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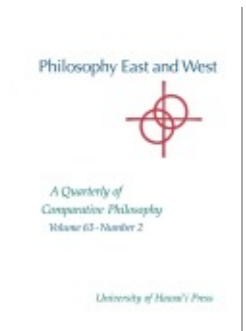
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# ON BUDDHISTIC ONTOLOGY: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF MOU ZONGSAN AND KYOTO SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

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## *Introduction*

In his later years, Mou Zongsan (1909–1995), as the representative of contemporary New Confucianism, promoted a Buddhist-inspired ontological approach that he called *Buddhistic ontology*.<sup>1</sup> This approach is part of one of the most profound and complex theoretical constructs of his philosophy, the importance of which was not immediately recognized. It can be considered the culminating achievement of one of the most significant East Asian philosophers of modern times. Since its importance was recognized only in the very last phase of his philosophical career, we may suspect that the true implications of Buddhist ontology remain to be discovered. Once it is fully developed, it may lead us away from the better-known Confucian-based metaphysical scheme that currently defines Mou's mature philosophical position. The idea behind Buddhist ontology is not only complicated and profound but also highly problematic. So far, although his interpretation of Buddhism has been analyzed and discussed, the nature of its complexity and its problematic status in Mou's overall metaphysical scheme remain to be studied.

Mou Zongsan's idea of *Buddhistic ontology* clearly belongs to his later philosophy, since its Chinese term, *Fojiao shide cunyou lun* 佛教式的存有論 (sometimes accompanied by the English term in his writings), attains its fullest meaning only in his later works.<sup>2</sup> It is well known that New Confucian thinkers from Xiong Shili to Tang Junyi made extensive studies of Buddhist concepts. However, it is all the more remarkable that Buddhism only gradually gained in importance during Mou's long philosophical career, so that he finally came to admire the "beauty" of Buddhist thought in his last phase. As Mou himself remarked in 1991, Buddhism, ontologically speaking, is more "beautiful" when compared not only to Christian teaching and Western philosophy but also to Confucianism.<sup>3</sup>

Yet, the idea of Buddhist ontology has not been sufficiently developed for us to understand it in its fullest meaning. Even Mou did not pursue the implications of this idea, or he was simply unable to do so. Furthermore, he never abandoned his focus on Confucianism and its system of moral metaphysics. This limitation forces us to search for some auxiliary arguments in order to characterize this complex idea and understand its problematic implications. Such auxiliary arguments can be found in the works of another twentieth-century East Asian school of philosophy that established itself with a Buddhist-inspired approach: the Kyoto School.

This article attempts to explain Buddhist ontology by comparing it with Kyoto School philosophy and to develop the resulting implications, a project that Mou himself was unable to pursue. Here I use the term “Kyoto School” to refer to, besides Nishida Kitarō, those philosophers who were his direct successors, namely Tanabe Hajime, Nishitani Keiji, and Kōyama Iwao.

It might appear strange to compare Mou’s own philosophical beliefs with Kyoto School philosophy as a whole. And it certainly seems outrageous to ignore the differences among the four Japanese philosophers just mentioned. However, the differences among the core members of this school can be put aside for the moment—as long as we focus on their respective ways of criticizing Kantianism. It was in their criticism of Kant that they emphasized the contribution of Buddhism to Western philosophy, even though they never explicitly offered themselves as interpreters of East Asian traditions.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, I concentrate on the way modern East Asian philosophers criticized Kant and overcame Kantianism in the process of developing their Buddhist-inspired investigation into the meaning of being. The texts of both Mou and the four main Kyoto philosophers show that they developed their own philosophical ideas in the form of a reexaminations of Kant’s philosophy. As far as Buddhism or its “religious worldview” is concerned, their focal point is Kant’s *antinomy of practical reason* and its solution. We can compare their understandings of Buddhism by considering their reexamination and criticism of the Kantian antinomy in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. This shared target of their philosophical expositions will be used to make this comparative study more effective as well as more precise.

I use the comparative method in order to clarify specifically Mou’s *ontological* interpretation of Buddhism. Such an attempt seems not to have been tried before, although comparative studies of New Confucianism and Kyoto School philosophy have recently been undertaken by several researchers in East Asian countries such as Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Japan (although I am the sole such researcher in Japan, according to Lam Wing-kang’s bibliography).<sup>5</sup> The highly illuminating comparison by Ng Yu-kwan (Wu Rujun) of Mou and Kyoto School Buddhism (specifically Hisamatsu) is not a comparative study of the two types of Buddhist understanding, because it regards Mou as essentially a Confucian thinker.<sup>6</sup> Only by investigating the nature of the *ontological* interpretation of Buddhism can we expose the common structure of modern East Asian philosophies, as we will see later. Before such a comparison, however, the problematic status of Mou’s Buddhist ontology in his New Confucian enterprise must be examined.

### *The Problematic Status of Buddhist Ontology in Mou’s Philosophy*

The status of Buddhist ontology over the course of Mou’s philosophical career is not easy to see. Numerous attempts have been made by scholars to situate this idea in the system of Mou’s essentially Confucian *moral metaphysics* (道德的形上學). This interpretation would lead us to identify this Buddhist ontology with a component of the so-called twofold or dual ontology of metaphysics, namely *non-attachment*

*ontology* (無執的存有論). If we take such a view, however, Mou's interpretation of Buddhism would be seen as contaminated by the Kant-inspired metaphysical scheme, which certainly results in an inadequate comprehension of the doctrine of Perfect Teaching. In order to argue against this type of interpretation, it is necessary to clarify the very problematic status of Buddhistic ontology throughout Mou's career.

There are two major reasons for scholars to ignore or devalue the importance of the idea of Buddhistic ontology in Mou's philosophy. First and most important, he is the foremost representative of modern New Confucianism, both for his readers and in his own estimation. How is a sympathetic understanding of Buddhism possible for a Confucian thinker whose way of thinking is limited by his overall New Confucian framework? Only if Mou was conquered by Buddhism after a long period of faith in Confucianism would scholars attribute any fundamental importance to his discovery of Buddhistic ontology.

The other reason for devaluation is that the appreciation of Buddhistic ontology belongs only to Mou's later years. He confessed in his *Nineteen Lectures on Chinese Philosophy* (1983) that it was a fairly "recent" discovery for him: "I have come to think this matter out, and have understood [it] clearly only in recent years; I have not yet explained [it] sufficiently or solved this problem in my *Phenomenon and Thing-in-itself*."<sup>7</sup> The idea belongs to the last phase of his career; he was not able to expound on it until the very last decade of his life, as will be shown later. This limitation of time made it impossible for him to develop fully the philosophical implications of the idea and the meaning of his discovery in a metaphysical framework. As a result, the idea was more or less inherited and pursued by his younger successors.<sup>8</sup>

The following discussion argues against the first reason for devaluation and instead tries to establish the crucial importance of Mou's Buddhistic ontology. The second reason will lose its significance when the comparative method is implemented in the next section below.

Mou's appreciation of Buddhism is not of the same degree as his faith in Confucianism. It is no exaggeration to say that his interest in Buddhism is that of a historian. Mou's most extensive treatment of Buddhism, *Buddha-nature and Prajñā Wisdom* (1974), clearly manifests this attitude. He writes in the preface:

I am not a Buddhist. But in writing a history of Chinese philosophy, and standing on academic ground, all one should do is [try] to be objective.<sup>9</sup>

This confession is faithful to his New Confucian standpoint, as there is a New Confucian motive behind his interpretation of Buddhism. In this sense, Mou's borrowings of Buddhist concepts can be seen as strictly "intellectual," or rather "formal and instrumental," as Joel Thoraval says.<sup>10</sup> Although, as shown in his autobiography, Mou had expressed occasional sympathy with the existential aspects of Buddhism in his younger years, his academic attitude toward Buddhism is only that of a historian of Chinese philosophy. His recourse to Buddhism should be regarded as historical research, driven by a Confucian motive.

Then, what is the Confucian motive that drives Mou's interpretation of Buddhism? One of the main tasks for twentieth-century New Confucians was to establish the

primacy of Confucianism over Buddhism. This task is exemplified by the pioneering attempt of Xiong Shili; subsequently, both Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan tried to clarify the structural difference between Confucianism and Buddhism, which was not sufficiently elaborated by their mentor.<sup>12</sup> This line of investigation culminated in Mou's reexamination of the Neo-Confucianism of the Song-Ming period, where he tried to understand the basic structure of Confucian thought by using the Kantian concepts of autonomy and freedom.<sup>12</sup> While endeavoring to construct a structural distinction between Confucianism and Buddhism, or even incorporate the latter in his overall metaphysical scheme, his attitude toward Buddhism was undeniably that of a historian.

Turning now to Mou's interpretation of Confucianism: it is entirely defined by his profoundly Kantian *metaphysical* scheme. It is useless to ask which has priority in Mou's philosophical career—his Confucian understanding or his Kantian interpretation; these two themes are intertwined and developed in parallel, notably from *Xintiyu xingti* (1968) to *Phenomenon and Thing-in-itself* (1975).<sup>13</sup> The status of metaphysics itself has to be characterized through this close resemblance between Kantianism and Confucianism.

The uniqueness of Mou's interpretation of Kant is in its fundamental similarity to the so-called *metaphysical interpretation* of Kant. The latter, as exemplified by Heinz Heimsoeth, is a type of Kantian interpretation that sees critical philosophy as not only a criticism of metaphysics but also a contribution to a future metaphysics.<sup>14</sup> With his metaphysical interpretation of Kant, Mou could assume that he had accomplished the New Confucian task of systematizing Chinese philosophy.

But what is the meaning of the *metaphysics* that Mou borrows from Kant? Critical philosophy is not a denial of metaphysics but an attempt to establish the only possible metaphysics. Kant described this future metaphysics, or the only possible metaphysics, as *practico-dogmatic metaphysics*, a famous characterization that is found in Kant's posthumous work.<sup>15</sup> Practico-dogmatic metaphysics is said to come after the *theoretico-dogmatic* and *skeptical* types. The term "practico-dogmatic" can be paraphrased as *moral-assertive*, and we must be careful not to read any negative meaning into the word *dogmatic* here. In fact, his practico-dogmatic metaphysics can be reached only through critical philosophy. The only possible metaphysics is revealed by establishing the priority of practical reason.

