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COMPARATIVE THINKING AS A FUNDAMENTAL METHOD OF INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH

Abstract: The general target of this paper is to establish methodological guidelines for comparative thinking that will show the latter's merits for the development of global thinking in cultural and human sciences. Furthermore, the paper solves questions of how the *inter-action* of cultures and the *intra-relation* of societies and communication work for the benefit of human beings of various cultural backgrounds.

Therefore, the purpose of this project is not limited to pure methodology. The project shows in detail how comparative thinking works in every aspect of human sciences and how effective it is as applied cultural philosophy. Contrary to materialist and physical reductionism, the comparative method opens a wide gate to understanding the principles of cultures, including various dimensions of the *inter-action* of different thinking methods. From this viewpoint, comparative thinking shows an effective way of interdisciplinary thinking which supports the basis of human and cultural sciences in this globalizing world.

The special focus of this work is on how comparative thinking grasps the basic terminology of the cultural philosophies of East and West, e.g., the basic thoughts of Heidegger about *being*, *life*, *death* and *nothingness* versus the same problems treated by Dōgen, one of the most important thinkers and authors of Zen Buddhism in Japan and East Asia. Until about ten years ago, many philosophers regarded Heidegger and Buddhist thinkers in a harmonized one-sided dimension. The effort was successful, and we have entered an era of intercultural "oneness philosophy." Starting from this point a further step leads to a better understanding of the basic differences of insight into similar problems approached by Heidegger and Dōgen. An intensified dialogue and a more lively inter-action will lead to the emergence of profound conceptions and hermeneutics, capable of constructing a new philosophy in the contemporary world.

Key Words: Heidegger, Nishida, Dōgen, Western and Eastern thought, being

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Questions Arising out of the Current Situation

Worldwide cross-linking of scientific data has facilitated an overview over the state of the art in the research of various disciplines. Other than in former times this information, which is usually up to date, enables simultaneous interaction and mutual influence, at least virtually. This may have positive stimuli, but may also lead to possible misinterpretations. In the latter case, no specific methods of thinking have yet been developed to avoid following such misleading paths. The present draft outlines a way of thinking by means of which errors may be avoided, valuable time and expenses may be saved in interdisciplinary research and a high level of the state of research may be ensured.

I. Why Comparative Thinking is Useful for Solving Problems in Religion and Philosophy in a Globalized World

The description of a widely diffused problem noticeable in the transfer of non-European traditions into the current intercultural civilization and philosophy may serve as an introduction:

Buddhism as a religion of reincarnation?

Last year I sent a letter to Prof. Dr. Hans Waldenfels upon the recommendation of a member of the archdiocese of Vienna. It concerned the review of a theological work comparing Christian religions with Buddhism. The latter was presented under the heading of a religion of reincarnation, the former would stand for unique and eternal life. This terminology of "reincarnation" is a serious problem in East Asia, above all with many Buddhist intellectuals in important monasteries and convents. The head of the Zen convent at Nagoya/Japan, Aoyama Shundō of the Zen-Buddhist Sōtō school, for instance, has deplored that such a misunderstanding has spread so widely in Europe that it would be difficult to quickly correct it. In short: Buddhism focusing on "samsara" (reincarnation/rebirth) conforms mainly to the teachings of the Tibetan Vajrayana-Buddhism, whereas most Mahayana Buddhist schools in East Asia do not follow these principles.

Are there reasons for this erroneous transfer?

This is an erroneous transfer of major sections of Buddhist teaching, accompanied by a diffusion in Europe helped by the mass media. The activities of the Tibetan monks under their leader, the Dalai Lama in

exile, and the content of their teachings of Buddhism are well known in international journalism; but they are not immune to constant misinterpretation by the media. Tibetan Buddhism is held to be the major “representative” of Buddhism in the global world; whereas the movements of Theravada and Mahayana Buddhism have not been taken into consideration. The special development of the Vajrayana Buddhism of Tibet is confused with the general features of Buddhism as a whole. The concept of “samsara/reincarnation” is not bound to substantial being during the whole history of Buddhism and is therefore not one of the focal points of cognition.

