

## **Dialogue and Transformation: Buddhism in Asian Philosophy**

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Please note that all terms appearing in **bold** are included in the glossary.

#### 1. Overall Themes and Goals

A one-to-three week unit that covers the transformative influence Buddhism exerted over Asian philosophical thinking. Each of the three sections constitutes a full week of material; they may be used separately or in combination.

The materials attempt to bring a comparative perspective to the understanding of Asian philosophy by following the one major philosophical tradition that is truly pan-Asian. The unit does not assume that Buddhism is "one thing," but leaves the instructor free to draw parallels and connections between what were clearly different Buddhisms.

The overall theme of the entire unit is the development of selected philosophical concepts and issues in the Buddhist tradition and their contribution to Asian thought. These issues were selected not only because of their centrality within Buddhism but also their relevance to contemporary philosophical issues that students may encounter in their courses and intellectual development.

Key questions in the unit as a whole include: Is there such a thing as a Buddhist philosophy? How are such key concepts as “no-self” (**anatta**) and “emptiness” (**sunyata**) understood across different versions of Buddhism? What are the general moral or even political implications of such Buddhist concepts and doctrines?

Section I explores the oldest branch of Buddhism in the Indian Hindu context where it developed in critical confrontation with the traditional view of the self (**atman**) and its metaphysical implications. Section II deals primarily with the contribution of Chinese Buddhism to the Confucian-Taoist (Daoist) debate over the exact nature of self-cultivation and represents an opportunity to think through some of the ethical implications of themes introduced in Section I. Finally, Section III examines the somewhat unusual Japanese Buddhist emphasis on the dangers of rationalizing thought as a form of egocentrism and thus the value of “without thinking” in action. This trend is also examined in terms of its role in the nativist concern with “Japaneseness” that emerges in the work of one of Japan’s most famous Shinto thinkers, **MOTOORI Norinaga**. Taken together all three sections attempt to present a rounded picture of some of the more crucial philosophical aspects of the tradition.

For philosophy and religion courses, this unit affords an opportunity to present an important philosophical tradition in its own right as well as to explore metaphysical and ethical themes of general interest. As such the sections could be useful in a wide variety of courses from introductory survey courses to more specialized “topics” courses dealing with issues from philosophical psychology to ethics and politics.

For history and world literature courses, these materials can provide background wherever exposure to Asian thought is involved. Because Buddhism and its philosophical concepts have had such a large influence on Asian cultures, it is difficult to appreciate a work such as the Japanese *Tale of Genji* without some knowledge of basic Buddhist themes and ideas. Equally, it is important to understand the Buddhist contribution to Chinese ideas of self-cultivation in order to make sense out of later Chinese and Japanese conceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of the ruler.

The materials in this unit encourage students to think critically about fundamental moral and metaphysical issues from a variety of perspectives that are still largely absent from the undergraduate study of philosophy. Issues of concern include:

- What is the nature of the self and its place with respect to reality?
- What is the fundamental constitution of reality? Are things substantial in nature or more of a process?
- To what extent does our knowledge of things reflect our point of view as opposed to reality itself?
- What is the source of moral or ethical concern? Is ethics based on something more fundamental than one’s knowledge of rules or a specific set of dispositions?

## 2. Audiences and Uses

This unit is intended to fit into the following undergraduate courses:

- Philosophy
- Eastern philosophy
- Asian and comparative religions
- Introduction to Buddhism
- Asian history and world history courses
- World literature with an emphasis on themes in Asian thinking
- Introduction to Chinese Culture
- Introduction to Japanese Culture
- Introduction to Asian or East Asian Cultures

Audience: The course material is pitched to a general, undergraduate level and presumes no specialized historical or philosophical knowledge.

## 3. Section I: Early Buddhism and Evolving Hindu Thought

### 3A. Theme

Buddhist philosophy arose in opposition to the prevailing development of Vedic (based on the sacred texts of Hinduism — **Vedas**) thought. Taking a systematically different position on the nature of human salvation itself, Buddhism offered a reworking of such basic concepts as the “self” (or **atman**), action (or **karma**), release from the suffering of worldly life (or **samsara**), and the very permanence of ultimate reality itself.

The purpose of this section is to present one of the most pivotal of these “debates” between Buddhists and Hindus, that regarding the nature of the “self” and its connection to what is ultimately real. If there is one thread connecting all versions of Buddhism, it is the thesis of the impermanent and “empty” nature of the self, our misperception of which is the source of all suffering. That is, human suffering is ultimately rooted in a mistaken assumption that the transient self is something permanent and real, that the Hindu **atman** is an expression of the ultimately real — **brahman**.

This alternative raises real questions about how reality is constituted such that it gives the appearance of permanence. Is it that reality is just fleeting moments — **dharmas** — that pass away below the threshold of our noticing and on which we superimpose mere images of permanent things? Or is the fleeting reality of appearance always underlaid by a deeper but ultimately unknowable substratum or the really real? Are the various elements that combine to present the illusion of self themselves equally empty or do they enjoy a more permanent status?

The readings are meant not only to present traditional positions on these issues, together with some of the philosophical reasons for them, but also to show how the Buddhist position clearly influenced the thinking of Hinduism. A further theme is the reciprocal influence that the Hindu tradition had on Buddhism by pushing it increasingly in a metaphysical direction, as seen in the contrast between the early texts and the later works of **Nagarjuna**. It is important to emphasize that in many ways the Hindu tradition includes Buddhism as a dissident voice.

### 3B. Instructor's Introduction

The Hindu aspect of the section starts with selections from the Upanishads that define the self and demonstrate its place in ultimate reality. This section ends with a selection representing the non-dualist absolutism of **Shankara** (8<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century) — the view that there is only one ultimate reality, qualityless or **nirguna Brahman**, and that all distinctions whatsoever are false consciousness. For Buddhism, the early texts — which seek to deconstruct the self or **atman** — are followed by a short selection from the philosopher **Buddhaghosa** (5<sup>th</sup> century) stressing the impermanence of all things and end with the equally non-dualist relativism (some prefer the term “relationalism”) of **Nagarjuna** (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries) — the position that there is only the co-arising of equally empty, insubstantial things.

