Finding True Buddhism: Arguments Surrounding Critical Buddhism

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Christianity has the Bible, Judaism the Torah, and Islam the Qur'an, but Buddhism does not have a single orthodox doctrine or text that one can refer to. There is no equivalent to the canonized Bible that has been formulated and accepted as the word of God by groups of men and maintained through the millennia. Sermons of the Buddha were eventually written down, but since the Buddha was neither God's son nor chosen by God, the words of other men that expound on his teachings also hold great authority. Texts of questionable authorship have been used by Buddhists for centuries, and the most basic lessons in Buddhist teaching, although relatively universally accepted by various sects of Buddhism, are difficult to interpret. Even the root of Buddhism has allowed for widely varying branches to grow in several countries.

Japanese Buddhism, often exemplified thought Zen to the Western world, is a perfect example of an outgrowth of the Buddhist doctrine that involves many ideas that may have originated outside of Buddhism. A few scholars within the Kyoto Zen school have questioned some of these ideas and put forth claims that Zen contains anti-Buddhist ideas. Their criticisms of Zen are based on claims of authority that point to some form of orthodoxy that does not really exist in Buddhism. Defining true Buddhism can be done based on various points. Is the most "original" form of Buddhism really Buddhism? Finding the oldest texts by authentic authors would then be the key to establishing orthodoxy. On the other hand, couldn't the meaning behind the Buddha's words, the main points he really wished to communicate, be true Buddhism? Truth in Buddhism is a mix between the tension of absolute teachings while rejecting absolutes and of the more simple problem of texts, translations, and interpretations.

These points are all involved in the debate over "Critical Buddhism," the name the critics of Zen give their movement within Buddhism. What is at stake is Buddhism itself, the teachings

that lead to liberation and to the ultimate state of being. If a part of Buddhism is not authentic, that is a threat to true Buddhism, and could cause people to stray from the path to enlightenment. Critical Buddhists and the defenders of Zen both make excellent arguments to promote their ideas on orthodoxy, but there are points that neither side fully examines. Looking at the arguments of each side, we will ascertain their validity and ponder the argument over "true" Buddhism.

Chapter 1
Understanding Buddhism

With "true" Buddhism as the central issue under discussion, it may seem odd to begin by casually outlining the basic tenets of Buddhism. The orthodoxy or origination of Buddhism is only questioned because of certain beliefs within Buddhism. It is, however, necessary to explain Buddhism from the perspective of a specific school, since each has slight differences in doctrine and outlook on ultimate reality. Since Critical Buddhists often call for a return to what they call "original" Buddhism in India, I will describe Buddhism's most basic assumptions from the perspective of the Madhyamaka.

The earliest sermons of the Buddha pertain to the suffering of humanity and the way to end that suffering. Buddha's or the "Great Physician's" cure for suffering caused by the illness in human consciousness is described in four steps or "noble truths." These four truths are realizing that there is an illness, understanding the cause of the disease, that the sickness can in fact be cured, and the means of curing the disease. The sickness is suffering itself, or *dukkha*, and the cure is seeing things as they really are.

Beginning with the first truth, *dukkha*, the Buddha sought to show that the suffering he

described was not the simple tangible or emotional pain of daily life, but a deeply rooted problem in the very outlook and thought processes of humans. Even while experiencing moments of relative happiness in life, a person is consumed by *dukkha*. In fact, the Sanskrit term *dukkha*, which is commonly translated as suffering, may be interpreted in Buddhist texts and sermons to mean not just simple physical pain, but also emotional strain caused by change and the ultimate impermanence of happiness, pleasure, or anything in this world. Any human experience, short of enlightenment, can be described as *dukkha*.

Something equally pervasive lies behind this suffering. Desires for things in this world, constant cravings, and attachments cause *dukkha*. Put simply, these are cravings for impermanent or unattainable objects or states of being, which leave a person with an unquenchable thirst for more. Attachment is not limited to simple physical desires. "Cravings include not just cravings for sensory pleasures, but also craving for continued existence - eternal life - and craving for complete cessation, non-existence, a complete 'end to it all.'"[1] All people, even those who have all their physical desires met, crave something, and these cravings cause suffering, since they cannot be fulfilled. The second truth the Buddha taught was this connection between unquenchable thirst and unchecked suffering.

To end the suffering one must end the craving; this state without craving is the third Noble Truth, or the cessation of suffering. This cessation, nirvana, is an occurrence; it is the release of cravings. Nirvana should not be mistaken for a physical state or location, nor should it be misunderstood as a complete negation of living. Not a dream world, certainly not a separate location, nirvana is removal of attachment and therefore a removal of suffering. This removal is both negative, since it is the ending of suffering or the extinguishing of the flames of worldly passions, and positive, as a state of being that is free of pain of attachment. Logically, to end

[1] Williams, Paul, with Anthony Tribe. *Buddhist Thought: A Complete Introduction to the Indian Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2000), 44.

pain, one removes the cause. It is, in many ways, just that simple. Getting to the point where a person can actually let go of all cravings is, on the other hand, not so simple.

The way to free oneself from cravings is the fourth Noble Truth. This is the so-called path of Buddhist practice. Mental poisons of greed, hatred, and ignorance, along with anything that one might be attached to, must be overcome by following eight appropriate modes of conduct, all based on three main pillars: morality, meditation, and wisdom. Right view, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration[2] lead to liberation from craving. Although the first five describe ways in which a person should act on a daily yet lifelong basis, the final three concern modes of thought. Right effort is to work against negative feelings like greed and hate; right mindfulness is to be conscious of all thoughts and feelings. Mindfulness aids in the identification of cravings to help stop and prevent them. Finally, right concentration is the focus on an object of meditation and the stripping away of distractive thoughts and feelings. When one sees the world as it truly is, he has not only stripped away distractions, he has realized the "Three Marks of Existence," suffering, impermanence, and non-self (*anatman*).

The Buddha taught that all of the things that people normally would call the "self," the thing they imagine at the root of their existence, is not really a "self" at all. Tangible bodies, emotions, thoughts, or even consciousness are not fully controlled by a person. Each of these is subject to change outside the control of the person and is not permanent. There is then no immortal "self," especially one that continues to be attached to the personality or psychology of a person after death. Moreover, anything commonly referred to as the "self" is part of what leads to suffering. Why would someone's self be the cause of his or her constant suffering? To identify the cause of suffering with one's "self" makes no sense. Beyond that, it is this

[2] Williams, 53.

identification that leads one to crave, for one craves things for the sake of the "self." When one understands that there is no "self" to be focused on and mentally attached to, the path to nirvana becomes apparent.