Commutation of the culturally relevant basic concepts

Rebirth from one life into another is a belief central to the Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet, which differs from many Mahayana schools. Samsara, another life following a former one, an endless life with the substance of a soul, has been a key tenet in the religions of India since Brahmanism. Buddhism has dissociated itself from this. The belief in the substance of a soul (*ātman*) is based on the principle that such an *ātman* cannot be given as a substantial being (the *anātman* theory).¹ A further life after death in another form is possible based on the cognition that the final result of the thinking and acting of everybody (*karman*) can have its effects throughout one’s life and also after death. The reincarnation of the soul and body of an individual, however, is impossible.

The Madhyamika school of Nāgārjuna follows the cognition that an individual ego in the empirical life, *puḍgala*, cannot be reborn in one and the same shape or with the same mind.² The Mahayana Buddhism in East Asia also upholds the basic belief that things and all that is are free from being bound to any substance (“empty of substance”), which may exist forever, since all manifestations are subject to dynamic change of space and time.³ The difference is that religious belief and philosophical reflection take place directly in the sphere of real, empirical life. A substantially traceable causality has been negated since the *puḍgala* doctrine of the Madhyamika School. The reason is in the original interpretation of space and time, that space in its limited and unlimited expansion and contraction is always in mutual relation with time, which arises from one moment to the next and disappears into what is past. Man, in his indivisible context of body, soul and mind, is thrown into this structure of time, into the dynamic change from one moment to the next, from being and nothing, from emergence and disappearance.⁴

With regard to “samsara,” the Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet holds a position close to that of Hinduism. Though there is no recognition of a

substance of soul according to the Buddhist belief, “samsara” as “reincarnation” is often posed as a focal point for meditation. A further link for intercultural transfer in Europe is the view that “samsara” will be passed on from one life to another as a *reincarnation of one individual to another potential life based on substantiality*. In the original Vajrayana Buddhism in Tibet this is not really regarded as substantial: Even though a “further life” is visualised as focal point for one’s meditation, one must not cling to it but free oneself from it as soon as the meditation is finished. A “reincarnation” of the self after death is a *new perspective* (consciously or unconsciously) spread in Europe, which has remained a phenomenon arising in the wake of *crosslinked misinterpretations* and has not yet found its due scientific revision.⁵ These introductory words make it clear that Buddhism cannot be seen as a religion of reincarnation, above all where Buddhism in East Asia is concerned. Zen Buddhism, Huayan Buddhism, Tiantai Buddhism and others represent the position of Madhyamaka (Nāgārjuna’s School), i.e. that a human being can never be reborn as the same individual with his/her personal characteristics.⁶

Zen Buddhism has further developed this idea in that rebirth is held to be an illusion. What can be accepted is a causally determined basic law of *karman* that all beings are subject to the principle of mutually dependent appearing and disappearing (without being connected to an eternally present substance). In this the bodily presence of a person (*pudgala*) in itself forms a unique life of his/her own. Time itself is a basic phenomenon of *anitya*: the constant impermanence of coming into being and passing away (submerging and disappearing/vanishing) of any moment (“*From breath to breath, from one instant to the other, the here and now of space and time passes away*”). Concentration on collecting and building up good *karman* should be directed towards the here and now of the present life instead of contemplating an unknown potential of rebirth after death.⁷

Tiantai Buddhism has propagated the idea (*shohō jissō* 諸法実相) of “the emergence of manifold truths in really empirical being.” Huayan Buddhism has found in the given phenomenon an unlimited source for grasping all-uniform truth. In this distinct orientation of grasping an immutable truth in the middle of world immanence the principle of *samsara* in ancient India has led into the opposite direction: *samsara*, an infinite cycle from one life to another takes place within the individual life of every man and woman from day to day. The “transformation between six worlds” is to be found in the fact that a human being – according to his collected *karman* (results of thinking and acting) – is constantly moving between the different worlds of “man, bodhisattva (heavenly divine), war or brute force, endless hunger, animal greed and

hell". A very real mode of thinking, applicable to the psychology and social ethics of this century.⁸