This characterization of metaphysics is essential for understanding Mou's New Confucian scheme, *moral metaphysics* (道德的形上學). Moral metaphysics is carefully distinguished from a metaphysics of morals (道德底形上學), which is nothing but a metaphysical exposition of morals.<sup>16</sup> Moral metaphysics is, on the contrary, a metaphysical thought *via morality and moral practice*, that is, a metaphysics that is constructed based on the priority of practical reason. Therefore, his idea of moral metaphysics is basically no different from Kant's notion of practico-dogmatic metaphysics. (However, Mou was unable to see the close relevance of the Kantian notion to his own Confucian-oriented interpretation of Kant. Although Mou once referred to the Kantian characterization, he mistakenly attributed it to Beck.)<sup>17</sup>

Now, Confucianism is considered to be metaphysics *par excellence*. Confucianism is profoundly metaphysical and has even greater legitimacy than Kantianism because of its complete awareness of the priority of practical reason. The Japanese term for metaphysics is *Keijijōgaku* and the Chinese is *Xing(er)shangxue*, both are the same in Chinese characters (形而上學) and taken from the expression “the thing beyond shapes” (形而上者) in the Ten Wings of the *I Ching*. This etymology is not accidental but essential and symbolic in the formation of modern East Asian philosophy: *metaphysics is fundamentally Confucian*. Confucian moral metaphysics is a theory concerning the problem of being (存在): “Confucians are talking not only about the problem of ‘ought’ but also about that of *being*.”<sup>18</sup> And this understanding itself reminds us of the metaphysical interpretation of Kant; as Heinz Heimsoeth said clearly, a new study of being (*Seinslehre*) begins in the section of postulates of the *Second Critique*.<sup>19</sup> Metaphysics becomes possible only through the priority of practical reason. The only possible metaphysics is a practico-dogmatic one, which studies being via moral practice.

It is precisely to this definition of metaphysics that Mou’s famous formula “Kantianism equals Confucianism” applies. Metaphysics is a study of being via morality or moral practice, with the priority of practical reason as its ground. Hereafter in this article the word *metaphysics* will be used in this sense.

Having offered this characterization of metaphysics, we may further observe the status of the word *ontology*. Yet, for the moment, we are unable to distinguish between these two words. Moral metaphysics is sometimes called “practical ontology.”<sup>20</sup> Kantianism and Confucianism, and ontology and metaphysics, are so closely intermingled in Mou’s scheme that they appear either inseparable or simply *undifferentiated*. When Mou attacks Heidegger’s idea of fundamental ontology, he insists that ontology is possible only *via* a moral way. The Heideggerian equation (at least in the period of *Sein und Zeit*) “Phenomenology equals Ontology” is judged to be unsustainable from Mou’s *metaphysical* standpoint. Metaphysics and ontology are simply equivalent or conflated.

This conception of *ontology* is highly problematic. Moral metaphysics tries to open the horizon of ontology based on the priority of practical reason, but it fails to develop the ontological difference between entities and their being. Even if Mou insists that Confucianism is a study of being, the question of being fails to be questioned within the moralistic standpoint of Confucian dogmatism. The things beyond shapes (形而上者) are nothing more than transcendent entities. As Sébastien Billioud observed very insightfully in his critical assessment of Mou’s interpretation of Heidegger:

Mou turns out to be a zealous guardian of Kant’s text because he wants to preserve the possibility of a transcendent metaphysics. Such a possibility is indeed for him of the utmost importance if he wants to protect his own metaphysical system and seam Kant’s work to the Chinese tradition.<sup>21</sup>

In short, Mou’s metaphysical framework can be called a *transcendent metaphysics*, rather than *ontology* in the Heideggerian sense, as long as Mou remains unable to



pose *the question of being*. What must be observed is the problematic status of the word ontology in Mou's philosophy.

The ambiguous status of the word ontology becomes even more complicated in Mou's concept of "twofold ontology," found in his synthesis of Kantian and Chinese philosophy in his magnum opus, *Phenomenon and Thing-in-itself*. The structure of moral metaphysics is now formulated as a "twofold ontology," which consists of two regional ontologies, of phenomena and noumena. As is often admitted, the crucial point of Kantian philosophy is the distinction between phenomena and noumena, and also between theoretical and practical reason. *Noumenal ontology* is opened up through practical reason, while *phenomenal ontology* (transcendental logic) is incorporated in the field of theoretical reason. This bipolar or twofold ontology is considered to constitute the structure of moral metaphysics. When Mou insists on a twofold structure for ontology, he always holds to his *metaphysical* standpoint, which deals with entities no matter whether they are phenomenal or noumenal. Therefore, he considers only the *ontical* difference between entities and their two regions, phenomena and noumena. He never develops the *ontological* difference between entities and their own *being* itself.

It is not surprising that interpreters of Mou's philosophy tend to juxtapose the two very different ideas, the twofold ontology (the "two-tier mind" paradigm) and his later Buddhistic ontology (the "perfect teaching" paradigm).<sup>22</sup> This kind of interpretation is natural because of the ambiguous status of the word ontology. This ambiguity reaches its climax when Mou furnishes his metaphysics with the Buddhist concept of "one-mind-opens-two-gates" (一心開二門). This beautiful and well-known concept is borrowed from the *Qixinlun* 起信論 (Awakening of faith for the Great Vehicle). The dual-ontology scheme of phenomena and noumena is now embellished with a Buddhist expression. Phenomena and noumena are basically identified with the two gates opened by one mind: metaphysics consists of the ontology of attachment and the ontology of non-attachment.

The important point here is that this concept is not identical with the Buddhistic ontology whose detailed account is given below. It might appear confusing and lead us to a serious misunderstanding. The "two-tier mind" paradigm is the keystone of the metaphysical scheme of Mou's that belongs to his New Confucian creed, but it is still irrelevant to a genuine understanding of ontology as such. Besides the two regions that are reached through the "two gates" of moral mind, there remains something that has yet to be recognized. We may now turn to this consideration.

There is a fundamental difference between the two schools of Chinese Buddhism, Tiantai and Huayan. On the one hand, Mou sees Huayan Buddhism as essentially inseparable from the "two-tier mind" paradigm and the twofold ontology scheme of moral metaphysics, even if the former cannot simply be defined by the latter. The twofold ontology, which is expressed in the most definitive way in the Buddhist text *Qixinlun*, is also at the core of Huayan doctrine, at least according to Mou's interpretation: this school of Buddhism establishes itself by utilizing the *Qixinlun* "as its theoretical basis."<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Huayan is considered to be surpassed by Zhiyi's 智顓 Tiantai doctrine, which is described as the authentic "perfect teaching."

Considering the difference between the two schools, we must necessarily transcend the twofold ontology scheme of metaphysics. What does this mean? If Tiantai is considered to be superior to Huayan, and the latter is inseparable from the “two-tier mind” paradigm, then it is a simple logical consequence that *Tiantai goes beyond this paradigm*. If Tiantai teaching is both unique and privileged, then this status must be explained by its fundamental difference from the twofold ontology scheme of moral metaphysics.

However, this consequence was not readily recognized by Mou himself. The emphasis on Tiantai Buddhism was already developed in his *Buddha-nature and Prajñā Wisdom*, in which the utmost importance and superiority of this theory are assigned to Tiantai teaching in Mou’s own doctrinal taxonomy (判教). But as long as Mou maintained a historical standpoint, he would not be able to see the philosophical implications of his doctrinal taxonomy. If Tiantai Buddhism criticizes the rival Huayan School, which is based on the “one-mind-opens-two-gates” theory of the *Qixinlun*, what is the structure of Tiantai perfect teaching from the standpoint of Mou’s scheme of moral metaphysics? Does this not mean that Tiantai teaching points the way toward overcoming his previous scheme of a dual or twofold ontology? Mou does not answer these questions; he had no need to consider the meaning of his thesis as long as his view was that of a historian.

Yet, Mou was not only a historian and a Confucian scholar; he was also a *philosopher*. His discovery of the status of Tiantai teaching necessarily means a conquest of the twofold ontology scheme (“one-mind-opens-two-gates” theory). Accordingly, his conception of *ontology* itself had to be drastically altered. It was at this moment that the meaning of Buddhistic ontology surfaced in his philosophy.

To show this, I call attention to the remarkable difference between the two works of his that treat Tiantai Buddhism in their main arguments, namely *Buddha-nature and Prajñā Wisdom* and *On the Perfect Good* (1985).<sup>24</sup> Only the proper understanding of the nature of this subtle difference enables us to understand the final phase of Mou’s philosophy. Both of these works emphasize the importance of Tiantai teaching. However, the former is only a history of Chinese Buddhism, while the latter is intended as a treatise on the highest good (perfect good) and a critical assessment of Kant’s *Second Critique*. Mou’s treatment of Tiantai teaching is now no longer that of a historian of Chinese philosophy, but that of a genuine philosopher. The true implications of this understanding of Tiantai Buddhism were not recognized in his doctrinal taxonomy. They came to fruition more than ten years later in his *On the Perfect Good*, which features a reexamination of the *Second Critique*. Here, in his last important work, he attempts to go beyond the Kantian scheme, and only here can we find a definition of *Buddhistic ontology*, whose intricate content will be explained in the next section.

However, one possible objection may be raised to the distinction made above between these two works treating Buddhism. The continuity of Mou’s position is effectively emphasized in the short appendix of *On the Perfect Good*, titled “Note on the term *ontology*” (存有論一詞之附注). Here Mou reiterates the distinction between the noumenal and phenomenal forms of ontology, and criticizes Heidegger’s funda-



mental ontology as still phenomenal (immanent) in character, together with Husserlian phenomenology. He claims the importance of transcendent ontology, which is noumenal ontology, and dares to identify it with moral metaphysics itself.<sup>25</sup> This note restates his previous position and his intention to corroborate it. It seems difficult to find any suggestion of philosophical change or development here and presents a serious obstacle to our interpretation.

To answer this objection, it will suffice to clarify what is being said in this appendix. There are two reasons why this note does not help us to understand the nature of Buddhistic ontology. First, in the appendix the meaning of Buddhistic ontology is no longer taken into consideration but rather consigned to oblivion. The appendix is a supplement to Mou's Confucian reinterpretation of perfect teaching after introducing that idea in a reference to Tiantai Buddhism. On the one hand, he admits in this book that the latter's contribution to the establishment of perfect teaching is the greatest among all the Chinese traditions.<sup>26</sup> On the other hand, the meaning of Buddhistic ontology is obscured by the further exposition of the *Confucian type* of perfect teaching, to which he ascribes the ultimate goal and the end of philosophy: "Once philosophical thinking comes here, it reaches its end."<sup>27</sup> Mou asserts that Chinese culture could not produce its own immanent (phenomenal) ontology, except for the Buddhist analysis of phenomena, and concludes that the result of his philosophy is the twofold ontology. Once again the supremacy of Confucianism is confirmed. The appendix in question is added as a supplement to the conclusion of the book. Therefore, it does not provide us an opportunity to understand the nature of Buddhistic ontology.