What one might think of as the "self" is no more than physical and mental sensations and reactions; to see the world as it really is, one must remove attachment to the "self" and see that there is in fact no "self." The Buddha said that physical forms, feelings, perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness are not and cannot be a "self;" it is not helpful to try to think of things that might be a "self," even if the Buddha did not explicitly say that specific thing is not the "self." The point the Buddha wished to get across was that there is no "self." Searching for something to apply the term "self" to is therefore pointless and leads only to more attachment and suffering. Along this same path of reasoning, there is no ultimate "self" that exists once one attains enlightenment. Even though there are many false "selves," like one's physical body or metaphysical mind, there is no true "self." This reaching for a true "self" is still attachment, craving or grasping for a "self" that does not exist.

The concept of dependent arising also stands in opposition to the idea of a "self." In the simple causal chain upon which the Buddha's philosophy rests, the attachments and cravings of an individual lead that consciousness to be reborn in another person. These two people, the dead and reborn, are not the same person in any way that could be interpreted as "self." Since one causes the other, they are also not independent of one another. This may be confusing to one who simply wishes to refer to bodies or metaphysical aspects of a person as a "self." Rebirth in Buddhism must not be seen as a possibility for an immortal "self;" rebirth is simply another causal link.

One can become the final link in the chain of rebirth by removing all of the attachments that lead to rebirth. Seeing things as they are is the path not only to the cessation of suffering,

but to the ending of the causes of rebirth. In removing attachments, one sees the difference between how things appear and how they really are. Any sense of permanence is lost as one realizes that all of the things one had considered stable or unchanging are really just fluid and changeable. All of these are illusion. The distinction between this illusion and reality is important but should not be taken too far when one is considering what is "real." To see things as they really are does not mean that there is a shadowy, illusory world that simply clouds a solid, real world. Just like trying to see an ultimate "self" beyond all false "selves" cannot lead one to enlightenment, looking for a real world behind the illusion of a world that exists leads to misdirected thought. If one is trying to find a final thing to attach cravings to, neither "self" nor world is appropriate. Such thinking only leads to more attachment, more suffering.

Instead of a real world behind the false world, Buddhism teaches that to realize the truth is to understand that this world and this consciousness are transitory and that nothing should be attached to them. If there is an ultimate truth to be found in Buddhism, it is only this act of understanding, not any physical or metaphysical state. A material or immaterial state would be an object to attach oneself to, but that is of course not correct.[3] This is the beginning of a balance that Buddhist teachings must attain. There can be no metaphysical system or object to cling to, yet they must have teachings that Buddhists can learn about, and there must be a path to enlightenment from the incorrect perceptions within human consciousness. Buddhism teaches that there should be no attachment while promoting the cultivation of understanding, which is itself a metaphysical concept, but one must not apply concrete existence to that concept. "This, the Buddha taught, is the misconception that lies at the root of all suffering in the world. . . classifying abstractions of 'name and form' and then imagining them as substantial entities."[4]

Early Buddhist thought held that there were forms and constructions that contributed to

[3] Williams, 89.
[4] Hubbard, Jamie and Paul Swanson. *Pruning the Bodhi Tree* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), 226.

the perceived "reality" of the conventional world. To call something a "chair," for instance, is to apply labels to an impermanent, material object. What might be commonly thought of as a chair is merely a bunch of wood that has been mentally constructed to be a conglomerate thing called a chair. This construction does not reveal anything about the true being of the chair; it is a group of momentary physical states. What is seen now as chair can be broken down, mentally and physically, into smaller component parts. It is just some chunks of wood. Beyond that, this wood is only molecular combinations of atoms. Anything that can be reduced to smaller, root parts is not real. It is a construction of human mental states. For practical, everyday purposes it is useful to call an object a chair, but for the purpose of enlightened consciousness, such constructions are harmful in that they suggest a permanence or chairness of being that does not exist. To call a bunch of specifically shaped wood a chair is similar to calling a body combined with consciousness and thoughts a "self."

The Sarvastivada order differs from other schools of thought in the way it describes primary and secondary existents. Primary existents are fundamental pieces of reality, those that cannot be further broken down conceptually. Secondary existents, according to Sarvastivadans, are conceptual forms, like labels that are applied to objects. While primary existents can be called *dharmas*, the roots of being which secondary existents arise from, neither type of existent "exists" more than the other. Although they do not form their own existence, secondary existents, especially for practical, everyday purposes, do exist. They are brought into being, or caused by, primary existents.

When discussing this causation, Sarvastivadans must deal with temporal contradictions in non-existence of causes. Since a cause may appear long before the effect, and can therefore be understood as not existing at all between that point and the time of the effect, how can one say that dharmas or primary existents exist? Sarvastivadans respond that if a *dharma* exists at any

point in the past, present, or future it does necessarily still exist, but not in the same way it existed in its own time. This response makes it sound as if *dharmas* have some sort of permanence, but Sarvastivadans avoid this trap by explaining that *dharmas* exist within the moments in which they arise. A dharma exercises its being in that moment, existing independent of concepts, and therefore it does exist. Once that moment ends, the fundamental realness of the *dharma* does not end, even if the *dharma* itself does not remain after that moment has passed. Since it stands in a single moment, a *dharma* is not linked to time. It may not exist permanently as it did in its own "now," but that does not change whether or not it does, in fact, exist.

Along with their stance on existents, Sarvastivadans hold a unique doctrine on the *dharma* of *prapti,* or "possession." Without imposing selfhood, they believe there must be a link between actions that produce *karman* and the results that are visited upon that person. Otherwise there would be no negative actions or grasping to hold a person in the cycle of rebirth and suffering. *Karmic* action is explained through causation. In one moment, a person (or a bundle of aggregates, to avoid confusing person with "self") commits a negative karmic action. In that moment there is *prapti* (possession) of that *karman*. In the next moment, the person is different, as the bundles are impermanent, but within them arises another *prapti*. Each bundle of aggregates is, in turn, tied to *prapti* that finally causes negative results for the person who had performed the negative action, although it is important to remember that it is not really the same "person," since it is a different time and different aggregates. With this reasoning in place, enlightenment and freedom from suffering come when one no longer carries this prapti. This state is *aprapti*, or "non-possession."[5]

Although Sarvastivadan doctrines predate Mahayana, the Mahayana is not a reform of earlier Buddhist schools, but a specific stance on what the final goal of Buddhism should be.

[5] Williams, 118.

Mahayana and Sarvastivada are certainly not mutually exclusive, although some Mahayana philosophers have made direct arguments against some of the teachings of the Sarvastivadans. The main difference between the two is that the purpose of Mahayana is not just enlightenment. Compassionate beings called bodhisattvas attain a point just short of nirvana and remain unenlightened for the sake of other beings. Bodhisattvas are truly enlightened, because to attain enlightenment just to end one's own suffering displays a certain degree of selfishness that cannot remain in a selfless and compassionate person. Mahayana means "great path," and those who follow it call other forms of Buddhism Hinayana, which means "inferior path." One can easily follow the Mahayana idea of what enlightenment is and accept Sarvastivadan explanations of existence, it is simply a matter of the goals of the particular Buddhist.