If the given misinterpretation can be regarded an interim result, which reflects an intercultural cross-linking of *homonymous but semantically different terms*, then it seems plausible that comparative reflection can make useful contributions to filling in gaps in the current research landscape. Comparative thinking is the basis of reflecting on the essence of things, concepts and principles of everything that is.⁹

Comparative thinking as basic method applied to the phenomenon of interdisciplinary inter-action

Cultural heritage is based on principles of tradition. Building up such principles can be visualized as a "system" in the sense of a unit of consistent order. If such a system/unit of consistent order from time to time is being restructured by the user, his environment and other human beings surrounding him, we might call this a structure instead of a system.¹⁰ It might be a consistent order of logic with a "system" or a structural unit relating more to behavior and acting. But both can be seen as a systematic structural unit in an interdisciplinary field of exchange, of inter-action and communication, which is held together by itself.¹¹ This unit may be called *intra-system*.¹² The Tibetan *samsara* concept, for example, is an *intra-system* for Vajrayana Buddhists.

Quite different ideas about "samsara" are held by Tiantai, Huayan and Zen Buddhists.¹³ Opposed to the *intra-system* is another unit which can be called *extra-system*.¹⁴ Most members of either system, *intra-* and *extra-system*, respectively, have not yet found a way of comparing what belongs to their own systems and what remains outside, so that the principles of the other side may be evaluated by comparative thinking. There remain ambiguities about what is foreign to one's own system, or interpretations are made vaguely because prejudices of one's own stand in the way of *clear-cut appraisalment*. In this way an erroneous integration as described above ("samsara" as substantial reincarnation) is made.¹⁵

The comparative method of thinking - with special reference to interdisciplinary research

The tendency mentioned before is not only an erroneous transmission in the reception of a foreign culture. The reason is a random cross-linking of a concept of ideas specific to one culture/civilization (*A*) with those of another culture/civilization (*non-A*). In this the original concept belonging to *A* is connected to a completely different set of ideas of *non-A*, being integrated into the latter without further reflection. The

following approaches to intellectual currents should be considered a desideratum for research:¹⁶

- a) Comparative thinking as a basic method in cultural communication in a globalized world;
- b) An encounter of non-uniform cultures/civilizations is a meeting of different disciplines of thought and action. A profound evaluation of the interdisciplinary method of thinking is important not only for the exchange between scientists in different disciplines but – beyond that – for a cultural exchange on an intellectual level.

This lacuna (of item a and item b) is a common global problem in interdisciplinary research.

Globalization and international networking have generated an immense amount of new information. This is bound to lead to misrouted scientific concepts because – especially in interdisciplinary research – new ideas and incentives arise at the interfaces between the different disciplines. However, each individual term has to be interpreted against the background of its own specific discipline and the *intra-system method* of thinking. Interdisciplinary interactions are bound to fail *when the terms used are identical as to their outward form but not as to their semantic contents and connotations*. Using these terms without differentiation will lead to misinterpretations. The comparative method of thinking can help to correct such misconceptions. Errors, ambiguities and a certain one-sidedness in using and understanding a term can be avoided if one's own horizon of thinking is extended, by operating with homonyms of another scientific system while being fully aware of this different background. The comparison of terms, of sentences and of their contents is indispensable for elaborating the strategic method of thinking.

Basic research into the major concepts in different cultures/civilizations thus gains new relevance. The comparative method of thinking can be fruitfully employed in this, as a basic method for familiarization with extraneous disciplines of thinking and acting, enabling a successful interchange.¹⁷

Concrete method employed

So far, comparative philosophy or philosophical comparatistics have not been integrated into research as a fundamental scientific method. Some assessments, concerned with a comparison of two different cultures/civilizations, philosophers or their works, limited themselves to a mere contraposition, listing similarities and contrasts. Ideas of different thinkers have been brought together and compared at random

without clarification of focal points. Without a profound specification of the essence between the two subjects any effort for a comparative philosophy or philosophical comparatistics is bound to fail.

