁸⁸ The meetings and sharing of ideas preceded Heidegger's own publishing of seminal turning points in his career (*What is Metaphysics, Origin of the Work of Art*). Thus, many have speculated as to how much

³⁸⁷ May, Reinhard, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian influences on his work*, trans by Graham Parkes, London and New York: Routledge Press, 1996, p. 2

³⁸⁸ see Graham Parkes' essay "Rising sun over Black Forest," in May, Reinhard, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian influences on his work*, trans by Graham Parkes, London and New York: Routledge Press, 1996, pp. 79-117

Heidegger was influenced in his meditations on *Das Nichts*, particularly by the Kyoto School of Philosophy as they were simultaneously wrestling with the Buddhist concept of *mu/sūnyatā*, emptiness, and likewise Heidegger's meditations on the "way" in reference to the Chinese *tao*. Discussions surrounding an Eastern influence on Heidegger must remain speculative for Heidegger rarely spoke of these contacts and only occasionally remarked on the Zen and Chinese philosophical ideas to which he had been exposed.³⁸⁹ Instead, Heidegger was more apt to draw the reader back to early Greek or German source material for his own thought. It is not the purpose here to further substantiate these influences except to agree that Heidegger had more meaningful exchange with Eastern material than he cared to discuss or reveal and his reasons for leaving the Eastern philosophy to surface by itself are ponderous. What is quite obvious, however, is that Heidegger's thinking around the phenomenological exposé of Da-sein is filled out with greater depth and meaning as he turns his attention to both the aspects of *Das Nichts* and 'being on the way'. What is more, the Eastern tradition that influenced Zen Buddhism (including the Mahāyāna concept of emptiness as discussed in earlier chapters) has viewed these issues as integral in defining meaningful existence.

Da-sein and Das Nichts

Heidegger's view of Da-sein is deepened when he meditates on non-being, and his ontological emphasis lightens:

The Being of beings, however, is comprehensible only – and in this lies the deepest finitude of transcendence – when Dasein by its very nature, plunges into Non-being.³⁹⁰

Transcendence and non-being come together in Da-sein so as to create paradoxical ontology: being defined by non-being. The transcendence of Da-sein is only fully realised in Da-sein's most serious limitation: the certainty of death. Heidegger proposes that Da-sein's transcendental nature via an un-grounding in *Das Nichts* is the basis for authenticity in the world-at-hand, the world of beings. Zimmerman states it thus:

³⁸⁹ see Graham Parkes' essay "Rising sun over Black Forest," in May, Reinhard, *Heidegger's Hidden Sources: East Asian influences on his work*, trans by Graham Parkes, London and New York: Routledge Press, 1996, pp. 79-117

³⁹⁰ "Das Sein des Seienden ist aber überhaupt nur verstehbar – und darin liegt die tiefste Endlichkeit der Transzendenz – wenn das Dasein im Grunde seines Wesens sich in das Nichts hineinhält," *Kant und das Problem der Metaphysik* [Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1951], p. 214, as quoted by Steffney, John, "Transmetaphysical Thinking in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, 27 (July, 1977) p. 327

"Dasein is embodied openness to what is."³⁹¹ Embodiment and the clearing, like the transcendent and immanent, rather than at odds or competition for dominance, become the 'ground' for the other. Heidegger finds meaning not located in idealistic transcendental planes of consciousness, but in openings, clearings where Being itself is brought to light in an occasion of self-showing. Heidegger speaks of *Lichtung*, the "clearing" which is also a "lighting" and the way in which phenomena show themselves as they are. Clearings, as those in the forest, have boundaries – they are simultaneously enclosures. Hence, the act of bringing to light is in the same instance covering up, concealing. And now what is exhibited is the "play" of Being and beings in the light of the clearing of Da-sein, the consciousness that engages the world.

Heidegger, in *Was ist Metaphysik?*, examines the ground of being and finds there "*Das Nichts*", not in the grounding sense of an absolute Nothing, for as he points out, speaking of "nothing *is*" is wholly ridiculous. Rather, Heidegger wishes to introduce the nothing of an abyss, which is also inextricably part of the being of Da-sein. Moreover, it is the act of holding itself out into *Das Nichts* that characterises Da-sein's experience in the world of beings. That is to say, the facing towards transcendence in which Da-sein faces *Das Nichts*, simultaneously places Da-sein within a true, in the sense of "authentic", relationship with the world of beings.

Because of its transcendental nature, Dasein must be thought of as comprising not merely a "self" but, more inclusively, a world – even more inclusively, Being.³⁹²

Heidegger refers to human and Da-sein's existence as "ek-sistence" – that which reaches beyond itself toward Being. "Standing in the light of Being is what I call the ek-sistence of man (sic)."³⁹³ Heidegger finds the absolutism of modernity's metaphysics a deadly trap and inauthentic to existence that finds not an ontological ground but the Abyss. However, Heidegger criticises Nietzsche's Absolute Nothing which ultimately works polar to modernity's substance as an equal absolute.

³⁹¹ Zimmerman, Michael E., *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, rev. ed., Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981, p. 27

³⁹² Steffney, John, "Transmetaphysical Thinking in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, 27 (July, 1977) p. 324

³⁹³ Heidegger, Martin in *Platos Lehre von der Wahrheit: Mit einem Brief über den "Humanismus"*, [Bern: Francke, 1947] pp. 66-67, as quoted by John Steffney, "Transmetaphysical Thinking in Heidegger and Zen Buddhism," *Philosophy East and West*, 27 (July, 1977), p. 325

Da-sein on the way

In his 1950 lecture entitled, "Language," Heidegger begins his reflections with what a logician might call an "empty tautology": "Language itself is language." Anticipating the criticism, he states,

Merely to say the identical thing twice – language is language – how is that supposed to get us anywhere? But we do not want to get anywhere. We would like only, for once, to get just where we are already.³⁹⁴

Joan Stambaugh remarks that Heidegger speaks of a 'way' which is not a method, and which is no pre-subscribed route with beginning and end-point. She quotes from Heidegger's essay, "On the Way to Language" (translated by Peter D. Hertz, but with Stambaugh's minor changes):

Thinking itself is a way. We respond to the way only by remaining underway ... We must get on the way, that is, must take the steps by which alone the way becomes a way. The way of thinking cannot be traced from somewhere to somewhere like a well-worn rut, nor does it at all exist as such in any place. Only when we walk it, and in no other fashion, only, that is, by thoughtful questioning, are we on the move on the way. This movement is what allows the way to come forward.³⁹⁵