Within Mahayana, but in opposition to Sarvastivada, the Madhyamaka school arose. Main points of division are the ideas of time, existence, and causation. Nagarjuna, a second century Indian philosopher often credited with founding the Madhymaka, attacked the positions of other Buddhist philosophies that claimed any primary existents or the causation of other existents. Central to his teaching is the notion of emptiness. Returning to early teachings, even those of the Buddha himself, Nagarjuna reiterates that all things are empty of existence within themselves. Nothing, that is, has a permanent or fundamentally real existence. What may have been called a primary existent in Sarvastivadan teachings is really just as empty as conceptualizations. No matter how much the Sarvastivadans wished to avoid permanence or ultimacy of any object, the primary existents, the *dharmas*, could too easily be understood to promote a sense of "self." Everything that promotes attachment must be removed for detachment to take place, so the Madhyamika taught that even primary existents were empty of being.

Emptiness and dependent origination are linked in the Madhymaka. Just as the

Sarvastivadans wished to show that primary existents are the root causes of secondary existents, Madhyamaka philosophy seeks to logically prove that, through that reasoning, there are no primary existents. If primary and secondary existents are related through cause and effect, then primary existents themselves could not be caused by anything. This is not true, since everything has been brought about by previous causes. Everything is dependent in its origination upon something else, which was equally dependent on another, and so on, with no ultimate cause for everything. Saying that everything is empty does not mean that nothing exists; all things are empty of independent self-being because they are caused; they arise dependent on another thing.

There is no ultimate truth to point to, no one object that necessarily and independently exists. The real ultimate truth, then, is that all things are empty. Madhyamaka has two descriptions of what it calls "ultimate truth," one which is real and one which is not:

> (i) The first is the ultimate truth as *an* ultimate truth, i.e. something resistant to analysis, a primary existent. In this sense, Madhyamaka is saying that there is no such thing as an ultimate truth.
> (ii) The second is the truth as the ultimate way of things (the *dharmata*), how it ultimately is, what is found to be the case as a result of ultimate analysis, searching for primary existence. This is the lack, the absence, of the primary existence, i.e. emptiness.[6]

Madhyamika wish to realize the ultimate truth that there is no ultimate truth. This is to make non-attachment easier through logical understanding that there is really nothing to grasp, nothing to reach for, and no cause for suffering. This ultimate truth of emptiness also points to the fact that the suffering and attachment are also empty, and the true emptiness of letting go of the suffering and attachments is enlightenment.

The Yogacara, members of another, later school of Buddhism, see emptiness in a slightly different way. Also called the "mind-only" school, Yogacara philosophy on emptiness pertains

[6] Williams, 148.

to the emptying of attachments from the mind. Instead of denying all existents, they say that consciousness exists. The problem and cause for suffering is that this consciousness is clouded, and in order create a clear, enlightened consciousness, one must empty the mind of attachments. This is closely related to the Madhyamaka idea of true emptiness and enlightenment, but is not mistaken for nihilism as often as Madhyamaka's philosophy of emptiness, since in Yogacara there is something that exists, while in Madhyamaka everything is empty.

As time passed, different schools of Buddhism developed, each to combat or address a certain possible problem in Buddhism. None of them wished to change the teachings of the Buddha; all simply wished to clarify the Buddha's path to enlightenment. Understanding the development of these various schools is important because the ideas presented by Critical Buddhists are based on some early Indian teachings, and the Zen that they criticize using these teachings grew out of the Yogacara school.

Chapter 2
Critical Buddhism

When passing through time and cultures, Buddhism itself has been molded and shaped into various forms. These schools and sects each have their philosophers, and all refer back to the teachings of the Buddha. Quoting sermons and texts, Buddhist philosophers all attempt to define the way to enlightenment and re-teach what the Buddha has already taught. Each explanation not only interprets the words of the Buddha, they correct misinterpretations by earlier scholars and contemporaries that may have been led astray by other philosophies and their own misguided thoughts. New discourse does not attempt to innovate, they merely wish to uncover the truth in what has already been revealed.

In the late 1980s two scholars began publishing essays to combat what they saw as a problem that had grown in Buddhism. What Hakamaya Noriaki and Matsumoto Shiro, both scholars within the school of Kyoto Buddhism, call "Critical Buddhism" began as a criticism of problems they saw in Japanese Buddhism. They termed Critical Buddhism "critical" because it both criticizes the Kyoto school of philosophy and bases its claim on its own philosophy of critical thought. Various aspects of the Kyoto school alarmed Hakamaya and Matsumoto, and, as members of the Soto Zen school themselves, they approached these issues from the subjective perspective of those on the inside.

Early on, Hakamaya made his position clear. In an essay outlining the differences between critical philosophy and what he calls "topical philosophy," he introduces his subject writing, "By 'Critical Buddhism' I mean to indicate that 'Buddhism is criticism' or that 'only that which is critical is Buddhism.'"[7] He goes on to explain that all Buddhists or schools of Buddhism may not be critical, but Buddhism really should return to the basis of the Buddha's teachings, which Hakamaya claims is criticism itself. When the Buddha attained enlightenment, according to Hakamaya, he did so through logically considering suffering and existence. Hakamaya juxtaposes his critical philosophy to topical philosophy, which he finds in Zen, Japanese Buddhism, and the Kyoto school of philosophy. "How are critical and topical philosophy to be understood? One important aspect of the distinction is epistemological: criticalists and topicalists have different views about how beliefs--claims to knowledge--ought to be acquired and fixed, and about how they ought to be justified."[8] While critical philosophy involves logical questioning, topical philosophy accepts the existence of something beyond reasoning, enlightenment that is ineffable.

Topical philosophy is called "topical" by Hakamaya due to it's acceptance of and belief in an underlying *topos*, or locus of being. This *topos* conflicts with the teachings of the Buddha,

[7] Hubbard, 56.
[8] Hubbard, 148.

according to Hakamaya. Any idea of the underlying existence of a "thing," any substratum, no matter what that "thing" might be, does not accord itself with Buddhist teachings, which are narrowly defined by Hakamaya as teachings from specific early texts. Everything that the Buddha said about the self and causation goes against the existence of something that can be depended upon for self-definition or can be an uncaused cause. Hakamaya and Matsumoto reject this *topos* because they believe that the Buddha taught that reliance on any "thing" results in craving, which, as discussed in chapter one, causes suffering. Hakamaya sees the Buddha under the bodhi tree in rational thought, working backward from suffering to its cause, and understanding that faith in a *topos* is part of the cycle of suffering and rebirth. This is why topical Buddhism must be rejected in favor of Critical Buddhism.

