

Phenomenon of Life and Death by Dōgen and Heidegger—In View of “Embodied Cognition” in Buddhist Philosophy and Phenomenology

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Abstract

Contrary to occidental philosophy, which is to grasp and solidify the principles of essential being (*ontos on*), Buddhism seeks to understand the existence of human beings and the significance of suffering in human life. In the East Asian languages human beings are described as “inter-beings” in that they are enveloped by the *topos* of life and death. From breath to breath, our life is bound to the moments of emerging and vanishing, being and non-being in an essential unity. Dōgen’s philosophical thinking integrated this conception with the embodied cognition of both the thinking and the acting self. In the phenomenological point of view, Heidegger, in his early work, emphasizes that being is bound to a fundamental substantiality, which borders on the *Abgrund*, falling into nothingness. With Dōgen, the unity-within-contrast of life and death is exemplified in our breathing because it achieves a unity of body and cognition which can be called “*corpus*”. In perfect contrast, the essential reflection for Heidegger is that of grasping the fundament of being in the world, which represents the actualization of a thinking-being-unity. The goal of this comparison is to fundamentally grasp what is the essentiality of being, life, and recognition (*jikaku* 自覺), bound to embodied cognition in our globalized world.

Keywords: embodied cognition, Dōgen, Heidegger, comparative reflection, philosophy in life

Izveček

V nasprotju z zahodno filozofijo, usmerjeno v razumevanje in strnjevanje principov osnovnega bivanja (*ontos on*), budizem išče razumevanje eksistence človeškega bitja in pomenljivost trpljenja v človekovem življenju. V vzhodnoazijskih jezikih so človeška bitja opisana kot »med-bitja«, s tem da so obdana s *toposom* življenja in smrti. Od diha do diha je naše življenje omejeno s trenutkom pojavljanja in izginjanja, bivanjem in nebivanjem v bistveni enoti. Dōgen je s svojim filozofskim razmišljanjem vključil ta koncept z

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utelešenim znanjem tako razmišljanja kot samodelovanja. Iz vidika fenomenologije Heidegger v svojih zgodnjih delih poudarja, da je bivanje omjeno s fundamentalno bitnostjo, ki meji na *Abgrund*, padanje v neobstoj. Z Dōgenom je unikatnost znotraj kontrasta življenja in smrti ponazorjena v našem dihanju, ker dosega enost telesa in poznavanja, ki ga lahko poimenujemo »*corpus*«. V popolnem kontrastu je za Heideggerja esencialna refleksija doumevanje temelj bivanja v svetu, ki predstavlja oživitev enote razmišljanja in obstoja. Cilj te primerjave je v osnovi doumeti bistvenost obstoja, življenja in spoznanja (*jikaku* 自覚), omejenih z utelešenim spoznanjem v našem globaliziranem svetu

Ključne besede: utelešeno spoznanje, Dōgen, Heidegger, primerjalna refleksija, filozofija v življenju

Introduction: The Historical Position of Dōgen as the Zen Thinker

Dōgen (Dōgen Kigen 道元希玄), born in Kyoto 1200, died in Kyoto, Japan, in 1253, originated from a famous aristocrat family Kuga 久我 with the childhood name “Monju” 文殊, lost his father in the early childhood, and also the mother at the age of 7. He was adopted into the residence of his uncle. Nothing was lacking in his material life in this circumstance, but he tended to melancholy in reflecting the life of phenomenal world in which suffering, depression or despair cannot be eradicated completely. At the age of 12 he left spontaneously the residence of the uncle. Transmitted by one of his relation who was a Buddhist monk, the young “Monju” entered into the monastery Hieizan-Enryaku-ji 比叡山延暦寺 of the Tendai 天台 Buddhism in Kyoto, one of the great Mahayana Buddhist Schools in East Asia. He was ordained to monk at the age of 13 with the *dharma* name “Dōgen” 道元, met in the next year 1214 Monk Eisai (Myōan Eisai 明菴栄西, 1141–1215), one of the greatest Zen Buddhists who widely introduced in Japan the Zen Buddhism from China. Eisai established the original Zen tradition from China in Japan, the Rinzai-School. Influenced by Eisai, Dōgen went to China (in the Era of Song 宋) in 1223 at the age of 23. Visiting and staying at various Chinese Zen monasteries he met the Zen master, Tiendong Rujing/Tendō Nyojō 天童如浄, (1162–1227) one of the most relevant Zen monks in China. In his finishing period of intensive Zen study, Dōgen was requested by his Zen master Nyojō to stay in China. In reconsideration of various circumstances, Dōgen came back to Japan at

the age of 27 (1227), tried to establish a new school from the original Chinese Zen tradition, the Sōtō School 曹洞宗 in Japan. Though constantly getting jealous rivals against the new school, Dōgen's own tradition grew continuously. However, there were always a number of problems against many rivals of other Buddhist schools. The established enormous organization had also connections to several politicians in the government and was involved in institutional political struggles against some groups of Tendai Buddhism, Dōgen decided to go out from the capital Kyoto into a provincial region. In the guidance of Hatano Yoshishige 波多野義重, one of the most trusted supporters of Dōgen, Dōgen's community established a complete new monastery in the province of north-western Japan; today's Great Monastery Eihei-ji 永平寺 in the prefecture Fukui. Dōgen's main work *Shōbō genzō* (Reflections of True *dharma* 正法眼藏; *dharma*, "The world of universal truth" of Buddhism) in 75 volumes and several appendix (selected volumes by Dōgen, some "secret volumes" etc.), was completed from year to year and finished in this monastery. After the death of Dōgen at the age of 53 (1253), his school and his works gradually received from generation to generation intensified acknowledgment in various areas in public and societies.—Today, the Great Monastery Eihei-ji is valid as one of the most relevant centers of Zen Buddhism in Japan, East Asia and in the globalized world.