It is important to note that Heidegger would choose tautology and paradox in lectures/essays on "language". This should re-enforce what was earlier stated in terms of seeing around what is "merely spoken about, meant, or perceived". Some have called Heidegger's later writing "mystical" with the negative connotation indicating that it becomes obscure and even less comprehensible. Others have explored the "mystical elements" in Heidegger's writing claiming that he is pointing beyond the cognitive to an experience that cannot be captured with language; to meaning that defies explanation.³⁹⁶ Heidegger's use of motion in this passage recalls Meister Eckhart's *Gelassenheit* and mirrors the "stillness in motion," "acting without acting" or "a doing of non-doing" that

³⁹⁴ Heidegger, Martin, "Language: 1950," *Language: Hermeneutical Inquiry*, vol. 2, edited by David Klemm, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986, p. 42

³⁹⁵ Stambaugh, Joan, "Heidegger, Taoism, and the Question of Metaphysics," *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987, p. 82

³⁹⁶ Caputo quotes from Heidegger's *Habilitationsschrift* on Duns Scotus to point out Heidegger's early concern with the overly rationalistic view of philosophy and thinking: "Philosophy as a rationalistic creation, detached from life, is powerless; mysticism as an irrationalist experience is purposeless" Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 7

is described by NISHIDA.³⁹⁷ Heidegger speaks of being underway without travelling to a pre-determined destination. It is one's openness to the experience of being underway which "allows the way to come forward." Stambaugh again quotes from "On the Way to Language:"

To clear a way, for instance across a snow-covered field, is in the Alemannic-Swabian dialect still called *wägen*³⁹⁸ even today. This verb, used transitively, means: to form a way and forming it, to keep it ready. Way-making understood in this sense no longer means to move something up or down a path that is already there. It means to bring the way ... forth first of all, and thus to *be* the way.³⁹⁹

Here Heidegger collapses the subject-object duality of walking a well-worn rut toward a destination into the non-dual understanding of way-making as being the way itself. Indeed, he has brought us back to a tautology.

In an earlier essay (1947) Heidegger addresses the pathway, this time introducing the interplay of heaven and earth in the formation of the one on the way:

The oak itself spoke: Only in such growth is grounded what lasts and fructifies. Growing means this: to open oneself up to the breadth of heaven and at the same time to sink roots into the darkness of the earth. Whatever is genuine thrives only if man [sic] does justice to both: ready for the appeal of the highest heaven, and transformed [*aufgehoben*] in the protection of the sustaining earth. (FW, 3/89)⁴⁰⁰

Ereignis: the event of belonging together of being and Being

The event of the way coming forward only while one is "underway" is very much in line with Heidegger's discussion of the Appropriation (*Ereignis*) of Da-sein. Stambaugh explains that "way-making is how Appropriation (the belonging together of man [sic] and

³⁹⁷ Nishida, Kitarō, *An Inquiry into the Good*, trans. Masao Abe & Christopher Ives, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990 (originally published by Iwanami Shoten, Tokyo, 1921), p. 34

³⁹⁸ The word *Bewegung*, without an umlaut, conveys the meaning of movement. However, *wägen* ("way making") is a word that Heidegger manipulates to better express his intention that the term carry both the transitive and intransitive connotations of action and being acted upon.

³⁹⁹ Stambaugh, Joan, "Heidegger, Taoism, and the Question of Metaphysics," *Heidegger and Asian Thought*, ed. Graham Parkes, Hawai'i: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987, p. 83. Similarly, Stambaugh also notes that Heidegger relates his usage of call (*heissen*) to the New Testament Greek *kelonein* and the Sanskrit origins of the term that indicate an invitation rather than a command.

⁴⁰⁰ Zimmerman, Michael E., *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, rev. ed., Ohio University Press, 1981, p. 273

Being) appropriates."⁴⁰¹ She also asserts that Appropriation is the "primordial relation" which is "thought by Heidegger under both aspects of identity and difference ... [to be] more fundamental than the "elements" in it. The elements, man and Being, don't constitute the relation; the relation constitutes the elements."⁴⁰² David F. Krell terms *Ereignis* as "the propriative event" and ties it to disclosure (*aletheia*) while noting that the propriative event is always also "expropriative."⁴⁰³ Hofstadter makes the English clearer by explaining the etymology of the term "*Ereignis*" which contains the meaning of the verb *eignen* in which one makes something one's own as well as an earlier verb *erugen* which means to bring something before one's eyes, or to show. Thus, *das Ereignis*, "the event" is the playful dance in which beings both reveal and appropriate each other in the "play of *erugen* and *ereignen*".⁴⁰⁴ Zimmerman points out that the "ringing, circling play" that is *Ereignis*, out of which the world makes itself manifest, is not a ground but an abyss (*Ab-grund*).⁴⁰⁵

There is movement described in what Stambaugh calls a relationship, and Krell terms an event. The movement is not as from subject to object, beings to Being, nor understood in reverse, from Being to beings. The movement is rather what Heidegger describes in the excerpt above when he describes waying bringing forth the path. In human terms (which is how Heidegger treats the topic in *Being and Time*), opening or clearing "oneself" authentically brings forth the other which is always already there, but often times concealed or obscured. The action of clearing oneself (*aletheia*), of opening oneself and of letting be (*Gelassenheit*) so that the path comes forth is what Stambaugh means by asserting that for Heidegger, the "relation constitutes the elements." The movement described here is not of one element asserting its will to force another into relationship. The movement is one of both action and non-action -- opening oneself authentically and letting another be. Hence, waying *is* the path. If Heidegger never achieved complete non-duality in *Being and Time*, it can be argued that in these later essays he moves in this direction.

⁴⁰¹ Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, New York Press: 1999, p. 83

⁴⁰² Stambaugh, Joan, *The Formless Self*, New York Press: 1999, p. 82

⁴⁰³ Krell, David Farrell, *Martin Heidegger: Basic Writings, Revised and Expanded Version*, Routledge: London, 1993, p. 94.