Second, this appendix reveals Mou's uneasiness about the status of the term ontology. We must ask: why should he reiterate his definition of ontology in the appendix? Indeed, the main theme of the book is not ontology but the highest good. He certainly senses here the need to determine the status of *ontology* although his recourse to Confucianism allows him to feel free of the philosophical outcome of the discovery of Buddhistic ontology. Mou tries to define the notion of ontology only to show his reactionary stance toward his own discovery. The newly discovered ontological question is not pursued. His dogmatic reiteration of twofold ontology simply shows his inability to pursue the philosophical outcome of Buddhistic ontology. This appendix only testifies to this setback.

Mou himself had to inquire concerning the word *ontology* in this last important work. The question itself proves that the idea of Buddhistic ontology brought new meaning to this term. In the twofold ontology scheme, it simply means a study of entities and of the region of entities. Since phenomenal ontology must be fully grounded in the noumenal version, the ultimate ground must be morality: it is essentially a moral vision of the world. On the contrary, Buddhistic ontology has nothing to do with morality. It is something amoral, as I will discuss later. And only on this amoral ground, or on the lack of any ground, can we see the possibility of posing a *question of being*. This is the meaning of fundamental ontology. If the only possible metaphysics is a study of the regions of entities, grounded ultimately in a moral way, Buddhistic ontology is rather a question of being, asking amorally the meaning of

what it is to be. If the twofold ontology is metaphysical, Buddhistic ontology is non-metaphysical. Only at this point does the word ontology need to be differentiated from metaphysics.

Therefore, the discovery of Buddhistic ontology is a decisive moment in Mou's philosophical development. It is discovered to be *beyond all types of metaphysics* including the so-called twofold ontology of the Huayan type. The conception of ontology itself becomes radically changed as Buddhistic ontology opens up a non-metaphysical horizon of philosophy, which has at its center the question of being. Only in this non-metaphysical horizon, which no longer emphasizes morality, can we pose the question of being, in the Heideggerian sense. Wing-cheuk Chan, in a pioneering 1983 article, had already referred to the similarity between Tiantai Buddhism and Heideggerian ontology. Chan's fundamental thesis, from the standpoint of my argument, can be summarized as follows: only with the discovery of this *genuinely ontological meaning* of Tiantai Buddhism did Mou approach the possibility of truly and thoroughly overcoming Kantian philosophy.<sup>28</sup> Although Mou adhered dogmatically to Confucianism until the end of his life, the true implication of his discovery of Buddhistic ontology is that this was a deviation—or a liberation—from his New Confucian creed.

From the argument above, it is already clear that the two very different ideas presented here—the *twofold ontology* scheme and *Buddhistic ontology*—should not be confused. Even if these two ideas (which can be paraphrased as the “two-tier mind” paradigm and the “perfect teaching” paradigm) share the word *ontology*, we cannot follow Mou's own imperfect understanding. Moreover, it is unjust to presume that Mou's interpretation of Tiantai teaching is thoroughly based on his twofold ontology and moral metaphysics.

Yet, this result seems different from that of other interpreters. In his excellent study of Tiantai Buddhism, Hans-Rudolf Kantor criticizes Mou for employing the twofold ontological system in his Tiantai interpretation:

Chinese Mahāyāna Buddhist concepts of soteriology—particularly that of Tiantai Buddhism—that refer to the sacred and the profane in the existence of sentient beings cannot be interpreted according to the Kantian distinction between noumena and phenomena. Mou's concept of ontological transcendence, derived from his interpretation of Kant, does not fit Tiantai Buddhism's tendency to reject subordinate levels of being.<sup>29</sup>

We can fully agree that Mou's moral metaphysics does not fit Tiantai Buddhism. And it is arguable whether his interpretation of Kant is acceptable, and whether his concept actually fits other schools of Buddhism such as Huayan. However, when Kantor criticizes him for stating that “Tiantai Buddhism also adheres to the same twofold pattern of ontology,” we must defend Mou from this criticism.<sup>30</sup> Even though we have every reason to doubt that Mou himself was aware of it, his newly found Buddhistic ontology scheme transgresses his previous Kantian twofold ontology; it goes beyond the Kantian distinction of noumena and phenomena and its moral vision of the world. In this sense, Kantor's detailed and highly stimulating criticism of Mou's Tiantai interpretation seems to have failed in elucidating the nature of Mou's idea of Bud-

dhistic ontology, because Kantor fails to appreciate the implications of Buddhistic ontology, which must be distinguished from the twofold ontology of moral metaphysics; it offers the possibility of giving us a non-metaphysical horizon of philosophy.

In summary, Mou's interpretation of Tiantai Buddhism shows the possibility of going further than his metaphysical system. Mou understands Tiantai Buddhism as overcoming the twofold ontology scheme; through this understanding, he reaches the possibility of overturning the whole prior system on his own. We cannot overemphasize this imposing status of Buddhistic ontology. The idea of Buddhistic ontology can be seen to constitute a fundamental critique of his previous New Confucian standpoint; at least, it did indeed allow him to overcome Kantian philosophy by recasting the antinomy of practical reason, as we shall see in the next section.

### *Mou's Exposition of Buddhistic Ontology and the Antinomy of Practical Reason*

Having explained the controversial status of Buddhistic ontology within Mou's Confucian and Kantian framework, I will next examine its content and meaning. Only in *On the Perfect Good* can one find Mou's decisive criticism of Kant and the exposition of Mou's so-called Buddhistic ontology. This criticism is centered on the solution that Kantian philosophy provided for the antinomy of practical reason. Mou believed he had found the genuine solution to it in the Tiantai doctrine of perfect teaching. Here, for the first time, he fully explains the philosophical scope of his systematic reconstruction of Buddhist thought in his earlier works. Let us examine the nature of this criticism and how it is related to the idea of Buddhistic ontology.

We will begin with a simple observation. Mou reexamined the first two Kantian *Critiques*, respectively, in his two works, *Phenomenon and the Thing in itself* and *On the Perfect Good* (for our purpose, there is no need to go into detail about his examination of the *Third Critique*). In the former work, he tried to describe the Kantian understanding of the theoretical and the practical by using Chinese traditional concepts, especially that of the "one-mind-opens-two-gates" theory. This theory, which is at the core of his twofold ontology, is basically identical to the Kantian distinction of phenomena and noumena; thus, it is faithfully Kantian, as already mentioned. In order to reexamine Kant critically and go beyond him, it was necessary for Mou to concentrate on the way Kant solved his own philosophical problems. The biggest problem Kant himself faced was the transcendental illusion (*Transzendentaler Schein*), especially the antinomies that our reason cannot evade. In the process of giving a definitive solution to this problem, Kant revealed the effectiveness of the distinction between the phenomenal and the noumenal. And the transcendental illusions were resolved by assuming a standpoint of transcendental idealism and describing the relationship between the theoretical and the practical. All of these steps Mou faithfully observes, even if he occasionally attacks Kant fiercely, especially concerning intellectual intuition. Even if Kantianism is said to be insufficient, Mou's framework of philosophy is still *unmistakably Kantian*.

Then, is Mou's truly original contribution to the critique of Kantian philosophy the notion of intellectual intuition? Although the emphasis on intellectual intuition

appears to be his (and Chinese tradition's) contribution to Kantian philosophy, it must be considered only as an *amendment* to it, not as a fundamental attack on it. If the deficiency of this philosophy is the insufficiency of recognizing only sensible intuition, Chinese philosophy admits another form of intuition, the intellectual, which must be fully recognized in order that freedom *presents or manifests* itself (呈現). Wing-cheuk Chan explains this (quoting Mou's text) as follows:

According to Mou Zongsan, in order to radicalize Kant's moral philosophy, it is necessary to secure freedom as an intuitive presentation. Originally, Kant only characterizes freedom as a fact of reason. Hence the freedom of the will remains a nonintuitive presupposition of morality. But the problem is that "if freedom is only a postulate and not a *presentation*—for it is beyond empirical knowledge, then moral laws and the categorical imperative etc. must become empty."<sup>31</sup>

Therefore, the notion of intuition must be expanded in order to give proper status to morality. Here is the Confucian contribution to philosophy as moral metaphysics. Freedom is a *presentation*, which is not a sensible presentation but an intellectual one. This enlargement of the notion of intuition and presentation is Mou's most significant improvement to Kantian philosophy.

Yet, this contribution is only a further development or *perfection* of Kantian philosophy. It is not an outright opposition or criticism; it does not change the overall Kantian framework. In spite of the many improvements and supplements that Mou has added to this classical philosophy, he is almost completely Kantian. For example, Mou's critical attitude toward Heidegger is based on Mou's defense of moral standpoint, as Heidegger's philosophy is profoundly anti-Kantian. Therefore, it is difficult to say whether Mou succeeded in presenting the remarkable supremacy of Chinese culture over Kant's philosophy only by pointing out the notion of intellectual intuition.<sup>32</sup>

In his *On the Perfect Good*, however, Mou tried to attack directly the Kantian solution to the antinomy of practical reason and assert his own solution positively. The central topic in this treatise is no longer the most effective way of illustrating Kantian philosophy, nor is it a commitment in the form of an amendment or enlargement of the Kantian scheme, but the invention of a totally different method for solving the Kantian antinomy of practical reason, which is discovered between happiness and virtue. Only if this alternative solution is successful and acceptable can we say that Mou succeeded in presenting the supremacy of his (or Chinese) philosophy over Kantianism.

Kant discovered the antinomy of practical reason in the apparent impossibility of the necessary connection between happiness and virtue. The desire for happiness cannot be the motive for virtue, and the maxim of virtue cannot be the cause of happiness, which makes a proportionate balance between happiness and morality impossible. On this idea of a proportionality or a necessary connection depends the idea of the *sovereign good*, but in our world its realization seems to be impossible. As is well known, Kant believed that he solved this problem in the form of "postulates": the solution is provided by postulating the infinite progress of our soul in its

immortality and the absolute ground of moral cause of the world (God). Especially problematic for Mou is the postulate that states the existence of God. As a non-Christian East Asian philosopher, he tries to solve the Kantian antinomy of practical reason without postulating the existence of God.

This Kantian antinomy and its subsequent postulates have an important meaning in the Kantian system of philosophy. It might appear strange that a “postulate” provides a definitive solution; yet, here is the mystery of Kantian philosophy as elucidated by the *ontological interpretation* of Kantian philosophy. According to Heinz Heimsoeth, a prominent ontological interpreter of Kant, we have to take into consideration Kant’s “metaphysical interest” here. In Kant’s overall picture of philosophical investigation, the *critique as a propaedeutic for future systematic philosophy* ends here, and the construction of his *ontology* proper starts from this postulate-theory onward, as already mentioned above.<sup>33</sup> The Kantian postulate is not simply a solution to antinomy, but an exposition of the possible way in which we lay the foundations of metaphysics. God had traditionally been considered to be the entity par excellence, *primum et maxime ens*, but now Kant considers His existence only as a postulate of practical reason. This is a structural aspect not only of *moral theology* but also of his so-called *practico-dogmatic metaphysics*. Mou never misses this deeply ontological meaning of Kantian antinomy.