To argue against topical philosophy to a topical philosopher is difficult. Once one accepts a truth beyond reason, any argument based in reason cannot stand against it. It is precisely because topical philosophy cannot be rejected by logical criticism that Hakamaya finds it so important that topical thought be removed from Buddhism. He points out that, in the West, philosophy is critical philosophy, and any other thought like topical philosophy is not really philosophy at all, but "antiphilosophy."[9] Hakamaya explains that the emergence of a so-called topical philosophy is a danger to "true philosophy."

> To say that "philosophy alone is criticism, and criticism alone is philosophy" renders everything outside of criticism nonphilosophical, but the "virtue" of affirming *topica* rather than "antiphilosophy" is that *topica* absorbs everything into itself, even criticism. As a result, if philosophy does not reject topica and grants the latter existence at all, topica will, as "topical philosophy," suddenly find a place within philosophy.[10]

[9] Hakamaya refers to Descartes as a prime example of Western philosophy and criticism, which I find interesting considering the conclusions Descartes comes to using critical thought are so different from those of the Buddha and Hakamaya himself. Thought as a basis for proving self-existence, for example.
[10] Hubbard, 62.

Just as calling topical philosophy a philosophy is not correct, calling topical Buddhism a type of Buddhism is wrong.

How did this antiphilosophical and apparently anti-Buddhist notion make its way into Buddhist thought? Hakamaya blames the adaptation of authentic, original Buddhist teachings in the Chinese cultural context. When Buddhism was transmitted from India to China, indigenous Chinese religions and philosophical traditions resisted its assimilation, and it was only through the ideas and teachings of established Taoist and Confucian philosophy that Buddhism could become comprehensible in its new context; as a result, Hakamaya writes that Buddhism in China came to be quite different than what had originally arrived from India. In this way, Hakamaya and Matsumoto claim that Chinese Buddhist schools allowed the topical philosophy that contravenes the teachings of the Buddha to come to dominate Chinese Buddhism. As stated concisely by Dan Lusthaus, "East Asian Buddhism returned with deliberateness and passion to its own earlier misconceptions instead of returning to the trajectory of Indian Buddhism from which it believed it had spawned."[11] These misconceptions were fueled by Taoism, which Hakamaya describes as topical philosophy, with its ineffable Way and mistrust of words.

The topical undercurrents of this new Taoist, Chinese Buddhism made their way into Japan. The topical undercurrents of Chinese Buddhism faced no opposition in Japan. Indigenous Japanese philosophy was naturally topical; Hakamaya theorizes that all indigenous thought is topical and that it is a natural human inclination to favor topical thought. That the Buddha proposed a philosophy that combated India's own topical philosophy was lost once the topical thought of Hindu, Taoist, and Confusian philosophies found their way into Buddhism. As indigenous philosophies in India and China had done, Japanese philosophy changed the logic of the Buddha into an awakening to the *topos* of enlightenment.

[11] Hubbard, 35.

Buddhism truly is, to Hakamaya, the original teachings of the Buddha and does not include any of the subsequent changes that have taken place. Any deviation from the "original," "true," or "authentic" word of teh Buddha could change the entire message, thereby negating the efficacy of Buddhism as a path to enlightenment. Although it is natural for humans to try to make such changes, as the indigenous thought of Japan has done, the purpose of Buddhism is to remain critical of such thought so teachings of the path to enlightenment remain intact.

Both scholars argue that part of what is missing in Japanese Buddhism is the ability to make distinctions. The Buddha himself first distinguished between the path to suffering and the way to end it. Ideas of harmony and oneness not only contradict the Buddha, they make it difficult to follow moral standards of any kind, since standards rely on a distinction between right and wrong. According to this line of thought, if everything is the same, or contains the same non-dualistic, underlying being, one need not worry about making social changes or questioning the government, since they are unchanging at the truly existent core, anyway. Hakamaya and Matsumoto both argue that positive social change in Japan has been lacking, and this shortage has been justified using *hongaku shiso*, original enlightenment thought, a supposed "Buddhist" concept. Turning from topical thought to critical philosophy would not only make Buddhism in Japan Buddhist again, it would help pave the way for positive social change.

One of the main causes of this problem of non-dualistic *topos* is the concept of *hongaku*, original enlightenment. This Japanese idea that all things, even non-sentient objects like rocks and trees, contain enlightenment bears the majority of Hakamaya's criticism of topical Buddhism. To say that all things contain some "thing," even such a thing as enlightenment, is to proclaim a pervasive basis in all beings and objects. When describing this incorrect way of thinking, Hakamaya uses Matsumoto's term, *dhatu-vada*. This term utilizes Sanskrit to speak of an underlying locus of being, and any philosophy that contains such a locus is not Buddhist.

Hongaku, with its implied locus of enlightenment, is what Hakamaya calls "*dhatu-vada*."

Matsumoto also classifies the predecessor to original enlightenment, *tathagata-garbha* (the "seed" or "womb of Buddhahood" that is in each sentient being), *dhatu-vada*. *Hongaku* thought perpetuates and causes some of the social inequalities and problems in Japan. "In practice it leads to discrimination, since if one assumes a single basis and underlying reality for all things--that good and evil, strong and weak, rich and poor, right and wrong are fundamentally 'the same'--there is no need or incentive to correct any injustice or right any wrong or challenge the status quo."[12] The challenge to *hongaku* comes in criticism; the solution to this problem lies in Critical Buddhism.

Hakamaya does not simply leave Critical Buddhism undefined as a vague critical philosophy. Specific aspects of topical Buddhism are problematic, and he outlines three of these aspects of actual Buddhism which distinguish it from topical Buddhist thought:

1. The basic teaching of the Buddha is the law of causation (*pratitya-samutpada*), formulated in response to the Indian philosophy of a substantial atman. Any idea that implies an underlying substance (a "topos"; *basho*) and any philosophy that accepts a "topos" is called a *dhatu-vada*. Examples of *dhatu-vada* are the atman concept of India, the idea of "nature" (Jpn. *shizen*) in Chinese philosophy, and the "original enlightenment" idea of Japan. These ideas run contrary to the basic Buddhist ideas of causation.
2. The moral imperative of Buddhism is to act selflessly (anatman) to benefit others. Any religion that favors the self to the neglect of others contradicts the Buddhist ideal. The *hongaku shiso* idea that "grasses, trees, mountains, and rivers have all attained Buddhahood; that sentient and non-sentient beings are all endowed with the way of the Buddha" (or, in Hakamaya's words, "included in the substance of Buddha") leaves no room for moral imperative.
3. Buddhism requires faith, words, and the use of intellect (wisdom, *prajna*) to *choose* the

[12] Hubbard, 7.

> truth of *pratityasamutpada*. The Zen allergy to the use of words is more native Chinese than Buddhist, and the ineffability of "thusness" (*shinyo*) asserted in *hongaku shiso* leaves no room for words or faith.[13]

This final statement about words and faith sets the Zen idea of enlightenment against that of Hakamaya, who sees the Buddha's enlightenment as a result of critical thought as opposed to the transcendence of thought that one might use to describe Zen's state of enlightenment.

