

“ZEN IS NOT BUDDHISM”  
RECENT JAPANESE CRITIQUES OF BUDDHA-NATURE\*

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*Summary*

*Hongaku shisō*, the idea that all beings are “inherently” enlightened, is an almost universal assumption in the Japanese Buddhist tradition. This idea also played an important role in the indigenization of Buddhism in Japan and in the development of the syncretistic religious ethos that underlies Japanese society. Through most of Japanese history, the idea of the inherent enlightenment (including non-sentient beings such as plants and rocks—which expanded to include assumptions such as the non-differentiation between “indigenous” kami and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas, and the transcendence of all dualities (including good and evil) as an ideal—was pervasive and unquestioned in much of Japanese religious activity and thought. Recently some Japanese Buddhist scholars, notably Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō of the Sōtō Zen sect Komazawa University, have questioned the legitimacy of this ethos, claiming that it is antithetical to basic Buddhist ideas such as *anātman* (“no-self”), and that it is the source of many social problems in Japan. They call for a conscious recognition and rejection of this ethos, and a return to “true Buddhism.” After presenting a brief outline of the history and significance of these ideas in Japan, Hakamaya and Matsumoto’s critique is explained and examined. Some of the academic and social reactions to this critique are also explored.

Early in A.D. 817, Saichō, the founder of Japanese Tendai Buddhism, entered into a debate with Tokuitsu over the idea of Buddha-nature and universal enlightenment. Tokuitsu, a Hossō monk who lived in the Kantō region, had written a tract called *Bussōshō* [On buddha-nature], and Saichō responded with *Hokke kowaku* [Vanquishing misunderstandings about the *Lotus Sūtra*]. For the next four years these two scholars exchanged essays and arguments in what grew to be one of the most important doctrinal debates in Japanese Buddhist history. In short, Saichō championed the idea of universal buddhahood, the *ekayāna* ideal espoused in the *Lotus Sūtra* that all beings are destined for the highest enlightenment of a Buddha, while Tokuitsu supported the Yogācāra interpretation of five *gotra*, or five inherent potentials latent in sentient beings, including that of the *icchantika* who have no hope of ever attaining buddhahood.<sup>1</sup>

What, you might ask, does this debate have to do with the contemporary study of religion and our understanding of Buddhism in Japan? Just this: we are in the midst of a very provocative “rethinking” of Japanese Buddhism by some prominent Buddhist scholars and thinkers who claim that Ch’an/Zen, the *tathāgata-garbha* (“womb of the Buddha”) tradition, *hongaku shisō* (“original” or “inherent” enlightenment), and related ideas are “not Buddhism.” This is tantamount to saying that most, if not all, of Japanese Buddhism is not Buddhism at all. In a sense what they are saying is not at all that new—the *tathāgata-garbha* tradition and Buddha-nature ideas have always been open to the charge that they posit an un-Buddhist substantialist or ātman-like existence, and it is akin to the debate between Saichō and Tokuitsu in our contemporary context. What is the “true” understanding of the teaching of the Buddha? Which of the many and varied strands (if any) of Buddhist tradition should be accepted as correct and proper, and which (if any) should be rejected as contrary to the Buddha-Dharma? What are the wider social implications of accepting or rejecting certain interpretations of the Buddhist tradition?

It is usually assumed that Saichō “won” the debate against Tokuitsu, and certainly Saichō’s stand of universal buddhahood became the accepted presupposition for most of Japanese Buddhism, and is in fact the dominant religious ethos in Japan. *Hongaku shisō*—a way of thinking that came to include such ideas as the inherent enlightenment of all things (including non-sentient beings such as grasses and trees, rocks and mountains); the identity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa; no differentiation between the “indigenous” kami and the Buddhas and bodhisattvas; the transcendence of all dualities, including good and evil—grew to be pervasive and unquestioned in much of Japanese religious activity and thought. However, there have also been times, though few and far between, when the idea and implications of *hongaku shisō* were questioned. Now is such a time.

The current attack is led by two Buddhist scholars at Komazawa University (associated with the Sōtō Zen sect): Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shirō. The main focus of their attack is the *hongaku shisō* tradition—strictly speaking the idea that all things are “inherently” or “originally” enlightened—and the implications of

this kind of thinking (such as the ideal of *wa*, “harmony” or “conformity”) that is pervasive in Japanese society. In this paper I will briefly examine the development of this tradition in Japan, its significance for Japanese religion and society, and the recent critique of this tradition by Hakamaya, Matsumoto, and other Japanese scholars.

### *History of Hongaku Shisō*

The term *hongaku* [Chin. *pen-chiao*] has no Sanskrit equivalent, and makes its first appearance in the *Awakening of Faith*, a text probably compiled in China,<sup>2</sup> and in two Chinese apocryphal Buddhist texts, the *Jen-wang ching* [T 8.825-834, 834-845]<sup>3</sup> and the \**Vajrasamādhi-sūtra* [T 9.365-373].<sup>4</sup> In the *Awakening of Faith*, *hongaku* is used in contrast to *shigaku*, the “inception” or “actualization” of enlightenment, i.e. the process by which one realizes enlightenment in his life; thus the English rendering “original” enlightenment. The *Awakening of Faith* teaches that

... “original enlightenment” indicates [the essence of Mind (*a priori*)] in contradistinction to [the essence of Mind in] the process of actualization of enlightenment; the process of actualization of enlightenment is none other than [the process of integrating] the identity with the original enlightenment.<sup>5</sup>

This idea of original or inherent enlightenment, along with the *Awakening of Faith* in general, had a great influence on the development of East Asian Buddhism.<sup>6</sup> Some brief examples: Fa-tsang (643-712), the Hua-yen patriarch, is also well known for his influential commentary on the *Awakening of Faith*;<sup>7</sup> the idea was pervasive in the Ch’an tradition; and it influenced the development of the concept of “the Buddha-nature in non-sentient beings” in the T’ien-t’ai tradition.

In Japan *hongaku* thought took on a life of its own. Its influence was felt in the Shingon school, particularly through Kūkai’s extensive use of the *Shakumakaen-ron* [T #1668, 32.591-668], an apocryphal commentary on the *Awakening of Faith* attributed to Nāgārjuna. The development of *hongaku shisō* was especially prominent in the Tendai school. After the Tendai school was transmitted to Japan by Saichō it underwent many developments,<sup>8</sup> one of which

was the growth of an identifiably independent branch called *hongakumon*. Texts devoted to *hongaku shisō* made their appearance in the late Heian and Kamakura periods and some were attributed to prominent Tendai figures such as Saichō, Genshin, and Ryōgen. These texts include the *Honri taikō shū*, attributed to Saichō, which interprets the most important Tendai teachings in terms of *hongaku shisō*; *Hymns on Inherent Enlightenment* [*Hongaku-san*], with commentary attributed to Ryōgen [*Chū-hongaku-san*] and Genshin [*Hongaku-san shaku*], and texts such as the *Shuzen-ji ketsu*, attributed in part to Saichō, which contain details on the oral transmissions (*kuden*) of *hongaku* ideas, practices, and lineages.<sup>9</sup> Such oral transmissions and the accompanying lineages were an important part of the *hongaku* tradition.

It is no accident that these developments were contemporaneous with (even part of) the growth of the syncretistic *honjī-suijaku/shinbutsu shūgō* movement, the tendency to emphasize the unity of Buddhist and “Shinto” deities and practices. Its influence can be seen in the development of Shugendō (the way of mountain asceticism), in Shinto, and in all of the Buddhist schools. Building on the Mahāyāna idea of the “identity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa,” *hongaku shisō* developed into an ethos (to use Tamura Yoshirō’s words) of “absolute non-duality” and “total affirmation” of the mundane world. The ideal is perhaps best expressed in the phrases *sōmoku kokudo shikkai jōbutsu* and *sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu* [the grasses, trees, mountains and rivers all attain buddhahood], phrases which pop up almost incessantly in Japanese literature, art, theatre, and so forth.<sup>10</sup> This religious ethos was the overwhelming status quo for most of Japanese history, and continues to dominate today despite the attempt by the State to forcibly “separate” Buddhism and Shinto elements (*shinbutsu bunri*) in the early Meiji period.