Again, Mou, as a non-Christian East Asian philosopher, attempts to solve the Kantian antinomy of practical reason without postulating the existence of God. Here he discovers the profound ontological meaning of the Tiantai doctrine of perfect-teaching (圓教). It appears bizarre that he invokes the Buddhist idea of perfect teaching at this point, but Mou had no choice but to resort to Buddhism, because Confucianism doesn’t work effectively here, as the latter tends to consider the virtue-happiness relationship as something *analytic*, as in Stoicism, even though their ultimate positions might be different. Mou writes:

The first stage of Confucian moral practice sees the virtue-happiness relationship similarly to Stoicism, taking an analytical attitude. . . . In the later period, when Neo-Confucianism developed to its highest point, at this stage it was no longer deadlocked. However, Confucianism does not explain this problem sufficiently or put enough emphasis on it. It was when Buddhism exhibited its idea of perfect teaching that the virtue-happiness relationship became suddenly unquestionable.<sup>34</sup>

In its later development Confucianism evolved from a mere analytical approach and moved toward acceptance of the virtue-happiness relation. We can find an exemplary exposition of this problem in Buddhism as well—and the Buddhism invoked here must be Tiantai Buddhism because that is the “perfect teaching.”

But what is perfect teaching? Here I need not explain at length the concept of perfect teaching as shown in *Buddha-nature and Prajñā Wisdom*. For our purpose here, however, I must call attention to the point that the Tiantai doctrine defines itself as “perfect teaching” for the sake of its *ontological* standpoint. Perfect teaching is called perfect because of its ontological perfection. In other words, other Buddhist

doctrines are imperfect as long as we assess them from an ontological point of view. As Mou says:

The perfection of wisdom (*Prajñāpāramitā*) is only the *weft* (緯) of perfect teaching. The reason why Tiantai perfect teaching is called perfect must be found in its *warp* (經) and its *principle* (綱), that is, in the *question of being* (存在問題) of all entities. . . . It is clear that the being of dharmas cannot be guaranteed (保住) until we reach the height of perfect teaching. From this aspect of guaranteeing the being of dharmas, we can give it a name: *Buddhistic ontology*.<sup>35</sup>

The importance of perfect teaching is in its scrutiny of the “question of being,” which has no more adequate definition than ontology. It is called perfect because of its ontological superiority vis-à-vis other schools of Buddhism. The question of the problem of being is posed and reasoned out by Tiantai Buddhism.

How is this ontological thought, a type of Buddhism that is concerned with the question of being, connected to the virtue-happiness relation? What relevance is there between the problem of highest good and the question of being? To answer this question, one should take into consideration Mou’s penetrating understanding of Kantian philosophy, as well as his position as a non-Christian. The Kantian solution to antinomy already has an ontological meaning. When Kant postulates the existence of God in order to guarantee the possibility of the highest good, the antinomy of practical reason must be seen as the key to the question of being, even though he cannot ask this question seriously. The existence of God is postulated, which announces future metaphysics as of the practico-dogmatic version. However, this is nothing but the annihilation of the question of being, which can be called the “forgetting of being” in the Heideggerian sense. Mou sees here a profound challenge to non-Christian philosophy: “According to Kantian philosophy, the highest good cannot present itself. Kant only affirms that God guarantees the possibility of the highest good.”<sup>36</sup> A genuine Chinese philosopher cannot presuppose the existence of God or accept this “postulate” of practical reason. He must solve the antinomy, the virtue-happiness problem, without postulating the existence of God. If Buddhism claims to be ontological, it must solve the virtue-happiness problem without resorting to such transcendence. This is why perfect teaching is called for in the context of the antinomy of practical reason.

Mou attacks this Kantian postulate that states the existence of God and tries to show the Buddhist version of resolution. His core understanding of the antinomy of practical reason resides in the interpretation of “happiness” (as we shall see later, Kōyama Iwao also sees happiness as the core of the problem). Kant himself seems aware of this problem as well. When Kant talks about “self-satisfaction” (*Selbstzufriedenheit*) as a more adequate term to describe our joy in moral practice (which he also paraphrases as *intellectual satisfaction*), he is closer to the possibility of going further than his own previous understanding of happiness.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, the concept of happiness is problematic even for Kant himself. Mou’s reinterpretation can be justified in this context.



Mou's reinterpretation of "happiness," one which no one else had conceived of before, is surprisingly innovative. In Mou's conception of Buddhist ontology, *happiness is itself nothing but being*: "The *being* of dharma is nothing but happiness" (法的存在就是福).<sup>38</sup> Or rather, happiness is inseparable from the act of being. Happiness can be ascribed only to something existent.<sup>39</sup> Happiness is inseparable from existence and is attributable to it; therefore, we can substitute the concept of being for the concept of happiness. More adequately, happiness is identical to the *affirmation of being* (肯定存在).<sup>40</sup> Surprisingly, Mou does not explain this equation further. To equate happiness and being would appear to be considerably optimistic. Moreover, philosophically the similarity is not at all self-evident. Logically, we cannot equate happiness and the act of being or the affirmation of being without several conditions; at the least, this understanding is surprisingly dissimilar to Kantian philosophy. However, Mou seems to believe that this logic is nonetheless virtually axiomatic. Although he does not go into the meaning of this concept of being, it actually entails a meaning far richer than mere natural existence; affirmation of being means *the concentrated attention to the being of entities*, as will be explained shortly.

If happiness *is* the act of being itself, the Kantian antinomy can now be transformed into a question of the relationship *between virtue and being*. The antinomy of practical reason is reformulated as the incompatibility or inconsistency between virtue and the pure affirmation of being. An important aspect of this idea is that even if existence or the affirmation of being is substituted for happiness, it does not change the nature of antinomy by itself. Even if pure affirmation of existence is identical to happiness, this affirmation is not right there, ready at hand. Just as it was before, it is difficult to affirm the being of this world now, full of evil as it is.

Thus, the problem between virtue and existence presents us with the *problem of evil*. When the virtue-happiness problem is transformed into the virtue-existence problem, the whole problem becomes that of the existence of evil in this world. The Christian idea of Evil is expressed in several ways in the Buddhist tradition. Mou follows the Tiantai tradition and uses the term "the world of evil" (魔界), or Hell (地獄).<sup>41</sup> Indeed, in the Buddhist regional ontology of the ten world-spheres (十法界) of the universe, the lower regions, such as those of Hell, Hunger (*preta*), and Animality, are mentioned in order to point to the existence of evil. The existence of evil described in this way threatens the realization of the highest good and the compatibility and consistency of virtue and existence.

It is almost impossible for us to affirm existence as such. All-encompassing affirmation is unthinkable for ordinary people and intolerable for our moral judgment. Our lives are full of negative conditions and experiences, and the world is replete with evil and harsh realities. Certainly, we ought to negate these things in our moral thinking because our moral thinking cannot accept and affirm their existence. However, the focus here is not the shining moral life, as Mou, representative of the New Confucian thinking, had tried to emphasize, but a life full of misery, evil, and despair, a life that is terrible and *almost indistinguishable from death*. Our experience is no longer a "Study of Life" in the Confucian sense, but a study of death and life in an

amoral and religious sense. The difficulty presented by the antinomy is not simply still intact, but even magnified to the extreme.

The difficulty presented by the antinomy is no longer objective, but purely *subjective*, and *practical* in nature. The affirmation of the being of this world is difficult in a purely subjective or practical sense. When we hear the expression “virtue and existence coincide,” this seems to indicate a Confucian moral metaphysics, but this is far from the truth; what is asked here is *how can we affirm even the worst and most terrible aspects of this world*. If Tiantai is the true, perfect teaching, it is because the awakening or awareness it pursues is an all-encompassing affirmation of existence, which characterizes this form of Buddhism. This affirmation is possible when we ask for the being of all existent entities, and focus our attention as we cast our gaze on it. What we should do in order to affirm existence is not to deny the inferior entities and evils, but to cast our gaze on the univocal being of all existent entities. We awake to the fact that we are inseparable from the world, even from evil, and that we are immediately connected to it as long as we hold to this purely *ontological* point of view. To use Mou’s beautiful expression, we become Buddha in the *immediacy* with Hell, Hunger, or Animality (即者地獄, 餓鬼, 畜生等而成佛).<sup>42</sup> The difficulty of consistency between virtue and existence is overcome in this immediacy or paradoxical identity (即) in our practice. An all-encompassing affirmation will be attained through the virtue of Buddhist practitioners; even the terrible and virtueless aspects will be absolutely affirmed. The Buddha of perfect teaching, whose virtue is consistent with existence, is a *perfect Buddha* (圓佛).<sup>43</sup> This is how Tiantai Buddhism solves the virtue-existence problem.

On the contrary, the rival Huayan School, at least according to Tiantai’s criticism of it, has a tendency to cut off the lower worlds, abandoning all other world-spheres, hence their being, and emphasizes the purity of Truth (緣理斷九). Consequently, virtue and existence do not coincide, as virtuous practice tries to annihilate the being of *virtueless* existence. Huayan Buddhism nullifies the problem of evil in this sense by neglecting the being of all inferior entities such as Hell, Hunger, and Animality. When we awaken and become Buddha, we have to deny the negative outlook on this world. In this way, the Huayan mode of thought cannot comprehend reality absolutely *because it only sees the ultimate reality*. It does not gaze on the being of entities because it does not absolutely affirm existence but only conditionally or partially affirms it. Unlike Tiantai doctrine, which maintains that we awaken through affirming the entire world without ever denying the lower world-spheres, even Hell, nonperfect teaching sees the world in an idealistic way by not acknowledging the *being* of all negative aspects of the world. Such a Buddha does not awaken with an acceptance of the immediacy of Hell. In such an imperfect awareness, virtue and existence do not coincide.

This is how Mou solved the problem of the Kantian antinomy in a genuinely Buddhist manner. Happiness is existence itself, and we affirm existence through Buddhist virtue (practice) when we become aware of our immediacy with the world in all its aspects by casting our gaze on the *being* of the entities with which we are the one. As a result, we can attain the affirmation of *being* without reservation or exception.

Only then are virtue and happiness necessarily synthesized in the perfect awareness of a Buddha, and they no longer create an antinomy. Virtue and happiness manifest themselves consistently in Buddhist awareness, which is the *realization* of the solution to the Kantian antinomy.<sup>44</sup> In short, this solution is not a theoretical solution, nor is it done through a postulate; it is done through Buddhist practice. Buddhist awareness is the *presentation* of the highest good in this manner. Thus, it is a practical solution or rather a practical realization, although the word “practical” is no longer understood in the *moral* sense, as in Kantian usage, but unmistakably in the Buddhist or *religious* sense, to use the terminology of the Kyoto School (we will discuss this later).