Comparative thinking uses the following method:

- Premise: clear definition of a scientific topic
- α) Syntactic comparison
- β) Semantic comparison
- γ) Semiotic comparison
- Clarification of emerging individual questions and results to develop a consistent theory

An example to illustrate this method:

Premise: A topic is defined by the key term "God" (absolute being).

ad α) "God" is substance. God created the universe. *Deus est omnipotens*. The attributes of God are fundamentally related to 'being'. They form the bases of monotheistic religions and the philosophy related thereto.

Many religions and philosophies of the non-European world (Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism a.o.), however, are not based on a monotheistic concept of God. Thus, the fundamental link between God and absolute being is absent.

ad β) The icon "God" may be decoded as a perennial, persistent substance (leading to further interpretations). True statements – whatever their contents – lead back to the certainty of absolute being.

In the second case the same icon cannot be interpreted in the same way; God or Gods as absolute beings may or may not be present. There is no absolute persistent substance in the infinite: One can only rely on reality, which means that there is no absolute, perennial being.¹⁸

ad γ) In the first case a way of thinking and acting is promoted, related to absolute being, which is established by it. In the second case a method of thinking and acting is expressed which above all is related to a given reality, because the basic initial position of any thinking and acting is not explained by a divine creator or by an absolutely positive stratum of being, but is underlined by its negation or by keeping open an absolute and persistent being. However, man has to accept an absolute norm for truth. As a norm for determining an absolute truth there is nothing but reality, which is built up by man and his environment step by step on a co-operative basis. (A detailed discussion of ethical points is not possible here.)¹⁹

II. Specific Topics to be Elaborated

The following is an overview over the individual topics that will have to be treated within the framework of the current project.

1. The perception of subject-object-splitting

Since the times of ancient Greece, European philosophy has assumed that a thinking person who discovers incontrovertible truth experiences surprise or astonishment. This leads to a development where thinking will grasp the sources of truth and clarify the objects of the established phenomena of truth. It is shown that already Aristotle's *Metaphysics* is based on a clear cut delineation between thinking subject and object, being and not being, right and false in the deliberation of possible discourses.

Later history passes through the fruitful periods of substance metaphysics, running from medieval times to the modern era, to the period of Enlightenment, and to the foundation of transcendental philosophy and ego-ontology in continental Europe.²⁰ Anyone trying to evaluate the philosophy of India, China and East Asia solely on the basis of his/her knowledge of European philosophy will go into the wrong direction. Even Hegel, biased by his own dialectic method of thinking, passed judgement on the history of philosophy of India and China as underdeveloped phenomena of history.²¹ In the light of comparative philosophy this is a grave mistake. The beginnings of the history of religion and of ideas in India were not based on the same mode as the Greek *philosophhein*, but the *darśana* (the religious and philosophical outlook) was directed towards the deliverance from suffering in life.²² The method to achieve this is meditation. The person meditating aspires to full concentration in his mind, while his body remains seated in the lotus position, fairly tense, but nevertheless relaxed. The aim is to arrive at an inseparable unity between the regarding subject and the regarded object. A split between subject and object according to the European way of thinking is unfamiliar to this type of mentality. A later development of the Prasangika School has led to a refinement in the art of debate. One prerequisite of this debate is that the topic generally is derived from *darśana*, the critical and self-critical reflective appraisal of the object of thinking.²³

Truth is mainly understood in a way in which the thinking and regarding person places himself/herself into the world of intellectual, religious or philosophical outlook until he/she reaches an indivisible unity with the object he/she is regarding, including the influences exerted by his/her environment. In the intellectual and cultural

tradition of China, the general position of subject and object is yet accorded another significance. Philosophy, *zhé xué*, is a method for teaching and research into the principles of truth. These principles, at the same time, should be practised in the lives of men and society. Therefore *zhé xué* serves not only for speculative thinking but also for paving a way for unified thinking and acting.