Any lack of trust in language is a weakness in philosophy, since it makes communication of ideas both within a philosophy and in dialogue with other ways of thought impossible. If Zen questions the truth or meaning of linguistic concepts, it shares this weakness. A way of thinking in which experience is central has difficulty exchanging ideas, since it is impossible to put experience into words. Since the truth of Zen is ineffable, as Hakamaya pointed out, those who attain the state of enlightenment cannot rationally or linguistically point the way to attain that which they have. "It is difficult indeed to have a discussion with somebody who claims to have had an experience that cannot be talked about but the truth of which is self-validating, since any who have not had the same experience are by definition unfit to talk about it."[14] The conversation, from the perspective of Critical Buddhists, is at a standstill unless topical Buddhists accept logical arguments. Although this makes it seem as if members of the Kyoto school would simply ignore the rationality and words of the Critical Buddhists, that was far from what happened.

[13] Hubbard, 13-14.
12 Hubbard, 91.

Chapter 3
Responses to Critical Buddhism

Response to the claims of Critical Buddhists within the Kyoto school was not mere acquiescence. Assertions made by Critical Buddhists, especially those against the concept of original enlightenment, incited quick rebuttals. The basis of the sort of "orthodoxy" that Critical Buddhists sought in Buddhism resulted in much contention. Interpretations of root ideas missed the point, according to so-called "topical Buddhists," and they wished to mend the misguided thoughts of the Critical Buddhists as much as the Critical Buddhists themselves had attempted to correct problems they perceived in Zen.

The Response to Critical Buddhists' definition of philosophy and Buddhism was a range of defiant counter-arguments. Scholars argue that Critical Buddhists simply chose reason and criticism as their foundation of thought, and this criticism is not really critical at all. Although they may claim to seek a Buddhism without *topos*, their constant reference to reason can result in a similar grounding of being, with rationality at its core instead of Zen's enlightenment. Paul Griffiths describes this conflict as possibly a distinction between what Hakamaya understands to be a purely externalist authoritarian locus and internalist philosophy. While grounding one's faith in any underlying locus leaves no room to question that authority, leaving religion to personal critical thought is equally weak, and that is one way to interpret what Hakamaya says. If Hakamaya simply took a more balanced stance, if he identified "the more limited thesis that a systematic and complete rejection of criticism (reasoned argument) as a method for belief-fixation and belief-justification—a rejection typical of topicalism as Hakamaya presents it—is improper and indefensible,"[15] it may have met more acceptance. Instead, many scholars understand

15 Hubbard, 157.

Hakamaya's works as promotions of internalist rational values, which leave decisions of rightness and understanding in the mind of each individual. Although this reading of Hakamaya may not be correct or may not be a full rendition of the points he wishes to make, "Hakamaya's often intemperate rhetoric allows the impression that he gives an independent and free-standing significance to the unaided force of the human intellect."[16]

The intellect, although not entirely without its place in Zen, should not bear the finality that Hakamaya's writings often communicate. The importance of intellect lies in its function of making distinctions. One must question at this point whether the teachings of Buddhism rely upon a distinction the Buddha made intellectually or a point beyond reason and duality that the Buddha attained through meditation. Critical Buddhism is flawed because of its selection of orthodoxy and its interpreted connection to reason. Critical Buddhists picked two main pillars in building this orthodox or "true" Buddhism: dependent origination and the doctrine of no-self; distinctions between Buddhism and non-Buddhist philosophies can be made by referring to these two tenets. Arguments defending these two point to the originality of these teachings (that when the Buddha taught them they went against other teachings of the time and region) and their centrality (that all other lessons of Buddhism are derived from these two things). Although there are ways to focus on texts that might reveal this conclusion, "some scholars and thinkers have responded that Critical Buddhism is actually a veiled form of fundamentalism that deems itself alone worthy of determining authentic forms of religion based on a simple and perhaps arbitrary commitment to the doctrine of dependent origination and a sectarian preference for a particular set of Dogen's writings."[17] They contend that Critical Buddhism does not properly answer the question of why reason is a valid source for judging Buddhism.

Using reason as a source also comes dangerously close to clinging which, as stated above

16 Hubbard, 160.

17 Hubbard, 278.

in the first chapter, leads to suffering. If Critical Buddhists think original enlightenment thought is a monolithic eternal object to cling to, their own dependence on reason causes similar problems. Any way of thinking or definitive teaching can inadvertently lead its followers to clinging. Even if the teaching is about non-abiding-self, if that becomes a sort of universal or eternal truth, then it could allow for feelings of attachment.

Selection of teachings that Critical Buddhists deem essential or true to Buddhism spark other controversies as well. Why should specific Indian texts be followed and not others? Critical Buddhists select few Indian texts with one hand while defending a Japanese author, Dogen, with the other. They strain to reconcile the later writings of Dogen with the philosophy that they consider appropriate. Critical Buddhists derive the importance of *anatman* from certain texts; they require a specific reading or interpretation of the text.

> The pillars of orthodoxy are few, and even they have to be purified: they include
>
> 1. the Buddha, except insofar as he compromised his message with older ways of thinking…
> 2. the Pali sutta texts, except where corrupted by *atmavada* and Indian conventions;
> 3. the earlier stages of the *Prajnaparamita* literature;
> 4. the *Lotus Sutra*: contrary to what Nakamura Hajime claims, its teachings that all sentient beings will attain buddhahood is innocent of the later tathagatagarbha substantialism…
> 5. Nagarjuna and the *Prasangika* version of Madhyamika down to Tsong-ka-pa;
> 6. Dogen in his later writings, which are purified of his earlier dabbling in *hongaku shiso*.[18]

With these limitations placed upon Buddhism, it ceases to be a flowing and changeable religion and becomes a static and eternal basis of thought. This sort of grounding is reminiscent of what Critical Buddhists argue against, undermining their claim with their own logic.

18 O'Leary, Joseph S. "The Hermeneutics of Critical Buddhism," *Eastern Buddhist* 38 (1998), 280. (numbering corrected, italics added)

If rationality could be considered a *topos*, Critical Buddhists themselves are promoting *dhatu-vada*. A philosophy that is without some grounding or basis of thought may well be impossible. To say that Buddhism is based in criticism is a severely limiting and self-contradictory ideal.