Therefore, Buddhistic ontology is an attempt to cast our gaze on the being of entities to firmly expose the being of all the beings in our awareness or awakening, which simultaneously is the presentation of the highest good. As already mentioned, this presentation of the highest good is the same as becoming-Buddha in the *immediacy* of Hell, Hunger, or Animality. One way to describe this situation would be to say that “evil immediately *is* Buddha” (魔界即佛).<sup>45</sup> This immediacy or paradoxical identity (即) can be interpreted in an ontological way, although Mou does not explicitly speak in these terms; otherwise, it inevitably appears to be more of a mystical than a philosophical notion.

But what is the meaning of *ontology* here? I will explain as follows. Things are different in their essences, but from an ontological standpoint, that is, by focusing on their being, they are said to be the same. Things are *immediately* the same, at least paradoxically so, as long as we can see the ontological difference between entities and their “being” and concentrate on the latter. An all-encompassing affirmation is realized in the awareness of this univocal horizon of being, and it will be attained through the virtue of Buddhist practice. This solution to the problem of antinomy, this realization or presentation of the highest good, is a truly ontological enterprise; thus, it is called Buddhistic ontology. We affirm the whole being in a practical way, and only through such an absolute affirmation can we see the possibility of genuine ontology. What we now have is no longer a moral metaphysics even though it might still be called a practical ontology. Mou conceives of it as the final conclusion of his long ontological quest; it is no longer a Confucian-inspired moral metaphysics, but a Buddhist-inspired Buddhistic ontology, although here he comes unexpectedly closer to his long-time enemy, Heidegger.

Is this idea of Buddhistic ontology exclusive to Tiantai teaching? Mou certainly thinks so. His understanding of Buddhism is based on his *scholastic* interpretation of the historical dispute between the Tiantai and Huayan schools. However, we must consider that this is the fundamental characteristic not of perfect teaching but of Buddhist thought. His understanding of Tiantai doctrine is not restricted to the narrow problem of Buddhist scholasticism; indeed, it inevitably concerns the understanding of the nature of Buddhist thought as a whole. This view is supported by his interpretation of Zen Buddhism. According to Mou, all Zen follows either of the two types of Buddhist doctrines (Huayan or Tiantai), and the Zen master Huineng clearly belongs to the Tiantai type of perfect teaching.<sup>46</sup> And, historically speaking, most major Zen

practitioners belong to this type, since the influence of Huineng has been predominant in the history of Zen Buddhism in East Asia. Therefore, the idea of Buddhist ontology has a surprisingly wider scope than Mou himself may have suspected.

At the very least, Mou's exposition of Buddhist ontology offers an important key to the understanding of Zen Buddhism. Thus, we are fully justified in comparing his Buddhist ontology with Kyoto School philosophy, which is usually said to be influenced by Zen Buddhism. In the next section, I will show how the Kyoto philosophers resolved the same Kantian antinomy.

### *The Antinomy of Practical Reason and Kyoto School Philosophy*

The reexamination of Kantian philosophy was also one of the major tasks for the Kyoto School philosophers. If the latter are considered to be Buddhist-inspired East Asian philosophers, their way of overcoming Kant would naturally provide us with considerable insights into the understanding of Buddhist philosophy, as well as Mou's ontological interpretation. Therefore, let us next turn our attention to the treatment of Kantian philosophy by the Kyoto School.

For most of the Kyoto philosophers (the major authors, such as Nishida, Tanabe, Nishitani, and Kōyama), Kantian philosophy was the springboard for constructing their own philosophical positions, due in part to the authority of the German philosophical academy. Each of them tried to overcome it in their own way, while their attempts radically differed from Mou's.

There are two conspicuous characteristics of their critical approach. First, their type of thought (except for Nishitani) is said to be *dialectical*, and their main concern is not the presentation of the highest good as with Mou, but the dialectical cancellation of the contradiction, or the dialectical movement driven by the force of contradiction. Second, the meaning of the antinomy of practical reason is clearly recognized as the transcendence of morality in order to arrive at a religious horizon. For all of these Kyoto School philosophers, Kant is an exemplar of a moral vision of the world, thus the most difficult obstacle to overcoming moralism. Nishida criticized Kant for considering religion solely from the moral standpoint in his 1945 essay *Religious Worldview*. Tanabe defined his own profoundly religious philosophy as *absolute critique*, which, in his *Philosophy as Metanoetics* (1945), is shown to be an attempt to transcend the antinomy of practical reason. Kōyama inherited this line of thought and reexamined the Kantian solution to the antinomy of practical reason in the most definitive manner. These two offer a criticism of Kantian philosophy that is considerably different from Mou's.<sup>47</sup>

Let us first examine Kōyama's reinterpretation of the Kantian solution to the antinomy of practical reason. Kōyama, the successor to Nishida and Tanabe at the Department of Philosophy at Kyoto University, is neither well known nor appreciated today.<sup>48</sup> However, he is known for his highly systematic theorization of Kyoto School philosophy. For example, the first-ever monograph on Nishida (1935) was written by him; his exposition is highly lucid and much more refined than the infamously arcane writing style of Nishida. And Kōyama's formulation of the logic of place is

outstanding for its synthesis of Nishida's and Tanabe's formulations.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, unlike his predecessors, he investigated the schools of Buddhism, namely Tiantai and Huayan. Therefore, we have good reason to consider his ideas here in order to formulate the Kyoto School's attitude toward Kantian philosophy and to examine the nature of its understanding of Buddhism.

According to Kōyama, the question is whether true antinomy is found between virtue and happiness. Do their contradictions deserve to be called antinomy? Although virtue and happiness may not coincide, *how do they constitute an antinomy as such?* Rather, is it not true that there is a problem with the Kantian understanding of happiness itself? When Kant refers to happiness, does he really mean happiness that is distinguished from mere pleasure?<sup>50</sup> As we have seen above, Mou also reinterprets the concept of happiness in quite an original manner; he equates happiness with existence, thus transforming the antinomy into one between virtue and existence. Kōyama does not display such interpretative skill. Instead, he tries to look for another form of antinomy, one that is genuine and decisive. If the concept of happiness is already questionable, we have to search for the true antinomy of practical reason.

Kōyama asks: where can we find this true antinomy? As the antinomy of practical reason cannot be found between virtue and happiness, Kōyama finds it in another place, namely *between moral duties themselves*. The true antinomy will be found between different moral duties, in other words, in the *conflicts* between different duties.<sup>51</sup> But if following duties is a virtuous undertaking, this means that antinomy would thus be found *within virtue itself*. As our moral duties conflict with each other, our virtue itself is torn by different duties. Universal legislation cannot be unconditionally universal; this would be impossible, as we would face discord and conflict arising from unresolvable dilemmas.<sup>52</sup>

Although we face unresolvable dilemmas in our moral practice, the issue here is not the "borderline cases" of morality. Kōyama's point is that Kantian universal legislation is inherently self-contradictory. Indeed, this contradiction constitutes a *truly moral experience* for us, expressing the ultimate condition in which we reside and act.<sup>53</sup> In our daily lives we ignore conditions of this severity. We neglect the conflicts among the duties in our moral practice. Yet, in faithful moral practice and in the occasional tragedies of our lives, such contradictions will of necessity be revealed. Only those who have a keen sense of moral rectitude will find this a serious problem and be tormented by the moral dilemmas they face. Therefore, a moral dilemma is the genuine antinomy of practical reason, which is found and *lived* seriously.

This antinomy is the ultimate problem that we face in our attempt to reason; it amounts to the realization that practical reason is itself contradictory. We *ought* to follow the universal legislation, whose universality is *in itself contradictory*. This situation can be understood as *absolutely contradictory*, as this contradiction is without reservation and without any possible solution from a moral standpoint. What is in question here is our own existence; as long as we are rational beings, we are necessarily contradictory. We cannot overcome such contradictions as long as we hold to



the moral standpoint; morality is neither autonomous nor self-sufficient. As Nishida writes, in *Religious Worldview*:

Is even morality, which is supposedly autonomous, really self-sufficient? The ultimate victory of moral good over moral evil would involve the negation of morality itself. The moral will possesses this self-contradiction within itself.<sup>54</sup>

Although the situation Nishida describes is slightly different and not as powerful as Kōyama's explanation, what is meant is the same: morality is necessarily self-contradictory. This means that morality is not the ultimate ground but non-ground.

This *recognition of the limits of morality* characterizes the philosophy of the Kyoto School in general. Our shining moral lives are unable to solve the problems that we face. We ought to recognize that morality is *not* the ultimate stage of philosophy. Contrary to the Kantian standpoint (and Mou's idea of moral metaphysics), morality does not have sufficient power to supply a foundation to the metaphysical investigations of the supra-sensible. This understanding of the genuine antinomy of moral reason necessarily brings us to another stage of philosophy that is no longer either theoretical or practical.

If we assume the preceding to be true, there are several questions to consider. For example: how can we resolve this antinomy? Can we resort to the existence of God to overcome such contradictions? Or can we talk about the well-known concept of "reconciliation" (*Versöhnung*), as emphasized in the philosophy of Hegel? Kōyama simply says that from the self-negation of practical reason through this antinomy, thus from the collapse of moral supremacy, an absolutely universal field will be opened. This field is described only as an absolute contradiction (absolutely contradictory identity), which would also be called something *religious*. Morality is unable to build a genuine ontology; only by going beyond it, and doing so from a religious standpoint, can we begin to understand absolute reality. The emphasis is put not on the shining moral life but on the dark side of life, or, rather, our spiritual death.

The Kyoto School philosophers emphasize *religion* or the "religious standpoint" as something higher than morality or the moral standpoint. They characterize their own position as something religious, which is deliberately opposed to both the theoretical-epistemological and the practical-moral. In this sense, the religious standpoint is said to provide the solution to the antinomy. However, we have to avoid considering religion as the resolution of the contradiction. While dialectics is usually understood as a cancellation of contradictions, the Kyoto School philosophers pursue the contradiction to the limit, without ever surpassing it. They struggle to situate themselves in contradiction. This is a painful practice. Usually humans want to resolve contradictions and reach a stable and happy self-identity. Even Hegel, the founder of modern dialectics, had to hold on to the ultimate identity of the "Absolute Spirit," for which the Kyoto School philosophers criticized him. Their task was to remain at this difficult standpoint and see the ultimate reality as clearly as possible. There is no solution to the contradiction; we can only live the absolute contradiction as such.