Comparative reflection will lead to the fundamental modes of *philosophia*, *darśana* and *zhé xué* (哲学), which might give rise to the following questions:

- What is the position and the use of philosophy in a global world, against the backgrounds of the different world religions and cultures/civilizations?
- If the fundamental mode of philosophy is determined by a profound, self-critical reflection such as *darśana*, what is the effect on the problem of human suffering?
- Taking into account the history of philosophy in China and East Asia opens a new mode for the further development of philosophy in the global world: thinking as intellectual acting, *actus intellectualis*. What are the influences this mode has on the historicity of philosophy of today's Europe?

2. About the perception of good and bad

The fact that Buddhism is not a monotheistic religion postulating a personalized divine creator has its influence on the dualistic view of good and bad. There is no clear-cut differentiation between the created world of absolute good and the fall from grace on the part of man (Genesis), since Buddhism teaches that both good and bad are present in one individual who, just because of the tension between good and bad, has to confront his/her own suffering. Other than the absolute good in the creator and in his creation, the main topic here is Buddha as a human being, who is awakened to absolute truth, as a being of infinite aspiration to the highest good. In the later development of Mahayana Buddhism in China and East Asia the idea of the 'nature' of Buddha has become a key concept: Each individual harbours an original humanity, the potential to become a nascent Buddha (*bodhisattva*). This potential, however, is hidden by suffering and conflict, so that the individual from day to day may walk among the "six worlds" (man, the divine, brute force, hunger, greed and hell).²⁴

The categorical differentiation between good and bad is less important here. Instead, the following view is paramount: Each individual self (the ego in its experience of body and mind) forms a decisive mode for activating good or bad, according to his/her encounters with other beings. Man is a composite being, in constant

relation to good and bad. What makes him clearly differentiate between good and bad is the law of *karman*, the law of cause and effect of his own deeds including the results of his own thinking. What is bad forms bad *karman*, falling back on itself. From this is derived the responsibility of man for his own thinking and acting within the network of himself and other beings in his environment. The latter aspect is in line with the ethics of the Christian religions. What may be derived from the *karma* tenet to Christian teachings, is the awareness of each individual that his/her self will form an absolute, ultimate phase for ethical thinking and acting.²⁵ The place of an absolute divine creator in Buddhism and other non-monotheistic religions is kept "free and open."²⁶ The ethics derived from this may well comprise and esteem a monotheistic belief on the one hand, but - on the other hand - are free to develop a further ethical concept for all men and all beings in the universe, in the network of coexisting relations.²⁷

3. Comparative reflection on Buddhist phenomenology and philosophy (with special consideration of the philosophy of Zen Buddhism and the Kyoto school)

Buddhist phenomenology and philosophy offer a limited though variegated scope for reflection and analysis, since there are many schools with diversified regulations. From an analytical and epistemological point of view: The major advantage of phenomenology can be seen in the fact that the bases for reflection are not determined by the deduction of the concepts of pure reason in the terms of Kant, "*quid juris*", but by "*quid facti*". In analytical terms, phenomenology bases its reflections on what has not been selected for discourse in the pure transcendentalism of Kant's philosophy.²⁸

Buddhism and phenomenology in a certain aspect show many common features for elaborating on a common topic between the two horizons. One of the dominant factors is to be found in their joint subject: the phenomenon of the things that are. One of the sources - among many others - is Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, § 7. He shows that phenomenology is a method for investigating what shows itself openly, what is obvious in itself. Phenomenology originally refers to a methodological concept. Phenomenology expresses a maxim which refers "to the things themselves!"²⁹ Instead of any freely suspended construction in contrast to apparently designated concepts, phenomenology is the method of thinking of the "Phenomenon Logos."³⁰ What has to be investigated is the true being which hides in the phenomenon. Instead of speculative logics, metaphysics or dialectics the thinker returns to the "things themselves." thereby illuminating what is hidden and guiding it to the *logos* for definite

verbalization.³¹ The *Aisthesis*, what is perceptible by the senses, plays a dominant part in the phenomenological discourse. What is true appears in the phenomenon of the things that are.