There have been a few exceptions to the dominance of the *hongaku* ethos. Noteworthy is the work of Hōchibō Shōshin in the 12th century,<sup>11</sup> Shōshin was critical of *hongaku shisō*, saying that one should not understand it to mean that sentient beings are “already” enlightened, and that such an interpretation denies causality and is the heresy of “naturalism” (*shizen gedō*).<sup>12</sup> It is often pointed out that the so-called “new” Kamakura Buddhist schools arose in reaction against the *hongaku* stance of the Tendai establish-

ment, but I think that in actual practice these movements soon “reverted to” (if they had ever rejected) what Hakamaya and Matsumoto criticize as a *hongaku* ethos. In the Tokugawa period Myōyū (1637-1690) and Reikū (1652-1739) of the Anraku school urged a revival of the keeping of the precepts based on the *Ssu-fen lü* [Jpn. *Shibun-ritsu*] in response to what they perceived as a decadence encouraged by *hongaku shisō*. This movement was exceptional, however, and the *hongaku* ethos continues as an unquestioned assumption for much, if not all, of Japanese Buddhism.

### *Recent Critiques of Hongaku Shisō*

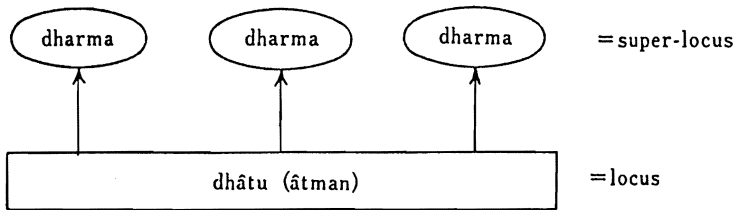
The current controversy concerning *hongaku shisō* centers around two figures associated with Komazawa University, Matsumoto Shirō and Hakamaya Noriaki, but includes a number of others. It is significant that these figures are all first-rate textual scholars and philosophers, as well as faculty members of the Sōtō-Zen-affiliated Komazawa University. Theirs are not casual criticism made by outsiders or sloppy scholarship based on lack of familiarity with the Buddhist tradition and its texts. These are first-rate academic studies prepared by committed Buddhists.

Matsumoto Shirō, a specialist in Māhyamika Buddhism, published a collection of his essays in 1989 called *Engi to kū—nyoraizō shisō hihan* [Causality (*pratītya-samutpāda*) and emptiness (*śūnyatā*)—A critique of *tathāgata-garbha* thought]. I will attempt to summarize the main points Matsumoto makes in these essays.

I. The first essay, provocatively titled “*Tathāgata-garbha* thought is not Buddhism” [*Nyoraizō shisō wa bukkū ni arazu*] leaves no doubt as to Matsumoto’s position or intent. *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is not Buddhism—then what is the correct teaching of the Buddha? Buddhism is the teaching of non-self [*muga; anātman*], the teaching of causality [*pratītya-samutpāda*]. This teaching of causality is not the teaching of universal mutual co-arising and non-temporal causality developed later (e.g. by Hua-yen thinkers), but the temporal, twelvefold chain of dependent arising as discovered by the Buddha during his enlightenment under the Bodhi tree and classically expressed in the *Mahāvagga*.<sup>13</sup> The critical point is a denial of any

eternal, substantial, underlying basis or locus on which everything else depends or arises from. This “locus” that is denied by the teaching of causality is given the name “dhātu,” and any teaching that implies the existence of a dhātu is called “dhātu-vāda,” a neo-Sanskritism coined by Matsumoto. Dhātu-vāda is antithetical to Buddhism, since it is the very teaching that Śākyamuni intended to deny. The idea of a *tathāgata-garbha*, the “womb,” “matrix,” or “seed” of buddhahood inherent in all sentient beings, is a form of dhātu-vāda and thus is not Buddhism.

Dhātu-vāda is further explained using a chart:



The “locus” (L) is the underlying basis, and the “super-locus” (S) are the phenomenal “dharmas” which arise based on the locus. The teaching of dhātu-vāda follows a certain pattern:

1. L is the basis for S;
2. L gives rise to [is the source of] S;
3. L is one, S are many;
4. L is real (existent), and S are not real (non-existent);
5. L is the essential nature (*honshitsu*; ātman) of S;
6. S is not ultimately real, but “participates” in reality as something that arises based on L.

The teaching of dhātu-vāda appears to be a teaching of “equality” (*byōdō shisō*)—after all, it says that all things are based on a single, universal, eternal reality. However, in practice it leads to discrimination (*sabetsu shisō*), because if one assumes a single basis and underlying reality for all things—that good and evil, strong and weak, rich and poor, right and wrong, are fundamentally “the same”—there is no need or incentive to correct any injustice or right any wrong. In practice, then, dhātu-vāda supports and fosters discrimination and injustice. The idea of a universal,

inherent buddhahood appears optimistic, but in fact enhances the status quo and inhibits improving the human condition.

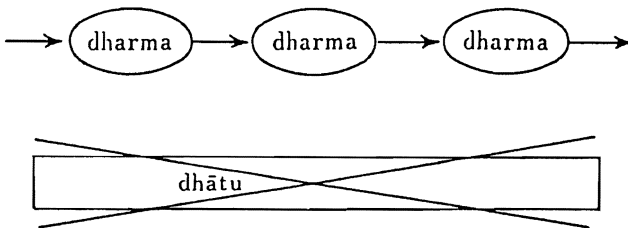
The article closes (p. 8) with a summary conclusion in three parts:

1. *Tathāgata-garbha* thought is a form of dhātu-vāda.
2. Dhātu-vāda is the object of Śākyamuni’s criticism, and the correct Buddhist teaching of causality (*pratītya-samutpāda*) is a denial of dhātu-vāda.
3. Contemporary Japanese Buddhism can only claim to be truly Buddhist insofar as it denies the validity of *tathāgata-garbha* thought.

II. The second essay, “On *pratītya-samutpāda*,” as well as the rest of Matsumoto’s work, expands and gives detailed support to the basic assertions outlined in the first essay. Here Matsumoto critiques the work of many of the most prominent modern Japanese Buddhist scholars, such as Ui Hakuju, Watsuji Tetsurō, Hirakawa Akira, Tamaki Kōshirō, Fujita Kōtatsu, and Tsuda Shin’ichi.

Some of the more interesting points made in this long essay:

There is no religion without time. The correct understanding of causality is not that of theoretical, spatial, or mutually inclusive causality, but a temporal causality of an effect following after a cause. The twelve-linked chain of causation refers not to the relationship between things, but the temporal sequence from cause to effect. In terms of the locus/super-locus scheme, *pratītya-samutpāda* is a sequence of super-locus without a locus; a sequence of properties and not things (dharmas). There is no reality (dhātu) beyond or underlying this temporal sequence. [pp. 14-36] This understanding of *pratītya-samutpāda* can be schematized as follows:



The concept of *hongaku* (Matsumoto uses the English “original enlightenment”) posits “pre-time” or state beyond time from which all things arise, or in or on which all things are simultaneously and mutually related. This is dhātu-vāda. [pp. 65-77]

In a note (# 11, pp. 79-81) Matsumoto says that the dhātu-vāda way of thinking can be found in all ancient societies regardless of East or West. It is the idea that “all things arise from and return to One.” If so, then it is possible to say that *Tathāgata-garbha* thought/dhātu-vāda is the theoretical/philosophical development of “native” (*dochaku*—dare I say “primitive”) animistic ideas and “folk religion” (*minzoku shūkyō*).<sup>14</sup> Some claim that the idea of *sansen sōmoku shikkai jōbutsu* is the climactic development of Buddhist thought, but it is only a form of animism. There is no period in history where animism has been held in higher esteem than today. Recently at a conference in Japan, a certain scholar claimed that “The basis of the religious consciousness of the Japanese people is animism and ancestor veneration.” This kind of understanding of folk religion and *tathāgata-garbha* thought is closely related. Both are the theoretical development of “native” (*dochaku*) ways of thinking and its most representative exponent is the Nihongaku (“Japanism”) of Umehara Takeshi. It is not at all surprising that Umehara is a proponent of both Japanese folk religion and *tathāgata-garbha* thought.

III. This last theme is taken up in the third essay, *Bukkyō to shingi—han-nihonshugiteki kōsatsu* [Buddhism and the kami—thoughts against “Japanism”]. Here Matsumoto criticizes the kind of easy “Japanism” and pro-Japan glorification represented by the Nihongaku of Umehara Takeshi. He first introduces the ideas of Umehara, who often speaks of the superiority of the Japanese race, and who presents Japanese Buddhism positively in terms of its *tathāgata-garbha* elements, the “buddahood” of inanimate things, and the emphasis on *wa*.<sup>15</sup> He points out that ideas such as “no thought and no conceptualization” (*munen musō*), “direct intuition” (*chokkan*), and “non-reliance on words” (*furyū monji*), that have been introduced in the West as representative of “Zen,” are in fact ideas based on *tathāgata-garbha* and *hongaku* thought, and should not be considered positive Buddhist virtues.