The Position of Embodied Truth

Dōgen's main work, *Shōbō genzō* (1980; 1993; 2004–2008)² (*Reflections of the True dharma of Buddha*), is composed in the style of typical Zen language, syntax and semantics. Thanks to Dōgen's knowledge of classic Japanese and Chinese literature, as well as his understanding of everyday conversation in China and Japan at that time, the original position of Dōgen's Zen thought has given rise to a unique *philosophy*, embodying truth in life. This characteristic differs widely from the genealogy of Aristotle's *philosophia prima* in the occidental world. For example, Aristotle maintained that *philosophia* is to grasp the *causality* of phenomena and being. Things which are experienced should not remain experiences only, but should be subjected to analysis: "Why does this particular phenomenon appear? From which causality has it been realized?" The things mainly questioned by Aristotle in his *philosophia prima* are not the *experience* of

² For a biography of Dōgen in historic scientific research see Imaeda 1994.

truth *per se*, but analytical thinking which is to clarify the causality of a certain phenomenon and the principle by which the phenomenon is constructed as a logical scheme. (Aristotle 1987) The *theoria* for viewing an absolute truth must be realized through the *logos*, stating general truth in logical language. (Klein 2005, Chs. 8 and 3) Quite the opposite is the principle of Buddhist philosophy, which is positioned always in the topos of a “*phenomenon of experience in life*”. The most important thing is not the process to establish a statement by *logos*, but grasping, acknowledging and demonstrating the universal truth in depending on one’s own life, based on bodily existence. In short, the “cognition” of Buddhist philosophy has a principal preposition which should not be omitted or ignored in that knowledge. And its cognition of every kind is focused in the middle of one’s own life, in relation to real circumstances, a real environment, and also to the “practice” of daily life.³

Not only Zen practice but life, too, comprise a wealth of experiences, to grasp a universal, irrefutable truth, which is practiced and manifested day by day. Cognition, reached through the confrontations of daily life, is bound to the main aspects of the “experience of an irrefutable, undividable truth”. It must be experienced and actualized through one’s own bodily existence. The “complex system of truth” is always constructed in an integration of one’s own life, one’s own action of thinking and acting, so that the bodily self within the real and the intellectual world overlaps with the construction of a dimensional truth in daily life. (Hashi 2014a)

The Tangent of Analytical Philosophy and Buddhist Philosophy

Cognition in pure analytical thought is executed in a dimension in which the subjective self, its feelings, emotions, sense of bodily existence etc. are consciously *omitted*. These factors are, first of all, *filtered* through analytical consciousness, to divide everything into categories which can be evaluated and verified as positive, analytically correct scientific data. Buddhist thinkers acknowledge the relevance of analytical categories, and value the significance of analytical thinking. However, Buddhist philosophy, knowing this kind of analytical filtering very consciously, and independently from this, because the

³ The full context of Dōgen *Shōbō genzō* states this fundamental position. See especially Vols. *Shinjin gakudō* 身心學道 (*The Way of dharma Studies through the Unity of Body and Mind*), *Genjō kōan* 現成公案 (*The Actualizing of Essential Questions in Life*), *Busshō* 佛性 (*Buddha Nature*).

analytical filtering of every problem to divide what is analyzable and what is not, results at last in tightening and limiting the thinking and acting dimensions. In natural science, an analyzable problem arises from observation and analysis of a problematical fact (Pietschmann 2003). In a preparatory operation, the minimal parts are defined, of which a larger entity can be reconstructed. Even if the collected parts can be reconstructed, showing a functional unity in a system of natural science, the solution to any problem is found only in a selected part of the whole phenomenon, out of which new problems may arise unexpectedly. Buddhism focuses just on this point that the analyzed factors are reconstructed in a way as to open a whole dimension of truth which should be applied to life in the real world. Yet, analytical philosophy leaves many parts which cannot be clearly analyzed; the latter is therefore omitted from analytical thinking. According to Pietschmann (forthcoming), one half of the world is neglected, whereas the other half—analyzed under the best conditions—can dominate the whole universe. Moritz Schlick, who occupied a prominent position in the Vienna Circle, stated that the self, soul, psyche etc. which build up the metaphysical problem could be proved only by concrete positive, natural scientific facts, for example, in mutual communication and in the knowledge of persons in accordance (coherence) with the recognition of several data, A, B, C and so on. Under these conditions “acknowledging only the positive, scientifically verifiable facts” is right, but there is something which has been neglected in this discourse of criticizing and omitting “idealism”, “metaphysics”, “religious intuition” etc. This shows us a further aspect which should be cautiously reviewed by self-critical reflection. The unity of this “judging self”, who criticizes and isolates others, is seen in Buddhist philosophy as the most important problem. Here the object of a self-critical view is the “self per se”; at the same time, this “object” is the main “subject” of our thinking and of cautiously recognizing causal relationships. (Schlick 1986, Chs. 21, 22)

The Phenomenon of “Suffering”

A position like that of Schlick is not valid in Buddhist philosophy because the latter envisages the phenomenon of suffering of every kind. The reason is quite evident: Buddhist philosophy works primarily with the questions “What is suffering?”, “How can we overcome our own suffering?” Suffering is not only physical pain, it does not only imply injuries of the body or psychic trauma. It is better to describe it in another way, for example: The term “suffering” in Buddhist

philosophy includes *all phenomena of dynamic change* in every being, phenomena of one's self and its circumstances, the dynamic change of the things between stability and non-stability. All are topics in the life world, in which everyone experiences also the transformation of one's own mind, one's own body and one's own connection to other beings in the environment. The total phenomenon of dynamic change includes one's own life, its bodily and psychic circumstances. They produce the causality of "*duḥkha*", the *suffering* of various kinds, the complete phenomena of the problems of humans and other beings in reality. (Takasaki and Hayashima 1993)

If we define "suffering" by physical pain, the experience of suffering is hard for the sufferer, who will try to come out of this phenomenon of suffering. At the same time, the "suffering from that particular pain" for all other persons is "not real". A physician, due to his medical knowledge, may imagine how intensive this pain is for a given part of the body. But generally the suffering of other persons, other beings, cannot be experienced by someone else in the same way, at the same time, by the same causality, at the same level or in the same psychic situation. Ludwig Wittgenstein problematized this point in his "Philosophical Investigations", that the pain of one subject cannot be clarified at all, even if we have possibilities to describe and define it in analytical philosophy. (Wittgenstein 1958)⁴ Physicians, too, can only form analogous conclusions as to what kind of pain the patient is suffering from. This circumstance that one can experience one's own "suffering" exclusively within one's own self, is the basic principle in Buddhist philosophy where all other problems are focused. The main principle is that our life is bound to end at a "terminal", namely, death. No one can experience the death of someone else. It causes a psychic confrontation and suffering, which in Buddhist philosophy must be treated as the *duḥkha*, the form and contents of the changing phenomenon at any time, any space, under any circumstances and in any situation in real life and in intellectual activity.