⁴⁰⁴ As cited by Michael E. Zimmerman in *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, rev. ed., Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981, p. 236

⁴⁰⁵ Zimmerman, Michael E., *Eclipse of the Self: The Development of Heidegger's Concept of Authenticity*, rev. ed., Athens: Ohio University Press, 1981, p. 237

Heidegger's description of *Ereignis* as the event/relationship of Da-sein to Being as one of disclosure (*aletheia*) which at once authenticates Da-sein, but also reveals their primordial relation – that they belong together and always already are appropriated, one to another, recalls Dōgen's efforts to explain Buddha-nature. The arguments appear circular: one's Buddha-nature is authenticated in an enlightenment experience; however, the Buddha-nature that is made manifest has never not been manifested. Heidegger states:

Being itself is the relationship (*Verhältnis*) insofar as it [=Being] holds (*hält*) ek-sistence (*Ek-sistenz*) in its existential, i.e., ex-static essence (*Wesen*) in itself and gathers it [=Eksistenz] to itself as the dwelling place of the truth of Being in the midst of beings.⁴⁰⁶

What both Heidegger and Dōgen would like the student/practitioner to recognize is that being in the world is at its essence a relationship – (transcendent) Being to/with (immanent) beings – and authentic existence opens to this truth in a self-relinquishing manner which at once is totally transformative. Heidegger understands Being and being interdependently: “Presencing (*An-wesen*) requires letting-be-present (*An-wesen-lassen*), presencing needs the openness of a clearing in which it may be what it is.”⁴⁰⁷ In his reflections on Heidegger's *Contributions to Philosophy*, Otto Pöggler writes that for Heidegger, “the divine by definition needs being in order not to forget itself and its greatness,” that the divine condescends to participate in history and human language while at the same time human beings look beyond the historical to the many showings of the divine. And thus, the temporal and eternal come together through the fulfilment of experience:

The temporality of human being is fulfilled in the moment of insight, which is imagined in the *Contributions* as the play of space and time on the occasion of a moment of insight. On this occasion of a moment of insight, time and space together flourish as one in eternity, though this eternity must be reimagined in the moment of insight as having the character of the divine. Thus it becomes determined as “passing”: as that in which time is fulfilled in the experience of the divine, when the restless questioning of Dasein is stilled in a shattering unquestionability, then time wins its freedom, able to cede its position and to make way for another time. The accord of time, eternity, and the moment of insight can only

⁴⁰⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *Letter on Humanism*, cited in Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 163.

⁴⁰⁷ from *Identity and Difference*, 95/31, as cited in Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 182-3

be grasped in repetition, which (beyond recollection) lets what has been repeat itself in another way. The divine, whose essence is passing, is given to Dasein in a sign, so that the divine eliminates itself when it is given to human being – suddenly and fleetingly, not firmly and unalterably.⁴⁰⁸

Pöggler sees here a parallel to Heidegger's appreciation of Hölderlin's poetry as he voiced in his lectures of 1934/5 in which he cites the hymn "The Festival of Peace" where heavenly things are described as "quickly past" and the eternity of the heavenly or divine as a "fleeting, scarcely graspable sign ... which can show everything blessed and everything terrible in the instant of its passing."⁴⁰⁹ Heidegger's incorporation of Hölderlin's description of the fleeting nature of eternity in relation to human existence resonates well with Nāgārjuna's description of *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra* and Dōgen's description of the dynamic interdependence of Buddha-nature and living beings. Rather than seeing them as categorical states of being, they must be treated and approached relationally, or in Buddhist terminology, from the standpoint of *pratitya-samutpada*, that is, co-dependently arising in a repeatable pattern, yet always renewed.

Thus Heidegger's reluctance, as intimated at the beginning of this chapter, to express himself within the language norms of theology become clearer. He himself states, "The holy cannot be expressed 'theologically' at all, for all 'theology' presupposes God with such certainty that everywhere theology looks, God has already taken flight."⁴¹⁰ Instead, Heidegger puts forward poetry as the "language" and profound or meditative thinking as two means which most effectively evoke the sacred, the divine.

Dichten (poetry) and *Denken* (thinking)

It has been suggested that what Heidegger calls meditative thinking (*Denken*) approaches what the Zen practitioners describe as seated meditation (*zazen*). Elements that have caused some to see this parallel include Heidegger's description of allowing the way to arise spontaneously by using the German mystical term favoured by Meister Eckhart, *Gelassenheit*. Caputo notes "there is a strictness, a discipline, in Heidegger's concept of *Gelassenheit*: an ascetic overtone for thinking – it is a "persevering meditation" (*ansdauernde*

⁴⁰⁸ Pöggler, Otto, *The Paths of Heidegger's Life and Thought*, trans John Bailiff, New Jersey: Humanities Press (originally published in German in 1992), 1997, p. 330

⁴⁰⁹ Pöggler, Otto, *The Paths of Heidegger's Life and Thought*, trans John Bailiff, New Jersey: Humanities Press (originally published in German in 1992), 1997, p. 330

⁴¹⁰ from his second Hölderlin lecture as cited by Pöggler, Otto, *The Paths of Heidegger's Life and Thought*, trans John Bailiff, New Jersey: Humanities Press (originally published in German in 1992), 1997, p. 333

Besinnung).⁴¹¹ And for Caputo, this “speaks of effort, practice, care with thinking, more so than calculative thinking.”⁴¹² Meditative thinking is distinctive from ‘representational thinking’ as Young points out, in that representational thinking always occurs “within a horizon of disclosure” whereas meditative thinking is “in a certain sense, ‘horizonless’.”⁴¹³ Likewise, whereas representational thinking establishes boundaries and categories, meditative thinking allows the ‘the mystery’ a presencing while it yet remains ‘the mystery’ and thereby allows it “to remain ‘nameless’.”⁴¹⁴ Meditative thinking is similar, then, to poetic thinking in that both “allow ‘the holy enigma [Rätsel]’ to come ‘close’ to us ‘as the enigma’”.⁴¹⁵ Heidegger states in *What is Called Thinking*, “...when poesy is elevated and thinking profound” they think “the same.”⁴¹⁶ It is Young’s conclusion that although meditative thinking and great poetry share the same concern, yet, for Heidegger, they are different modes that accomplish a different access. Meditative thinking is only able to bring one close or to the “brink of the mystical” -- it is able to indicate the existence of the ‘holy enigma’ but not to bring one into intimacy with the holy. Young considers Heidegger’s meditative thinking as that which indicates the holy, the mystery, negatively by showing the boundaries of cognitive expression. Poetry/art, on the other hand, brings the holy into “positive presence” by “thematizing” it.⁴¹⁷ Poetry/art allows humans a way to participate in the divine that cognitive and even meditative thinking cannot; poetry/art is immediate and intuitive. Interestingly, Young concludes that although it seems that poetry/art is given privilege over thinking of any kind, even meditative, still thinking has its definitive role in the “verification” of poetry/art by testing it.⁴¹⁸ Young and others have noted that Heidegger’s later writing seems to want to merge philosophical writing with poetic utterance, what Young considers a “perfect marriage” and others consider greater chaos and obscurity in his meaning.