The “Japanism” of Motoori Norinaga, Kawabata Yasunari, and Mishima Yukio are then briefly outlined, showing their close identification of themselves with the country or concept of “Japan.” He concludes that such thinking is a “philosophy of death” (*shi no tetsugaku*) and as a Buddhist he must reject all philosophies of death.

He concludes (p. 111):

The idea that the ancient Japanese people had an optimistic attitude toward life and this became pessimistic due to the introduction of Buddhism is a lot of rubbish put forth by people who know nothing about religion. In fact, the ancient Japanese people had no basis for living with hope. They lived their lives in this world knowing only that they must wait in fear for their inevitable death, and that after death they were faced with the feared land of darkness (*yomi no kuni*). It was only through their encounter with Buddhism that they were given hope, or in other words, given the conviction of life (resurrection) after death.

Finally, allow me to share some of my thought with regard to my personal relationship with Japan. I believe that to love Japan is to love one’s self. To me “Japan” is an extension of my own mind and body. As I love my own body, so I love Japan. Self-love—narcissism—is very enticing and sweet... However, love is something which should be directed to others; if it is directed at one’s self, it becomes self-attachment.

On the basis of the Buddhist teaching of non-self (*muga-setsu*), I have come to the following conclusions:

1. One should disdain oneself; and
2. One should love only the absolute other (God or Buddha).

Therefore, as a Buddhist, based on the teaching of non-self, I must not love Japan since it is an extension of my self.

Even if I believe I should not love myself, it is certainly true that I am always loving myself; even if I believe I should not love Japan, I cannot avoid loving Japan. However, the teaching of the Buddha is absolute.... A Buddhist must not love Japan [i.e. one’s own country].

IV. The fourth essay, *Jitsuzairon hihan* [A critique of “existence”], deals with Tsuda Shin’ichi’s criticisms of Matsumoto’s arguments made in chapter 2 (which had been published as an article earlier). Matsumoto makes a detailed, technical, and textual argument (pp. 121-190) against understanding “dharma” as “existence,” and expands on his critique of dhātu-vāda.

V. In *Gedatsu to nehan—kono hi-bukkyōteki naru mono* [Liberation (*vimukti*) and nirvāṇa—Some non-Buddhist ideas] Matsumoto goes even further in his critique to say that

the final goal of Buddhism is said to be “liberation” (*gedatsu; vimukti*). However, in the effort to correctly understand Buddhism there is no greater

misunderstanding. The reason is that the idea of liberation (*vimukti*) is based on the non-Buddhist idea that there is a self (*ātmavāda*) [to be liberated], and is therefore an anti-Buddhist idea. Not only liberation, but also the ideas of nirvāṇa, a concentrated state of mind (*jhāna, samādhi*), and even the idea of a mind (*citta*), are all based on the non-Buddhist idea of a self. [p. 191]

In this essay Matsumoto leaves aside the ideas of *jhāna, samādhi*, and *citta* and concentrates on liberation and nirvāṇa.

In short, he argues that the idea of liberation and nirvāṇa presupposes a “self” to be liberated, and is thus a dhātu-vāda. He argues against the prevalent interpretation of nirvāṇa as “extinction”—based on the etymology of *nir*√*vā*, to “blow out”—and instead argues for the etymology of *nir*√*vr*, to “uncover.” Matsumoto gives a painstaking textual study to support his contention, and concludes with four points (pp. 195-219):

1. The original meaning of “nirvāṇa” was not “extinction” but “to uncover.”
2. The basic idea of “nirvāṇa” is “the liberation of the ātman from that which is not ātman,” and is thus related to the idea of “liberation” as the goal of Buddhism. Thus both ideas of “nirvāṇa” and “liberation” are based on the idea of an ātman.
3. The ātman is often compared to “light,” or it is said that the ātman gives forth light. If one uncovers or takes away that which is hindering the light, then the light can shine forth and illuminate the darkness. Thus the “extinction of light” cannot be the meaning of a liberation or “nirvāṇa” of an ātman.
4. “The liberation of the ātman from that which is not ātman” is, in other words, the liberation of the “spirit” from the “body.” Thus, complete liberation is possible only by completely escaping the body, and therefore this kind of liberation thought is a “philosophy of death.”

We have yet to see how far Matsumoto is willing to go in denying or reinterpreting traditional Buddhist terms and concepts. As we shall see later, Takasaki Jikidō takes Matsumoto to task for going too far and leaving nothing that can be called “Buddhist.”

VI. The next essay on *Hannaya-kyō to nyoraizō shisō* [The Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtras and *tathāgata-garbha* thought] shows that although

the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras began [with the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā*] as writings based on the idea of emptiness (*śūnyatā*), dhātu-vāda-type ideas gradually crept in and one must be careful to discriminate the contents of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras texts.

One of the main arguments here is that the earliest extant version of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā-prajñā-pāramitā*, the Chinese translation made in 179 A.D. (*Dōgyō-hannya-kyō*, T # 224, 8.425-478), does not contain the famous passage that the “mind is originally pure” [*prakṛtiś cit-tasya prabhāsvarā*], a passage used to support *tathāgata-garbha*-like ideas.

Matsumoto concludes that the early Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras taught emptiness, but gradually incorporated *tathāgata-garbha* tendencies, finally resulting in the compilation of the *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, an influential commentary on the *Larger Prajñā-pāramitā Sūtra* that embraces *tathāgata-garbha* ideas. Matsumoto advocates studying early versions of the Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras, such as the *Dōgyō-hannya-kyō*, to help weed out these later (and mistaken) accretions.

VII. The next essay on *Shōmangyō no ichijō shisō ni tsuite* [On the *ekayāna* idea in the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*] is an early essay by Matsumoto, the arguments of which are better developed in other essays. By examining the *tathāgata-garbha* ideas in the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* Matsumoto concludes that

Indian Mahāyāna Buddhism is usually considered to have had two major scholastic traditions: the Mādhyamika and Yogācāra. This is fine for classifying the *scholastic (gakuha)* traditions, and I cannot agree with the opinion that the *tathāgata-garbha* tradition was a third school. In India there were certainly scholastic debates within the Yogācāra school, and debates within the Mādhyamika school, and there were also debates between the Yogācāra and Mādhyamika schools, but can it be said that there were debates between the *tathāgata-garbha* and the Yogācāra schools? [No, I don’t think so.]

VIII. The final essay, *Kū ni tsuite* [On emptiness], discusses *śūnyatā* from the perspective of *pratītya-samutpāda*. Matsumoto argues that the main theme of Nāgārjuna’s *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* is not emptiness but *pratītya-samutpāda*. He does not claim that *śūnyatā* and *pratītya-samutpāda* are opposing or contradictory concepts, but does caution that *śūnyatā* must be understood in terms of *pratītya-*

*samutpāda*, and not the other way around. Otherwise there is the danger that *sūnyatā* will be misunderstood in dhātu-vāda terms.

Finally, Matsumoto has developed a wider social critique in a paper he gave in 1990 in Vancouver on the meaning of the *Lotus Sūtra* in Japanese culture. In this paper he makes a general critique of Japanese culture based on the ideas outlined above.

This optimistic philosophy of “Japanese identity” exhibits the following characteristics:

- a) An adoration of naturalism rather than humanism.
- b) A praise of experiential anti-rationalism (e.g. mysticism of Zen or tantric Buddhism) over logic and intellect.
- c) A praise of totalitarianism over individualism, which in turn paves the way to corporate nationalism, in a forced application of *wa* or “harmony.”
- d) A praise of animism and polytheism or pantheism, on the basis of relativism, over absolute monotheism.<sup>16</sup>

As Matsumoto points out many times in his book, Hakamaya Noriaki is his colleague and confidante, and their thinking has developed in tandem. Let us now take a look at the critique of *hongaku shisō* published by Hakamaya.

#### *The Critique of Hongaku Shisō by Hakamaya Noriaki*

Hakamaya Noriaki, also a faculty member of the Buddhist Studies department of Komazawa University, is a noted specialist in Yogācāra. He is a prolific writer, scholar, and social critic with a long list of textual studies to his credit, and has recently published two collections of his essays on the subject at hand: *Hongaku shisō hihan* [A critique of *hongaku shisō*] and *Hihan bukkyō* [Critical Buddhism].