For the Kyoto School philosophers, Hegelian reconciliation represents the abandonment of philosophy. Reason cannot and must not be restored to its original unity. If such a stern attitude is simply called “religious,” then a religious standpoint doesn’t allow us to resolve contradictions. This new type of dialectics is most clearly conceived by Tanabe, according to whom critical philosophy does not prepare for a future possible metaphysics; critique must be continued infinitely without reservation, without rest, or even without a possible exit; this he calls the *absolute critique*. The religious standpoint is the name of the attitude that sees the reality *qua* absolute contradiction and absolute self-disruption. As Tanabe says, self-contradictions are the final result of the demand for self-identical unity:

The critique of reason cannot avoid leading reason to absolute critique. The absolute self-disruption brought about in absolute critique is unavoidable for reason awakened to consciousness of itself. The self-consciousness that all things are in absolute disruption because of antinomies and self-contradictions is the final result of the demand for self-identical unity in reason.<sup>55</sup>

As self-contradictions are the final result of the demand of reason, we cannot choose to return to self-identity, as this just means a withdrawal from our investigations. Yet, the most difficult task for us is to avoid an almost irresistible return to self-identity. We must observe self-contradictions eagerly and passionately.

Then, what is the result of such a religious standpoint? What happens when we attain the ultimate degree of contradiction? The absolute self-contradiction amounts to a “death.” Only in this death, in this absolute self-disruption, can we see ultimate reality, because ultimate reality is by nature contradictory and self-disruptive. As Tanabe says:

Nevertheless, if we submit obediently to this destiny, choose this death willingly, and throw ourselves into the very depths of these utterly unavoidable contradictions, reality renews itself from those depths, and opens up a new way, urging us to head in the direction in which actuality is moving and to collaborate with this movement.<sup>56</sup>

We have to situate ourselves in the midst of contradictions and disruptions. This idea is shared and even applied within the school itself. In other words, once we lose sight of contradictions and recover from our self-disruptions, we cannot see reality anymore. When Tanabe criticized Nishida, his attack was directed at the concept of identity, which the latter saw in terms of absolute contradiction.

But the question arises as to what such a stern attitude has to do with Buddhism. This dialectical understanding of reality *qua* contradiction is at the core of Kyoto School philosophy, and Nishida himself was fully aware of the Buddhist nature of this argument. Most of the Kyoto philosophers recognize the influence of Buddhism, but the reference is almost always to Zen (Nishida, Nishitani) and Pure Land (Tanabe). However, Kōyama sees behind the core idea of this school the Japanese tradition of Tiantai. Historically, Tiantai has been the matrix of almost all Japanese Buddhist thinking ever since the Heian period. This tradition placed importance on reality (事) rather than reason (理). As we have seen, Tiantai Buddhists criticize the Huayan doc-

trine for abandoning all the lower worlds by resorting to the purity of Truth (緣理斷九). Tiantai Buddhism has always attempted to grasp absolute reality without reservation, without any resort to the ultimate and the beyond, by splitting up self-identity and reason. As is often said, Japanese monks tried to go even further than the Chinese Tiantai tradition, and the absolute affirmation of reality has been seen as an esoteric truth, which is usually called the Tiantai theory of innate awakening or *Hongaku* doctrine (天台本覺論).<sup>57</sup> It is in this light that Kōyama sees a Tiantai foundation to Kyoto School philosophy.

However, the Kyoto School philosophers' explanation of Buddhism is always, and deliberately, insufficient, compared to Mou's extensive interpretation of Tiantai doctrines. Not only Kōyama but all the other Kyoto School philosophers seem less eager to offer theoretical explanations of their Buddhist background. They do not permit themselves to pretend to be Buddhist or to depend on Buddhist concepts, or to appeal explicitly to that tradition. They are surprisingly faithful to the tradition of Western philosophy. Their understanding of the antinomy shown above is clear in itself, but its relationship with Buddhism is unmentioned and totally unclear. Rather, one can even suspect that their dialectical thought *might not* find any direct affinity with Buddhism, at least as one of the plausible possibilities.

The exception (among the major figures mentioned above) is Nishitani. He is exceptional with respect to two points. First, he tried to explain his own explicitly Zen-based philosophy in his *Religion and Nothingness* (1961). Even though this is irrelevant to Buddhist scholasticism, Nishitani always orients himself to Zen. Second, his standpoint is not dialectical but *ontological*, in a Heideggerian sense. (This point must be examined carefully because this plays a pivotal role in the characterization of Buddhistic ontology in the following section.)

It is true that Nishitani carefully avoids the word *ontology*. His intention is to "attempt an answer to the question of the essence of religion by tracing the process of the real pursuit of true reality."<sup>58</sup> However, his interpretation of Great Doubt is unmistakably ontological. He writes:

When we break through the field of self-consciousness and overstep the field of *beings* to come out on the field of nihility . . . that is when we may speak of the self as doubting. Here we come to something fundamentally different from the ordinary doubts we have about one thing or the other, that is, the doubts that have to do with objective matters. . . . I am talking about the point at which the nihility that lies hidden as a reality at the ground of the self and all things makes itself *present* (現前) as a reality to the self in such a way that self-existence, together with the being of all things, turns into a single doubt.<sup>59</sup>

Doubts do not concern objective matters or things present at hand; doubt is about overstepping the field of such beings to uncover another field called nihility, which *presents* itself as a reality that lies hidden at the foundation of all entities. This is the experience of "Great Doubt," in which the being of all entities becomes the question. This doubt or question must be seen as *ontological* in nature even if Nishitani does not use the word.

Whereas it is Great Doubt that presents itself, it is the self which *realizes* this doubting or questioning. "It is the full realization (actualization-*sive*-appropriation) of the reality of the self and all things."<sup>60</sup> In this experience of Great Doubt, being itself is questioned in its entirety and in its authenticity. Here contradictions are no longer in question. This is neither an ontical nor a dialectical investigation. This is precisely an *ontological* insight because it no longer rests on contradiction but goes beyond the field of objective entities. As Nishitani writes, one should "break through the field of self-consciousness and overstep the field of beings to come out on the field of nihility."<sup>61</sup> The question no longer concerns the ontical differences between entities but the ontological difference between entities and their being itself. In short, contradiction is now overstepped, and the horizon that allows us to question the *being* of beings manifests itself in a conspicuously Buddhist manner.

How, then, does Nishitani understand Kantian antinomy? As explained above, most Kyoto philosophers assume a dialectical attitude in order to show where they stand. Nishitani's philosophy is strikingly non-dialectical in the sense that he does not appeal much to contradiction, even though he occasionally refers to it. Rather, his point is the ontological difference and the presentation of elemental reality. In this context, he, too, tries to illuminate his own position by referring to the Kantian antinomy of practical reason. He characterizes Kantian philosophy as a "standpoint of the person":

The standpoint of the person as autotelic and the concept of a commonwealth of ends formed by a community of such persons are not only clarifications of the most aboriginal base of ethics; they are also equivalent to the humanness of man reaching its apex of self-awareness. . . . What I mean to ask here, however, is whether or not this standpoint of the self-sufficient subject that takes hold of its roots within itself does not rest on a still more fundamental ground.<sup>62</sup>

Although the importance of Kantian moral philosophy cannot be overestimated, Nishitani also asks if it really is the ultimate standpoint. The standpoint of person or morality must "rest on a still more fundamental ground." In the terminology of the Kyoto School, this "ground" can be vaguely called a religious one. However, he tries to clarify this "ground" by using Kantian antinomy.

How can such a discovery of a "still more fundamental ground" be possible? Nishitani's answer is that there must be a "complete conversion from the standpoint where the self is an autotelic person to the standpoint where the self is a means for all other things."<sup>63</sup> This means a complete negation of any standpoint of the morality of person. Rather, the self as person becomes a *thing* to all other beings. This results in the Buddhist idea of compassion. And, he adds, "This is possible on the field of emptiness as an absolute near side."<sup>64</sup> However, for our purpose here it is not necessary to enter into a detailed discussion of Nishitani's conception of emptiness, or of the field of emptiness itself. To do so would require a discussion of factors that fall outside the scope of this study, which is focused on Mou's idea of Buddhistic ontology. For our purpose, then, it is sufficient to mention that the field of emptiness will be described by the logic of the *circuminsessional* (回互的) relationship.

We have seen how the major Kyoto School philosophers utilize Kantian antinomy as a springboard. The moral standpoint finds itself in a contradictory condition, which leads either to the absolute contradiction or the paradoxical condition. To dwell on this critical situation is called the absolute critique by Tanabe, and the real pursuit of true reality (the “standpoint of emptiness”) by Nishitani. In the latter view, the Kantian standpoint of the person, which is usually considered to be self-sufficient, is revealed to rest on a still more “fundamental ground.” In this already *non-personal* standpoint, we are no longer ends in ourselves but *things* to others. This paradoxical vision makes Buddhistic compassion possible. In either case, Kantian moralism breaks down and a contradictory or paradoxical field presents itself, which is characterized as *religious*. This is how the Kyoto School philosophers utilize Kantian antinomy and try to go beyond it in a Buddhistic manner.

### *What is the Philosophical Contribution of Buddhism?*

After describing the Kyoto School’s methods of reexamining the Kantian antinomy of practical reason in a Buddhistic manner, we are now able to compare them with Mou’s Buddhistic ontology. All of them considered the Kantian understanding of happiness as problematic and attempted to transform the antinomy into its genuine form. However, before offering comparative remarks, we must first put their thoughts in order and quickly summarize their characteristics as clearly as possible. And then we can see the similarities and the important differences.

Mou’s understanding of the Kantian antinomy can be summarized as follows. He understands happiness as existence itself even though he doesn’t explain this sufficiently. This interpretative art is critically important, as it changes the nature of Kantian antinomy. By interpreting happiness as existence, the antinomy of practical reason is now found between existence and virtue; it is no longer a dispute between Stoicism and Epicureanism. The true confrontation here is the one between the two schools of Buddhism: Huayan and Tiantai. While Huayan sees ultimate reality by ignoring the lower worlds and incorporating everything into the world of reason, Tiantai attempts to comprehend and affirm the whole of reality, including its most troubling aspects, immediately and without reservation, by casting its gaze on the being of all things or entities. Such an all-encompassing affirmation is not at all easy; it must be carried out in a *practical* way so as to stimulate awakening. It is a sudden awakening, an *immediate* experience; it is no longer a postulate, but an actual and immediate realization that becomes possible only through Buddhist practice.<sup>65</sup> When the being of the whole world is absolutely affirmed, only then can existence be realized *virtuously* in this all-encompassing affirmation. The Tiantai School’s perfect teaching brings about in a *practical* way the coincidence and consistency of virtue and existence, and thus virtue and happiness. This is a practical solution to Kantian antinomy, from an ontological standpoint.