Many of the readings can be paired as contrasting debate positions. For example, besides the obvious contrasts to be drawn between **Shankara** and **Nagarjuna**, (e.g. their respective concepts of “qualityless” **nirguna Brahman** and absolute emptiness or **sunyata**), one could also contrast the ways in which the chariot metaphor is used in these texts. The *Katha Upanishad* identifies the chariot with the body and the self (**atman**) as the rider, while the Buddhist selection “Questions for King Milinda,” deconstructs the chariot itself and thus the entire concept of a unified self, replacing it with a doctrine of non-self egolessness (**anatman**). One can even imagine a hypothetical dialogue between these two texts, where the Vedic side insists that there is ultimately a self because there is always someone who drives our chariot to which the Buddhist responds that while the parts of the chariot may be apparent, the chariot as a whole isn't at all obvious or apparent. (“I see an axle, wheels, a car, and so on, but I fail to see the ‘chariot’” — i.e. something that isn't simply reducible to its component parts.) Of course, the point is to push this way of thinking further and ask questions regarding the so-called parts as well, in which case the entire Buddhist doctrine of universal emptiness comes into focus.

### 3C. Instructor Readings

All readings are marked according to the following system:

- \*\*\* Most Important
- \*\* Recommended
- \* Optional

- \*\*\* Besides the works below, there are also the very excellent short introductions Daniel BONEVAC and Stephen PHILLIPS give to the same or similar readings in their book, *Understanding Non-Western Philosophy* (Mayfield, 1993).
- \*\* MOHANTY, J.N. “Indian Philosophy: A Historical Overview.” Chap. 1 in *Classical Indian Philosophy*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. Pages 1-7.

Historical overview of Indian philosophical traditions.

### 3D. Student Readings

Ideally, one should use all the required readings listed below. To assign a smaller amount of reading per session, choose readings according to the star (\*) system. If there is only one day to devote to the topic, it might be best to stick entirely to the older material (indicated by \*\*\*).

\*\*\* Most Important

\*\* Recommended

\* Optional

### Hinduism

- \*\*\* “Katha Upanisad.” In *Upanisads*, translated by Patrick OLIVELLE. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Chap. 2, verses 19-25 and chap. 3, verses 3-13. Pages 237–240.

Crucial for explaining the chariot metaphor as applied to the self as well as the **brahman/atman** connection.

- \*\* “Mundaka Upanisad.” In *Upanisads*, translated by Patrick OLIVELLE. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Chap. 2.2. Pages 272-274.

Offers a summary of Hindu metaphysics.

- \*\*\* “Chandogya Upanisad.” In *Upanisads*, translated by Patrick OLIVELLE. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996. Chap. 6.1 and 6.2. Pages 148-149.

Explores the relationship between the ultimate (**brahman**) and the mundane through a series of everyday analogies.

- \*\* *The Bhagavad-Gita: Krishna’s Counsel in Time of War*. Translated by Barbara Stoler MILLER. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986. Chap. 9 and 13. Pages 82-87; 115-119.

More challenging selection but important in explaining the connection between the divine unity of all things as personified in the character of Krishna and its connection with the self.

- \*\* “Brahmasutra commentary of Sankhara (Introduction).” Translation: George THIBANT, *The Vedanta Sutras of Badarayana*. Sacred Books of the East, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1890, 1896.

Or as reprinted in: BONEVAC, Daniel and Stephen PHILLIPS, *Understanding Non-Western Philosophy*. Mayfield, 1993. Pages 198-200.

Or: RADHAKRISHNAN, Sarvepalli and Charles A. MOORE, eds. *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957. Pages 509-510.

The most formidable of the readings but important as a philosophically sophisticated Hindu account of how the illusion of self arises and why it may be given up as empty. In this sense it has important connections with Buddhist thought, particularly the selections from **Nagarjuna** below.

### Buddhism

- \*\*\* “The First Sermon.” In *The Life of Buddha as Legend and History*, by Edward J. THOMAS. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975. Pages 87-88.

Or as reprinted in: RADHAKRISHNAN, Sarvepalli and Charles A. MOORE, eds. *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957. Pages 274-275.

Or: BONEVAC, Daniel and Stephen PHILLIPS. *Understanding Non-Western Philosophy*. Mayfield, 1993. Page 131.

The Buddha’s first statement which lays out the major and common elements in the Buddhist tradition including the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path.

- \*\* “Discussion of Dependent Origination.” In *Buddhism in Translations*, edited and translated by Henry Clarke WARREN. New York: Atheneum, 1976. Pages 202-208.

Details the important Buddhist conception of “dependent co-arising” as understood in the early texts.

- \*\*\* “King Milinda and Nagasena Come to an Understanding ” and “There is no Ego.” In *Buddhism in Translations*, edited and translated by Henry Clarke WARREN. New York: Atheneum, 1976. Pages 128-137.

This passage systematically deconstructs the idea of a unitary self through challenging the idea of an empirically evident and enduring object of any kind, in this case a chariot. May be usefully contrasted with the selection from the *Katha Upanishad* above where the self/chariot analogy is broached from a Hindu point of view.

- \*\* Buddhaghosa. “Duration of Life.” In *Buddhism in Translations*, edited and translated by Henry Clarke WARREN. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

Or: BONEVAC, Daniel and Stephen PHILLIPS, *Understanding Non-Western Philosophy*. Mayfield, 1993. Page 137 (same translation).

Very short selection introducing the important Buddhist concept of impermanence, particularly as applied to the life of a person.