Looking more closely at Buddhism, the teachings of Buddha *dharma*, one will find the moments for realizing the truth, as described above, in almost any part of Buddhist thinking: A truth in itself is hidden in the phenomenon of the things that are. One can directly look at it, free from an excess of words and without speculative logic. The Buddhist law of truth, *dharma*, lies in the everyday appearance of the real world. Sensual perception is also a subject important to cognition by reason, because in Buddhism bodily awareness is appreciated as a prime mode of recognition.

Thus it would appear that phenomenology and Buddhism have their parallels. Differences are only historical processes and the fact that Buddhism puts more stress on bodily recognition, whereas phenomenology is more open to being. Let us make a philosophical comparison of the two paths of thinking: One block is Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, second section, "Dasein und Zeitlichkeit," Chapter 1.³² His counterpart is Dōgen, *shōbō genzō*, volumes "Life-Death" (*shōji*) and "Time that is there" (*uji*).³³

In the Heidegger's sections the key concept of being there for death is the focal point of the discussion. Heidegger states that after the termination of our existence there will be a dimension of death. There is a linear, finite development of our life to reach the totality of our existence in the world. The terminal point is death. Death appears as the loss of being. Even if the focus to the "Ab-grund" or "Nothingness" in recognition of passing time seems to be similar to the Buddhist cognition of *anitya*, it is evident by Heidegger that the time, the being and self of humans are bound to the substantial existence associated to eternal cognitions.³⁴

Is our existence in the world a constant journey towards death in a "not yet"? Is death a termination of existence, and is being there in life something incomplete? Heidegger discusses these problems and shows that our existence is a "not-yet" to death. Death is still beyond all phenomena; it has not yet been integrated into the problem of being. Heidegger indicates a successive coming-into-being to arrive at the end; death is impending to our being.³⁵ The problem of death is integrated into existence. Being thrown into the field of imminent death causes fear. Fear of death is integrated into Being-in-the-World. Since the subject of fear is present even in our Being-in-the-World, we might say: "Angst ängstet sich"/"Fear is afraid". Heidegger writes:

Die Angst ängstet sich *um* das Seinkönnen des bestimmten Seienden (...)" (*Sein und Zeit*, 1993, p. 266): "Anxiety is anxious

about the Potentiality-for-Being of the entity so destined [des so bestimmten Seienden], and (...). (*Being and Time*, 1962, p. 310).

Heidegger has for a long time been concerned with the question how this nameless fear can be overcome. In his early work he arrived at the conclusion in the above mentioned chapter. Running ahead reveals the forlornness into being oneself and opens the possibility of being oneself, primarily relying on solicitous care, to have freedom to death, passionate, having broken away from the illusions of oneself, factual, sure of oneself and being afraid³⁶:

We may now summarize our characterization of authentic Being-towards-Death as we have projected it existentially: *anticipation reveals to Dasein its lostness in the they-self, and brings it face to face with the possibility of being itself, primarily unsupported by concerned solicitude, but of being itself, rather, in an impassioned freedom towards death – a freedom which has been released from the illusions of the 'they', and which is factual, certain of itself, and anxious.*

(Cf. the original, *Sein und Zeit*, 1993, p. 266:)

Die Charakteristik des existential entworfenen eigentlichen Seins zum Tode lässt sich dergestalt zusammenfassen: *Das Vorlaufen enthüllt dem Dasein die Verlorenheit in das Man-selbst und bringt es vor die Möglichkeit, auf die besorgende Fürsorge primär ungestützt, es selbst zu sein, selbst aber in leidenschaftlichen, von den Illusionen des Man gelösten, faktischen, ihrer selbst gewissen und sich ängstenden Freiheit zum Tode.*