With regard to one's suffering, we can see the following general phenomenon: If *physical pain* is correctly diagnosed and treated, the pain will be reduced; it *vanishes* at a given point of time. If this is true, the sufferer cannot be suffering any longer because the causality of suffering (the *dynamis* of the pain, in terms of Aristotle) fades, and the "substantial unity" of the painful part of the body

⁴ A similar problem of the relation of an experience of feeling and knowledge is treated in the article of Thomas Nagel 1974.

(*energeia*, the realizing, in terms of Aristotle) and the relation linked to its causality do not exist any more. The *suffering* has *vanished*: It is hard to substantialize what the suffering is, especially in the midst of experiencing it. Physiologically, the overstimulated nerve in that part of the body transmits the information about a danger threatening in this situation as a series of electron signals from the damaged part to the central nerve system and to the cerebral cortex. This process is very fast, causing a drastic change in the mental and physical conditions. In *psychic injury* and *trauma*, this situation of subjectivity can be intensified: Only the person whose psyche was injured suffers his/her own trauma. If it is treated properly, the phenomenon of the trauma will become obsolete in the memory and *vanish*. Pain and suffering cannot be definitively substantialized; even if this phenomenon is painstakingly defined in medical and physiological terms, the struggle of overcoming pain and suffering will always be part of a person's own experience⁵: A thing or a phenomenon is executed completely and *vanishes* in time and space without any “*substance*”. The “*substantiality*” has been interpreted in occidental philosophy as a remaining entity to actualize every changing phenomenon which is acknowledged as an “eternal truth”. In Buddhist philosophy the remaining entity is *dharma*, the universal truth which is experienced, recognized and actualized in our bodily life. “Dharma” as the “eternal truth” cannot “remain” substantial in reality because the phenomenon including our self and our environment is always transformed from one state to another one. (Hashi 2011a and b) In this sense, Buddhist *philosophy* is not positioned on a level of mysticism; its entity is without enthusiasm, esoteric features or irrationality. Since Buddhist and Zen practice was first introduced in Europe under the slogan of “Zen and the Mysticism of Christianity”, this connotation has been widely disseminated via the mass media. We should, however, bear in mind that Buddhism as a philosophy shows rational thinking in immediate relation to our real life.

Buddhist Philosophy and Phenomenology

Let us view the characteristics of Buddhist philosophy as compared to phenomenology in occidental philosophy. Contrary to analytical philosophy, it is

⁵ Morita Masatake, in his “Morita Therapy”, stated this relation of reducing and eliminatng “suffering” found in neuro-psychic symptoms, with the purpose of an effective support to strengthen the self-healing capacity of a patient. (in Tashiro 2005)

evident that Buddhism and phenomenology present several similar basic ideas of thinking. One of these similarities is that they are based on phenomena. In contrast to the transcendental philosophy of Kant, they question primarily what “*quid facti*” is, but not what “*quid juris*” is. (Kant 1990, 84–85, 116–17)

Cognition in Buddhist philosophy is never separated from the phenomena of real things in the empirical world. This point of view enables us to compare Dōgen and Heidegger. Heidegger postulates that phenomenology is a method of investigation which shows itself openly, and which is obvious in itself. His phenomenology expresses a maxim, pointing “to the things themselves!” (Heidegger 1993, 27, 50)

Instead of a speculative deduction of categories, his thought in *Phenomeno-Logos* (Heidegger 1993, 27; 1962, 49–50) goes on to reflect what is the essential being hidden in the background of the phenomena. Even if Heidegger defines that his thought is a phenomenological analysis of being, this way of thinking grasps the essential being in view of the whole problematical phenomena. If the analysis of an “anxiety” is executed, the anxiety is not only an analyzable category, but is also in focus of the phenomenon of the human being who feels the anxiety. (Heidegger 1993, 266; 1962, 311) The “feeling thinking”, one of the well-known terms of Heidegger⁶, surely shows an introduction to understanding the phenomena of the Buddhist and East Asian philosophies in which the levels of “feeling” and “thinking” are integrated without dichotomy.

Let us view Buddhist thinking: For Dōgen, reflection leads primarily to transparent cognition, transcending our self and the limit of our knowledge (in the terms of Dōgen: *tōdatsu* 透脱) (Dōgen 1981, *Zenki*), in which we see the fundamental causality of our suffering and the confusion or the problems of our tangible life. For Dōgen, the ultimate purpose of thinking is to use it as a means of transcending our reliance on thinking in order to more fully harmonize with eternal truth (*dharma*). Independent from speculation, the Buddhist law of eternal truth, *dharma*, is to grasp the phenomenon of tangible life. Sensory perception is not secondary, but attached to cognition, because knowledge—as cognition integrated into bodily existence—is the primary source in Buddhist philosophy of the thinking-recognizing-acting-system of *dharma*—eternal truth viewed from an

⁶ Fühlendes Denken, Problem der Angst in Heidegger 1993, § 29, § 40, § 38, §46; 1962, §53, § 62, § 67, § 68.

extended spectrum of historical and contemporary thought in critical and self-critical reflections.

As Heidegger said, “To the things themselves!” (1993, 27; 192, 50), the reviewer approaches things, grasps and construes the basic way of being in Phenomeno-Logos. The method is oriented to collecting things from phenomena and exhibiting them in the language of logos (*legein*).⁷ The viewer is primarily the thinking one who is able to state what is the fundamental principle of being throughout all phenomena.