> In focusing excessively on criticism and in reducing Buddhism, as well as philosophy, to criticism, Critical Buddhism develops a hermeneutic that cannot do justice to the contemplative aspects of Buddhism, or to the phenomenological ground of philosophy, neither of which are reducible to conceptual clarification. Since Critical Buddhism is dismissive of the very idea of hermeneutics, writing off centuries of hermeneutical reflection in the West as a betrayal of Western reason, it misses the degree to which its own positivistic and rationalistic stance is itself a hermeneutical investment.[19]

Critical Buddhists attacked topical philosophy's ability to include in itself all of philosophy, but their own ideas of philosophy are limited in a similar way. By accepting only critical philosophy as "real" philosophy, they are taking all philosophical stances into their own. Hakamaya goes a step farther and does not simply classify all viewpoints and arguments under the umbrella of philosophical thought, he denies that topical philosophy is philosophy at all. Just as defending critical philosophical thought is difficult within the confines of topical thinking, finding anything but criticism within a Buddhism that has been limited to criticism is impossible. This leaves Buddhists unable to argue against Critical Buddhism in its own terms, unless it can rationally undermine the criticism or independently declare its own ideas important.

To a Critical Buddhist, arguments of hermeneutics may border on ideas like relativism. Discussing Buddhism within the contexts of time and culture leads Buddhist scholars in the opposite direction from the pure rational criticism opponents see in Critical Buddhism. But the ideas of a religion, divorced from the people who practice and shape it, are relatively meaningless.

19 O'Leary, 285.

If arguments remain in the realm of metaphysical discourse, in a philosophically pure form, it does little for the multitude of people practicing the religion; it does not take into account the changing of ideas to fit a culture to become practicable by its population. "At the core of religious experience is an absolute reality, which is indubitable; the doctrines of religion share this absolute quality; but they are always enunciated in the language and horizon of a give epoch and culture, and this dimension of religion is intrinsically relative."[20] Why would Critical Buddhists wish for Buddhism to be pure of a human practice, though flawed, that would lead to the ultimate truth? The question becomes whether or not certain teachings even lead to the truth. What Buddhism has become in Japan, although different from the Buddhism that left India, is truly Buddhism as long as it leads to the enlightenment of the Buddha. Unfortunately, this is a point of irreconcilable contention. Since enlightenment is ineffable, and one cannot prove a state of enlightenment, it is nearly impossible to prove whether or not a teaching really leads to enlightenment.

Arguments over *hongaku* follow along these same lines. Critical Buddhists may criticize it because of its finality and self-existence, but response tends to focus on the ability to communicate Buddhism in a way which does not lead Buddhists in the wrong direction. Buddhists in Japan wish to avoid nihilistic teachings while not giving practitioners any impression of a "self" to cling to. "The conclusion to be drawn is that one cannot evaluate a tradition a priori; it is necessary to see how a teaching works in specific contexts, taking an integral view, with due attention to the performative soteriological intention of the teaching."[21] It is not enough to say that a teaching is not that of enlightened thought, but it would be meaningful to attack a teaching that did not lead people to the appropriate way of thinking.

Hongaku and its philosophical root, *tathagata-garbha*, bore the brunt of Critical

20 O'Leary, 286.

21 O'Leary, 290.

Buddhists' arguments, but proponents of *hongaku* respond that this criticism views original enlightenment thought as if it were an ideal and not a teaching for the sake of moving the student along the path. Perpetuating the thought that all things contain the Buddha-nature is merely a means to an end. Those who find enlightenment may well realize that this is not the truth, but the teaching has its place. Sallie King draws on ideas evident in the *Buddha-Nature Treatise* attributed to Vasubandhu to argue this point. Reasons for using an idea like Buddha-nature are the key to understanding that original enlightenment thought is not necessarily a topical philosophy and not, for that reason, anti-Buddhist, even by Critical Buddhists' definition. "Probably the single most important motivation for the author of the *Buddha-Nature Treatise* (and, I surmise, others in the Buddha-nature camp) is his concern over the negative language prevailing among... his contemporaries who, by virtue of the doctrine of emptiness, regard the Buddha as having expounded a nihilistic view and are themselves engaged in spreading this interpretation."[22] *Hongaku* is the solution to a particular problem.

Apparently, nihilism was enough of a problem for the author of the *Buddha-Nature Treatise* to include not only a concept like Buddha-nature but also use terminology like *atman* to describe it. For Buddhists who had begun to accept notions of nihilism, any way to describe Buddhist theology in existent terms might lead those who had gone astray back to Buddhism. Although *atman* is not the "truth," nothingness is also not the Buddhist ideal. "Ontologically, universal *anatman* is the final word; but linguistically and strategically, another word—a positive word—needs to be added... Our author [Vasubandhu] wishes to remain Buddhistically orthodox while creating a language that allows him to speak positively of what may be found at the end of the Buddhist path."[23] Here we see the important distinction between linguistic terms and ultimate reality. Many Buddhists would agree that the words they use to describe ultimate

22 Hubbard, 175.

23 Hubbard, 179.

reality are clearly not correct, but those who are not enlightened need some practical terms to describe their process of thought. Teachings promoting *tathagata-garbha* also tend to be cautious and make it clear that Buddha-nature is not a real self to cling to. "*Tathagata-garbha* texts themselves are constantly aware of the possible criticism that they are positing an *atman*, and deny the charge. Yet their openness to this charge did not lead anyone in India to accuse them of being 'not Buddhism.'"[24]

Critical Buddhism's criticism of *hongaku* is not only based on the earlier ideas from India and China, but on indigenous Japanese and Chinese thought. Part of Hakamaya's definition of *hongaku* thought is broadened to include not only a monistic idea of *topos*, but also authoritarianism and philosophy that favors experience over reason. "Hakamaya expands the meaning of the term *hongaku* thought to include not only indigenous anti-Buddhist elements in Buddhist history, but also non-Buddhist indigenous ideas that have influenced such anti-Buddhist elements within Buddhism."[25] This makes Hakamaya's Critical Buddhism a critique of East Asian culture as much as actual Buddhist thought. If all of the ideas he criticized were regarded as proper teachings of Japanese Buddhism, then the attacks would be more focused and might help develop Buddhist doctrine, but some are leveled toward Japanese cultural ideas and not Buddhist practice itself. This makes critiques of the broadened Buddha-nature mostly invalid within the context of the debate on Buddhist orthodoxy.

The authenticity of Buddha-nature as Buddhist thought is not the only argument opponents of Critical Buddhism make. Defining Buddhism as free of any monistic ideas is unacceptable to some Buddhists. Peter Gregory argues that reducing Buddhism to a simple definition, even one which states what Buddhism is not, betrays the purpose of Buddhism and the ineffability of the Buddha's enlightenment. As Critical Buddhists limit which texts are

24 Hubbard, 23.

25 Hubbard, 325.

acceptable they cut out any possibility of monistic thought, but the reasons for that choice are questionable. Critical Buddhists seek to return to the origins of Buddhism, to the earliest texts and teachings. A clear history and genuine texts may not exist, so Critical Buddhists have difficulties in finding what original and authentic texts might actually be. "Any reconstruction of 'original' Buddhism is therefore problematic, if only from a text-historical point of view. The blunt fact is that the Buddha's enlightenment is inaccessible to us; all we have are competing traditions about it... I, for one, would reject the assumption that Buddhism was ever originally simple or pure."[26] Buddhism cannot be critical if it remains attached to ideas of purity or simplicity. The thought of an original Buddhism must itself be examined critically.