This shows a confrontation with the duality of life and death and a resolve to further confrontation, in which one savors the depths of being as a contrast to its end and persists in the opening up of existence. With Dōgen, *shōbō genzō* (正法眼藏), secret records, vol. *shōji* (生死) / "The Unity of Life-Death", a different vision of the same problem is evident. Dōgen speaks to a layman:

The idea, generally held worldwide, that death is another dimension after the end of life, *is erroneous*. Life-death is an entity present in our bodily life from our birth onwards. It is wrong to think and act as if we negated one half of this pair of opposites, life-death, being and non-being, clinging only to the moment of being.³⁷

What is typical here is the Zen perception that these opposites should be analyzed not only in life-death, being and non-being, but also in our acts, in *retaining and releasing*, *hajō-hōgyō* / *hajū-hōgyō*.³⁸ Paramount is the notion that Dōgen does not see the phenomenon of life and death as a duality. Life-death is a collective phenomenon of our being as a whole. This is based on the principle of the recognition of being generally followed in Buddhism: *anitya*. All that is impermanent, no being remains persistent and eternal. A stratum of being as such in

Mahayana Buddhism is *held empty and open* with the concept of “*śūnyatā*.”³⁹

The substance of being is not focused because thinking, regarding, reflecting and acting are present in the midst of real, empirical life. The phenomenon as a whole is *anitya*, thrown into the dynamic change of all things. No divine creator is established. Buddha is one of the most important guides to overcome suffering and conflict, but he is not God. Buddha’s life and his *dharma* in the following are regarded as a being nearing the absolute. Buddha, in his limited lifespan, has formulated a number of irrefutable rules of recognition (*dharma*) and lived up to it, thus endowing suffering mankind with principles for the recognition of the causes of suffering and of how to overcome it. Buddha could not alter the lawful principle of *anitya*, the instability of all things, their occurring, development, staying and vanishing. There is an absolute irrefutable truth in the real, empirical being of our life and the conditions of the world. Dōgen’s lecture in the volume “The Unity of Life-Death” (*shōji* 生死, The secret records of *shōbō genzō*) points out that our present life with the two moments, appearing and disappearing/dying shows a unique, decisive moment for experiencing and grasping our “Buddha nature.”⁴⁰ This is the hidden potential in each individual to cope with the experiences made in one’s own life and to become a nascent Buddha, i.e. a *bodhisattva*.

By talking to the layman, Dōgen explains that *nirvāna*, the guiding principle of Buddhism, is not associated with higher transcendence beyond life. On the contrary, *nirvāna* is here and now, to be realized by an intellectual and real, empirical act: We can hold on to our living life and learn at the same time to let it loose. We can also hold on to dying death and learn to let it loose. Thus life is not life-life, but a given so-be-it; it is life-death. Death is no longer dying-death, but death-life. In this way nirvana is realized, the undisturbed silence, clearness and coolness in *dharma* awareness.⁴¹

Both Heidegger and Dōgen elaborate on the same topic: the relation between life and death, our existence that carries the potential of death, the confrontation with and the solution of the problems arising in this connection. The results of comparative reflection may be summarized as follows: the marked difference between Dōgen and Heidegger becomes obvious in the prerequisite that Heidegger poses death as the end of being in time, as an absolute opposite to being. Even though death at any time will be immanent to being, there is a *dual split* between being and death. Even though in Heidegger’s late work *Zeit und Sein* (*Time and Being*) and in the protocol of the Zollikon Seminar of “*Lichtung und Verbergung*” (“Clearing and Hiding”) mention is made of

extinguishing time, time, nevertheless, in connection with original being, remains in ever present subsistence.⁴²

With Dōgen this is different because of the paramount principle of the Buddhist dynamics of being, *anitya*. What remains ever present is not being, neither being nor nothing, but *anitya*, constant appearing, lingering and disappearing or vanishing of this moment (*kshana bhangha*) and the things involved, which exist in space, in their dynamic change from *being to non-being everywhere*.⁴³ The *Man* (*one or they*) of Heidegger is a persistent being destined for death. Its being in itself implies a moment for the loss of being; out of this arises the problem of abstract fear. With Dogen life-death, being and non-being, is integrated as indivisible pair of opposites; even this life forms a full dimension of life-death. Persisting and retaining (*hajū* 把住 or *hajō* 把定) in Zen recognition is constantly accompanied by the opposite, i.e. letting loose (*hōgyō* 放行).⁴⁴ Both thinkers at the end have found their ways to overcome death, with different ontological cognition and different ethic dimensions derived therefrom.