In his preface to *Hongaku shisō hihan* Hakamaya clearly spells out his intent: to show that *hongaku shisō* is not Buddhism. In addition, he claims that Zen, the Kyoto school of philosophy, even the teaching of non-duality in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*, are not Buddhism. And as a specialist in Yogācāra, he hopes eventually to write an article about the idea that Yogācāra is not Buddhism!

By *hongaku shisō* Hakamaya means a way of thinking that all things are embraced in a basic, singular, ineffable reality (a state of “original enlightenment”) that functions as an authoritarian ideology that does not admit the validity either of words or concepts

or faith or intellect. The structure of reality is expressed as consisting of a “pure” basis (object)—expressed as “original enlightenment,” the basis, essence, or principle—and the (subject) which is based on this reality—expressed as “actualized enlightenment,” traces, function, or phenomena. This “basis”—no matter how it is expressed—is a dhātu, and anything that admits a dhātu is not Buddhism.

What, then, is Buddhism? In a substantial introduction Hakamaya, like Matsumoto, lays out three defining characteristics of Buddhism as a rule by which to measure what is and what is not Buddhism (pp. 9-10):

1. The basic teaching of the Buddha is the law of causation (*pratītya-samutpāda*), formulated in response to the Indian philosophy of a substantial ātman. Any idea that implies an underlying substance (a “topos”; *basho*) and any philosophy that accepts a “topos” is called a “dhātu-vāda.” Examples of dhātu-vāda are the ātman concept in India, the idea of “nature” (*shizen*) in Chinese philosophy, and the “inherent enlightenment” idea in Japan. These ideas run contrary to the basic Buddhist idea of causation.
2. The moral imperative of Buddhism is to act selflessly (*anātman*) to benefit others. Any religion that favors the self to the neglect of others contradicts the Buddhist ideal. The *hongaku shisō* idea that “grasses, trees, mountains, and rivers have all attained buddhahood; that sentient and non-sentient beings are all endowed with the way of the Buddha” (or, in Hakamaya’s words, “included in the substance of Buddha”) leaves no room for this moral imperative.
3. Buddhism requires faith, words, and the use of the intellect (wisdom, *prajñā*) to choose the truth of *pratītya-samutpāda*. The Zen allergy to the use of words is more native Chinese than Buddhist, and the ineffability of “thusness” (*shinnyo*) claimed in *hongaku shisō* leaves no room for words or faith.

The paradigm for these three characteristics, Hakamaya insists, is to be found in the thought and enlightenment experience of the Buddha himself. Śākyamuni realized (Hakamaya prefers the word “chose”) the truth of causation during his enlightenment

(Hakamaya prefers “thinking”) under the Bodhi tree, resisted the temptation to keep the truth and bliss of enlightenment to himself and instead shared it for the benefit of others, and preached about his discovery of the truth of causation with words, appealing to people’s intellect as well as their faith.

This pattern is also found in T’ien-t’ai Chih-i’s critique of Taoism (p. 13). From the standpoint of Buddhism Chih-i rejected his country’s native philosophy—one of the few to do so—because it does not recognize causality (*inga*), it lacks the ideal of benefiting others (*rita*), and it tends towards a denial of words (*zetugon*).

Limits of time and space do not allow us to even briefly summarize each of Hakamaya’s essays, so I will just mention most of them and then concentrate on a few representative and recent essays.

#### I. Hongaku shisō hihan, 1989

1. *Kūshō rikai no mondaiten* [Some problems in understanding *sūnyatā*]  
-on various uses and interpretations of *sūnyatā* in Buddhist texts and the importance of words (*logos, vāc*)
2. *Daijōkishin-ron ni kansuru hihanteki oboegaki* [Some critical notes on the *Awakening of Faith*]  
-a critique of the concepts of thusness (*shinnyo, tathatā*) and “mind” in the *Awakening of Faith*
3. *Engi to shinnyo* [*pratīya-samutpāda* and *tathatā*]  
-an important study included in the commemorative volume of essays in honor of Hirakawa Akira; a warning against understanding *pratīya-samutpāda* in terms of *tathatā* or “réalité”
4. *Norinaga no bukyō hihan zatsukō* [Miscellaneous thoughts on Motoori Norinaga’s critique of Buddhism]
5. *Sabetsu jishō o umidashita shisōteki haikai ni kansuru shiken* [Some personal opinions on the way of thinking that gave rise to discrimination]  
-on the role of *hongaku shisō* in encouraging and maintaining discrimination against outcastes in Japanese society
6. *Norinaga no ryōbushintō hihan—Shisō to gengo no mondai ni kan-*

- shite* [Motoori Norinaga’s critique of Ryōbu Shinto—On the question of the relationship between thought and words]  
 -on Norinaga’s criticism against *hongaku* influence in Ryōbu Shinto, and the importance of words (i.e., they are not just “the finger pointing at the moon”)
7. *Shie (catuṣ-praīsarāna) hihankō josetsu* [Introductory critical thoughts on the “four criteria” (of the Buddhist tradition)]  
 -a warning against accepting the criteria that people should depend (1) on the Dharma but not on people, (2) on the meaning but not the words (of the teachings), (3) on the “definitive meaning” but not on the “interpretable meaning”, and (4) on wisdom but not on consciousness
  8. *Bukkyō to jingi—Han-Nihongakuteki kōsatsu* [Buddhism and the kami—Thoughts against Japanism]
  9. *Yuimagyō hihan* [A critique of the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra*]  
 -on the idea that the teaching of non-duality in the *Vimalakīrti Sūtra* is not Buddhism.
  10. *Hōshōron ni okeru shin no kōzō hihan* [A critique of the structure of faith in the *Ratnagotravibhāga*]
  11. *Basho (topos) to shite no shinnyo—“Basho no tetsugaku” hihan* [*Tathatā* as topos—A critique of the philosophy of “place”]  
 -a critique of “topical philosophy” [*basho no tetsugaku*] in contrast to “critical philosophy” [*hihan no tetsugaku*]
  12. *Dōgen rikai no ketteiteki shiten* [The definitive perspective for understanding Dōgen]  
 -that despite the understanding of most of the interpreters of his philosophy, Dōgen should be understood as being critical of *hongaku shisō*
  13. *Bendōwa no yomikata* [How to read (Dōgen’s) *Bendōwa*]
  14. *Jūnikan-bon Shōbōgenzō senjutsusetsu saikō* [A re-examination of the theories concerning the compilation of the *Shōbōgenzō* in twelve fascicles]  
 -that the twelve-fascicle compilation of the *Shōbōgenzō* was written by Dōgen late in his life and was critical of *hongaku shisō*<sup>17</sup>
  15. *Sankyō itchi hihan shōkō* [Some minor thoughts critical of the “unity of the three teachings” (Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism)]

- that Buddhism should not accept the fuzzy and mistakenly tolerant idea that these three religious traditions are “fundamentally compatible”
16. *Dōgen ni taisuru “zenichi no buppō”-teki rikai no hihan* [A critique of understanding Dōgen in terms of the “complete unity of the Buddha Dharma”]  
 -a response to comments by his colleague Ishii Shūdō and a critique of the interpretation of Dōgen based on the theory of one (*ichi*) and all (*zen*)
17. *Kyōge betsuden to kyōzen ittchi—Zen no yūgōshugi hihan* [The “transmission outside the teachings” and the unity of teachings and meditation (*zen*)—A critique of Zen syncretism]  
 -(the title says it all)
18. *Dōgen no hitei shita mono* [That which Dōgen denied]  
 -that in his later years Dōgen rejected the fuzzy spirituality based on *hongaku shisō*
19. *Nananyū-go-kan bon “Hotsu mujōshin” to Jūni-kan bon “Hotsu bodaishin”* [The “arousing the supreme mind” chapter in the 75-kan *Shōbōgenzō* and the “arousing *bodhicitta*” chapter in the 12-kan *Shōbōgenzō*]  
 -that both of these essays deal with the same subject but come to completely different conclusions, thus showing that Dōgen’s thought changed from the former to the latter.

## II. Hihan Bukkyō [*Critical Buddhism*], 1990

1. *Hihan bukkū josetsu—“hihan no tetsugaku” tai “basho no tetsugaku”* [Introduction to critical Buddhism—“Critical philosophy” vs. “topical philosophy”]  
 -In short, to be a Buddhist is to be critical, i.e., to be able to make distinctions; the only truly Buddhist stand is to be critical; Buddhism must be a “critical philosophy” able to make distinctions, not a “topical (*basho*) philosophy” [e.g. *hongaku shisō*] that is “all-inclusive” and uncritically tolerant, an “experimental” philosophy.