Early texts themselves can often convey a message that some scholars interpret as monism. Even though Critical Buddhists themselves often turn to causation to defend their views, this causal chain itself may be the dreaded *dhatu-vada*, a grounding of being. Some early Buddhist texts "refer to the idea that samsara and nirvana exist together or share a single 'place' or 'realm.' This 'place' is the context within which one passes, through practice, from *samsara* to *nirvana*."[27] That it is described as a place does not mean that it exists in a real physical or even metaphysical way, but that it is an actual occurrence. Just as the metaphor of a path can describe a religious process, so this singular place is not a thing that one can cling to. At the same time, there is oneness of process; causation exists for everyone, even if a person does not fully understand. This is both Buddhism and monism. It is topical philosophy, *dhatu-vada*, yet it denies the existence of a self. This ground can only support process—it is not made for resting upon or a location to find self-definition.

This ground or *dhatu* may even consist of various pluralistic grounds. Since Matsumoto found the theological root of *hongaku* in *tathagata-garbha*, earlier Yogacarin texts that discussed

26 Hubbard, 295.

27 Hubbard, 315.

the latter should provide insights on the structure and meaning of original enlightenment thought. If *tathagata-garbha* bears no definite sign of being monistic or topical, then Hakamaya and Matsumoto's argument that original enlightenment thought is not Buddhist would become weaker.[28] In a debate between himself and Matsumoto, Yamabe Nobuyoshi explains that *dhatus*, when mentioned in early texts, are the seeds from which various mental states arise. Diverse mentalities do not all come from the same root, they are separate points of origination. "The basic message... is that there are innumerable good and bad elements (*dhatu*) in sentient beings that correspond to good and bad mental functions, and that one must accordingly cultivate the good elements in order to realize good mental states"[29] This does not remove any of the discrimination that Matsumoto wishes to eradicate from Buddhism, but it does eliminate the monism of *dhatu-vada*. Also, Matsumoto argues that these separate "seeds" still have an underlying ground or locus to rest upon. To this Yamabe responds that Matsumoto draws inaccurate conclusions based on his interpretation of key terms. "Buddhist texts do occasionally interpret *dhatu* as *dharana*, 'support,' which leads me to suppose that 'support' (or, for Matsumoto, 'locus') was in fact one of the meanings of *dhatu*. But this is not the same as concluding that 'support' or 'locus' accounts for the word's etymological origins."[30] In this argument over all-important terminology, the meaning of the word *dhatu* is of the utmost significance, but discovering what the original authors meant is impossible, and applying different definitions than the generally accepted usage is not sufficient when attempting to prove something about the Buddhist nature of the word itself. Saying that a term sometimes used in the plural form and sometimes singular classifies as monism constitutes just such a leap.

28 Disproving the monism of original enlightenment would not prove that Critical Buddhism is wholly invalid, since some of their arguments were aimed at the cultural implications of *hongaku* and the lack of critical thought involved accepting underlying existent causes.

29 Hubbard, 196.

30 Hubbard, 210.

In attacking Zen Buddhism and the ideas of *hongaku* and *tathagata-garbha*, Critical Buddhists incited scholars in both Japan and the West to justify their doctrines. Not only do they defend their own view of Buddha-nature as either non-monistic or merely conventional, they understand even topical ideas to be within the teachings of the Buddha and certainly no worse than the rational dependence of Critical Buddhists. Scholars on both sides of the argument are wary of the others' definitions of Buddhism. What makes a text pure? Even if a text is authentically Buddhist, what interpretation should be used, and which meanings of weighty and ambiguous terms should be used? Critical Buddhists may have triggered a quest for orthodoxy in Buddhism that may or may not exist.

Chapter 4
Concluding Remarks

If only one truth exists, and ideas of truth and falsity are merely illusions, why should it matter that Critical Buddhists say Zen is not Buddhism? The words and concepts thrown around by scholars on both sides of the argument do not carry meaning in themselves; they are not ultimately real because they are caused. Words are part of conventional reality, used for practical purposes but not to express things as they really are. When used to express ideas of doctrine or the path to enlightenment, words can carry weight beyond their limited existence. Discourse can lead to deeper understanding, but words can also lead to confusion, and claims like those of Critical Buddhists are deeply serious because they deal with the essence of Buddhism. Critical Buddhists called the ultimate reality of Zen into question, and, interestingly enough, some responded that Critical Buddhists had confused the conventionally useful *hongaku* and ultimate reality. *Hongaku* isn't the true, ultimate reality, and they know it isn't, it's just a way

to communicate a way of thinking that leads people's minds to correct understanding. Unfortunately, along this line of thinking, any doctrine could be considered mere convention, and creators of deviant doctrines would only need to say that they know it isn't the truth to defend it. Critical Buddhists would consider this is a dangerous position, since they began their study and criticism of Buddhism to end possible moral weaknesses in Zen, and if doctrines are easily defended, immoral systems are equally easy to support.

The dichotomy of conventional and ultimate should not be used to defend a doctrine. If conventional words and practices can lead a person to the truth, then they cannot be easily dismissed. Even conventional terms are important. Of comparable importance is actively reminding Buddhists that their doctrine is convention. Neither of these should be forgotten; the former prevents the spirit of Buddhism, the point that Buddhism wishes to get across, from becoming diluted, inverted, or changed into something not recognizable as Buddhist. Remembering that doctrine is convention serves this same purpose, but in a specific way. If doctrine becomes ultimate, then the nature of Buddhism changes, and the ineffability of enlightenment is gone. Preserving the idea of idea of convention in Buddhism preserves Buddhism itself.

Critical Buddhists must recall this distinction as they formulate their analysis of Zen. When he said that only criticism is Buddhism, Hakamaya did not add that metaphysical logical reasoning is conventional, or that criticism itself is not some ultimate truth. Buddhism should be self-critical to guard against harm to its members or doctrines that do not lead people to the truth, so criticism certainly becomes necessary, but it is not all of Buddhism. Likewise, critical thinking has its place along with experiential lack of thought. Just as Nagarjuna used emptiness to contest the metaphysicians of his time, and Buddha-nature thought combats nihilism, tempered criticism could solve the problem of clinging and discrimination that Critical Buddhists see in Zen

currently.