- \*\* Nagarjuna. “Atma pariksa: Examination of the Bifurcated Self.” Chap. 18 in *Nagarjuna: A Translation of his Mulamadhyamakakarika with an Introductory Essay*, by Kenneth K. INADA. Tokyo: Hokuseido Press, 1970. Pages 113-116.

This is the Buddhist companion to the **Shankara** selection above both in the points it makes and the difficulty of the text. One of the more challenging selections but important for understanding the reciprocal influence of Buddhism and Hinduism in their later stages.

### 3E. Discussion Questions

What are the different ways in which the Hindu and Buddhist sources use the chariot metaphor? What points are made regarding the nature of the self and its connection with reality? What implications with regard to reality in general might follow?

If you assign “Nagarjuna” and “Brahmasutra commentary of Sankhara” (both recommended [\*\*] readings): Compare and contrast the non-difference of **samsara** and **nirvana** that **Nagarjuna** regards as the ultimate Buddhist insight with the non-difference expressed in **Shankara’s nirguna brahman**. Are the different “non-differences” themselves different? In other words, are they different absolutisms?

What does it mean to look at the world from the standpoint of **anatman** (no-self) and **sunyata** (emptiness)? How does this approach root out suffering (**duhkha**) or bring release (**nirvana**) from rebirth and worldly existence (**samsara**)?

### 3F. Comparative Opportunity

In regard to the repeated analogies between the self and a chariot, both in the Hindu *Katha Upanishad* and the Buddhist King Milinda selection, one might refer to Plato’s use of the same analogy in the *Phaedrus* (246A-247C) to outline a rather different view of the self or soul. Interestingly, in Plato’s use of the chariot and its driver as metaphor for the soul, it is the horses and the manner in which the driver controls them that is significant for understanding our inner nature, not the chariot itself as in the Buddhist case.

### 3G. Further Reading

#### General background – Hinduism

- MOHANTY, J.N. *Classical Indian Philosophy*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000. Pages 117-122.

Covers ethical issues in the *Bhagavad Gita* and the first chapter is a historical overview of Indian philosophical traditions.

- PHILLIPS, Stephen. *Classical Indian Metaphysics: Refutations of Realism and the Emergence of "New Logic."* Chicago: Open Court, 1995.

Chapters 1 and 2 cover what Phillips regards as the idealist-mystic tradition hailing from the **Upanishads** to Yoga and the realist tradition, especially as represented by the Nyaya-Vaishesika. Chapter 1 is probably more important.

## Buddhism

For a general discussion of Buddhism, and especially its ethical precepts, see:

- HARVEY, Peter. "The Shared Foundations of Buddhist Ethics." Chap. 1 in *An Introduction to Buddhist Ethics: Foundations, Values and Issues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000. Pages 8-59.
- INADA, Kenneth K. "Introductory Essay." In *Nagarjuna: A Translation of his Mulamadhyamakakarika with an Introductory Essay*. Tokyo: The Hokuseido Press, 1970. Pages 3-34.
- STRENG, Frederick J. *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967.
- KALUPAHANA, David J. *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*. Honolulu: The University Press of Hawaii Press, 1976.

A fine book-length introduction to the entire tradition, especially in India. Chapters 1-5 (pages 3-55) give a good, condensed account of basic early Buddhism.

- KASULIS, Thomas P. *Zen Action / Zen Person*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981.

Still has one of the finest brief discussions of **Nagarjuna** and Middle-Way Madhyamika Buddhism. See especially chapter 2.

- KOLLER, John M. *Asian Philosophies*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2002.

## 4. Section II: Buddhist and Confucian Views of Self-Cultivation (Buddhism and China)

### 4A. Theme

The theme in this section is the influence of Buddhism in China, principally through its impact on Confucian social ethics. Buddhism contributes a unique understanding of the individual actor, not merely as a socially determined role player, but as a ground of spontaneous knowing and acting that arguably approximates Confucius's (551-479 B.C.) own insight that a



cultivated humanity (**jen** or ren) rather than a rulebook is the most reliable guide to ethically appropriate action.

The readings move from classic Confucian text, a selection from the *Analects* that lays out the complex themes regarding self-cultivation and performance of ritualized action, through both the **Taoist** (Daoist) and later Buddhist emphasis on self-cultivation as a kind of antinomian spontaneity that builds on the notion of egolessness (**anatta**) as our true nature. Finally, many centuries later **WANG Yang-ming's** (1472-1529) blend of these ideas in his **Neo-Confucian** understanding of the cultivated man as similarly spontaneous offers a second view of the absorption of Buddhist ideas into Asian intellectual culture.

#### 4B. Instructor's Introduction

Buddhism came to China from Tibet in the early centuries of the Common Era. It encountered an intellectual culture with a lively philosophical debate regarding human nature and socio-political ethics. The principal "schools" of Chinese thought of this time included the Confucians, Taoists and others. Each expressed a somewhat different point of view concerning the fundamental goodness of human nature and therefore the proper prescription for maintaining order and good governance in the empire.

Customarily, it was thought that once one understood human character and its fundamental nature, whether good or bad, one then knew how to cultivate it to produce a harmonious society. Confucians and Taoists represented polar opposites in this debate, with the early Confucians arguing that whatever human nature was, it was susceptible to improvement by following the rites (**li**) and rituals of tradition to the point of becoming a cultivated person (**chün-tzu** or junzi) capable of recognizing the needs of others and creating harmonious order in society.