⁴¹¹ Heidegger, Martin, *Gelassenheit*, 15/49, *Identity and Difference*, 47/51, as cited by Caputo, John D., *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 178

⁴¹² Heidegger, Martin, *Gelassenheit*, 15/47, as cited by Caputo, John D., in *The Mystical Element in Heidegger*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1978, p. 178

⁴¹³ Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 18

⁴¹⁴ Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 19

⁴¹⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *Identity and Difference*, pp. 34-5, as cited in Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 19

⁴¹⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *What is Called Thinking?*, trans. by Fred D. Wieck and J. Glenn Gray, New York: Harper & Row, 1972, p. 20 as cited in Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 19

⁴¹⁷ Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 20

⁴¹⁸ Young, Julian, *Heidegger’s Later Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 21

Philosophical concepts as 'formal indication'

In *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude* Heidegger argues that Dasein must question what it means to belong to the "wholeness" that is the world,⁴¹⁹ what it means to be finite, and what is the individuation of Dasein itself. But the asking of these questions must be undertaken in a way that makes them relevant in addressing the "need" of Dasein: "The question which continues to face us is simply whether or not we are capable of experiencing, or at least releasing, the liberating power harboured within these questions as questions."⁴²⁰ One of Heidegger's projects in this volume is to show that philosophical concepts themselves are not the location of truth for Dasein regarding the world, but that they do (1) indicate that there is truth for Dasein, and (2) prepare Dasein for engaging that truth. 'The honest or sincere questioning activity of Dasein brings Dasein to the "brink of possibility, the possibility of restoring to Dasein its actuality, that is, its existence."⁴²¹ Really living is Dasein's goal and philosophy is a "formal indication" to the truth and realisation of this goal. Heidegger says that "Philosophizing ... can only lead us to the brink and always remains something penultimate in this respect." At the brink, one is left to make a "leap" for "[o]nly individual action itself can dislodge us from this brink of possibility into actuality, and this is the *moment of vision*."⁴²² Heidegger writes that "[a]ll philosophical concepts are *formally indicative*, and only if they are taken in this way do they provide the genuine possibility of comprehending something."⁴²³ Heidegger describes the "comprehending something" thus: "True understanding never proves its mettle in repeating something after someone, but only in its power to lead understanding into genuine action, into objective achievement, which by no means primarily consists in the production of more philosophical literature."⁴²⁴ Here Heidegger sets up the *moment of vision*, the Augenblick, as the *active* realisation or comprehension of Dasein – philosophising does not achieve its goal in the philosopher's head. Moreover, Heidegger has also stated that "Philosophizing is something living only

⁴¹⁹ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 5

⁴²⁰ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 170

⁴²¹ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 173

⁴²² Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 173

⁴²³ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 294

⁴²⁴ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 300

where it comes to language and expresses itself ..."⁴²⁵ Of course, the moment philosophy "comes to language" it is immediately misinterpreted. This is entirely unavoidable given how we commonly approach meaning (i.e. like we do other objects in the world, as "something present at hand"), however, it should not be a discouragement from philosophy. We merely need to know how philosophising works, that is, it provides a person the space needed to engage in "genuine exposition and explication" of the questions (what is world, what is finitude, what is individuation) that will allow one to free Dasein and "...let *the intrinsic relationships between world, individuation, and finitude* emerge together."⁴²⁶ Heidegger also warns against the "direct" approach, philosophical concepts do not "directly intend what they mean" and we should avoid that kind of direct correlative thinking for the relationship between Dasein and the essence of what it means to be in the world is one that is made clear in a moment of vision where such truths "emerge." Thus, one should not expect to construct philosophical systems that contain, or in any way explain, the more essential elements of existence. At the same time, philosophising is an excellent path of approach to authentic existence.

At this point, it is again perhaps clarifying to compare Heidegger's direction to the Buddhist treatment of utterances and different modes of expression. Nāgārjuna was not inclined to grant any utterance the privilege of being anything but an indicator of the mystery beyond. Words are vehicles whose scope is limited beyond which only silence reigns. Philosophical discourse has the sole purpose of frustrating cognitive paths so that the participant ceases to engage in such thinking and eventually shuts it down – there is a rest, a stillness, beyond the work of thinking. Once this is accomplished, there is nothing left but the full participation (practice) in Buddhist activity. True practice takes the place of 'great' art. Dōgen has perhaps a more complementary path to Heidegger in that he takes "expression" and turns it inside out so that it expresses the individual as much as it is expressive of an individual. In this way, both individuals and expression share a reality in non-duality that may be where Heidegger would find affinity. As discussed in the Dōgen chapter, *keōan* normally are used as a tool, a verbal test, to shatter an individual's pre-conceived outlook so that a flash of insight may provoke transformation in the practitioner. However, Dōgen makes the case that *keōan* are more than mere verbal tools

⁴²⁵ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 291

⁴²⁶ Heidegger, Martin, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. William McNeill and Nicholas Walker, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995, p. 300

with which one utilizes and casts aside once the insight has been gained. By internalising the *keōan*, as was indicated in the Dōgen chapter, Dōgen shows how even a verbal tool shares in the moment of insight, for the *keōan* works existentially within the practitioner through the transformation process and all aspects of the individual share the transformation.

Heidegger's *Dialogue on Language* provides a working exemplar of the way in which Heidegger and Dōgen share a similar view of language and its relationship to beings. First of all, Heidegger chooses to express himself in the form of a "dialogue" instead of a more linear philosophical presentation. A "dialogue" is naturally composed of different voices, and Heidegger emphasises this by juxtaposing his own voice (as the Inquirer) with the voice of a foreigner (the Japanese). Heidegger reminds us in the course of the dialogue of the gravity of such a move by recalling that he has considered different language groups isolated "houses of being."⁴²⁷ He softens his earlier consideration by admitting that it was a "clumsy" designation and allowing the inquirer to remind him that exchange between the two "houses" is only "nearly" impossible, not totally impossible. Much later in the dialogue, the "Japanese" is allowed to say that there is a "deeply concealed kinship with our thinking, precisely because your path of thinking and its language are so wholly other."⁴²⁸ Further, in discussing what Heidegger calls the "two-fold" of "presence" and "present beings," the admission of the "deeply concealed kinship" between their thinking is said to rest or depend on the "boundlessness which is shown to us in *Ku*," that is, the Buddhist emptiness. Immediately upon this pronouncement, Heidegger defines the human being as "the message-bearer of the message of the two-fold's unconcealment"⁴²⁹ and also the one "who walks the boundary of the boundless."⁴³⁰ Thus, Heidegger again suggests that *Da-sein* is the hermeneutic key embodied. Humans, like language, contain limits but express or provide opportunity for the "boundary's mystery" to take shape, make an appearance. Language is likened to a "trail" on which

⁴²⁷ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 5

⁴²⁸ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 41

⁴²⁹ Heidegger's description is strikingly similar to the Kione Greek term "Εὐαγγέλιον" or "gospel – bearing" whereby the nexus of message and messenger is indistinguishable. See G. Strecker's reception definition of Εὐαγγέλιον in *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*, volume 2, edited by Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1981, p. 70

⁴³⁰ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 41

an almost imperceptible promise announcing that we would be set free into the open, now dark and perplexing, now again lightning-sharp like a sudden insight, which then, in turn, eluded every effort to say it.⁴³¹