The shared attitude of the Kyoto School philosophers toward Kantian philosophy can briefly be summarized as follows. Both Nishida and Tanabe criticized Kant for his moral standpoint, and defined their own position as something religious. Con-

cerning the antinomy of practical reason, the understanding of happiness is not at issue here because they have no intention of building their philosophy on the Kantian scheme; rather, a *refinement* of antinomy is necessary. As Kōyama shows, the core ontological idea of Kyoto School philosophy can be explained as such a refinement. The genuine antinomy of practical reason will be found *within moral virtue itself*. Virtue is in itself contradictory; that is, moral duties under universal legislation conflict with each other. Any effort to be universal is contradictory and paradoxical in itself. Unlike in ordinary ethical considerations, such moral dilemmas should not be seen merely as exceptional or borderline cases, but as inevitable moral experiences. With this, moral supremacy collapses, and our reason is forced to disintegrate. Indeed, our self splits up upon such an experience, in these absolutely unresolvable dilemmas. We are caught in such a dilemma only when we try hard to be moral, but so far as we try to be moral we are strangled by contradictions. The Kyoto School philosophers regard this situation as the ultimate reality in itself; in short, reality is in itself something contradictory. However, this contradictory nature of reality is affirmed as such, in its absolutely contradictory identity. And, as Kōyama says, this emphasis on the *contradictory nature of reality* is highly Buddhistic, in the Tiantai sense.

Can we see the common aspects of these different reexaminations of or attitudes toward Kantian antinomy? We can say that all these types of solutions are *practical* and *subjective*, rather than theoretical and objective. The Kantian solution is nothing other than objective, even if Kant emphasizes its practical aspect. If we postulate the existence of God, this is no more than expressing our need for the transcendent being extrinsically; we need it practically, but suppose it objectively, even though it might be called practical objectivity. In contrast to the moral nature of this objectivity, we do not need any practical effort to pose such a postulate because it is only extrinsically supposed. It is not practical at all in this sense, but rather static and even *theoretical* in nature. Kant seems to be betraying his own practical standpoint in his theory of the postulate. Mou asserts his own subjective and practical solution against Kantianism. Here the word “practical” is not used in the moral sense anymore, but should be understood in the Buddhist sense of meditation and awareness; it is the attainment of the affirmation of being. All-encompassing affirmation can only be possible in practical subjectivity; it is nonsense to affirm theoretically and objectively the darker aspects of this world.

The Kyoto School also concentrates on the contradictory nature of reality subjectively and practically. For its members, ontology is not a theoretical problem; it is a “metanoetic” practice against the tendency to convert contradiction into reconciliation. Philosophy in this sense is a painstaking practice of absolute critique. Thus, both forms of Buddhist-inspired philosophy provide the same *practical* and *subjective* solution.

Besides their subjective and practical character, both forms of Buddhist-inspired philosophy share the same problem of how we can affirm existence in a different way from mere morality. Both recognize the limits of the moral standpoint, the Kantian (and moral-metaphysical) view of the world. They deny neither the contradictions nor the evil of the world, but affirm the reality without reservation or moral judgment.

Here both the Kyoto School philosophers and Mou show their respective limitations. On the one hand, Mou does not clearly recognize that his approach is no longer in the category of moral philosophy because he wants to incorporate it as far as possible into a Confucian framework, while the Kyoto School successfully distinguishes its position from morality and calls it a religious standpoint. On the other hand, the Kyoto School has its own limitations because its dialectical standpoint cannot detach itself from contradiction, and thus from antinomy. Rather, it must dwell in a never-ending contradiction in order to supply dialectical movement for its own sake. Although they affirm dialectically the contradictory nature of existence and see the possibility of a new field of philosophy, they cannot go beyond a framework that is both Kantian and deeply metaphysical.

One exception to this dialectical tendency in the Kyoto School is Nishitani, who went further than his predecessors (Nishida and Tanabe) and his contemporary (Kōyama). Nishitani's standpoint cannot be defined in a dialectical manner. His position no longer depends on Kantianism even as a springboard. Indeed, the other Kyoto philosophers are dialectical and metaphysical in that they cannot go beyond the antinomy; their effort is an attempt to situate themselves in a predicament without end, instead of being able to reach a Hegelian cancellation or reconciliation. In short, if they cannot overcome Kantianism, they simply radicalize it as far as they can go; Tanabe's formulation of *absolute critique* is a perfect example of this unmistakably Kantian tendency. On the contrary, Nishitani's solution is considerably different, as it no longer rests on Kantianism.

Then, how should we characterize this anti-dialectical standpoint? Its focus is on the ontological difference between beings and their being, which opens up an absolutely elementary field in which reality *presents* itself elementarily. This elementary field is called the field of emptiness, where one is led away from an entity and led back to its being. As Heidegger points out, this is the meaning of ontological investigation:

Apprehension of being, ontological investigation, always turns, at first and necessarily, to some being; but then, *in a precise way, it is led away from that being and led back to its being*. We call this basic component of phenomenological method—the leading back or reduction of investigative vision from a naively apprehended being to being—*phenomenological reduction*.<sup>66</sup>

Even if Heidegger's definition of phenomenological reduction does not appear in Nishitani's writing, it is clear that the latter's Buddhistic investigation is always *ontological*. Beyond ontical contradiction, Nishitani tries to develop the ontological difference between beings and their being, in the deepening of awareness. Similar to Mou, Nishitani's interpretation of Buddhism must be characterized as a Buddhistic ontology.

Here we can see a profound affinity between Nishitani and Mou on this theme of Buddhistic ontology. Both of them found the essence of Buddhism in its precisely ontological standpoint: Buddhism is profoundly opposed to metaphysics in the sense of an ontic and transcendent metaphysics. The being of beings presents itself in our



meditation as our awareness of the ontological difference deepens and develops. Although Nishitani's focus is on the essence of Buddhism in general, while Mou's emphasis (as far as the idea of ontology is concerned) is exclusively on Tiantai's perfect teaching, we cannot miss this fundamental similarity between these two East Asian philosophers. *For both of them, the essence of Buddhism is discovered in its non-metaphysical and precisely ontological investigation of the being of entities.*

But the implication of the limitations, or uncertainty, shared by both Mou and the Kyoto School philosophers should not be ignored. Although Nishitani is in a sense free from these limitations, the caution and uncertainty of other Kyoto philosophers, especially Tanabe, have their own importance. Their caution and uncertainty originate from their identification of their philosophical enemy. The Kyoto philosophers try to go beyond Hegel and perfect philosophical logic (dialectics) on their own. Indeed, dialectics has always been imperfect in the history of philosophy, as contradictions tend to be converted into reconciliation. Thus, the attempt to see the contradictory nature of reality must be carried out as an *absolute critique*. By comparison, we can say that Mou was at a disadvantage because his only counterpart was Kant. Although we must admit that his interpretation is highly illuminating, we cannot deny the paucity of philosophical speculation in his formulation of Buddhistic ontology. He was not sufficiently aware of the risk that his philosophical view might easily degenerate into a mere confirmation and justification of the observed world (a common criticism of Mahāyāna Buddhism).

It would seem that the affirmation of being could easily degenerate into a mere convenient reconciliation with the existing world. When affirmation becomes something objective and theoretical, as in Kantian postulates, it loses its critical power. It is nothing but a rubber-stamp agreement with reality. The Kyoto School philosophers always warn of the danger of withdrawing from contradictions, or of returning to the standpoint of person. Mou seems fairly optimistic about the realization and the presentation of the highest good, but he never forgets to emphasize his ultimate moral orientation. We should be vigilant about the possible danger to Buddhistic ontology, which can degenerate into a mere justification and simple confirmation of what already exists. As Tanabe clearly points out, such vigilance makes this philosophical attempt not an ontological doctrine, but rather an absolute and unending *critique*. This is why we should not go beyond Kant's critical philosophy; even Buddhism should be formulated as an absolute critique. Kyoto School philosophy might not be characterized as Buddhistic ontology in Mou's sense, but rather as a Buddhist practice itself in its critical mode, in the sense of *Critical Buddhism*.<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, it is fruitless to attack Buddhistic ontology from a moral or ethical standpoint. Even if Mou's philosophy can also be seen as *Topical Buddhism*, we must appreciate the way he elucidated Tiantai Buddhism in close connection with the Kantian antinomy, and the way he advanced his ever-developing philosophy in his later life, so as to overcome his own moral vision of the world. The same can be said about Nishitani; although his field of emptiness has no ethical element, ontology cannot be identical to morality, while it surely contains the latter as an important component. Thus, it is nonsense to criticize Mou or Nishitani for their ontological

interpretation of Buddhism in this respect. We should not neglect alternative ways of examining Kantian antinomy by the Kyoto School philosophers, even though a given method is not ontologically *perfect*. In short, perfect teaching does not abolish the other genres of teaching but *comprehends* them; all of them coexist within the field of perfect teaching.

### *Conclusion*

In his later years, Mou Zongsan, one of the most significant New Confucian philosophers of the twentieth century, came to recognize the importance of the Buddhist way of posing the question of being. Buddhist ontology cannot be incorporated into a Confucian moral metaphysics; it is an ontological and non-metaphysical approach to the meaning of being and a practical affirmation of being itself. If metaphysics is possible only as moral metaphysics, which is a study of entities via morality or moral practice grounded in the priority of practical reason, Buddhist ontology enables a fundamental criticism of this entirely Kantian idea of metaphysics.

The implications of this idea are explained in Mou's reexamination of the Kantian antinomy of practical reason. The affirmation of being, which is achieved in Buddhist practice, practically resolves the Kantian antinomy, and *presents* the highest good. Although Mou himself could not develop this idea further, this Buddhist idea holds the possibility of the self-denial of Mou's previous moral standpoint. The two-fold ontology ("one-mind-opens-two-gates") scheme of metaphysics is unsustainable in this authentically ontological view, and this difference between metaphysics and ontology is historically expressed by the way Tiantai perfect teaching criticizes Huayan Buddhism.

The same Kantian antinomy is used by the Kyoto philosophers to clarify their own philosophies. They were well aware that their standpoint was no longer a moral but a religious one. According to them, what we see in the true antinomy of practical reason (which is formulated by Kōyama as the conflicts between moral duties) is the *absolutely contradictory nature* of reality. This contradictory nature is what Kant saw in his transcendental philosophy and what Hegel developed in his dialectical philosophy. However, there is danger in succumbing to the shift from painful contradictions into an easy reconciliation with, or an irresistible return to, the identity of the Supreme Being (God). This affirmation of the absolutely contradictory nature of reality must be carried out practically and unceasingly, as an *absolute critique* (Tanabe). Yet, in this direction, we cannot go beyond Kant because we must depend on the metaphysical position as a springboard.

Nishitani went further. He developed a Zen-inspired ontological investigation, under the more or less explicit influence of Heidegger. Here we can clearly see the shared characteristics of Buddhist ontology, which represents the definitive conquest of Kant's philosophy. Mou and Nishitani share the similar idea of Buddhist ontology, which is a practical and radically ontological type of philosophy. It is radically *amoral* and *impersonal* in the sense that it transcends the personal standpoint. It is a question of being in its univocal horizon, which can only be described in para-

doxical or non-metaphysical ways. Reality self-realizes in this affirmation of being, which pays concentrated attention to the being of all things, which is also an affirmation of the controversial and even disturbing aspects of our world. This question of being constitutes an ontological awareness in its purely *subjective* and *practical* sense. It is realizable in its awareness and in its all-embracing and no longer personal compassion.