The Taoists argued that such cultivation was counterproductive in making one rigid and formulaic and that the empire would flourish when actions were more spontaneous, natural, and closer to the **Tao** (Dao, or "Way") itself. Bending or breaking rules and encouraging spontaneity were therefore superior to cultivation and slavish adherence to ritual for the Taoists

Metaphysically, the contrast was between the Confucian emphasis on the concrete as the direct experience of the overall Way or **Tao** (Dao) and the Taoist (Daoist) emphasis on the hidden and mysterious. This is particularly evident in the "butterfly selection" from the *Chuang Tzu* (*Zhuangzi*) where the "truth" of a human wakeful conception of reality is strongly challenged. Thus, for Confucians generally, the obvious and manifest, especially in the form of rules and rituals represented the Way. For Taoists (Daoists), the empty, such as in the empty space of a bell or a wheel hub, and the spontaneous ("Those who grasp, lose." *Tao Te Ching* (*Dao De Jing*) 29) represented the Way. The alternatives were social form or social formlessness.

The Confucian and Taoist (Daoist) positions suggest a possible middle way that Buddhism in part supplied. From the Buddhist standpoint, the self is empty and therefore socially conditioned. This equation of formlessness with form at the deepest level is evident in the Hua-yen (Huayan) selection from the "Treatise of the Golden Lion" where the interdependence of all phenomena attests to their empty nature and vice versa. But Chinese Buddhism, particularly the **Ch'an** (Chan) (Zen, in Japanese) form, went beyond the mere equivalence of emptiness and interdependent forms and offered a glimpse of the formless self within as a kind of Tao-like presence beyond the grasp of human reason. To reach such a realization therefore required a kind of cultivation but very different from the Confucian sort

involving obedience and respect. Rather **Ch'an** (Chan) offered a series of radical challenges to rationality itself, driving one's experience beyond the bounds of language and meaning towards an experience of immediate formlessness. This is particularly evident in the selections from the "Conversations of I-Hsüan," (Yi Xuan) where rationally conceived attempts on the part of his students to answer his challenging questions are met with physical blows and verbal abuse. The point is to respond without answering, a kind of no-answer answer which cannot be anticipated and must be delivered entirely spontaneously

Widely attacked as immoral by Confucians, Buddhism would seem to fit more closely with **Taoism** (Daoism), particularly the selection from the *Chuang-Tzu* (*Zhuangzi*). However, over time Confucian thinkers found some of Buddhist metaphysics and even ethics consistent with their own ideas and began to incorporate Buddhist themes. As an example of this, the selection of texts ends with the **Neo-Confucian** thinker **WANG Yang-ming** who is widely regarded as having integrated Buddhist conceptions of formlessness and individual spontaneity with a Confucian emphasis on self-cultivation. For Wang, "truth has no form" and is an "intuitive knowledge" native to the mind that is only obscured in those who act improperly.

#### 4C. Instructor Readings

All readings are marked according to the following system:

- \*\*\* Most Important
- \*\* Recommended
- \* Optional

- \*\*\* KASULIS, Thomas P. *Zen Action / Zen Person*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981. Pages 29-52.

Chapters 3 and 4, which cover both Taoism and its impact on Chinese **Ch'an** (Chan) and Japanese Zen.

#### 4D. Student Readings

All readings are marked according to the following system:

- \*\*\* Most Important
- \*\* Recommended
- \* Optional

#### Confucianism

- \*\*\* Analects of Confucius

The most convenient collection to use in terms of brevity and availability is the revised version of James LEGGE's translation available in BONEVAC, Daniel and Stephen PHILLIPS. *Understanding Non-Western Philosophy*. Mayfield, 1993. pp. 242-48.

James LEGGE's translation can also be found online at <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext02/cnfcs10.txt>. In particular, see the following selections (same as those featured in Bonevac and Phillips above):

- Book 1, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6-8, 11-12, 14-16;
- Book 2, Chapters 1-5, 10, 12-17, 19-20, 24;
- Book 4, Chapters 2-7, 10-12, 14-19, 22-25;
- Book 5, Chapters 10-12;
- Book 6, Chapters 18, 20, 23-25, 27-28;
- Book 7, Chapters 27, 36-37;
- Book 8, Chapters 2, 8, 13;
- Book 9, Chapter 4;
- Book 11, Chapter 11;
- Book 12, Chapters 1-2, 9, 17, 22;
- Book 13, Chapters 3, 6, 9, 11, 13, 16-19;
- Book 14, Chapters 25, 30, 36;
- Book 15, Chapters 2, 17-20, 23, 28, 38-40;
- Book 16, Chapter 10;
- Book 17, Chapters 2, 6, 8;
- Book 20, Chapter 3.

For a brief introduction to the *Analects* see: CHAN, Wing-Tsit. *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit CHAN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. Pages 14-18.

For a more recent source see: DEBARY, William Theodore and Irene BLOOM. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, compiled by Wm. Theodore DEBARY and Irene BLOOM with the collaboration of Wing-Tsit CHAN et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. Pages 44-64.

This work is the *locus classicus* of Confucius's words and the touchstone of Confucian philosophy. In it the emphasis on self-cultivation in terms of following the rites and instilling benevolence or humanity (**jen** or ren) emerges clearly.

- \*\* WANG Yang-ming, *Record of Discourses* (selected)  
Use: "Inquiry on the Great Learning." In *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit CHAN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. Pages 659-667.

Or: DEBARY, William Theodore and Irene BLOOM. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, compiled by Wm. Theodore DEBARY and Irene BLOOM with the collaboration of Wing-Tsit CHAN et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. Pages 842-853.

Or the selections provided in: BONEVAC, Daniel and Stephen PHILLIPS. *Understanding Non-Western Philosophy*. Mayfield, 1993. Pages 312-315.

**WANG Yang-ming**, the famous **Neo-Confucian** philosopher of Ming-period China (1368-1644), is well-known for exhibiting the affinities between **Confucianism** and a number of important Buddhist ideas including the interdependence of all phenomena, the mind-dependence of all distinctions, and the need to overcome a delusional attachment to self in order to achieve the Confucian ideal of sage-like cultivation.