Language and thought are both pathways or trails that lead toward the mystery, yet the mystery is really expressed within the existence of Da-sein. Heidegger's Dialogue is a meditation in some ways on the collapse of subject and object as expressed through the human. Heidegger warns that it is "treacherous" to think in terms of subject and object. The collapse of the subject and object occurs when the essence sought arises not outside of the seeker but as a result of the seeking and indeed because of the necessity of seeking. Language is no simple tool and engaged in properly also participates in Heidegger's "hermeneutical circle" as speaking comes "from out of language's reality," thus from the source of itself which is ever "coming."⁴³² Furthermore, true "saying" is characterised "with more silence than talk" and presumably this introduces to the so-called houses of being a more common ground than they previously saw.⁴³³ Heidegger chooses to describe the source of the saying as "stillness" and "a stilling" that "quiets the breath of the vastness into the structure of Saying which calls out to the messenger."⁴³⁴ One is reminded of the "stilling" and "quieting" aspects of *nirvāṇa* that Nagarjuna speaks about after the clutter of *prapañca* (conceptual diffusion) has been cleared away.

⁴³¹ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 41

⁴³² Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 52

⁴³³ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 52

⁴³⁴ Heidegger, Martin, "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," in *On the Way to Language*, trans. Peter Hertz, New York: Harper & Row, 1971, p. 53

Conclusion

There is within the Western phenomenological tradition a respect for the way truth speaks through the world and others in the world. And truth is understood as something gained or experienced only within the *Lebenswelt*. As Sokolowski points out, the "intentionality" that describes the way a consciousness/ego approaches the world (i.e. through a manifold of intentionalities from pictures, ideas to words) serves to remind us that "the mind is a public thing, that it acts and manifests out in the open ..."⁴³⁵ Moreover, Sokolowski maintains, phenomenology pushes back on the previous philosophy which would posit judgements and meaning itself as entities, either in the mind or transcendent to experience (as seen in Kant or Descartes) and suggests rather that judgements (and meaning) are a "dimension of presentation" and dependent upon the "propositional attitude" of the subject.⁴³⁶ That is to say, truth is not detached from the phenomenal, but awaits a proper perspective from the consciousness which pursues it whereby it can be recognized or discovered, or in Heidegger's terminology, an event of discovery (*Erignis*). In this way, truth stands always available and immanently accessible within experience and not as a reified or transcendent ideal. Truth is the event of discovery/self-showing.

However, as Abe has observed, the West sees religion and philosophy as two separate disciplines, engaging different methodologies and pursuing at times, different manifestations of truth. Abe asserts that the West sees philosophy as a "human enterprise for understanding humans and the universe based on intelligence or reason, whereas [religion] is faith in divine revelation."⁴³⁷ In Eastern thought, particularly in Zen Buddhism, there is no such difference, for Abe writes, "(s)ince Buddhism is originally not a religion of faith in a transcendent deity but a religion of awakening to the true nature of self and others, *praxis* and *theoria*, to use Western terms, are interfused and undifferentiated."⁴³⁸ This thesis has considered seminal thinkers within the Mahāyāna/Zen tradition, Nāgārjuna, Asanga and Vasubandhu within the Yogācāra School, and Dōgen, as well as Western philosopher and thinker, Martin Heidegger, and

⁴³⁵ Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 12

⁴³⁶ see Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 99-100

⁴³⁷ ABE, Masao, *A Study of Dogen*, ed. Steven Heine, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 11

⁴³⁸ ABE, Masao, *A Study of Dōgen*, ed. Steven Heine, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992, p. 11

evaluated each in terms of a praxi-centric phenomenology. In other words, this thesis has evaluated Abe's statement by investigating the extent to which and more importantly, how, *praxis* and *theoria* are brought together in a universalised search for truth, reality, or the way things are (*yathābhūtam*).

In discussing Nāgārjuna, it becomes clear that he leads Madhyamika thinking in a similar direction as the Western school of phenomenology. Nāgārjuna decries the reifying tendencies of doctrinal Buddhism, and emphatically seeks to clear the practitioner's mind of dogmatic teaching. However, one cannot leave the mundane realm to find the transcendent truth elsewhere. One must instead prepare and cleanse one's mind of the false perceptions and religious doctrines which would serve only to clutter one's vision and further obscure true reality. When religious doctrine replaces genuine practice, then truth is no where to be found.

Likewise, both Nāgārjuna and the Western phenomenologists possess great scepticism in the human use of language to name or adequately describe truth. The phenomenologists would rather recognize language for its role in ascertaining a portion of identity – language works with intellect to show up and exhibit, to communicate, *différance* (with all of its dependencies on presence, absence, gaps) that prepares the consciousness/ego to make judgements.⁴³⁹ But it only goes this far. Meaning, or true identity lies beyond the realm of language and without this understanding, the consciousness cannot get beyond the fundamentals of *différance*. Nāgārjuna, too, makes his case to severely limit the effectiveness of language to reveal or even discuss the realm of *paramartha-satya* or ultimate truth. In his more shocking moments he has asserted that the Buddha has in no place and at no time ever taught the *Dharma*, the truth.

Where Nāgārjuna most clearly departs from especially Husserlian phenomenology, is the latter's desire to locate (and hence "name") the source of truth. Nāgārjuna emphatically denies this pursuit of an essence which bears and communicates meaning. Nāgārjuna's attack of *svabhava*, self-nature or essence, is to show that the pursuit of such essences – and ultimately The Essence, for this is where the search leads – is the very detriment to locating or better, experiencing, meaning. What phenomenologists, like Husserl, propose

⁴³⁹ see Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, p. 123

by clearing away the assumptions and making ready the transcendent ego for an ultimate encounter with truth, is for Nāgārjuna what the Buddhist scholars did in his time. That is, they exchanged one set of categorical and short-reaching methods for another. If ever Buddhist rhetoric approaches indicating The Essence or Ultimate Reality, it is in relation to speaking of the *tathāgata*, the thus gone/come one, the fully completed One, the Buddha, and in speaking of *nirvāṇa*. Nāgārjuna dedicates a chapter in the MMK to untavelling the perceived foundationalism of both the *tathāgata* and *nirvāṇa* in order to show how severely misleading a Buddhist doctrinal approach can be.⁴⁴⁰

Prompted by the ever-troublesome question of time, Husserl theorises that we can identify three ways of dealing with temporality: world or objective time which works according to worldly processes and is measured by worldly standards (clocks, etc); internal or subjective time which allows the ego consciousness to play out mental acts; and internal time consciousness which is both the “core” or source of temporality, and at the same time which cannot be identified or considered independent of either internal or world time.⁴⁴¹ Husserl realises the problems resultant from the dichotomous presencing and absencing which arise from objective-subjective treatment of time, and looks for the source of the distinction. He finds it, ultimately, in the transcendent ego.