2. *Kyōtōgakuha hihan* [A critique of the Kyōto school of philosophy]
  - a critique of the idea of *basho* in the Kyoto school [Nishida Kitarō and Nishitani Keiji] and that it is an extension of the non-Buddhist ideas of *hongaku shisō*
3. *Hihan to shite no gakumon* [Scholarship as critique]
  - on the importance of a critical method for scholarship; that what is wrong should be pointed out as wrong and not papered over for the sake of a shallow harmonious tolerance [This may seem rather standard and not worth saying for Western scholarship, but is a radical stance in the world of Japanese scholarship. In contrast, perhaps the Western world of scholarship needs some of the tolerance and graciousness of Japanese scholarship.]
4. *Kobayashi Hideo* “*Watashi no jinseikan*” *hihan* [A critique of Kobayashi Hideo’s *My View of Life*]
5. *Amerika bukkuyō jijō bekken—Amerika no aru wakaki bukkuyō kenkyūsha no happyō ni mukete* [A glance at the state of Buddhism in the United States—On a paper given by a young Buddhist scholar]
  - A report on his experience at the U.S.-Japan Conference on Japanese Buddhism held at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, August 25-28, 1985: in particular the paper by Paul Griffiths, “On the Possible Future of the Buddhist-Christian Interaction”<sup>18</sup>
6. *Shinnyo, hokkai, hosshō* [*Tathatā, dharmadhātu, dharmatā*]
  - on the non-Buddhist implications of these concepts
7. “*Wa*” *no han-bukkyō-sei to bukkuyō no han-sen-sei* [The anti-Buddhist character of *wa* and the anti-violent character of Buddhism]
  - the idea of *wa* is not a positive Buddhist virtue but in practice is an excuse for uncritical syncretism and plays into the hands of the powerful in coercing conformity from above; true Buddhist virtue is anti-violent, and requires a critical stance against discrimination and injustice; “faith” should be the ideal, not *wa*.
8. *Gi-bukkyō o haisuru* [Rejection of false Buddhism]

- the importance of choosing what is right and rejecting what is wrong
9. *Watsuji-hakase ni okeru "hō" to "kū" rikai no mondaiten* [Problems in Dr. Watsuji Tetsurō's understanding of "dharma" and "emptiness"]
  10. *Nyōjitsu chiken*—"Shi ni itaru yamai" o yominagara [Thoughts on "truth" while reading *A Sickness Unto Death*]
  11. *Yuishiki to muga*—*Boku no shikan taza* [Vijñāpti-mātra and anātman—My "just sitting"]

### III. Some essays published recently:

1. *Shōtoku Taishi no wa no shisō hihan* [A critique of Shōtoku Taishi's idea of *wa* ("harmony")] [1989/10]  
-a continuation of essay II-7
2. *Tennōsei hihan* [A critique of the emperor system] [1989/10]  
-on the dangers of the Japanese emperor system and its similarity to the *hongaku shisō* ethos
3. *Zenshū hihan* [A critique of the Zen school] [1990/3]  
-a call for the "Zen" tradition to reject non-Buddhist ideas such as *hongaku shisō* and Taoist influences, and recover the "true Dharma"
4. "*Hokkekyō*" to *hongaku shisō* [The *Lotus Sūtra* and *hongaku shisō*] [1990/10]  
-on the differences between the *ekayāna* teaching of the *Lotus Sūtra* and *hongaku shisō*
5. *Shizen hihan to shite no bukkō* [Buddhism as critical of the idea of "nature"] [1990/10]  
-Buddhism does not teach "oneness with nature" but rejects the ātman-like idea of an all-encompassing "nature" (*shizen*); a Buddhist must escape from "nature" and project "nature" from destruction by becoming the "masters and possessors of nature" [*maîtres et possesseurs de la Nature*].

Many of the points Hakamaya makes in his more technical "Buddhological" essays have already been mentioned in summarizing Matsumoto's work. Thus I will concentrate on Hakamaya's social commentary, and some of his recent essays:

1. “*Wa*” *no han-bukkyō-sei to bukkyō no han-sei* [The anti-Buddhist character of *wa* and the anti-violence character of Buddhism] [1987]

This essay opens with a long quote on the increasing interest in religion in Japan, the cooperation between state and religion, and how this is a good thing for the country. Except for the dated style, one gets the impression that the quote was written recently, given the fact that Japan is now experiencing another *shūkyō būmu*. The perspective shifts, however, when one realizes that the quote is by Nishitani Keiji, written in 1941 as Japan was in the throes of a world war, religious persecution, and domestic repression. Hakamaya uses this quote as a springboard to argue that the idea of *wa* (“harmony”) is promoted as a positive ideal, but in reality it is a coercive principle used by the powerful to maintain the status quo and social order, and to restrict criticism. The *wa* promoted since the time of Shōtoku Taishi and his famous 17-article Constitution is not a Buddhist virtue. *Wa* is an enemy of Buddhism and an enemy of true peace. Buddhists should not give in to a compromising and mushy “tolerance” that uncritically accepts all things as “equal.”

Coeval with the ideal of *wa* is the *hongaku shisō* religious ethos. Both support an attitude of uncritical tolerance, which Hakamaya compares to mixing *miso* and *kuso* [brown bean paste and dung—“curds and turds”] (p. 110). Both support a superficial syncretism that ignores differences of right and wrong or good and bad, and thus ironically works to maintain discrimination and injustice and the whims of those in positions of power and authority.

In contrast to *wa*, the Buddhist should emphasize faith. The *wa* ideal encourages acceptance of any teaching or idea, whether it is Confucian, Taoist, native Japanese animism, or un-Buddhistic dhātu-vāda tendencies; “faith” requires one to have a firm belief in certain Buddhist truths and to reject ideas that are contrary to these truths. Thus Buddhist faith (*shin*, *śraddhā*) is the same as the Latin *credo*—one believes in order to be able to judge whether an idea is correct or not correct. This is “faith” as taught in the *Lotus Sūtra*. The “faith” taught in *tathāgata-garbha* texts such as the *Ratnagotravibhāga* and *Awakening of Faith*, in contrast, emphasizes the unity of the believer and the object of belief, and confidence in one’s own

buddha-nature or potential to become a buddha (see essay I-10). The faith of the *Lotus Sūtra* means to believe the words of the Buddha, and then judge with one's intelligent (*prajñā*) between the correct and the incorrect, and criticize the incorrect with words.

The *wa* ethos led people in prewar Japan to uncritically sacrifice their bodies to the war effort and maintain silence. Buddhist faith requires intellect to critically respond with words and actions against mistaken notions and activity. This is the “anti-violent” stand of Buddhism. To oppose *wa* is to be truly anti-violent and anti-war (*hansen*).

## 2. *Tennōsei hihan* [A critique of the emperor system] [1989/10]

This essay opens with a quote from Dōgen:

Sentient beings should not be full of fear and take refuge in the mountain deities, oni, kami, and so forth, or take refuge in non-Buddhist (*gedō*) spiritual powers (*caitya*). There is no liberation from suffering by relying on such things. By following the mistaken teaching (*jakyō*) of non-Buddhist ways, ... one does not attain any causes for liberation. The wise person does not praise these things; they add to suffering and not to good recompense. Thus one should not take refuge in mistaken ways, but should clearly exclude them.

Hakamaya takes the occasion of Emperor Shōwa's death, and the period of “voluntary restraint” (*jishuku*) among the Japanese people during the Emperor's terminal illness, to comment on the place and dangerous tendencies of the emperor system in modern Japan. He wonders how it can be claimed that Japan is a country “with unusual freedom of thought and expression” when social pressures during this period were so strong that hardly anyone dared to make any comment or take any action that could be construed as “inappropriate” to the occasion.

The emperor system is like the *hongaku* and *honji suijaku* ethos—it is structured with an ineffable center and a murky syncretism and relies on the ideal of *wa* to muffle any ideological criticism. It is a non-Buddhist system of spirituality that Dōgen clearly rejected. Buddhists must be critical of the emperor system and its hothouse atmosphere that stifles dissent.

## 3. *Zenshū hihan* [A critique of the Zen school] [1990/3]

In this article Hakamaya reiterates and expands his criticism that “Zen is not Buddhism,” makes a blistering attack on the Zen inter-

pretations of Yanagida Seizan and D.T. Suzuki, and also responds to some questions raised by his colleague Ishii Shūdō.