## Taoism (Daoism)

- \*\*\* Lao-Tzu. *Tao Te Ching*. Translated by Stephen ADDISS and Stanley LOMBARDO. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1993. Pages 1-3, 5, 11, 15-16, 19, 21, 38, 51, 57, 81.

Or: DEBARY, William Theodore and Irene BLOOM. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, compiled by Wm. Theodore DEBARY and Irene BLOOM with the collaboration of Wing-Tsit CHAN et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. Pages 79-94.

Most accessible statement of the **Taoist** (Daoist) outlook and its connection to conduct with obvious affinities to Buddhist conceptions of emptiness (**sunyata**) and the doctrine of no-self (**anatman**).

- \*\* Chuang Tzu. "The Identity of Contraries." Chap. 2 in *Chuang Tzu: Taoist Philosopher and Chinese Mystic*, translated by Herbert A. GILES. London: Ruskin House, 1926. Pages 34-47.

Reprinted in: BONEVAC, Daniel and Stephen PHILLIPS. *Understanding Non-Western Philosophy*. Mayfield, 1993. Pages 273-277.

Or in: *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit CHAN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. Pages 179-181, 184, 186-190.

Or: DEBARY, William Theodore and Irene BLOOM. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, compiled by Wm. Theodore DEBARY and Irene BLOOM with the collaboration of Wing-Tsit CHAN et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999, Pages 96-111.

Chuang **Tzu**'s (Zhuangzi's) work, though not necessarily representative of all **Taoism** (Daoism), decisively raises the issue of rationality and self-identity in ways that prefigure much of the **Ch'an** (Chan) (Zen, in Japanese) Buddhist material.

## Buddhism

- \*\* "Treatise on the Golden Lion." In *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit CHAN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. Pages 409-414.

An important expression of the Hua-Yen (Huayan) school of Buddhism and one that is both uniquely Chinese and importantly influential, especially in regard to **Neo-Confucianism**.

- \*\* "The Platform Sutra." In *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit CHAN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. Pages 430-440.

Or: DEBARY, William Theodore and Irene BLOOM. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, compiled by Wm. Theodore DEBARY and Irene BLOOM with the collaboration of Wing-Tsit CHAN et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. Pages 494-504.

Important expression of the **Ch'an** (Chan/Zen) school or "Sudden Enlightenment" school, many passages in the selection echo **Taoist** themes in **Lao Tzu** (Laozi) and **Chuang Tzu** (Zhuangzi).

- \*\*\* "The Recorded Conversations of Zen Master I-Hsüan." In *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, translated and compiled by Wing-Tsit CHAN. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963. Pages 444-449.

See also: Yixuan. "Seeing into One's Own Nature." In DEBARY, William Theodore and Irene BLOOM. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, compiled by Wm. Theodore DEBARY and Irene BLOOM with the collaboration of Wing-Tsit CHAN et al. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999. Pages 504-508.

Famous and influential example of the **Ch'an** (Chan/Zen) method of teaching and philosophical perspective, in which the connection between rationality and enlightenment becomes as much an issue as it is for **Chuang Tzu** (Zhuangzi).

#### 4E. Discussion Questions

What does Buddhist enlightenment offer to the **Confucian/Taoist** (Daoist) understanding of individual cultivation? Is spontaneity central in one way or another to all of these views? Is there a connection between emptiness and individual spontaneity? If Confucius followed his "heart's desire" would **I-Hsüan** (Yixuan) approve?

Compare and contrast a "spontaneity"-based ethics with a "tradition"-based ethics.

#### 4F. Comparative Opportunities

The disagreements between **Confucianism**, **Taoism**, and Buddhism over self-cultivation suggest comparison with Plato and Aristotle's differences over the nature and our knowledge of the good, and consequently how we cultivate the virtues or develop wisdom. Other comparisons may be drawn between recurring images of the mind as a mirror or as part of a broad net of reflecting mirrored jewels in Hua-Yen (Huayan) Buddhism and contrasting ideas and images in Western philosophy such as Leibnitz's notion of a universal, inter-reflecting system of self-contained monads.

#### 4G. Further Reading

##### Confucianism/

- GRAHAM, A.C. *Disputers of the Tao: Philosophical Argument in Ancient China*. LaSalle, I.L.: Open Court, 1989.

See especially the Introduction for general background and Chapter 1 on Confucius, pages 1-33.

- *A Confucian Life in America: Tu Wei-ming*. [Video] Produced and directed by Gail Pellett. (From the series *A World of Ideas with Bill Moyers*.) Princeton, NJ: Films for the Humanities and Sciences. 1990.  
Running Time: 30 minutes  
Format: VHS and DVD  
Available from many university libraries or from Films for the Humanities and Social Sciences. [http://www.films.com/Films\\_Home/Item.cfm?s=1&bin=5005](http://www.films.com/Films_Home/Item.cfm?s=1&bin=5005):

Bill Moyers and Harvard University Professor Tu Wei-ming discuss what Confucian philosophy can offer contemporary society.

##### Reciprocal influence and shared themes between these views:

- TU, Wei-Ming. “The ‘Moral Universal’ from the Perspectives of East Asian Thought.” Chap. 1 in *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985. Pages 19-33.

#### 5. Section III: Buddhism in Japan: Esotericism, Pure Land, and the Development of Shinto

##### 5A. Theme

This section focuses on the development of two uniquely Japanese Buddhist forms — **Kukai’s** (774-835) **Shingon Buddhism** with its conception of this world as the body of Buddha and **Shinran’s** (1173-1262) **Shin** or Pure Land Buddhism and its notion of complete self-surrender to **Amida Buddha**. The conceptual influence of these forms is traced through the emergence of the **Shinto** Nativism of the influential 18th-century thinker **MOTOORI Norinaga** and his arguments in favor of a specifically Japanese way of thinking and being.