All of this pushing back and forth, fighting one extreme by promoting the other, has unique properties within Buddhism. Critical Buddhists think that Zen is too experiential and lacking in reason; the abstract idea of original enlightenment has been accepted based on a faith that hasn't considered whether or not the idea even fits into Buddhism. Faith and questioning must be balanced. Any religion that lacks orthodoxy cannot be based solely on unquestioned faith or it will not remain the same for long, and its deepest ideologies might change. On the other hand, a religion tied to its orthodox or logical ways is incapable of meeting the demands of people who live in a constantly changing world. "Those who perceive self-nature as well as other-nature, existence as well as non-existence, they do not perceive the truth embodied in the Buddha's message."[31] Focusing on the extremes of existence and non-existence does not help one see things the way they really are.

Should Buddhists be searching for the mean between the extremes of logic and experience? From it's inception, Buddhist teachers have avoided perceived clinging by creating new ways of thinking that challenge accepted norms. It is not a simple mean between extremes; Buddhism is fueled by a consistent push away from the suffering caused by grasping at concepts. "On the waning of defilements of action, there is release. Defilements of action belong to one who discriminates, and these in turn result from obsession. Obsession, in it's turn, ceases within the context of emptiness."[32] Extremes are the objects of obsession. Polarising dualities like being and non-being or Critical Buddhism and Zen push a person to think one way or the other, but neither should be the only focus or the source of one's thought. Critical Buddhism does a service to Buddhists by leading their thoughts away from their obsession with *hongaku*, but Critical

[31] Nagarjuna, 2nd cent. *The Philosophy of the Middle Way.* trans. David Kalupahana (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986), 231.
[32] Nagarjuna, 266.

Buddhists must be careful not to become obsessed with their own ideas.

Monism is a threat to Buddhism because it is an easy target for obsession. If there is simply one source or one being, then it is easy to become fixated upon it, and it is and difficult to say why one shouldn't be absorbed in thoughts of the one true existence. A scholar does not need to mention immortal selfhood or *atman* in order to contradict the teachings of the Buddha. When Critical Buddhists limit the Buddha's teachings to those of no-self and dependent origination, they are not necessarily defining appropriate grounds with which to combat monism. An underlying locus of being is not synonymous with a self. Monism tempts Buddhists to see the thing their self arises from, to cling to a being that is permanent. To reiterate the Buddha's teaching that there was no self does not stop this sort of clinging. Also, dependent origination and causation only combat monism when the causation goes infinitely backward to no source. All of a person's thoughts, as caused metaphysical objects, may not exist, but if the ground from which that thought arises exists, and a person identifies with that source, then it perpetuates the problem of clinging.

The more Critical Buddhists limit Buddhist orthodoxy, the more questions arise about the basis of their claims. Not only do they choose early texts, although even the earliest texts have some shades of authenticity, they also rely upon logic to make these assertions. Critical Buddhists argue against *hongaku*, saying there is no original enlightenment within everything from which each individual's enlightenment arises, but when Hakamaya says that the Buddha came to his realization under the bodhi tree because of rational thought, that creates a similar problem. In Hakamaya's argument, one must look to either *hongaku* or to logic to attain enlightenment. Even if neither rationality nor original enlightenment is the locus of all being, and neither should be considered a locus, each of these ideas could still produce clinging, since they are means to becoming enlightened. The rationality of Critical Buddhism bears the same

weaknesses as *hongaku*.

There is another argument within Critical Buddhism that I have intentionally omitted up to this point. Both Matsumoto and Hakamaya began their criticisms after researching certain negative aspects of Buddhism in Japanese culture. When Matsumoto formulated his arguments against original enlightenment thought, he was hoping to combat a problem in Japanese culture, a problem that Zen not only allowed but encouraged through its doctrines. Matsumoto perceived a certain "pro-Japan glorification" in Zen, which he argues against since all of the concepts "which have been proposed to the West as representative of 'Zen,' are in fact based on *tathagata-garbha* and *hongaku* thought, and should not be considered positive Buddhist virtues."[33] Not all concepts in Zen should not be considered solely Japanese, but if they are Japanese they are not Buddhist, according to Matsumoto.

Hakamaya focused his attacks on discrimination within Japanese culture. He stated that the idea of conformity for its own sake is not Buddhist, but Japanese, and it does not have a place in Buddhist doctrine. *Hongaku* thought encourages this discrimination against those who do not conform because it propounds singular being within all things. If every person has Buddha-nature, then they are all the same, or should be all the same. Encouragement to follow the emperor without question arose from that same vein of thought. "For Hakamaya, the emperor system is like the *hongaku*. . . ethos: it is an ineffable center, held together by a murky syncretism, and relies on the idea of *wa* [harmony] to muffle any ideological criticism."[34] Under such a system, any mistreatment of a minority or unethical practice would be allowed without question, since fighting the norm meant not only placing oneself in a socially vulnerable position, but going against the Japanese Buddhist precept of harmony.

I had ignored these arguments not because they did not make sense or were not important,

[33] Hubbard, 9.
[34] Hubbard, 19.

but because they were not a part of the central issue. Arguments over Buddhist orthodoxy are not supported by the cultural effects of a teaching, but on the origins and validity of that teaching within Buddhism. Although these problems in Japan may have been the reason Matsumoto and Hakamaya began their criticisms, it is not the basis of this argument. Although it is troubling that certain historical incidents[35] may have come from Buddhists or Buddhist teachings, to claim that an entire sect of Buddhism is not Buddhist may not prove fruitful. It may be a good tactic to incite positive change, but it also has the tendency to evoke vehement defense of ideas instead of change. Naming criticism and reasoning as the defining characteristics of Buddhism crosses the line of constructive suggestion into another extreme, one that may be equally harmful.

Is the solution to allow Buddhism to be a religion without defined orthodoxy? The range of doctrines in various schools of Buddhism leave little solid ground for a single and acceptable philosophy, and perhaps that is how it should be. Any semblance of orthodoxy that Buddhists establish, any basis of all Buddhist philosophy, could lead Buddhists to fall into the trap that all agree should be avoided: suffering produced by grasping. If Buddhist scholars attempt to outline an orthodoxy, on what ground will they base their ideas? As Critical Buddhists search for the origins of Buddhism, for the true teachings of the Buddha, I begin to wonder how narrow Buddhism could become. The point of Buddhism must remain the path to understanding. Being concerned with what the Buddha originally meant or why he might have said what he did could be helpful in reaching the goal of enlightenment, but it comes dangerously close to desire for something concrete or permanent.

Buddhism balances on the wire that all religions in this globalized time must rest upon. It must retain some semblance of orthodoxy to prevent changes that would make the goal of enlightenment something other than what it has been or should be. At the same time, Buddhism

[35] Incidents such as Zen's support of militarism in World War II, which is explained in depth in Brian Victoria's *Zen at War*.

cannot limit itself so much that people of various cultures cannot understand it. This does not necessarily mean syncretism or corrupting the teachings, but it will involve some adaptation. It is not the survival of Buddhism for its own sake, but the perpetuation of correct thinking for the sake of all people.

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