When Nāgārjuna approaches the troubling problem of time and distinctions, his solution attempts to drive the seeker out of the dead-end reasoning and perspective of the *samsaric*. Looking beyond the objective and subjective does not provide the source for both, or rather, it does not provide the ontological ego-source, but instead Nāgārjuna offers the opening of *śūnyatā* – the emptiness which in a way “supports” both *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. Within the approach of *śūnyatā* differences are irrelevant. The pursuit of limits is absorbed by its own impossibility, logically, and Nāgārjuna offers instead of *differance*, a reorientation toward the *Lebenswelt*, one transformed by the experience, rather than knowledge, of truth.

What has been described as Nāgārjuna’s mysticism is partly his uncompromising stance toward the misleading aspects of phenomenal life, that is, the ego navigating and discovering the *Lebenswelt*. Although I would argue that Nāgārjuna ultimately has a

⁴⁴⁰ MMK 22 and MMK 25

⁴⁴¹ see Sokolowski, Robert, *Introduction to Phenomenology*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, 130-131

positive stance toward to the *Lebenswelt* or samsaric reality in that he recognises it as a valid state, and further would perhaps take the recognised Buddhist stance that samsaric existence is ripe or opportunity for enlightenment, still Nāgārjuna is emphatic that what is given in *samsāra* (in the *Lebenswelt*) can only be taken as such. Attempts to speak, describe, to categorise, will never achieve the phenomenologist's hope of testing and verifying truth perceptions.

It can be argued that Nāgārjuna clears the way for a praxi-centric phenomenology by aggressively destroying by means of logic, any false ground or foundation that would replace the ultimate path of Buddhist practice. Although most of Nāgārjuna's efforts are concentrated around clearing away reified images of Buddhist religion, he has penned simple documents describing and praising the Buddhist life and practice (*Subhṛlekha*, *Ratnavali*, *The Hymns of the Catub-stava*). What Nāgārjuna leaves us with, after his perceived negative attack on all truth assertions/statements, is the *bodhisattva mārga* itself; that is, a relying not on the statements of truth eschewed in religious discourse, but the active pursuit through daily practice of a bodhisattva, intent upon true realisation.

Nāgārjuna pushed, via a negating logic, the consciousness beyond this phenomenal world, much like the stages of meditation train the consciousness in ever greater concentration until at some point the consciousness is simply beyond. In meditation practice, it is difficult to distinguish a living yogi in a deep trance from a dead corpse. What prevents Nāgārjuna's Buddhist practice from becoming yet another religious/philosophical transcendentalism is the way *śūnyatā* is utilised. *Śūnyatā* in Nāgārjuna's thought prevents both the foundationalism of presence as well as the equally foundationalism of the transcendent. When the mind is finally finished constructing arguments (*prapañca*) instead of ascending simply beyond arguments and doctrinal statements, the mind has been prepared to partake in the activities of a bodhisattva. For Nāgārjuna, the most difficult achievement is this preparing the mind. Nāgārjuna achieves the preparation through negating the constructing (particularly of arguments) activity of the mind – the quieting of *prapañca*. A stilled mind is the achievement of bliss (*śīva*) and peace (*śānta*) which is the way Nāgārjuna speaks of *nirvāṇa*. It is the ultimate achievement.

To propose that Nāgārjuna engages in a praxi-centric phenomenology, is not to attempt to systematise Nāgārjuna thought, but to recognise in his thought the necessity of practice, engaging directly the phenomenal mundane world. Without practice in the mundane realm, as recognised much earlier in Buddhist thought, there is no movement towards release. Further, Nāgārjuna argues, with *śūnyatā* as the “base,” the Buddhist practice cannot evaporate into transcendence.

Yogācāra, emphasising meditation practice, further analyses the consciousness and takes the argument deep within the psyche. Ultimately, of course, the subject’s inner psyche must be released, however, on the way one might conceivably remain lost in the systematics of another Buddhist doctrine, this time one within the consciousness itself.

Both Nāgārjuna and Yogācāra lay out the method of overcoming the illusory existence in the mundane realm of *samsāra* as a progressive path, ending in emptiness realised. Nāgārjuna’s logic carefully cuts away the base until one is able to logically let go. Practice is not secondary, but becomes at this point the focal point. Yogācāra progressively follows the path of illusion deep within the subjective consciousness so that once the primary or primordial creator of illusion is identified then all grasping of self can at this point be relinquished, and ‘no-self’ via ‘no mind’ is realised.

The efforts in Yogācāra to unravel the constructing activity of the mind appears to be in the same vein as Nāgārjuna who also sought, through deconstructive means to destroy the rational arguments of the mind which bar one from authentic religious experience. However, the crucial difference may be in the way that Nāgārjuna would push the practitioner to a position of *śūnyatā* and insist that, if the practitioner had truly gone beyond conceptualising, nothing further can be said; the experience speaks for itself and the best one can do at this point is say more clearly what such an experience is *not*. The Yogācāra approach, in contrast, also seeks to drive the practitioner beyond the conceptualising mode of the mind, which is designated as the portion of the mind which creates the distinctions when there are really none. This “beyond” however, is not left to apophatic language or the realm of the inexpressible, but described in a multitude of ways, none of which are designed to be definitive in and of themselves. Furthermore, and most importantly as a distinction between Madhyamika and Yogācāra, a bodhisattva’s mission of compassion in the Yogācāra view depends on a skilful

employment of language, for the bodhisattva is expected to lead others to liberation through efficacious teaching. Does “skilful means” provide the necessary room for both Madhyamika expression and the Yogācāra approach? Possibly. However, the Yogācāra allowance for positive statements of the source for the ego and the “ultimate” also leave open the possibility for the grave error of relegating practical insight to systematic processes and locating the ineffable within ontological or epistemological frameworks which cannot but fail as locations of release.

Paradoxically, release is *experienced* – it is existential in nature – and thus, in one sense personal and individual. However, ultimate release is experienced as an expression of no-self, not the ego self. Yogācāra teachings identify the ego-self as the mistaken activity of the mind, a location personal and individual, fully linked to the Buddhist teaching of karma. The Yogācāra mind is less a location, more an activity, which directs and forms the rest of the individual. Convert the activity of the mind from the detrimental actions of producing duality and the mind is allowed to participate in the ultimate, which is neither dual nor non-dual.