One passage in particular clarifies the intent of Hakamaya’s critique:

I have said that “Zen is not Buddhism” but do not recall ever saying that “Chinese Ch’an is not Buddhism.” This difference may appear to be minor, but it is an important distinction. The reason is that anything which shows no attempt at “critical philosophy” based on intellect (*prajñā*), but merely an experiential “Zen” (*dhyāna, bsam gtan*), whether it be in India or Tibet or wherever, cannot be Buddhism. (p. 64)

Hakamaya’s harsh critique of Yanigida Seizan and D.T. Suzuki is based on the idea that if, on the one hand the correct Dharma (*saddharma*) of Buddhism is a critical philosophy and a foreign and imported way of thinking, and on the other hand Zen is a topical philosophy no different from the customs and ways of the culture in which it is imported, then the fact both Suzuki and Yanagida wrote books concerning two phenomena that should be understood in opposition to each other, namely “Buddhism” and “Japanese culture,” shows that they are not aware of the fundamental opposition between these two. According to Hakamaya, the triumph of Zen in China and Japan is the triumph of the indigenous (*dochaku*) ways in absorbing Buddhism into itself and neutering the critical thrust of the Buddha’s teaching.

In concluding this essay and in response to questions from Ishii, Hakamaya clarifies his position on some points, including:

- there is no “good” *hongaku shisō*—no parts of it can be admitted as Buddhism, and it can only be rejected;
- as Ishii points out, the correct Dharma (*saddharma*) recognizes both sitting in mediation and various religious rituals as valuable, and also recognizes a proper role for a teacher to guide one in the correct Dharma. However, Hakamaya points out, one must completely reject the authoritarian idea that a teacher is absolute and never mistaken.

4. “*Hokkekyō*” to *hongaku shisō* [The *Lotus Sūtra* and *hongaku shisō*] [1990/10]

This paper was prepared to deliver in English at the conference on the *Lotus Sūtra* and Japanese Culture at the University of British

Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, in August 1990. It therefore repeats and neatly summarizes many of Hakamaya's major points. He points out that the *Lotus Sūtra* (*Saddharma-puṇḍarīka-sūtra*), since it claims to proclaim the only right and true Buddhism, and is an imported way of thinking, should be understood as antithetical to the indigenous ways of thinking in the countries it enters. *Hongaku shisō*, on the other hand, is naturally amenable to indigenous ways of thinking. Thus these two standpoints should, at least theoretically, be in opposition.

It has already been shown that *hongaku shisō* is a dhātu-vāda." The three criteria for a "correct" Buddhism are that it teaches causality, it promotes an altruistic, other-benefitting ideal, and words are valued to express the truth. The *Lotus Sūtra* meets all these criteria.

The *Lotus Sūtra* is a "critical philosophy," in contrast to the "topical philosophy" of *hongaku shisō*. It urges people to have faith, is critical of mistaken understanding of the Buddha Dharma, and values the skillful use (*hōben, upāya*) of language.

Unfortunately, Hakamaya says, the *Lotus Sūtra* has been understood in an un-Buddhistic way for most of Japanese history. The interpretations of Seng-chao, Chi-tsang, and others, who understood the *Lotus Sūtra* in terms of Taoist or Buddha-nature ideas, were imported into Japan from the earliest days, influenced the *wa* ethos attributed to Shōtoku Taishi, and from the very beginning turned the critical *Lotus Sūtra* approach into an overly tolerant ethos. Thus from the very beginning the *hongaku shisō* attitude won out over the radical, critical, and truly Buddhist approach of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

#### *Response and Other Contributions to the Issue*

Although Matsumoto and Hakamaya are the central figures in this on-going controversy, there are other scholars who have made similar claims or have contributed to this subject. The work of four more faculty members of Komazawa University should be mentioned, though once again limits of space and time do not allow a full treatment.

1. Ishii Shūdō has published an important volume on "Studies

in the history of Zen in the Sung period” (1989). In his introduction he refers to the work of Matsumoto and Hakamaya and their conclusion that “Chinese Zen is not Buddhism (anti-Upaniṣad).” He adds that “this may seem rather strange at first glance, but it corresponds to my understanding that ‘the indigenous Taoist thought is not Buddhism,’ and their statements promise to be valuable in my attempt to clarify the character of Chinese Ch’an” (p. ix). Ishii is careful not to give full support to the claims of Hakamaya and Matsumoto, however, and as we have seen from Hakamaya’s response to Ishii’s queries (in “Zenshū hihan”), they are in the midst of a public debate to clarify their positions. Ishii appears willing to admit the value of “indigenous” elements without them compromising Buddhism; Hakamaya will have none of it.

2. Yamauchi Shun’yū has published two massive tomes on “Dōgen-Zen and Tendai *hongaku shisō*” (1985) and “Zen and Tendai meditation” (1986). The former provides detailed studies on the development of *hongaku shisō*, and underscores Dōgen’s critique against it. In his preface he acknowledges that his studies are an extension of the work of Hazama Jikō (1923) and Tamura Yoshirō (1965, 1973) (see below).

3. Yoshizu Yoshihide has published studies on “Kegon-Zen” (1985) focussing on Fa-tsang, Ch’eng-kuan, and Ysung-mi, with special attention to the influence of *hongaku shisō*. He concludes that “although the thought of original awakening (*hongaku shisō*) is said to have taken root in Japanese Buddhism from the Heian period through the Kamakura period, further research must be conducted on the contact and incurring differences (sic?) between the Chinese meaning of original enlightenment, which I have called here Hua-yen-Ch’an, and the Japanese usage of the concept of original awakening” (p. 15).

4. Itō Takatoshi has published a number of works (1988, 1990) on the early Chinese assimilation of Buddhism. He focusses on the work of Seng-chao and his influence on Chi-tsang, the systematizer of the San-lun school. He points out that it is currently understood that these two figures were very influential in helping Buddhism take root in China. Itō, however, argues that in fact these two figures assimilated Buddhist teachings on the basis of indigenous Chinese ideas. In his essay on ‘matching terms,’ a phrase usually

used to describe only the early, pre-Seng-chao phase of the introduction of Buddhism into China, Itō argues that “All of Chinese Buddhism, from the time of its introduction to the dominance of the Ch’an school, is a Buddhism of ‘matching terms’” (p. 57). In other words, Chinese Buddhism is always understood on the basis of the indigenous ideas such as *tao* and *li*. A Buddhism of “matching terms” is no more than an extension of indigenous Chinese ideas (*rōsō shisō*), and cannot be considered correct or proper Buddhism.

*Responses to the Challenge by Buddhist Scholars*

1. The topic of *hongaku shisō* was brought to the fore of current Buddhist studies through the work of Tamura Yoshirō, who followed in the footsteps of Hazama Jikō and Shimaji Taitō in identifying *hongaku shisō* as a dominant ethos in Japanese Buddhism and religion in general. Tamura’s study on the influence of *hongaku shisō* on the new Kamakura Buddhist movements (1965) and the compilation of *hongaku* texts (TADA 1973) laid the foundation for current studies on *hongaku shisō*.

It was a great loss to the world of Buddhist scholarship when Tamura Yoshirō passed away in 1989. We can only speculate how he would have responded to the challenge presented by Matsumoto and Hakamaya. Tamura is on record as saying the *hongaku shisō* was the climactic development of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and was a tireless advocate of the positive influences of this ethos, not only on Japanese religion but in various areas of Japanese culture. What D.T. Suzuki claimed for “Zen,” Tamura would have claimed for *hongaku shisō*.<sup>19</sup> His collected works on the subject, published in 1990, must serve as his “response” on the subject.

2. The greatest authority on *tathāgata-garbha* thought in Japan today is Takasaki Jikidō, and his masterful *Nyorai-zō shisō no keisei* was published in 1974. Both Matsumoto and Hakamaya quote his work with respect, and in some of his recent publications Takasaki makes a preliminary response.<sup>20</sup> Takasaki praises them for their careful scholarship and critical approach, but cannot accept their conclusion that *tathāgata-garbha* thought and *hongaku shisō* is “not Buddhism.” He points out (1991, p. 206) that the *tathāgata-garbha*



texts themselves are constantly aware of the possible criticism that they are positing an ātman, and deny the charge. Their openness to this charge did not lead to them being accused in India of being “not Buddhism”. It is true that the Mādhyamika school criticized the *tathāgata-garbha* and Yogācāra traditions of using expressions which implied substantial existence, but this was accepted as still being a part of Mahāyāna Buddhism, although an “incomplete” teaching. The *tathāgata-garbha* ideas were accepted in Tibet also as part of the Mahāyāna tradition.