With Dōgen, a viewer is a thinking and an acting person in daily life. Life is a phenomenon where we seek to grasp what truth is.

Let us summarize the relation of phenomenology and Buddhist philosophy. Buddhist philosophy has a tangent to cognitive science to clarify that what is pain; on the other hand, it has a tangent to philosophical anthropology to clarify what is the self and self-subjectivity and what is suffering. The main stream of Buddhist philosophy is that it strives for a system, a complex system of knowledge by which our experiences in life and in the intellectual world are always integrated. (Hashi 2014a and b) In the aspect of the firm connection of philosophical knowledge to the phenomena of the world, Buddhist philosophy occupies a position highly similar to phenomenology or phenomenological ontology.

Phenomenology and Buddhist Philosophy—Via the Comparative Thinking Method

In the philosophy of both Heidegger and Dōgen, the nucleus is the phenomenon of the world, especially with Dōgen, “life” in time and space is surrounded by all things in the environment. For this reason, Heidegger and East Asian thinking including Buddhist philosophy have often been regarded as being similar in outlook. As distinguished from analytical philosophy, Buddhist philosophy as well as other East Asian thought systems were interpreted by occidental philosophers in view of their similarity to Heidegger. This was surely the most important step in the development of intercultural philosophy in Europe from 1980 onwards, but in

⁷ Heidegger discussed the relevance of the “*legein*” especially in *Complete Works* (1997, Ch. 13).

the effort to link Heidegger to Buddhist philosophy several questions should be reconsidered, mostly in the view of comparative philosophy.⁸

One of the questioning points is that in Buddhist philosophy the close connection of knowledge and its actualization in real human life is the most relevant principle. Thinking is an intellectual part of the actualization of life. The topos of thinking and acting as the *actus intellectualis* is always accompanied by objectivity with the aim to overcome/transcend one's own subjectivity. This is a basic principle for understanding Buddhism, of what cognition and knowledge means in this philosophy. Experience and knowledge are incorporated into one's mentality, bodily existence and the thinking system of the one who experiences: Our personal self is a *corpus* seen as a dimensional body into which we can transfer our cognition, which is applied and actualized in contacts made by the self with others, by the self with its environment. Without this close connection between intellectuality and acting in a "Life World", it is not cognition in the sense of Buddhist philosophy. Embodied cognition is the principle which strives for establishing an intelligible self in a life world. This is the core of Buddhist philosophy.⁹

Thus, the characteristic of Buddhist philosophy is that "cognition" must be "embodied", to be distinguished terminologically from that of pure analytical thought.

Formal Similarity—“Lightening and Hiding”, “Er-eignis”, “Gelassenheit”

Let us view some important points of a comparative reflection of Dōgen and Heidegger.

Heidegger has shown the relevance of *feeling thinking* in “*Sein und Zeit*”. The “Lightening and Hiding” (Heidegger 1962 and 2007) could be in accordance with the theory of the relationship of *yīn* and *yáng*. The “Gelassenheit/calmness/equanimity” in his late work, “where thinking stops in its border, the true thinking begins” could be accompanied by the Taoist thought of Laozi and others. (Heidegger 1960) Surely, several phrases of the late Heidegger hint to a connection with Buddhist philosophy. There is an opportunity to further research,

⁸ For potential harmony, similarity and unity see Ohashi and Stenger 2013. Several problems arising from this similarity are remarkable in the light of comparative philosophy (Hashi 2012).

⁹ For this position in accordance with the terms of “*actus intellectualis*”, “*corpus*” see Hashi 2012.

if and how far the thoughts of Heidegger and Zen Buddhism are in a harmonious equality.

The most important aspect to clarify is the semantic research that their original thinking systems are construed through quite different perspectives, from different viewpoints, and, first of all, based on different principles of the subject-object-construction of logic. (Izutsu 1986, Ch. I.4)

The basis of Dōgen’s thinking is 1) the experience observed in the cautious, self-critical view of the experiencing self, 2) grasping universal truth and 3) actualization of this truth through one’s bodily existence in life. In experiencing a self perceives and comprehends the dimensional world of truth step by step, viewing the phenomena encountered by it in its life circumstances and environment. The problem is intensified specifically with regard to the questions: “What is our self?”, “What is truth in our world of empirical life?”, “How can we express and actualize universal truth in a real world?”.

Heidegger sees the main principle of approaching dimensional truth through the experience of daily life from another position: He wants to understand “What is *Being/das Sein* at all?” For example, Heidegger in his late work looks cautiously at the aspect of the “*Er-eignis*” (Heidegger 1990), the *occasion, a special happening in the empirical phenomenon in which Being per se arises very intensively*. “Man” (German for: one, someone) becomes aware of grasping the fundamental ground of “*Being/das Sein*”. Other moments in which “*Being/das Sein*” is *not enlightened* are not considered. The *Sein*, the essential being, goes on into the phenomenon of “hiding” (*Verbergung*). In the early Heidegger it is mentioned as “*Verfall*” (downfall) and “*Zerstreuung*” (dissipation) of the essential cognition into the phenomenon of the triviality of daily life. (Heidegger 1962, § 68, c) and 1977, 458, 459) The main focus is directed to the clarification of the concept of the essential being, “*Sein*”. Even if the concept of the “*Er-eignis*” concerns the occasion of the arising and encountering of the fundamental ground of *being*, the *embodying of the recognized thing* did not become a special topic of his phenomenology.¹⁰

¹⁰ Compare with Hashi 2004, 386f; 2001/2004, 68; 2012, 7.