The structured appearance of Yogācāra teaching, its similarity to the Abhidharma *dharmā* matrices in form, is problematic. In the Yogācāra understanding, convert the *ālaya* and the rest of the world of *dharmas* is largely irrelevant – they no longer disturb the *ālaya* or prompt the *ālaya* into constructing activity. The *ālaya*, still and peaceful, fully transformed, can now “see” and “know” the world of *samsāra* for what it is and despite it, can remain in it precisely because it, the *ālaya*, is fully transformed. This is the Yogācāra explanation for how the bodhisattva, although enlightened, can maintain contact in and with the unenlightened world. The Yogācāra explanation makes the *bodhisattva-māyā* out to be very personal in the way it is executed. And less mystical than the apophatic approach of the Madhyamika, the Yogācāra scholars are not dissuaded from providing an explanation for how the bodhisattva reconciles the otherwise dualistic and contradictory mission of one who would delay ultimate freedom from the world of *samsāra* in order to teach and encourage others along the path of transformation. The Yogācāra approach appears more readily based on practice than even Nāgārjuna’s approach as the school is established and named based on the practice of yogic meditation. However, and not to de-emphasise the practice of meditation to the school’s doctrines, the Yogācāra explanation of illusory reality issuing from the *ālaya*-consciousness, the origin of the ego-

self, creates problems for the Yogācāra approach. The jump from locating the *ālaya* and identifying the source of the illusory's world's creation to the empty mind, not creating and not participating in the mundane activities of illusory reality, is difficult to follow. Apparently, one achieves the insight in the rhythm of meditation and *bodhisattva-mārga* activities.

Also problematic for the school is the trajectory the Yogācāra teaching took once it encountered Chinese thought in terms of *tathāgata-garbha* and universal Buddha-mind. Chinese Taoism undeniably provided the inclination toward this doctrinal development; however, it was easy for Yogācāra teaching to take on this foundational structure, largely because of the systematic appearance of Yogācāra thought. *Śūnyatā* receded from its primary role of freeing the practitioner to engage in the activity of release.

By clarifying the question of the bodhisattva ideal, Yogācāra seriously questions Buddha-nature and its relation to human-nature, for the bodhisattva ideal is not restricted to monks but is understood and intended for all sentient beings. In this way, Yogācāra prepares the ground for investigating "personal" liberation and the significance of individual praxis. Consequently, the way is opened for Dōgen's cosmological Buddha-nature which links human/sentient beings with the vast universe/non-sentient phenomena, not particularly important to earlier schools of thought for considered either polluted (Abhidharma thought) or inconsequential to the interior landscape of transformation (Yogācāra thought). Yogācāra conducted the positive investigation that Nāgārjuna spurned with mixed results. Nāgārjuna provided the conceptual key, *śūnyatā* (emptiness), by which to defeat conceptions. But Yogācāra raised the issue of personal liberation and praxis, not directly addressed or at least obvious in the Madhyamika approach. Consequently, Yogācāra paved the way for the synthesising idealism of Chinese Fa-Hsiang School, but also with the help of Madhyamika, helped secure the paradoxical approach of Chan/Zen designed to both give teaching while simultaneously negating and transcending, it. It may be far too simplistic to assert that Madhyamika and Yogācāra and Dōgen all insist, in their different approaches, on ego-less actualisation. However, despite the differences, their varied endeavours create striking contrast to the Western pre-occupation with freeing the "self" which in the attempt to actualise the self, tends to create super-egos and solipsistic systems of self-reflection.

In contrast to Nāgārjuna's and Yogācāra apparently linear progression to the position of emptiness (*śūnyatā*) what Dōgen and Heidegger propose is a kind of circling back for an encounter with profound reality or truth. Dōgen, in like vein with the Yogācāra stance, approaches the problem of true realisation from a personal standpoint. However, rather than purely psychological, Dōgen's approach does not bracket most of the physical world but brings the cosmological and particular together in the moment of experience, that moment that brings together all conceptions of time – past, present and future – as well as all conceptions of duality, so that true experience of Buddha nature happens while flowers fall and weeds grow.

Dōgen's actualised Buddha-nature pulls in the ontological reality of the cosmos, enlightened at the moment no-self is realised, recognising the paradoxical situation in which time and space allow for the transcendental, in fact exist in and spring forth of the timeless and spaceless. Dōgen's portrayal of the Buddhist doctrines of no-self, dependent co-origination, and liberation are more descriptive and personal than Nāgārjuna's apophatic *śūnyatā*, yet Dōgen models his *datsuraku-datsuraku* on Nāgārjuna's teaching that *śūnyatā* relativises all reality. Dōgen places this teaching squarely in the realm of Buddhist praxis by personalising *śūnyatā* to reflect the historical, autobiographical account of his own enlightenment experience. But unlike the personal/psychological approach suggested in Yogācāra, Dōgen's concern is also comprehensive of the phenomenal realm so that the merging of subject and object pursued in Dōgen's vision is one of mutual dependence, the immanent and transcendent as exhibited concretely in the personal with cosmological. In keeping with what at first sounds like Yogācāra paradox, self is actualised hence abandoned through true Buddhist practice which takes place within time and space, and located in a subject.

In Dōgen's praxi-centric phenomenology, which he sign-posted with the title of his *Shōbōgenzō* – seeing with a Buddha's eye the worldly reality reflecting Buddha reality through *zazen* practice – Dōgen invites the individual to practice with every intention of seeing mundane everyday reality, both sentient and non-sentient, participating in the very same activity. One's *zazen* session is at once the efforts of an individual practicing in daily repetition as well as the grand turning of the universe in its recognition of Buddha reality. The individual is not separated from any mundane reality and Buddha activity encompasses it all. But practice and activity are essential in this view for in this way,

Dōgen brings together the seemingly incompatible teachings of original enlightenment and acquired enlightenment, seeing them acting in concordance with each other. The paradox of beginnings and the factor of time does not disturb Dōgen, for he sees time moving not uni-directionally, but inter-directionally, bringing together past, present and future in a dynamic and significant expression of Buddha-nature.

For Dōgen, practice or *zazen*, is the primary reason any sentient being participates in Buddha-reality, beyond the compassionate nature of Buddha-reality itself. Practice is the expression and the manifestation of Buddha reality consequently what is viewed as mere mundane reality from one perspective may be viewed as the Buddha Dharma itself should one be open to this revelation. Outside one's direct experience, however, Buddha-nature cannot be sought or described or taught. Personal experience is not the key factor, however, although it is significantly part of Dōgen's teaching. As he stated, using the whole body to look at forms and listen to sounds, "even though we are sensing them directly, it is not like a mirror's reflection of an image ... While we are experiencing one side, we are blind to the other side." Experience and perception are always insufficient. One must see with the Buddha eye in order for Buddha reality to show itself. The ego-self is never able to demand this showing or see properly enough. Only experience as characterised by *śūnyatā*, in which the ego-self is completely sloughed off, draws forth Buddha reality.

