

# EDITORIAL



## Message from the Editor

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WELCOME TO THE FIRST EDITION of the *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy*. This has been a project a long time in the making. In 1981 Springer Press announced a journal called *Buddhist Philosophy* that, it seems, did not leave the ground.<sup>1</sup> But now the time seems ripe for such a journal. In the last fifteen years, the International Society of Buddhist Philosophy was founded and the American Association of Religion has included a program unit dedicated to Buddhist Philosophy.

The idea that philosophy can be found in the Buddhist tradition dates back to the early encounters between the European and Buddhist civilizations during the colonial period. Fyodor Ippolitovitch Stcherbatsky (1866–1942) published his two famous volumes discussing Buddhist logic between 1903 and 1909, and INOUE Enryō 井上円了 (1858–1919) dedicated a book-length volume to the topic of *Buddhist Philosophy* (*Bukkyō tetsugaku* 仏教哲学) in 1893. Shortly thereafter, PAEK Sönguk 白性郁 (1897–1971) mused about the philosophical dimensions of Buddhist texts and ideas on the Korean peninsula. Scholars working on Buddhist thinkers, for the most part, never doubted that philosophy can be found in the Buddhist tradition. Nevertheless, for most of the twentieth century, the academic study of Buddhist philosophy was relegated to the departments of Indology as well as Tibetology, and Buddhist texts of East Asian origin were excluded from the philosophical discourse altogether. The emergence of comparative philosophy spearheaded by the East West Center and the

Society of Asian and Comparative Philosophy strove to include Hindu, Confucian, and modern approaches to philosophy in South and East Asia in the philosophical discourse. At the same time, *Journals of Indian Philosophy* and *Chinese Philosophy* created space for the discussion of what was considered “non-Western” philosophy. However, there was no venue for academic discussions of Buddhist philosophy as Buddhist philosophy.

This hesitation to include “Buddhist thought” into the philosophical discourse was reinforced by Buddhist writers themselves. NISHI Amane 西周 (1829–1897), the first scholar to translate the term *philosophy* into Japanese and, by extension, Chinese characters, himself distinguished between philosophy made in Europe and North America, on the one side, and the thought of the premodern traditions of Japan and, by implication, China and possibly India, on the other. In addition, the popularizer of Zen Buddhism in the English language, D. T. Suzuki 鈴木大拙 (1870–1966) proclaimed proudly that Zen constitutes neither a religion nor a philosophy. This position, which was based on ideology rather than philosophical or historical scholarship, was frequently expanded to the whole Buddhist tradition. This rhetoric was repeated alike by academics who wanted to keep Buddhism in particular and South and East Asian philosophy in general out of the philosophical discourse and by Buddhist teachers eager to emphasize the uniqueness and exalted position of the Buddhist teaching.

But the times are changing. Recently, academic departments and academic society seem to be more willing to consider Buddhist philosophy as philosophy and not merely as theology or the intellectual heritage of the Buddhist tradition. In general, scholars, but also Buddhist teachers, have come to recognize that the Buddhist tradition, like any tradition, cannot be essentialized since it is not monolithic and contains religious as well as philosophical elements. In recent history, Mark Siderits and TAKEMURA Makio 竹村牧男 published, seemingly independently of each other, volumes with almost identical titles and agendas but varying content. Siderits’s *Buddhism as Philosophy: An Introduction* (Siderits 2007) traces the philosophical movements, ideas, and positions of early Indo-Tibetan Buddhist schools of thought and their interpreters throughout the ages. Takemura’s *Introduction: Buddhism as Philosophy (Nyūmon: tetstugaku to shite no bukkuyō 入門: 哲学としての仏教)* (Takemura 2009) focuses on themes, debates, and positions that can be found in Japanese Buddhism. Both, however, make a strong case for a study of Buddhist philosophy as philosophy and confirm that the time is ripe for an academic journal dedicated to Buddhist philosophy.

These considerations gave rise to the idea to start the *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy*. Our goal is to provide a venue to explore Buddhist philosophy as philosophy. Philological contributions and exercises in comparative

philosophy are welcome insofar as their primary focus is the philosophical analysis of Buddhist texts and ideas. Each issue will include one cluster of peer-reviewed essays that focus on one common topic, a selection of peer-reviewed articles that engage in the academic analysis of Buddhist philosophy, one or two less formal reflections on the status of current scholarship in the field of Buddhist philosophy, and reviews of recent releases in this field. In the future, we would like to encourage debates between authors and their reviewers in the same issue.

In the first issue, the common topic of the first cluster of essays is, appropriately enough, Madhyamaka philosophy, which provides the foundation of most Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy. These articles explore central themes in Buddhist epistemology and logic. In addition, we were privileged to include essays by Yakupitiyage Karunadasa and ISHII Shudō 石井修道 on early Buddhist psychology and the philosophy of Zen Master Dōgen 道元禪師 (1200–1254) respectively, as well as an essay in which SUEKI Fumihiko 末本文美士 reflects on new philosophical directions in Japanese Buddhist philosophy today. While we were preparing the first issue of the *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy*, we learned with great sadness that Professor Helmut Krasser, a trailblazer of research in the field of Buddhist philosophy, the editor of the *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, and a member of our advisory board, has passed away. The field of Buddhist philosophy is deeply indebted to him and it is an honor for us to dedicate the first issue of the *Journal of Buddhist Philosophy* to his memory.

I would like to thank especially Jin Y. Park who made invaluable comments on the proposal for the journal, James W. Heisig and David Jones who were willing to share their rich experiences with journals, Nancy Ellgate who trusted our vision and supported the project of having an academic journal in the field of Buddhist philosophy, the associate editor Douglas Duckworth, who will serve as co-editor starting with the second issue, our assistant editor Francesca Soans, the book review editors Pascal Hugon and Tao Jiang, Hannah Lund who came with the logo, Jacob Otte who pulled up our website, Dylan Essing who maintained our website for two years, and Katlyn Bay and Devon Armstrong who served as my assistants during the preparation of the first issue. I would like to thank the numerous scholars who have agreed to serve on either the editorial or advisory board. I would like to thank all the contributors and everyone who showed confidence in our journal and submitted essays whether or not their essay has been accepted. I thank them for their interest in publishing with a new academic journal in this exciting field of study. Finally, I would like to thank Dale Wright who was generous enough to write an introductory essay for the first issue. Without the support of everyone mentioned here

as well as many professionals behind the scenes this journal would not have been possible.

## NOTE

1. The announcement appeared in the *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 9, no. 3, (1981): 321.

## WORKS CITED

Siderits, Mark. 2007. *Philosophy: An Introduction*. Indianapolis: Hackett.

Takemura, Makio 竹村牧男. 2009. *Nyūmon: Tetstugaku to shite no bukkyō* [Introduction: Buddhist Philosophy]. Tokyo: Kōdansha.