The “Self”, the Recognition, Awareness and Actualization of Experienced Truth

Heidegger maintained a critical distance to Kant’s transcendental category of the “*Ich denke/I think*”, as a pure formality of the thinking activity of a self, primarily because “*being in the world*” in the phenomenon of a person, his/her temporality and feeling etc. were not treated. (Heidegger 1993, §64) Instead of the abstract transcendentalism of the „I think”, Heidegger stated the necessity of the concretization of “I think something” (*Ich denke etwas*). (Heidegger 1993, §64; 1977, 425) This kind of concretization appears in the whole *Being and Time*; thus a similarity of Heidegger and Buddhism arises. But, reviewing cautiously, the following aspect distinguishes the “*phenomenological daseinsanalysis*” of Heidegger and Dōgen’s “Zen Buddhist Philosophy of Life”: Heidegger’s setting and concretizing of the problem is “*the viewing of the whole phenomenon*” (sometimes also including the life world) from the methodological position of *Daseinsanalyse*. It builds up a unique position of phenomenological ontology, but it is *not* in the position of the *awakening of the self in bodily life*, the transcendation of its own limit of knowledge, its achievement of the transcending cognition for an intelligible self.

For example, “*man*” for Heidegger is a person who is found in a phenomenon of the world. (Heidegger 1993, §25–§27) It is focused from Heidegger’s cautious observer’s point as a phenomenological thinker and analyst of *Dasein*, but not in the general position of Dōgen and Buddhist thinkers: the latter approach the problem from the “middle of *experiencing the things in a life of the bodily self*”, just *within* the topos of the “*experiencing one*”, the experiencing self with the purpose of recognition in a cautious view, far from any subjectivity, whereas the recognized truth has to be actualized as an embodied cognition in a life world.

Some Principles in the Buddhist Ontology—Towards the System of Philosophy in a Life World

I have shown the fundamental difference of the thinking principles of Heidegger and Dōgen. As a third point, I would like to discuss the different principles to grasp “Being” and “Non-Being”: The central point is that in East Asian Buddhist philosophy it is not a fundamental principle to define “Being” as a substantial,

eternal fundamental truth in thinking and acting.¹¹ The negation of being, i.e. non-being, nothingness, emptiness (*śūnyatā*) (Nāgārjuna 2013, Chs. 15, 25, 23, 21, 3, 2), absolute nothingness, the *mu* and so on (Izutsu 1977; Hashi 2009), construct an enveloped principle of eternal truth: God as creator is not a topic in Buddhist philosophy. *Dharma*, the invisible system of the metaphysical and empirical orders, is understood as an absolute one, but it is a system of order and its relations, which can be described only through many predicates in addition to the subject, “*dharma*” as a non-personalized absolute *per se*. It is remarkable that Buddhist philosophy focuses always on reality in an environment. Time and space are always bound to situations in which various relations are in interaction and co-existence and relationship.¹² Time always goes forward, it does not turn back; an occasion which happened in the past is not reversible. Nothing is reversible in reality, time is bound to space in which humans execute various *karman* (logical order of the causality and result of one thing which is found in a relationship with another thing). Everything changes dynamically and does not continue forever; this is *anitya*, the negation of an eternal substantial being and its consistency, the main principle in Buddhist philosophy. Nothing remains substantial in reality; this is the principle which is not changeable. Paradoxically, Buddhist philosophy places this principle of *anitya*, the principle of inconsistency, a negation of eternal being in a reality, first in its metaphysical and empirical ontology. (*Dharma* remains consistent, but it is shown or manifested always through a human or being who, inherently, is never in consistence.)

¹¹ The being 有 does not correspond to the absolute truth. Furthermore, it is used constantly together with its contradiction and negation (non-being): being and non-being, *bhāva* and *abhāva* are coupled in the terminology of Buddhist philosophy. Neither *bhāva* nor *abhāva* alone show the eternal truth of *dharma*: Both are bound to the phenomenon of *dharma*, whereas being and non-being are both in a relationship. (Nāgārjuna 2013, Ch. 15) In this fundamental position the equivalent position of the absolute truth which is bound to “being”/“Sein” is a irrefutable principle for Aristotle or Heidegger etc., but it is hardly found in Buddhist philosophy. (Aristotle 1987, 1003a–1012b; Heidegger 1993, Chs. 1, 2, 3, 4; *Complete Works*, Vols. 9, 13, 14, 69 etc.)

¹² For a philosophical reflection, these aspects are central for the understanding of what Buddhism is and to distinguish it from other Asian religions, even if in the sutras of early Buddhism (*saṃyutta nikāya*, *dīgha nikāya*, *maḥjima nikāya*) there were *not concrete technical terms* to define what *anitya*, *dukkha* or *anātman* is (Steinkellner 2002; see also Saigusa 1986, 142ff; see the concept of “*dharma modāna*” in Takasaki and Hayashima 1993)

The Problem of Life and Death

The Relation of “Life and Death” for Heidegger—Being and Time

With Heidegger, the key concept of *being there for death* is the focal point of his discourse. He states that after the end of our lives there will be a dimension of death. There is a linear, finite development inherent to life, necessary for us to reach the totality of our existence in the world. The terminal point is death. Death appears as the loss of being. Even if the focus on the “Ab-grund” or “nothingness” (Heidegger 1993, § 47; 1962, 280–81¹³) in the recognition of passing time seems to be similar to the Buddhist cognition of *anitya*, it is made clear by Heidegger that time, being and self are bound to the substantial existence associated with eternal cognition.

Is our existence in the world, as Heidegger asserts, a constant journey towards death in a finite series of “*not yet*” moments? Is death a termination of existence, and is being in life something incomplete? Heidegger discusses these problems and shows that our existence is a “*not-yet*” to death. For Heidegger, death is still beyond all phenomena; it has not yet been integrated into the problem of being. Heidegger indicates a successive coming-into-being to arrive at the end; the impending death of our being. The problem of death (for Heidegger) is integrated into existence. Being thrown into the field of imminent death causes fear. Fear of death is integrated into *being-in-the-world*. Since the subject of fear is present even in our being-in-the-world, we might say: “*Angst ängstet sich*”/(fear fears itself). (Heidegger 1993, § 53, 266)

Heidegger is concerned with the question of to what extent this nameless fear can be overcome. In his early works, such as *Being and Time*, he arrives at the conclusion that through encountering the *void-ness* of the existential *Ab-grund*, one tries to overcome existential “fear” and creates the possibility of finally becoming oneself, primarily through “*an impassioned freedom towards death*” having finally broken away from the illusions of self and factuality, whereas fear and anxiety could not be completely eliminated. He emphasizes the recognition of our being in a decisive view that this life is not necessarily independent of “anxiety”. This position shows a confrontation with the dichotomy of life and

¹³ Cf. The statement of Heidegger: “Da-sein heißt: Hineingehaltenheit in das Nichts” (“The Being there is enclosed in the Nothingness”), in Heidegger 1943.

death and a resolve to further that confrontation, in that one is to savour the depths of being, in contrast to its end and in the opening up of existence.