##### 5B. Instructor’s Introduction

Though Japanese Buddhism is often associated with Zen, this unit focuses on two less well-known forms of Buddhist thinking that were uniquely influential, largely through two ideas. The first is associated with the famous 8th-9th century Buddhist master **Kukai** and his distinctive idea of this universe as literally the one Buddha body. Each and every phenomenon becomes sacred insofar as it becomes directly expressive of Buddha-nature, thus endowing the everyday

world with elevated religious significance. The second idea emerges from Pure Land Buddhism and is found in the thinking of another extremely influential Japanese thinker, **Shinran**. This is the idea that Buddhist enlightenment is not a rational or cognitive process but a self-surrender, a giving up of one's very rationality (what **Shinran** calls "rational calculation") as inauthentic and selfish in favor of a "sincere expression of faith" (**shinjin**) in **Amida Buddha** (through the **nembutsu**).

These twin ideas, the rejection of all rationalizing thought and the sacredness of present, physical reality, are pursued through the thinking of the **Shinto** revival, also known as Shinto Nativism or National Learning (**Kokugaku**) as exemplified in the thinking of **MOTOORI Norinaga**. Ironically, **Motoori** deploys these same sorts of considerations against what he sees as the foreign (Chinese) imports of Confucianism as well as against Buddhism itself. For **Motoori**, the rejection of rationalism does not lead to an embrace of the Buddha and the salvation of the Pure Land but an embrace of what is uniquely Japanese as expressed in the ancient chronicles (the **Kojiki** and **Nihon shoki**). Thus, **Motoori** sets the intellectual stage for the concern with "Japaneseness" and the creation of **National Learning**, a nativist application of **Kukai's** concern with the here and now.

Finally, the section presents selections from the works of two important 20<sup>th</sup> century philosophers who wrote on social issues — **WATSUJI Tetsuro** (1889-1960) and **TANABE Hajime** (1885-1962). Watsuji's *Ethics in Japan* incorporated a number of Buddhist themes into a conception of "betweenness" as the ethical thread gluing societies together. TANABE, referring specifically to **Shinran** and his conceptions of sincerity, argued that in the aftermath of World War II Japan needed to embark on a process of deep reflection and repentance, what he called "**metanoia**."

Instructors may want to compare the different directions Japanese Buddhist themes of antirationalism and sacred space have taken through the juxtaposition of these later thinkers with the nativism of **Motoori**. Philosophically, one might also wish to pursue issues of moral and political ambiguity in Buddhist thinking generally.

### 5C. Instructor Readings

All readings are marked according to the following system:

\*\*\* Most Important

\*\* Recommended

\* Optional

- \*\*\* KASULIS, Thomas P. "Intimacy: A General Orientation in Japanese Religious Values." *Philosophy East and West* 40, no. 4 (1990): 433-449.

A persuasive look at the general social and ethical orientation of Japanese thought and thus the basis for Watsuji's conception of "betweenness."

- \* CARTER, Robert E. “Introduction to Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku.” In *Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. Pages 1-6.

A clear and interesting survey of Watsuji and his place in Japanese philosophy.

#### 5D. Student Readings

All readings are marked according to the following system:

- \*\*\* Most Important
- \*\* Recommended
- \* Optional

#### Buddhism in Japan

- \*\*\* Kukai. “Attaining Enlightenment in this Very Existence.” In *Kukai: Major Works*, translated by Yoshito S. HAKEDA. New York: Columbia University Press, 1972. Pages 225-234.

Major early Japanese Buddhist philosopher who emphasized the body (as opposed to the Hua-yen emphasis on mind, for example) as the vehicle of enlightenment.

- \*\*\* Shinran. In Yoshifumi UEDA and Dennis HIROTA, *Shinran: An Introduction to His Thought*. Kyoto: Hongwanji International Center, 1989. Pages 185-202, 219-232, 237-238, 255-256.

Buddhist philosopher responsible for **Shin** and Pure Land. He is especially important to this unit in terms of his rejection of “rational calculation” as the last refuge of the ego-self and the need for complete self-surrender to **Amida Buddha**.

#### Shinto Nativism / National Learning (Kokugaku)

- \*\*\* MOTOORI, Norinaga. “Wonder.” In *Sources of Japanese Tradition*, vol. 2, compiled by Ryusaku TSUNODA, Wm. Theodore DE BARY, and Donald KEENE. New York: Columbia University Press, 1958. Pages 19-22.

Eighteenth century thinker in many ways responsible for the **Shinto** revival in Japanese thinking. The selection captures his critique of rationality as a path to deep truth about identity.



- \*\* NISHIMURA, Sey. “The Way of the Gods: Motoori Norinaga's Naobi no Mitama,” *Monumenta Nipponica* 46, no. 1 (1991): 21-41. Available on JSTOR.

This selection captures Motoori’s elevation of tradition as a source of authoritative truth, precisely because it discounts rational standards of evidence.

### Social Ethics

- \*\*\* INADA, Kenneth K. “Japan.” In *Encyclopedia of Ethics*, vol. 2, ed. 2. New York: Routledge, 2001. Pages 901-905.

A brief but incisive survey of a number of Japanese thinkers in terms of their views on ethics.

- \*\*\* WATSUJI, Tetsuro. “The Significance of Ethics as the Study of *Ningen*.” Chap. 1 in *Watsuji Tetsuro’s Rinrigaku: Ethics in Japan*, translated by Yamamoto Seisaku and Robert E. Carter. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996. Pages 9-27.

A selection from the modern philosopher **Watsuji’s** major work, where he develops a Buddhist-like concept of social interdependence as the source of ethical values.

- \* TANABE, Hajime. “Preface.” In *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, translated by Takeuchi Yoshinori. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986. Pages xlix-lxii.