As for Matsumoto’s idea of dhātu-vāda, Takasaki adds, it is a useful proposition with which to criticize *tathāgata-garbha* and Yogācāra ideas, and it is structurally similar to the Upaniṣadic idea of the unity of Brahman and ātman. However, Takasaki doubts if it is necessarily and always un- or anti-Buddhist, and whether it can be a litmus test to determine what is and is not Buddhism. Takasaki finds Matsumoto’s defining characteristics of Buddhism too restrictive, and wonders if maybe Śākyamuni himself was “poisoned” by dhātu-vāda influences.

Matsumoto’s logic should lead him to criticize the Mādhyamika idea of “supreme truth” (*paramārtha-satya*), and eventually any and all aspects of the Buddhist tradition (1989, p. 373). Matsumoto admits that ultimately he can only rely on “an absolute Other,” and Takasaki wonders if Matsumoto will eventually embrace Christianity.

Hakamaya, Takasaki points out (1989, p. 373 ff.), attacks *tathāgata-garbha* more as a social critic, and there is no denying that Buddhism has contributed to social injustice and discrimination. However, Takasaki claims, the fault for these shortcomings cannot be laid solely at the feet of *hongaku shisō*—a “pure” philosophy of emptiness could have led to the same results. In any case it is undeniable that a Buddhist should have compassionate concern for others and not ignore proper practices.

Hakamaya’s critique of languages also makes important points, and logical, verbal expressions are important in Buddhism, but Takasaki thinks that one must recognize the limits of language. It is not anti-Buddhist to admit these limits.

Takasaki concludes his brief comments by noting (1991, p. 212) that important questions have been raised by Matsumoto’s and

Hakamaya's critique, and it is time for him and others to rethink *tathāgata-garbha* ideas and the *Awakening of Faith*, and for him to reconsider his work as presented in *Nyoraizō shisō keisei*.

3. Hirakawa Akira is one of the deans of Japanese Buddhist studies, and he responds to Matsumoto's work in the leading essay in a collection of articles he edited on "*tathāgata-garbha* and the *Awakening of Faith*" (1990, pp. 78ff.). First he states his own understanding of *tathāgata-garbha* as the "nature" or "potential" to attain buddhahood. It is not static but is ever-changing: this is the *tathāgata-garbha-dhātu*. *Dhātu* does not necessarily mean a substantial "foundation" or "basis" as Matsumoto claims. In fact there are passages in the Āgama sūtras which identify *dhātu* with *pratītya-samutpāda*. The *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra* itself says that the *tathāgata-garbha* is not an ātman (T 12.222b19-21). Hirakawa agrees with Matsumoto that *pratītya-samutpāda*, *śūnyatā* and *anātman* are the fundamental teachings of Buddhism, but cannot agree that therefore *tathāgata-garbha* thought is not Buddhism.<sup>21</sup>

4. Lambert Schmithausen has published "Remarks on N. Hakamaya's view of the problem of 'Buddhism and Nature'" (1991, pp. 53-62). He critiques Hakamaya's view of Buddhism and nature and concludes that, despite his epousal of a "genuine Buddhism," some of his ideas are borrowed from the Western tradition and are "rather Cartesianism in a Buddhist garb" (1991, p. 62).

### *Responses Outside the World of Buddhist Scholarship*

#### 1. Response of the Sōtō Sect

I have no direct information on the response of the rank and file of those in the Sōtō sect, but one would assume that the criticism is not welcome. The daily routine of Sōtō temples, like most other Japanese Buddhist sects, mostly involves funerary rites.<sup>22</sup> The *hongaku* ethos is as prevalent in Sōtō circles as in any other Buddhist school. What would be the reaction among church members in England if a first-rate scholar and theologian at a major seminary (or the University of Cambridge) claimed that the Church of England is "not Christian"?

## 2. *Hongaku shisō* and Japanese Feminism

One of the most interesting responses to the critique of *hongaku shisō* is by Japanese feminists, who have picked up on the theme and applied it to their critique of contemporary Japanese society. Ōgoshi Aiko, Minamoto Junko, and Yamashita Akiko have made quite a splash with a best-selling publication of their essays entitled *Sei-sabetsu suru Bukkyō* (1990, “Buddhism as a promotor of sexual discrimination”). They point out that so far the feminist movement in Japan has largely consisted in activities and analysis influenced by Western models, and that feminism must respond to the indigenous situation in order for it to take root and be meaningful for Japanese society. In this context they refer to Hakamaya’s critique of *hongaku shisō* and argue that this ethos has contributed greatly to sexual discrimination in Japan. They point out that the *wa* ethos puts the burden for staying at home and maintaining the “harmony” of family life on women, and this acts to inhibit the liberation of Japanese women from restrictive traditional roles, not to mention the unconscious effect of this ethos in all aspects of their daily life. Minamoto (1990) attacks *wa* as a repressive element of Japanism (*Nihonshugi*) and a discriminatory ethos based on *hongaku shisō* (p. 9-13). Surely no one familiar with the place of women in Japanese society can deny the validity of these claims.

### *Some Personal Observations*

The question still remains whether or not all Buddha-nature formulations are necessarily dhātu-vāda and thus antithetical to Buddhism. One can come up with many examples of Buddha-nature formulations that take pains to avoid just that sort of substantialist interpretation. T’ien-t’ai Chih-i’s concept of threefold Buddha-nature (*san’in busshō*), for example, proposes a synergy of reality, wisdom, and practice that avoids proposing a substantial *dhātu*. Buddha-nature is threefold: Buddha-nature as the way things are (the “direct” cause of buddhahood), the wisdom that illuminates the way things are (the “sufficient” cause of buddhahood) and the practice that perfects inherent disposition for wisdom (the “conditional” causes of buddhahood). In order to avoid a simplistic treat-

ment of whether or not Buddha-nature “exists,” Chih-i interprets Buddha-nature in terms of the *ekayāna* principle of the *Lotus Sūtra*: the promise of potential buddhahood for all beings. Buddha-nature is thus not a static entity, and yet one cannot say that it does not “exist.” Everyone is not a Buddha “just as they are”—a process is required to manifest the inherent potential of buddhahood. Buddha-nature is part of a larger world of experience that involves three aspects: the way things are, the wisdom to perceive things correctly, and the practice required to attain this wisdom.<sup>23</sup>

As for *hongaku shisō*, perhaps the difficulty in rendering this term in English reveals the tension and danger in the term itself. I have always been wary of the translation “original” enlightenment because it has too strong a temporal implication, and yet many of the interpretations of this term (and the *Awakening of Faith* itself) do indeed encourage this understanding (and provide good reason for Matsumoto and Hakamaya to reject it as *dhātu-vāda*). The terms “innate” and “inherent” enlightenment also smack of a substantialist heterodoxy. If indeed *hongaku shisō* (and universal Buddha-nature) is a valid expression of the Buddha Dharma, it is incumbent on the proponents of this kind of thinking to show how it is compatible with the basic Buddhist teachings of *anātman* (non-self) and *pratītya-samutpāda* (causality)<sup>24</sup> One could start by discussing why it was necessary to come up with a new term in Chinese instead of using the traditional term *tathāgata-garbha*.

Finally, apart from the technical arguments as to whether Buddha-nature ideas and *hongaku shisō* are “orthodox” or “not really Buddhism,” it cannot be denied that this ethos has failed to provide a broad ethical dimension or stimulate a social ethic in Japanese society. Japanese Buddhists may—and in fact have—argued that this is not a problem, and that for Zen the priority is for the individual to realize one’s own enlightenment, after which compassion and concern for others should “flow forth spontaneously.” Nevertheless history has shown that this ethos tends to support the status quo; it provides neither a stimulus for necessary social change and altruistic activity, nor a basis to resist social structures that prey on the weak and oppressed. Was the Zen master who dismissed a beggar at the gate and refused him food and clothing, saying, “He has the Buddha-nature,” failing as a Bud-

dhist to be compassionate, or was he merely following through with the implications that flow naturally from the Buddha-nature ethos?

*Concluding Summary*

The criticisms of Hakamaya and Matsumoto seem to be directed at a number of different targets, often at the same time and not always readily apparent. At least three levels can be distinguished: Buddhological, sectarian, and social criticism.