The Relationship of “Time-Space-Consciousness” of Heidegger and Dōgen

At the beginning of a comparative reflection in any kind, I have to remark on the most relevant aspect. In regarding and thinking in Comparative Philosophy—especially in case of treating different thinkers from different cultures, it is generally expected and also noteworthy that readers must *come out* from a frame of historical interpretation of established thinkers just in purpose to be free of any preposition and prejudice which was built in a long history of a certain culture. Here in this article it is valid especially for Heideggerians who are specialized in Heidegger’s thinking. If one would ignore this starting position, every discourse goes into a labyrinth in which readers or interpreters presuppose and prejudge a certain thinker from another background of another culture by their fixed preposition based exceptionally on their own culture. The Comparative Philosophy offers to set a new ground to reflect on basic principles and prepositions which are prerequisite and bound to one’s own culture and thinking method. Just in this purpose, thinkers and readers are invited to an open court for a new common ground in thinking and reflecting about philosophical questions in an “Inter-Action” of invisible kind. (If one will ignore this starting point he/she will enter into a “Field of Isolation” in a philosophy of a globalized world.) In executing this Inter-Action one can enter into a productive “Field of Intra-Relation”.

The principles of the relevance of reality and the empirical world of life, the principle of negation of a substantial being, the focusing of life and death, as seen by Dōgen, are fundamentally different to Heidegger’s point of view. Heidegger treated the problems of “Nichts/nothingness” in his first lecture at the University of Heidelberg “Was ist Metaphysik?”, in which the core of the questioning can be summarized as follows:

Nothingness is hidden or ignored in occidental philosophy, but it is remarkable in the world. Where the category of being shows a border of its possibility of consistency, there occurs an unknown dimension of Nichts/downfall into nothingness. (Cf. Heidegger 1943)

In *Sein und Zeit* Heidegger shows that our life is bound to a temporality in which everything is limited by the passing time. At a point of time, things fall into an *Abgrund*, into an underground of negated being. Only the cognition of being can resist against this constant falling down into nothingness. (Heidegger 1993, § 47, § 30, § 53) It is remarkable that Heidegger reviewed time and space as a basic category of *esse/Being/Sein*, which in the whole history of occidental philosophy has been quite ignored as to deducing what it is.” (Heidegger 1993, §1; 1977) The “Sein” is positioned as a category or concept which remains eternal and exists eternally. Life is temporary, with *moments of ups and downs*, moving into *Grund und Ab-grund*, to the fundamental ground and anti-ground/non-ground. But death is a forthcoming issue in an unknown future. Life presupposes this possibility, and “man” (one) shows a resistance against the unknown future through the cognition of Being and its continuity and its consistency. (Heidegger 1993, §62; see also §47, §30, §53) In this structure we see a fundamental difference between Dōgen and Heidegger. Dōgen, as a Buddhist thinker, accepts the dynamic change of time/space in the principle of *anitya/inconsistence* and *dynamic change of being and non-being* without relying on any substantiality. Since this dynamic change without a fixation on substantiality is the basic principle of eternal truth in Buddhist philosophy (*dharma*), “time” is neither a subject nor an object which can be treated in separation from our self. For Dōgen, “time” is not a category but an indivisible part of our existence as life-and-death. “Space” is the same, because our bodily existence is spontaneous, a dimensional space in the middle of uncertain dynamically changing phenomena. (Dōgen 1980)¹⁴ This approach to time-space-self without a dualistic objectification between the “self” and “time-space” is basic also in the philosophy of Nishida: One of his main theses, “Contradictory Identity of Time-Space-Self”, is based on the acceptance of what is “contradictory” (Heidegger 1997, vol. 11, 254, 348), as a high-level integration of opposite categories, and has its roots in Buddhist philosophy.

Let us summarize. Both Heidegger and Dōgen elaborate on the same topics: the relationship between life and death, our existence that carries the potential of

¹⁴ This thought is actualized especially in Vols. *Uji* 有時 and *Zenki* 全機. In view of some experts of Heideggerian thinking it is necessary to accent, that Dōgen explains “Life and Death”, “Being and Non-Being” as one “*principle*” which cannot be divided into dualistic separated phenomena. According to Dōgen, the *nirvāna* is the self-overcoming position which embodies “Life-Death” as an indivisible continuum in our self from breath to breath. The overcoming of suffering is a powerful self-confrontation which has its goal in the “acceptance” of the oneness of “Life-Death” as a continuum.

death, and the confrontation with, and the solution of, the problems arising in this connection. The results of some comparative reflections may be summarized as follows: The marked difference between Dōgen and Heidegger becomes obvious in Heidegger's positioning of death at the end of being in time, i.e., as the absolute opposite to being. Even though death at any time will be immanent with regard to being, there is a *dual split* between being and death. Even though in Heidegger's late work *Sein und Zeit* (and in the proceedings of the Zollikon Seminar) where "*Lichtung und Verbergung/clearing and hiding*" are mentioned (Heidegger 1962 in 2007), the discourse is based nevertheless on existing time, in connection with original being; and therefore *clearing and hiding* remain in ever present subsistence.