An important twentieth-century figure, here **Tanabe** argues for the need for a kind of deep meditative and critical perspective in order to properly reflect on the Japanese involvement in World War II. He directly invokes **Shinran’s** ideas of self-surrender

### 5E. Discussion Questions

To what extent can **Motoori’s** nativist justification of his **Shinto** embrace of Japan’s past (on the basis of a Buddhist-like distrust of rational self-calculation) be seen as a problem for Buddhism? Does it open moral or political ambiguities regarding the practical ramifications of a Buddhist perspective? Could a consistent Buddhist similarly embrace the mystical importance of ancient Japanese texts?

What role does physical context in Kukai’s sense play in Japanese Buddhist thinking? For example, how does it influence **Watsuji’s** conception of ethics? What are the implications of Kukai’s assertion that the physical universe is literally the one Buddha body?

### 5F. Comparative Opportunities

In “Joseph De Maistre and the Origins of Fascism,” Isaiah BERLIN argued that De Maistre’s defense of “the importance of mystery and darkness—and above all of unreason” formed the very basis for modern fascism. The point invites interesting comparisons with

material from **Shinran** and **MOTOORI Norinaga** especially where a similarly hostile position to the value of “rational calculation” is articulated. Does a Buddhist embrace of “unreason” form an intellectual backdrop to the temptation of East Asian forms of fascism?

Another comparative theme, given **Shinran’s** rejection of “rational calculation,” might be Kierkegaard’s concept of authentic religious experience and its relation to thought and selfhood (see especially *Fear and Trembling*.)

## 5G. Further Reading

### Japanese Confucianism

- KAJI, Nobuyuki. “Confucianism, the Forgotten Religion,” *Japan Quarterly* 38, no. 1 (1991): 57-62. Available on ProQuest Research Library.
- SORAI, Ogyu. *Distinguishing the Way: Bendo*. Translated by Olof G. LIDIN. Tokyo: Sophia University Press, 1970.

### Japanese Zen

- KASULIS, Thomas P. *Zen Action / Zen Person*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1981. Especially chapters on Dogen, pp. 65-86, 87-103.
- ABE, Masao. “Zen Is not a Philosophy, but...” Chap. 1 in *Zen and Western Thought*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985. Pages 3-24.

## 6. Glossary

- **Advaita Vedanta:** (Indian, Hinduism) The school of Hindu thought associated with the 8th-century philosopher **Shankara**, or Sankaracarya (c. 700-750). The term advaita means “non-dualism” or “monism,” and is used by Sankara to indicate his belief that the phenomenal world is unreal (an illusion); only **Brahman** is real. Therefore, the self is nothing but Brahman. This school of thought owes a clear debt to Buddhist ideas on the illusory nature of reality.
- **Amida Buddha:** (Japanese, Buddhism; “Amitabha” in Sanskrit) extremely important Buddha, especially for Mahayana Buddhism.
- **Analects:** A central text of the Confucian tradition that includes the sayings and teachings of Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.E.).
- **Anatman:** (Sanskrit, Buddhism; “Anatta” in Pali) No-self or egolessness. Contrasts with the Hindu concept of atman.
- **Anatta:** (Pali, Buddhism) See **Anatman**.

- **Atman:** (Sanskrit, Hinduism and Buddhism) Various translations as self, soul, spirit, or ego depending on the context. In the **Upanishads** it is the permanent spiritual essence of the individual. For early Buddhists, it was simply the individual self or ego (which they denied—see **anatman**). For later **Advaita Vedanta**, the atman was identical with the spiritual essence of the world itself (atman is brahman—see **brahman**).
- **Brahman:** (Sanskrit, Hinduism) The ultimately real. Sometimes translated as the Absolute or Infinite Spirit, it is the permanent essence of all apparent being. In the **Upanishads** it serves as the universal principle or essence unifying all things. At a deep level it is also identical with the spiritual essence of the individual. Later **Advaita Vedanta** distinguishes saguna brahman from nirguna brahman. The former is brahman as qualified by various attributes (gunas) while the latter is brahman in its real or absolute nature.
- **Buddhaghosa:** 5<sup>th</sup> century Indian Buddhist scholar.
- **Ch’an (Chan):** (Chinese, Buddhism; “Zen” in Japanese) This Chinese and Japanese form of Buddhism advocated the practice of meditation above studying scriptures to understand the Ultimate Truth. Ch’an was first brought to China by Bodhidharma around 520 C.E.
- **Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi):** Unlike **Lao Tzu** (Laozi) whose historical personage is unverifiable and likely myth, Chuang Tzu (“Master Chuang”) seems to have been a real person. The historical Chuang Tzu was a minor official during the Warring States period (479-221 B.C.E.). His legacy is a profound Taoist text that bears his name.
- **Chün-tzu (junzi):** (Chinese, Confucianism) The self-cultivated person or the gentleman to whom Confucius’s teachings were addressed.
- **Confucianism:** The philosophical tradition in China and East Asia based on the ethical teachings of Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.E.).
- **Dharmas:** (Sanskrit, Buddhism) Virtuous actions, morality, duty.
- **Duhkha:** (Sanskrit, Buddhism) Buddhist understanding of life as suffering.
- **I-hsüan of Lin-chi (Yixuan of Linji) (d. 867 C.E.):** Ninth-century Chinese, Ch’an Buddhist who founded the Lin-chi (Rinzai in Japanese) school of sudden enlightenment.
- **Jen (Ren):** (Chinese, Confucianism) Confucius’s concept of an ideal humanity, benevolence and perfect virtue.
- **Karma:** (Sanskrit, Buddhism) Human actions. People acquire both good and bad karma according to their actions, and the amount of each determines into which state that person will be reborn.