Both Heidegger and Dōgen propose a transcendence away from beings: Dōgen via *shinjin-datsuraku*, letting cast off one's body-mind, and Heidegger by placing Da-sein at the edge of the abyss, facing death. Transcendence works to loosen one from the kind of mundane view that covers and dulls reality. Dōgen further attempts a transcendence of transcendence, or what can be called a "trans-descendence". Dōgen's *datsuraku-datsuraku* encourages one to let go letting go so that one's "traceless enlightenment" comes forth forever.

Both Dōgen and Heidegger propose their phenomenology in terms of a kind of circling. Dōgen sees enlightenment in slumber and *nirvāṇa* in *sāmsara* through the tautological teaching of *datsuraku-datsuraku*. Heidegger expresses the circling of Da-sein and Being between which there is dependence and revealing. Dōgen states in *The Voicing of the Way* fascicle (*Dōtoku*):

... at the very moment of falling away [*datsuraku*], the voicing of the Way arises, spontaneous and unexpected. It arises neither by strength of mind nor by strength of body. It is the voicing of the Way, arising of itself. Furthermore, when this voicing of the Way is being voiced, it is at once the non-voicing of the Way being non-voiced.⁴⁴²

Dōgen's words here recall Heidegger's discussion of Waying which "allows the way to come forward." Heidegger asserts that the Way cannot be traced as a path bound for a destination, and Dōgen writes that neither strength of mind nor body, in other words, no act of will or force, can bring forth the Way.

Heidegger's circling, brought to view through his use of tautology and his re-orienting Da-sein in relation to the Abyss or *Das Nichts*, attempts to clear Da-sein of inauthentic concerns so that the event of Being and the experiencing location of Being in Da-sein can 'meet.' Heidegger remains concerned with authentic experience, although his language changes throughout his career of writing and thinking. Near the end of his life he writes more of how the authentic experience can occur, or what it looks like in terms of wending one's way through a forest, the experience of wandering (with purpose) which allows the way to make itself clear before one.

Husserl and Heidegger both initially sought to challenge the notion that meaning be located outside the world of beings, what Husserl termed the lived-world (*Lebenswelt*). The descriptor "phenomenology" which Husserl held to and Heidegger found wanting as it increasingly became the way to name a bygone school of philosophy, remains meaningful when freed up from describing merely a method or school of thought. Heidegger declared that phenomenological philosophy is "over" because of its cliché attribution. However, Heidegger also comments that

...in what is most its own, phenomenology is not a school. It is the possibility of thinking, at times challenging and only thus persisting, of corresponding to the claim of what is to be thought.⁴⁴³

Heidegger viewed Husserl's phenomenology as a "way of doing" whereas a true phenomenological approach "makes extraordinary demands on the phenomenological

⁴⁴² SAKAMOTO, Hiroshi, "The Voicing of the Way: Dōgen's Shobogenzo Dotoku," *Eastern Buddhist*, 16:1, (1983), p. 95

⁴⁴³ Durie, Robin, "Does Phenomenology Have a Future?" *Radical Philosophy*, 113 (May/June 2002), p. 37

philosopher"⁴⁴ by challenging the very being of that philosopher. Furthermore, what Heidegger prompts in his description of the angst which acts as a wakening call to Dasein is a personal, active participation in the development and discovery of meaning such as not to be encountered outside an engagement in the world of beings. Heidegger's thought, often characterised by the *Kehre*, the turnings early and late in his career, exemplify partly Heidegger's life-long phenomenological bent which allows this re-writing and re-visioning that defines living philosophy – what Heidegger ultimately calls thinking (*Denken*). Husserl, conversely, in the very execution of his *method* of phenomenology puts into motion the mechanics by which his *Lebenswelt* loses life, ultimately abstracting from the phenomenal realm and retreating into a transcendent consciousness so that meaning, if it is to be understood as existing in the *Lebenswelt* itself and coming forth to meet the subject in some kind of genuine exchange, cannot express nor be expressed; meaning is rendered once again bodiless and voiceless. Heidegger's "*in-der-Welt*" contains the action of "thrownness" and demands a response from beings. Husserl's term "*Lebenswelt*" suggests more the existential participation of one in the world. That Heidegger ignores this term may be his desire to distance himself from Husserl's work, or perhaps his desire to re-define his terms, including that of *existenz*.

Question of Religious and Philosophical Pursuit

Each of the Buddhist practitioners considered in this thesis, Nāgārjuna, Asanga and Vasubandhu of the Yogācāra school, and Dōgen, have written their philosophical and religious treatises with the intention of leading their disciples closer to an experience of *nirvāṇa*, or Buddha reality, through an experience of *śūnyatā*. These practitioners wrote within the parameters of a particular Buddhist school or community, even when they were severely critical of the school or community. Although their methods can appear divergent, there is a similar active approach to the experience of profound reality which re-values all other (i.e. mundane) experience. The Buddhist practitioners considered here are singularly concerned with a religious experience that ultimately cannot be named or described; it is mystical in its participation with the mundane reality that is seen through everyday perception. Theirs can be called a praxi-centric phenomenological approach to experience profound reality or authentic living.

⁴⁴ Durie, Robin, "Does Phenomenology Have a Future?" *Radical Philosophy*, 113 (May/June 2002), p. 37

Comparing this searching for a clearly religious ultimate concern with the pursuit of Western philosophers brings in the question of what the Western phenomenologists were attempting to uncover through their investigation. Is Husserl's attempt to confront 'the things themselves' infused with the same type of ultimate concern as the Buddhist practitioner's? As discussed above, Heidegger's philosophical paths of thinking clearly intersect to a certain degree with the kind of ultimate concern that the Buddhist practitioners were transparently attempting to identify: clearing away the clutter of concern that obscures from the eye/mind reality as it is; attuning oneself to the rhythm of authenticity. The Buddhist practitioner's methods prepare one for that kind of engagement with reality that is transformative. Buddhist practitioners along with Heidegger allow the subject to remain in the tension that is experienced in practice and living which cannot be categorised. Accepting the tension and dissonance that pairs with experience is a readily accepted path for the Buddhist practitioner in contrast with the Western phenomenologist. The Buddhist practitioner relates it to the authenticity of living/practicing while the Western phenomenologist is uneasy with a tension that cannot be explained.

When the Buddhist practitioners criticise the foundational tendencies in the religious schools or doctrines of their time, they seek to set into motion once again the avenue of release through transformative experience. A reliance on transcendental truth is clearly as grounding as immanent reality and release cannot be found through one aspect alone, but through a dynamic intersection of them both. There is no question that the *bodhisattva mārga* is an ethical path, with behavioural expectations of the practitioners such as self-control, generosity, kindness and patience. However, ultimately the religious experience is not restricted to an ethics, although it may or even must exhibit one.

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