Therefore, the contribution of Buddhism to philosophy is *its profoundly non-metaphysical radicalization of the question of being, which differs in nature from moral metaphysics, and its practice of deepening the awareness of the being of entities*. The hesitation of other Kyoto philosophers, as well as Mou's unchanged faith in Confucianism, does not devalue the importance of this idea of Buddhist ontology. Tanabe insisted that philosophy should be an absolute and unending *critique*, and that an all-encompassing affirmation can bring us into a simple justification and monotonous confirmation of what already exists. Nevertheless, if perfect teaching or Buddhist ontology preserves and contains all the kinds of entities and thoughts, it already comprehends an imperfect component of its own, which is the critical type; this ultimate facticity expresses the fundamental importance of this idea.

## Notes

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- 1 – The Kyoto School understanding of Buddhism, together with a concise introduction to Mou's overall position toward Buddhism, is given in Tomomi Asakura, "Nihilism, Absolute Critique, and Doctrinal Taxonomy," *Tetsugaku zasshi* (Tokyo: Yūhikaku), no. 123 (2008): 125–143. On the nature of Mou's Confucian interpretation, see Asakura, "Mou Tsung-san's Idea of Confucianism as a Study of Life," *Journal of Death and Life Studies* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo) 8 (2006): 150–174.
- 2 – Especially important is the usage in Mou Zongsan, *Zhongguo zhexue shijiujiang* (Nineteen lectures on Chinese philosophy) (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1983), p. 362, and *Siyinshuo* (Lecture on four causes) (Taipei: E'hu Chubanshe, 1997), p. 128.
- 3 – Mou, *Lecture on Four Causes*, p. 231.
- 4 – They had no need to write a manifesto to express the value of their culture to the world, such as the New Confucian *Manifesto on Chinese Culture to the World* of 1958. Although the Kyoto School is often described as having nationalistic interests at heart, its core members always defined themselves as "philosophers" in the Western sense, not as cultural preachers in the New Confucian manner.

- 5 – See the article in Japanese by Lam Wing-kang (Lin Yongqiang), “Seimei-no gakumon toshitenō tetsugaku” (Philosophy as a study of life), *Risō* (Tokyo: Risōsha), no. 681 (2008): 179–180.
- 6 – Ng Yu-kwan (Wu Rujun), “Dangdai Xinrujia yu Jingdu Xuepai: Mou Zongsan yu Hisamatsu Shinichi lun juewu” (The contemporary New Confucians and the Kyoto School: Mou and Hisamatsu on awareness), in *Mou Zongsan zhaxue yu Tang Junyi zhaxue lun*, ed. Jian Rixin (Taipei: Wenjin Chubanshe, 1997), pp. 243–266.
- 7 – Mou, *Nineteen Lectures*, p. 385.
- 8 – I have already discussed this point in Tomomi Asakura, “From a Study of Life to a Phenomenology of Death,” *Journal of Death and Life Studies* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo) 10 (2009): 147–172.
- 9 – Mou, *Foxing yu bore* (Buddha-nature and *prajñā* wisdom) (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju 1974), p. 5.
- 10 – Joel Thoraval’s “Introduction” to his French translation of Mou, *Spécificités de la philosophie chinoise* (Paris: Cerf 2003), p. 56.
- 11 – On the Buddhist aspect of New Confucianism as a whole, see also Nakajima Takahiro, “Shinjuka to Bukkyō” (New Confucians and Buddhism), *Shisō* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten), no. 1001 (2007): 80–104.
- 12 – Mou Zongsan, *Xinti yu xingti* (Taipei: Zhengzhong Chubanshe, 1968).
- 13 – Mou, *Xinti yu xingti*; Mou Zongsan, *Xianxiang yu wuzhi* (Phenomenon and thing-in-itself) (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1975).
- 14 – Heinz Heimsoeth, *Studien zur Philosophie Immanuel Kants I* (Köln: Kölner Universitäts-Verlag, 1956).
- 15 – Immanuel Kant, *Preisschrift über die Fortschritte der Metaphysik*, Ak.20.
- 16 – Mou, *Nineteen Lectures*, pp. 72–73.
- 17 – *Ibid.*, pp. 375–376.
- 18 – *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- 19 – Heimsoeth, *Studien zur Philosophie Immanuel Kants I*, p. 230. I have emphasized this point in my article cited above.
- 20 – Mou, *Nineteen Lectures*, p. 93.
- 21 – Sébastien Billioud, “Mou Zongsan’s Problem with the Heideggerian Interpretation of Kant,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 33 (2006): 238.
- 22 – See the elegant and lucid article by N. Serina Chan, “What is Confucian and New about the Thought of Mou Zongsan?” in *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination*, ed. John Makeham (New York: Palgrave, 2003). Also see my previous article, cited above.

- 23 – Mou, *Buddha-nature and Prajñā Wisdom*, p. 483.
- 24 – Mou Zongsan, *Yuanshanlun* (On the perfect good) (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1985).
- 25 – *Ibid.*, pp. 337–340.
- 26 – *Ibid.*, p. 265.
- 27 – *Ibid.*, p. 334.
- 28 – See Wing-cheuk Chan (Chen Rongzhuo), “Haidege yu Tiantaizong” (Heidegger and Tiantai Buddhism), *E’hu Yuekan* (Taipei: E’hu Chubanshe) 47 (1983).
- 29 – Hans-Rudolf Kantor, “Ontological Indeterminacy and Its Soteriological Relevance,” *Philosophy East and West* 56 (1) (2006): 19.
- 30 – *Ibid.*, p. 21.
- 31 – Wing-cheuk Chan, “Mou’s transformation of Kant’s Philosophy,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 33 (2006): 130–131. Mou’s quoted text is from *Xinti yu xingti*, p. 155.
- 32 – In this sense, François Jullien’s criticism of Mou (for exaggerating the metaphysical integrity of Confucianism) is acceptable concerning the purely Confucian phase of his thought. See François Jullien, *Fonder la morale* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 1995); the title was later changed to *Dialogue sur la morale*.
- 33 – See Heimsoeth, *Studien zur Philosophie Immanuel Kants I*, p. 230.
- 34 – Mou, *Nineteen Lectures*, p. 329.
- 35 – *Ibid.*, pp. 358, 362.
- 36 – *Ibid.*, p. 363.
- 37 – Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*, Ak.5:117.
- 38 – Mou, *Nineteen Lectures*, p. 363.
- 39 – Mou, *On the Perfect Good*, p. 278.
- 40 – *Ibid.*, p. 270.
- 41 – *Ibid.*, p. 279.
- 42 – Mou, *Nineteen Lectures*, pp. 363, 383.
- 43 – *Ibid.*, p. 383.
- 44 – Mou, *On the Perfect Good*, p. 270. Also see Mou, *Nineteen Lectures*, p. 383.
- 45 – Mou, *On the Perfect Good*, p. 274 (quoted from Zhili’s text).
- 46 – See Mou, *Buddha-nature and Prajñā Wisdom*, pp. 1039–1070.
- 47 – I have discussed this point in Tomomi Asakura, “Mou Zongsan and Kōyama Iwao on Morality,” *Philosophical Studies* (Tokyo: University of Tokyo) 27 (2008): 70–83.

- 48 – One of the biggest reasons is that he was purged, along with Nishitani and Kōsaka, by the Allied Forces who occupied war-torn Japan; unlike the other two, he could not return to Kyoto University as a professor.
- 49 – Kōyama Iwao, *Bashoteki ronri to koō-no genri* (The logic of place and the principle of co-response) (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1951/1976).
- 50 – Kōyama, *Kyōiku tetsugaku* (Philosophy of education) (Tokyo: Tamagawa Daigaku, 1976), pp. 22–24.
- 51 – *Ibid.*, pp. 24–28. He repeats this theme of conflicts between duties (義務葛藤) in several other texts.
- 52 – His favorite example is a real story about a Japanese judge, who, shortly after the war, died of malnutrition, since he strictly followed the law that forbade buying food from the black market. In this case, obeying the law and keeping one's life are two conflicting moral duties. See Kōyama, *Dōtoku towa nanika* (What is morality?) (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1958), p. 209.
- 53 – *Ibid.*, p. 213.
- 54 – Nishida, *Last Writings*, trans. David A. Dilworth (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1987), p. 66.
- 55 – Tanabe Hajime, *Philosophy as Metanoetics*, trans. Yoshinori Takeuchi (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), pp. 43–44.
- 56 – *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 57 – See Kōyama's postscript to *Zoku Nishida tetsugaku* (Philosophy of Nishida), vol. 2 (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1940). However, this famous but not well studied doctrine is sometimes harshly denounced by Critical Buddhism scholars, from historical and cultural perspectives. See Ruben L. F. Habito, "Tendai Hongaku Doctrine and Japan's Ethnocentric Turn," in *Pruning the Bodhi Tree: The Storm over Critical Buddhism*, ed. Jamie Hubbard and Paul L. Swanson (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1997), pp. 374–387.
- 58 – Nishitani Keiji, *Philosophy and Nothingness*, trans. Jan Van Bragt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 6.
- 59 – *Ibid.*, pp. 17–18; my italics.
- 60 – *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.
- 61 – *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- 62 – *Ibid.*, p. 273.
- 63 – *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- 64 – *Ibid.*, p. 275.
- 65 – Although the English usage of the term "realization" is generally attributed to Nishitani, we can also use it to describe Mou's thought. On the original usage of this term, see Nishitani, *Philosophy and Nothingness*, pp. 5, 21–22: "I am



using the word to indicate that our ability to perceive reality means that reality realizes (actualizes [實現]) itself in us; that this in turn is the only way that we can realize (appropriate through understanding [體認]) the fact that reality is so realizing itself in us; and that in so doing the self-realization of reality itself takes place." "The reality that appears from the bottom of the Great Doubt and overturns it is none other than our 'original countenance.' To see 'heaven and earth becomes new' is to look on the face of the original self. It is the full realization (actualization-sive-appropriation [實現即體認]) of the reality of the self and all things. This is the Great Wisdom of which religion speaks, the wisdom that is, in fact, an aspect of the religious mode of being itself." (The words in brackets are my additions from the Japanese original text.)

- 66 – Martin Heidegger, *The Basic Problems of Phenomenology*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (Indiana University Press, 1982), p. 21.
- 67 – The critical aspect of Buddhism is well expressed by Kyoto School philosophy. However, critical Buddhism regards Kyoto School philosophy as its principal enemy. See Noriaki Hakamaya, "Critical Philosophy versus Topical Philosophy," *Pruning the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 58–60.