With Dōgen, this is different because of the paramount principle of the Buddhist dynamic of being: *anitya*. What remains ever present is not being, neither non-being nor nothingness, but *anitya*, the constant appearing, lingering, and vanishing of this moment (*kshana bhangha*)¹⁵ and all distinctions within it, which exist in space, in their dynamic change from *being to non-being*. "*Man*" (one) is the term Heidegger uses to suggest a persistent being destined for death. Its being in itself implies the inevitable loss of being; and out of this arises the problem of abstract fear. In contrast to this, Dōgen's conception of life-death, as encompassing being and non-being, is integrated as an indivisible pair of opposites, where even our clearest example of life in actuality expresses the full dimension of life-death. Holding/retaining (*hajū* 把住 or *hajō* 把定)¹⁶ in Zen recognition is constantly accompanied by the opposite, i.e., releasing/letting go (*hōgyō* 放行).

Life-Death as a Contradictory Unity—An Intelligible Self as the "Corpus"

Thus, for Dōgen it is evident that life and death are a *phenomenon coupling two in one*¹⁷, which is inherent in us from our birth to an unknown future. In Buddhist thinking and its culture it is not postulated that we have to keep our "Seinserkennntnis/cognition of being" as an inherent factor. If we do so, Dōgen warns, it is *only half of the phenomena of life*: either life or death in dualistic

¹⁵ *kshana bhangha*, *setsuna-metsu* 刹那滅 (Takasaki and Hayashima 1993, 261ff).

¹⁶ *hajō-hōgyō* 把定・放行/*hajū-hōgyō* 把住・放行. See Iriya and Koga 1991.

¹⁷ Dōgen, *Shōbō genzō*: This concept is explained in the secret vol. (秘密正法眼藏). (Dōgen 1993)

separation.¹⁸ For Dōgen, life-death are coupled, in one word, in every moment, at any time and in any situation. Every moment it emerges, stays and vanishes at the same time. There is nowhere a consistent continuity forever (out of *dharma*. *Dharma is eternal, but it is embodied and manifested only in a being which is inconsistent*). Dōgen thinks that the life moment and the death moment arise always linked to each other, accompanied by our breathing. A linear progression of time is not Dōgen's main issue.¹⁹ Time emerges, stays and vanishes: this coupling goes on forever with mathematical precision. But the time before and after the present is always all in one, just at this moment of here and now. The three-dimensional world passes through (present-past-future). The wide circle of our past lives in our memory (like Plato's *anamnesis*), as well as the unknown future, both are visions of our self-consciousness. In Zen thought the moment of the absolute presence here and now has an absolute existence forever, even if this moment of here and now becomes past and vanishes. This absolute moment of here and now is contradictory, vanishing at every moment and existing at the same time forever in "*cognition embodied in dharma*", the universal order of truth. A contradiction seems to be that we, in our limited and inconsistent bodily human existence, strive for "cognition embodied in irrefutable truth".

In the acknowledgement and the acceptance of this *contradiction* in our thinking and acting, we participate in the absolute truth, which is an unlimited truth. In the problem of the "life-death contradiction", the position of Dōgen also includes this philosophical contradiction. Breathing from moment to moment, our life is a dying life, life-death, even if we are in the middle of the living life.

When we live the moment of death, death is not a dying but a living death. The fact of death at the end of life is the *completed life*, life-death as oneness. This death is not a brief death, but falling into nothingness. *It is life-death executed in a completed phenomenon*. If we see the dualistic phenomena of life against death as two contradictory opposites, we cannot grasp and experience that what *nirvāṇa*

¹⁸ Even if the originality of the "secret volume" is questionable according to philologists, the basic concept is present also in vol. *Zenki* found in the statement: *Shō ya zenki-gen, shi ya zenki-gen* 生也全機現, 死也全機現 (The Life is to experience a fulfilled life as a complete dimensional one. The death is also for experiencing of a fulfilled death as a complete dimensional one.) The "life and death" shows in this context not only a limited meaning of a physical life and death. Furthermore this pair of concepts marks up the "moment of arising" and the "moment to fall down" for experience of human in every kind.

¹⁹ Dōgen, *Shōbō genzō*, vol. *Uji* 有時.

means: It means a deep understanding of the above-mentioned whole truth in bodily existence, in life in the real world and in the intellectual world: “Life and death as oneness, from our birth onwards, are always in us. This oneness is inherent as a contradictory self-identity of our human self, including the vanishing moment of our life and the completion of life-death in *dharma*, the universal eternal truth.” The cognition of life-death as a couple transcends our bodily existence, in the immanence of the world. The deeply inherent/immanent moment of *life-death* in the phenomena real-life is to be recognized in our careful breathing, aware of what is actually here and now. And the highly transcendent identity of life-death in our bodily life is grasped in the intellectual thinking-acting in every activity in life; human life develops in accordance with this *contradiction*, in completing our own life and our relationships to others day by day.²⁰ Here the construction of one’s own life as an irreversible occasion is described in Zen Buddhism as follows: “Once in encounter, once in a life time.” Everything, every occasion day by day is an encounter of our self with things in relation to it. Every occasion can be encountered only once. No experience is the same, because our self and the circumstances are always changing in time and space. Therefore nothing is the same; everything is an encounter made only once in a lifetime. The focus is directed to the centre of the life phenomenon and to the acting/thinking/breathing self as one of the highest dignity. I call this unit of the self which is responsible for experiencing, recognizing and actualizing truth by the special term of “*corpus*”:²¹ 1) the bodily existence as a physical volume, 2) its ability for acknowledging essential truth, 3) its manifestation of recognized truth in relationship with other beings. In view of Plato’s understanding of 1)^x *hedra*, 2)^x

²⁰ Dōgen, *Shōbō genzō*, the secret volume (秘密正法眼藏), (Dōgen 1993; Hashi 2011b)

²¹ The term of *corpus* in Hashi 2012, III. 16. There, the *corpus* is explained as a bodily bearer of cognitions in sense of a *self-critical and self-referential observer to cognitive scientific knowledge*. On the other hand, the *corpus* is a bearer of problematics to execute what is the real truth “*ontos on*” in the Metaphysics and Ontology which was worked over and over since Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. This aspect was once explained by Robert Reininger (1869–1955, University of Vienna), giving that the bodily existence of one’s self is the bearer of an “*Urerlebnis*” (original experience) that allows the experience of a whole dimension of the “real truth”. In the following continuum of self-consciousness the experienced things are reflected and treated over and over until the next “*Urerlebnis*” (original experience). *Corpus* as a bearer and critical observer of cognitive scientific knowledge and *corpus* as an executor of the metaphysic/ontological truth—herewith the difference to a phenomenological approach is clear. And also, the aspect of “*embodying knowledge*” as a *wisdom* and *self-transcending cognition* integrated in one’s own life—which has been treated in the long history of Mahayana Buddhist Philosophy in East Asia and also in today’s global world—builds a remarkable core of this term.