- **Kojiki:** Compiled in 712 C.E. Japan's oldest annals. This official history discusses Japan's mythical origins and history up to about 500 C.E. The *Kojiki* greatly influenced the work of Motoori Norinaga.
- **Kokugaku:** (Japanese) See **National Learning**.
- **Kukai (774-835):** Major early Japanese Buddhist philosopher who emphasized the body as the vehicle of enlightenment. Founded the **Shingon** school of Buddhism in Japan.
- **Lao Tzu (Laozi):** Lao Tzu literally means "old master". Italicized, it refers to an ancient Taoist text also known as the *Tao Te Ching* or *Daodejing*. Unitalicized, it refers to the author of that text (i.e. *the* "old master"). However, most contemporary scholarship tends to dismiss the notion that the text had a single author.
- **Li:** (Chinese, Confucianism and Taoism) Usually translated as "rites" or "rituals", li compose a kind of ritual decorum, proprietary practices established to guide one's moral development.
- **Metanoia:** A social process of reflection and repentance conceptualized by Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962).
- **Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801):** Japanese scholar of Shintoism, main thinker of Nativism or **National Learning** (*Kokugaku*).
- **Nagarjuna:** Second to 3rd-century Indian Buddhist philosopher.
- **National Learning (Kokugaku) or Nativism:** Intellectual movement in 18th-century Japan that advocated the teaching and learning of ancient Japanese stories and myths as a way towards developing a uniquely Japanese identity.
- **Nembutsu:** (Japanese, Buddhism) The name given to the practice of the repeated recitation of "namu Amida Butsu" ("praise be to Amida Buddha"). Advocated by all Japanese schools of Buddhism, and considered an aid to meditation.
- **Neo-Confucianism:** The revival of Confucian thinking often associated with the rationalist philosophy of Chu Hsi (Zhu Xi) (1130-1200).
- **Nihon shoki or Nihongi:** (Japanese) Ancient chronicles of gods and goddesses, especially important to the **National Learning** movement. Compiled in 720 C.E.
- **Nirguna Brahman:** (Sanskrit, Hinduism) Literally, quality-less brahman (ultimate reality). The form of brahman that the Hindu philosopher **Shankara** believed truly existed. In fact, for Shankara it is literally the only thing that really exists, as all form is illusion (maya).

- **Nirvana:** (Sanskrit, Buddhism) Release from the cycle of rebirth, the end of suffering.
- **Rationalism:** The philosophical view that reason is the basis for knowledge.
- **Samsara:** (Sanskrit, Buddhism) Worldly life or existence.
- **Shankara (or Sankhara) (c. 788-820):** 8th-9th century Indian philosopher. Major figure in the Advaita Vedanta (non-dual Vedanta) tradition of Hinduism.
- **Shin or Pure Land Buddhism:** Associated with thought of **Shinran** (1173-1262). Idea that Buddhist Enlightenment is a complete self-surrender to Amida Buddha, and not a rational or cognitive process. Shin Buddhism believed that all that had to be done to gain entrance into paradise was to invoke **Amida Buddha** through the chanting of the **Nembutsu**.
- **Shingon Buddhism:** Brought to Japan by **Kukai** (774-835), this esoteric school of Buddhism taught that the dharma body of Buddha (dharmakaya) could be expressed through literary and artistic forms. Kukai's teachings resonated with the tastes and dispositions of Japanese at the time, and Shingon Buddhism became extremely popular in Heian Japan (794-1185). Kukai advocated meditation through the use of mantras (chanting), mudras (specific hand gestures), and mandalas (artistic representations of deities and the universe).
- **Shinjin:** (Japanese, Buddhism) Sincere expression of faith. Central value in Shinran's ideal of complete trust in the Amida Buddha.
- **Shinran (1173-1262):** Japanese Buddhist philosopher. Disciples of his teachings founded the **Shin or Pure Land Buddhist** school. Rejected "rational calculation" as the last refuge of the ego-self and advocated the need for complete self-surrender to Amida Buddha.
- **Shinto or Shintoism:** Traditional Japanese religion based on ancient myths and legends associated with various gods and goddesses, later adapted by **MOTOORI Norinaga** (1730-1801) and associated with the philosophy of **National Learning** (Kokugaku).
- **Sunyata:** (Sanskrit, Buddhism) the condition of emptiness, especially as applied to conceptual categories which are said to "dependently co-arise" with each other because they are empty, it is particularly associated with the Buddhist philosopher **Nagarjuna**.
- **Tanabe Hajime (1885-1962):** Major Japanese philosopher of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, associated with the Kyoto School of Philosophy based at Kyoto University and inspired by Kitaro Nishida's Zen-inspired approach to Western philosophy. Tanabe's inspirations included **Shinran** and Hegel.

- **Tao (Dao):** (Chinese, Taoism and Confucianism) A religious/philosophical term common to a number of Chinese thinkers and usually translated as “the Way”, it generally denotes an underlying principle, both indefinite and immutable, of existence.
- **Taoism (Daoism):** Chinese religious and philosophical school associated with the *Lao Tzu* (*Laozi*) (also, *Tao-te Ching* or *Daodejing*) and the writings of **Chuang Tzu** (Zhuangzi) (c. 369-286 B.C.).
- **Upanishads:** Major Hindu text. First attempt to systematize the philosophical content of the **Vedas**.
- **Vedas:** The first, sacred texts of Hinduism, composed two thousand years before the Common Era (B.C.E.).
- **Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529):** Widely influential **Neo-Confucian** Chinese philosopher, well-known for his incorporation of Buddhist philosophical ideas into Confucian thought.
- **Watsuji Tetsuro (1889-1960):** 20th-century Japanese philosopher whose works focus on ethics.
- **Zange:** (Japanese, Buddhism) Deep reflection, conceived of as a form of repentance by **Tanabe Hajime** (1885-1962).

\*\*\*<http://uwacadweb.uwyo.edu/religionet/er/buddhism/BGLOSSRY.HTM> has a comprehensive glossary of Buddhist terms. It is from the University of Wyoming, and is a very useful link for students.