- 1) At the Buddhological level Hakamaya and Matsumoto are questioning the consistency of concepts such as Buddha-nature and *hongaku shisō* with other basic Buddhist concepts such as *pratītya-samutpāda*. They use textual and doctrinal arguments in an attempt to show that Buddha-nature ideas (*dhātu-vāda*) are incompatible with other, more basic, Buddhist teachings. Whether or not one agrees with the specifics of their argument, the time is ripe for a Buddhological reevaluation of the Buddha-nature concept.
- 2) At a sectarian level they are resisting what they perceive as an incorrect understanding of Dōgen’s teachings by their own Sōtō sect, and seek to reform the sect by re-evaluating Dōgen’s teachings, especially with regard to the idea of Buddha-nature.
- 3) At the level of social criticism they intend to show that the acceptance of the Buddha-nature/*hongaku shisō* ethos in Japan has led to objectionable social conditions and attitudes, and that a recognition of the danger of this ethos is necessary to change such unfortunate social conditions. That such social criticism should arise at this time in Japanese society, and from such a source, is a matter of great significance not only to those interested in Buddhism and its development in East Asia and its potential meaning for the West, but also for those interested in the dynamics of religious ideas and their influence on society in general, both in the past and present.

In conclusion, it can be said that the favorable yet stereotyped description of Japanese Buddhism (even Japanese religion in

general) has it emphasizing harmony with nature and a “harmonious” society, absolute immanence, an uncritical acceptance of phenomena as they are, the interdependence or identity of kami and buddhas, love of peace, an affirming and positive attitude toward life in this world, and so on. And on the negative side it is said to be lacking impetus for social-ethical concerns; having a weak idea of justice and social injustice, and so allowing people to become easy prey to political propaganda and social pressures to conform; encouraging an irresponsible “hands-off” disposition that contributes to pollution, reckless use of natural resources, littering, and destruction of public property, and disregard for the interest of anyone outside of one’s own “group”; and providing no basis for making ethical judgements between right and wrong, good and bad, correct and incorrect. These may be no less an oversimplification of the Japanese religious ethos than attempts to characterize the world-wide environmental destruction of the last century as a result of the Biblical injunction in Genesis to “subdue the earth.” But it is just this ethos that Matsumoto and Hakamaya are challenging. What is the true understanding of the Buddha Dharma? What are the social implication of various interpretations of the Buddha Dharma? What is the role of Buddhism in Japanese society today? How should developments in Buddhist doctrinal history be understood? What were the social, political, and Japan of the uncritical acceptance of the idea of an inherent and universal buddha-nature? Can contemporary Japanese society be critiqued from a Buddhist perspective, and if so, how? These are the questions that need to be addressed, and are being addressed, by rethinking the meaning and significance of *hongaku shisō*.

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it is destined to be somewhat outdated by the time it appears in print. The latest developments (as of fall 1992) show that there is a growing scholarly debate brewing over the significance of Dōgen’s 12-*kan* version of the *Shōbōgenzō*. Dōgen scholars in the West are invited to fill in and expand on my brief outline of this specific subject. The debate has also moved some major Japanese scholars to revise and/or update their work. Worthy of attention is a major publication called *Buddha kara Dōgen e* (From Buddha to Dōgen; Nara Yasuaki, ed., Tokyo: Tōkyō Shoseki, 1992), which grew out of a series of twelve colloquia held recently at Komazawa University.

<sup>1</sup> For details see Groner, *Saichō*, pp. 91-106.

<sup>2</sup> See the translation by Hakeda (1967); on the controversy over the origin of the *Awakening of Faith*, see recent works (and list of sources) by William Grosnick (e.g. “The Categories of *T’i*, *Hsiang*, and *Yung*: Evidence that Paramārtha Composed the *Awakening of Faith*,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 12/11 (1989): 65-92) and Whalen Lai (e.g. “A Clue to the Authorship of the *Awakening of Faith*: Śikṣānanda’s Redaction of the Word ‘*Nien*’,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 3/1: 34-53; “The *Chan-ch’a ching*: Religion and Magic in Medieval China,” in Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 1990, pp. 175-206).

<sup>3</sup> For details on the Chinese apocrypha and the *Jeng wang ching* see Swanson 1989, pp. 41-50, and Buswell, *Chinese Buddhist Apocrypha*, 1990.

<sup>4</sup> For details on this sūtra see Buswell, *The Formation of Chinese Ideology*, 1989.

<sup>5</sup> See Hakeda, p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> For details see the authoritative essay on the subject by Tamura Yoshirō, 1973, pp. 477-548, and other works by Tamura.

<sup>7</sup> *Ta-ch’eng chi’i-hsin lun i-chi*, T # 1846.

<sup>8</sup> For details see my introduction to the special issue on Tendai Buddhism in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies* 14/2-3, 1987; see also in the same issue the articles on “The Characteristics of Japanese Tendai” by Hazama Jikō and “Inherent Enlightenment and Saichō’s Acceptance of the Bodhisattva Precepts” by Shirato Waka.

<sup>9</sup> For details see Tamura 1973.

<sup>10</sup> It is often assumed that these phrases are quotes from a Mahāyāna text, but in fact they are not [at least as far as I was able to determine—if someone can find these phrases in a classical Buddhist text, I’d like to know about it]. See Miyamoto Shōson, “‘Sōmoku kokudo shikkai jōbutsu’ no busshōronteki igi to sono sakusha,” *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* 19/2, 1961, pp. 672-701. There are similar phrases, such as *issai shujō shitsu’u busshō* [all sentient beings have the Buddha-nature] in the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra*, but such Mahāyāna texts do not go so far as to admit the implications of these two phrases that even non-sentient things have Buddha-nature. In fact, at least one passage in the *Mahāparinirvāna-sūtra* says exactly the opposite: “That which is without Buddha Nature is the ground, the trees, gravel, and rocks. That which is other than these nonsentient things is all called Buddha Nature” [T 12.581a22-23 & 828b26-27]. See Jamie Hubbard, “Absolute Delusion, Perfect Buddhahood—The Universal Buddha of the San-chieh-chiao,” in Griffiths and Keenan, ed., *Buddha Nature*, 1990.

<sup>11</sup> Shōshin is known for his voluminous commentaries on the major works of T’ien-t’ai Chih-i, the creative genius and founder of the T’ien-t’ai tradition; it is said that he was so involved in his studies that he was not aware of the contemporary struggle between the Taira and Minamoto families, equivalent to a German scholar in the 1940’s being unaware of World War II.

<sup>12</sup> See Tamura 1984 and 1990, p. 393 ff.; Yamauchi (1985), pp. 718 ff.

<sup>13</sup> For a translation of this exposition in the *Mahāvagga* see Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 83-87.

<sup>14</sup> Matsumoto takes pains to point out that he is not using the term "native" in a derogatory sense.

<sup>15</sup> I will return to the theme of *wa* later.

<sup>16</sup> From a copy of the paper delivered by Matsumoto at the conference on the Lotus Sūtra and Japanese Culture at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, August 1990.

<sup>17</sup> Since this paper was prepared Hakamaya has published another book, specifically on this topic. See Hakamaya 1992.

<sup>18</sup> See Minoru Kiyota, ed., 1987.

<sup>19</sup> And Hakamaya would say that they are both the same *dhātu-vāda*, and neither are Buddhism.

<sup>20</sup> Matsumoto (p. 147) points out that Takasaki gave a paper entitled *Iwayuru Dhātuvāda ni tsuite* [On so-called *dhātuvāda*] at the Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Gakkai in 1988, but this paper did not appear in the *Indogaku Bukkyōgaku Kenkyū* which published the proceedings of this conference, and I have not been able to get a copy of his remarks.

Both books (1989, 1990) were under preparation long before the appearance of Matsumoto and Hakamaya's critique, so Takasaki's response is contained in remarks appended at the end of the books.

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that Hirakawa's essay was written in response to Matsumoto's early article on the *Śrīmālādevī Sūtra*, and does not take into account his later developments on the theme.

<sup>22</sup> See Ian Reader's articles on "Zazenless Zen" (1986) and "Transformations and Changes in the Teachings of the Sōtō Zen Buddhist Sect" (1985).

<sup>23</sup> See my article on "T'ien-t'ai Chih-i's Concept of Threefold Buddha-nature: A Synergy of Reality, Wisdom, and Practice" in Griffiths and Keenan, ed. *Buddha Nature*, 1990.

<sup>24</sup> An important step in this direction is made by Sallie King in her recent book *Buddha Nature* (1991).

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