topos, 3)^x *xora*, this explanation of the *corpus* will have another reference, continuing the comparative reflections on the philosophy of the global world.²² The main focus expressed by Plato is “*to hen*” (the one) as a being of universal truth. The focus of the *corpus* is also on the oneness of universal truth in real activity, finding the general base of the existence of our self among life and death. The correspondence of points 2) and 2)^x are consequent in recognizing this main difference. The correspondence of 3) to 3)^x becomes obvious if we regard the main focus of both, 3) to 3)^x, in the “recognition of the networks of the various relations of the principles of truth.”

In our time of globalization, many of packets of information flow around the clock. Activities of any kind are promoted sometimes only to receive various data for finding the shortest way to get the maximal profit. On the other hand, another kind of “activities”, directing and creating something from a full dimension of bodily existence of real human, is less acknowledged. In regard to this aspect, getting more and more information without reflecting, without directing and creating seems to be a “passivity of decadence” in scattering in a virtual field. The “*corpus*” strives for establishing another way—in opposite to the above mentioned “passivity of decadence”. Its final purpose is to achieve an integration of [(1)-2)-3)] and [(1)^x-2)^x-3)^x], i.e. based on the long history of philosophy we try to express a truth by our bodily existence in life in a real and intellectual world day by day. It has a basic background in:

- α) philosophical histories and cultures (especially those of East and West),
- β) philosophy as thinking and acting in an intellectual world: “*actus intellectualis*”,
- γ) philosophy for life in expressing *wisdom* and *compassion* in *awakening* to the universal truth. This *modus* has its backbone and the causality in various thinking traditions of East Asian philosophy—influenced especially from the philosophy of Mahayana Buddhism.

The significance of the term “*corpus*” has therefore another approach and another conceptual significance against a similar term which is treated in phenomenologist thinking. Just in short, one of the most compact and nearest mind of this “*corpus*” was manifested by Hisamatsu Shin’ichi (1889–1980), one of the

²² Nishida himself mentioned this kind of developing philosophy in possible comparison to Plato and Hegel (Nishida 1965, 73; see also Hashi 2005, 101–3).

leading thinkers in the Philosophy of Kyoto School specialized in Modern Zen Philosophy: “The Formless Self of All Mankind in Super Historical History”, for short “FAS”. As a philosopher in the following generation in the 21st century I will accent this mind which is not only “sectionalized” for a few knower of Zen Buddhism and its Philosophy. Furthermore, its “Philosophy of Mind” must be grasped by cosmopolitan intellectuals and friends in a world in which a philosophy as *thinking* and *acting* and *realizing* a universal and eternal truth should be found and manifested without ideological binding to any political party.

Let us summarize the most relevant aspects of the topic:

Life vs. death is a constantly changing phenomenon. In overcoming this dualistic struggle a human being achieves transcendence, *nirvāna* in a world immanency—the calm, transparent insight, the profound dimension of cognition integrated into dying/completing life, as visualized by Dōgen.

In the firm *grasping of cognition*, “Erschlossenheit des Daseins”/the definite clear significance of existence, one has *overcome the anxiety of death* according to Heidegger: Going forward to this life in “impassioned freedom” towards the unknown death.²³ This cognition of the *phenomeno-logos* shows us the “*veritas transcendentalis*”. (Heidegger 1993, § 7, 38; 1962, 62)

Cognition as “Veritas Transcendentalis” or Cognition as “Corpus”?—Towards Embodied Cognition in the Dialogue of Philosophy

In the above philosophical comparisons an important question is raised: Do we hold, as does Heidegger, the problem of death to be a prelude to the abyss of nothingness or do we accept Dōgen’s view of a dynamic principle of humanity and all beings within the transparency and tranquility of what can be construed as a single, great action, a single great mind? The problem of “*Zeitigung/temporalizing*” is important for visualizing the moment of *being-in-the-world* by Heidegger. With Dōgen, “*uji*” 有時 refers to an opposite interpretation, that time is in us and that it

²³ “We may now summarize our characterization of authentic Being-towards-Death as we have projected it existentially: “anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death—a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the ‘they’, and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.” (Heidegger 1993, §53, 266; 1962, 311)

passes and disappears from one moment to the next, reflecting our existence here and now. Yet, this moment is always there, enabling us to create and collect manifold *karman*.²⁴ Both ways of thinking concentrate on the essence of time: Dōgen urges us to realize the eternal truth to be recognized and actualized through reality, in empirical life; Heidegger thinks in phenomenological terms: “Being is nothing but *transcendence*,” “The transcendence of being is excellent insofar as it allows for the possibility and necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Any opening up of being as *transcendence* is a phenomenological truth as *veritas transcendentalis*.” (Heidegger 1993, §7, 38; Cf. Hashi 2014b)

Conclusion

The following provisional balance can be struck between the views presented in this article: Dōgen’s principle is how far the real empirical self, by totally accepting and manifesting its true nature, can grasp and embody *dharma* awareness. I call this *corpus*, a body with the unlimited capability of opening *dharma*, in other words, an insistent and conscious manifestation of our true self in daily life. Consideration of Dōgen’s Zen prompts a re-evaluation of Heidegger’s view insofar as the opening of “being-in-the-world” does not remain, only *transcendens*, but also it may point to a return of the *world immanence* to life in the direction of *embodied cognition*. This will produce a number of opportunities for a dialogue between Buddhist and occidental philosophy in our globalized world.

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²⁴ Cf. Dōgen, *Shōbō genzō*, Vol. *Uji* (in Hashi 2005).

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