

Lydia BRÜLL, *Die Japanische Philosophie—Eine Einführung*. 214 pp. Darmstadt, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1989. DM 49.80. ISBN 3-53408489-6.

ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN over ten years since Lydia Brüll's *Die Japanische Philosophie: Eine Einführung* was published, it still merits review as it constitutes a superb introduction to and summary of Japanese philosophy. The book encompasses the multiple strands of the Japanese philosophical tradition: Buddhism, Confucianism, the philosophical formulation of Shintoism qua Kokugaku during the Tokugawa period, as well as the variety of contemporary philosophy in Japan until the late 1940s. Brüll's work adds to German scholarship the first comprehensive overview of Japanese philosophy and its history. In addition, Brüll presents her topic in such a manner that it can function equally well as a history and a reference book of Japanese philosophy for seasoned philosophers, and as a textbook and introduction for beginners. In this review, I would like to discuss her choice and categorization of philosophers, especially her twofold approach to Japanese philosophy that is both conceptual (*problemorientiert*) and historical, and which is expressed in her sensitivity to the questions and issues that motivated individual philosophers, as well as her awareness of the problematic posed by the very term "Japanese philosophy."

Brüll's choice of philosophers is governed by two methodological tools. To justify her selection of thinkers, she distinguishes between philosophical schools, on the one side, and schools whose thought is "without consequence" for philosophy, such as the theologies of the Ritsu-shū, the Jōdo-shū, and the Nichiren-shū, on the other. Although this distinction raises methodological and terminological issues, which I will discuss below, it does enable the author to focus on philosophical issues and systems in the sense of *philosophia* and *testugaku*, the latter being the term Nishi Amane used to translate *philosophia* within the Japanese intellectual tradition. Second, she identifies three basic strands of Japanese philosophy, "Buddhist philosophy," "Confucian philosophy and its counter-movement, the Kokugaku," and "the philosophy between 1868 and 1945," and thus divides the philosophers in three overall categories. Even though Brüll acknowledges the existence of Buddhist philosophy in and after the Tokugawa period and Confucianist thought prior to and after the Tokugawa period, this tripart division seems to equate Buddhist philosophy with the philosophical development in Japan from the Nara to the Kamakura period, and Confucianism and its counter-movement with the philosophy of the Tokugawa period. Japanese philosophy in the Meiji period and thereafter divides, under the influence of European and American thought, into a new set of categories. Thus, her categorization assumes a historical division of philosophies.

Brüll anchors her discussion of Buddhist philosophy on the relationship between the phenomenal world, which is characterized by the subject-object dichotomy, and the absolute, which transcends the existential dualities characteristic of the phenomenal world. She argues that the various theories concerning causality and the ontological status of dharmas, devised by thinkers

of the Kusha-shū (from the Sarvastivāda tradition) and the Jōjitsu-shū (from the Sautrāntika tradition) to explain continuity in the face of the Buddhist doctrine of no-self (Skt. *anātman*; J. *muga*), reveals a “polar opposition between the phenomenal world as the empirical world of relations and causal conditions and the absolute.” The Mahāyāna philosophies, on the contrary, “attempted to overcome the polar opposition of the phenomenal world and the absolute and developed a monistic theory (*Alleinheitslehre*) from various approaches and standpoints” as the true “middle path.” This *Alleinheitslehre* was formulated by the Sanron-shū (from the Mādhyamaka tradition) philosophers as the two truths (J. *nitai*), by the philosophy of the Hossō-shū (from the Yogācāra tradition) as doctrine of the three self-natures (Skt. *trisvabhava*), by the philosophy of Kegon-shū (C. Hua-yen) as the One Vehicle (Skt. *ekayāna*; J. *ichijō*), by the Chinese Tendai (C. T’ien-t’ai) thinker Chih-i as the three truths (J. *santai*), by Kūkai, the founder of Japanese esoteric Buddhism (J. *mikkyō*), as the cosmology of Dainichi Nyorai (Mahāvairocana), and by Zen Buddhists as the paradoxical logic of satori and no-mind (J. *mushin*). Such an approach stresses the epistemological turn of Nāgārjuna’s work, which replaces the seemingly ontological terminologies of *samsāra* and *nirvāna* with the epistemological categories of *rūpa* and *śūnyatā*. The approach also elucidates how the thinkers of Yogācāra, T’ien-t’ai, and Hua-yen Buddhism struggled with the legacy of Nāgārjuna’s doctrine of *śūnyatā* by developing a phenomenology of *viññapti-mātra* in the case of Vasubandhu, a phenomenology of meditation in the case of Chih-i, and a cosmology from the perspective of the enlightened mind in the case of Fa-tsang. By the same token, Kūkai and Dōgen seem to honor Nāgārjuna’s critique of conceptual language by abandoning metaphysics in favor of mandala practice and zazen respectively. While I believe that the term *Alleinheitslehre* constitutes a rather awkward if not misleading description of Buddhist non-dualism, Brüll does correctly identify the central theme of Japanese Buddhist philosophy and its various interpretations. Thus, Brüll implicitly constructs a history of Japanese non-dualistic philosophy stretching from early Buddhism via Nāgārjuna’s dialectic, Chih-i’s three truths, to Dōgen’s fourfold modification of Buddha-nature (J. *busshō*) and, ultimately, Nishida’s dialectic of “absolute nothingness” (J. *zettai mu*). The basis of this history is, to some degree, implicitly anticipated by the “rankings of doctrines” (J. *kyōhan*) of Chih-i, Fa-tsang, and Kūkai.

By the same token, Brüll argues that the triangle of universal principle (*Ordnungsprinzip*; J. *ri*) human nature, and education inhabits a central position in the thought of Confucianism and Kokugaku; the differences between the different philosophical schools of Confucianism and Kokugaku lies in the definition of and relationship between these three elements and in their respective definition of orthodoxy. The thinkers of the Shushigaku interpreted the scientific (*wissenschaftlich*) enterprise as an expansion of knowledge (J. *chichi*) and as a discovery of the universal “principle of order” (*Ordnungsprinzip*), which is identical with human nature. While the philosophy of the Yōmeigaku agrees that human nature or, to use their term, “spirit” (*Geist*; J. *shin*), and universal principle are identical (J. *shin soku ri*), it prioritizes the notion of spirit whose self-realization constitutes the process of learning

(*Erkenntnisprozess*) and the knowledge of *ri*. Similarly, Itō Jinsai and Ogyū Sorai, representatives of the Kogaku, and Motoori Norinaga and Hirata Atsutane of the Kokugaku argued that a philological study of a particular canon (i.e., a specific combination of Chinese classics for Kogaku, and the *Man'yōshū* for Kokugaku) reveals the cosmology and psychology given by the “mandate of heaven” (J. *tenmei*) and the “way of the humans” (J. *jindō*) in Kogaku and by the “way of the kami” (Shinto) in the writings of the Kokugaku.

What unites the thinkers introduced in the last section of Brüll’s book is not so much a common project, but rather a common challenge—namely, to negotiate the heritage of the Japanese philosophical tradition and the influx of European and American thought, and to theorize the changing human predicament in the face of technology, science, and later, the tragedy and destruction that occurred in the second world war. In this period, Brüll argues, thinkers such as Nishi Amane, Fukuzawa Yukichi, Inoue Enryō, Inoue Tetsujirō, Watsuji Testurō, Nishida Kitarō, Tanabe Hajime, and Miki Kyoshi struggled, in various ways, to create a synthesis between Western and Japanese thought that could provide a meaningful intellectual framework to define the human predicament in a rapidly changing world. While Nishi and Fukuzawa develop a conception of history and ethics, which is deeply influenced by British utilitarianism and positivism, the idealism of Inoue Enryō, Inoue Tetsujirō, and Ōnishi Hajime returns—for Inoue Enryō to Buddhism, for Inoue Tetsujirō to Confucianism, and for Ōnishi to a philosophy of self-realization (J. *jiga jitsugen*)—and transcends the opposites of “Eastern” and “Western” thought. Ultimately, it is Watsuji’s ethics and the philosophy of the Kyoto school (especially that of Nishida, Tanabe, and Miki) which produces a unique synthesis of classical Japanese and contemporary “Western” philosophy. Here, Brüll identifies Watsuji’s notion of spatiality and intersubjectivity, Nishida’s absolute contradictory self-identity (J. *zettai mujunteki jikodōitsu*) qua absolute nothingness, Tanabe’s “absolute dialectic” (J. *zettai benshōhō*) of “absolute mediation (J. *zettai baikai*), and Miki’s notion of intuition as the central paradigms of the respective philosophical systems. In addition, Brüll demonstrates how these philosophies develop in response to ethical and epistemological questions traditionally raised in the Japanese and/or the so-called Western philosophical traditions (e.g., the intersubjective context of ethical decision, the relationship between the epistemic subject and object, the necessity of a dialectic in the face of two mutually opposed philosophical systems, and the quest for a humanistic philosophy).

Reading this book, the question arises as to what are the criteria that distinguish between philosophy and thought that is “without consequence” for philosophy? As mentioned above, Brüll is sensitive to this issue and carefully defines philosophy as “*das denkende Suchen*”—that is, the quest “for the true answer to that which exists, whose nature and meaning has to be discovered, and the search for the connections of all that exists.” In the center of this quest, which “concerns human existence,” Brüll locates the human spirit (*Geist*). This definition has the twofold advantage that it justifies the exclusion of the thought of Ritsu-shū, the various schools of Pure Land Buddhism, and

Nichiren-shū, by emphasizing that philosophy strives to explore phenomena qua *Seiendes* and, at the same time, is wide enough to include, for example, Buddhism, by not limiting philosophy to the search for the absolute qua *Sein*. However, it does not explore the definitions of philosophy given by Japanese philosophers themselves. Nishida, for example, who paraphrases philosophy as *Weltanschauung* (J. *sekaikan*) and *Lebensanschauung* (J. *jinseikan*) and, alternatively, as the *Wissenschaft der Wissenschaften* (J. *shogaku no gaku*), links philosophy inextricably to art and religion. This intimate connection is even more transparent when he defines philosophy as “the highest unity of consciousness.” While Nishida does distinguish religion, on the one side, and philosophy, on the other, he does not suggest that religion is “without consequence for philosophy.” A second, interesting question concerns the relationship between post-Meiji *tetsugaku* and pre-Meiji thought (J. *shisō*). Do contemporary Japanese philosophers consider Buddhist and Confucian thought as philosophy? While these questions certainly go beyond the scope of an introduction to Japanese philosophy, they are inevitably raised by such a treatise. In fact, the questions that Brüll’s book inevitably raises spark excitement about philosophy in general and Japanese philosophy in particular, and by doing so encourages the reader to pursue the topics and thinkers presented in the book. The author’s passion for philosophy coupled with academic rigor makes Brüll’s book a valuable contribution to the discourses on both Japanese philosophy and comparative philosophy.

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