For further thought, stimulated by comparatistic philosophy, the following question is important: Do we hold the problem of death as a prelude to the abyss of nothing as true or do we accept this as a dynamic principle of man and all beings in the universe in transparency and silence (and the tranquillity resulting therefrom) of the mind? Out of this arises an ethical focal point: What are the contributions derived from this to ethical life and in which way could the two paths serve for building up what is good in the global world? The problem of *Zeitigung* (*Temporalizing*) with the early Heidegger is an important moment for visualizing the moment of Being-in-the-World (In-der-Welt-Sein). With Dōgen, *uji* refers to an opposite interpretation, i.e. that time is in us and that it passes and disappears from one moment to the next, in line with our existence here and now. Yet, this moment is always there, enabling us to create and collect manifold *karman*. Both ways of thinking concentrate on the essence of time: Dōgen always shows what is real, empirical and what points the way to self-redemption; Heidegger thinks in phenomenological terms. Being is nothing but *transcendens*: The transcendence of being is excellent in so far as it comprises the possibility and necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Any opening up of being as *transcendens* is transcendental recognition. Phenomenological truth (opening of being) is *veritas transcendens*:

Die Transzendenz des Daseins ist eine ausgezeichnete, sofern in ihr die Möglichkeit und Notwendigkeit der radikalsten Individuation liegt. Jede Erschließung von Sein als des transcendens ist transzendente *Erkenntnis*. Phänomenologische Wahrheit (Erschlossenheit von Sein) ist *veritas transcendentalis*.⁴⁵

(Cf. Being and Time, 1962, p. 62:)

And the transcendence of Dasein's Being is distinctive in that it implies the possibility and the necessity of the most radical *individuation*. Every disclosure of Being as the *transcendence* is the *transcendental* knowledge. *Phenomenological truth (the disclosedness of Being) is veritas transcendentalis.*

I think that an interim balance of recognition is as follows: Dōgen's principle is how far the real empirical self by itself can grasp and embody dharma awareness. I call this **corpus**, a body with the unlimited capability of opening dharma.⁴⁶ There is an unheard-of confrontation with one's ego. Stimuli exerted by Dōgen's Zen upon research into Heidegger would be that opening of the Being-in-the-World according to Heidegger's thinking does not remain on the level of *transcendens*, but may point to a return of world immanence to life in the direction of *embodied cognition*. This will produce a number of new questions in the discourse about the interpretation of Heidegger.

4. About "structural recognition" of phenomenology (Rombach) and the "Logic of Place" of the Kyoto School (Nishida)

Rombach in his work *Neuere Entwicklungen des Phänomenbegriffes (Recent Developments of the Term Phenomenon)* indicates a critical reflection of systemic thinking of transcendental philosophy: the systematic order of transcendental/logical and speculatively dialectic terms can be deconstructed or reconstructed while giving full attention to the phenomenon of being. His elaboration of structural recognition requires the dynamic change that one phenomenon must not be seen only objectivistically from outside, but from the inner side of the phenomenon itself.

One example: There is a cathedral before us. As long as we look at it against the background of our collected experience, the cathedral will remain an object to us. But if we enter the cathedral world and reflect about details of the cathedral world, the cathedral will become a phenomenon in the sense of a basic phenomenon. Rombach quotes Heidegger's terminology of being (*Sein*), appearing (*erscheinend*) in a historic clearance (*Lichtung*) and rising in unconcealment (*aufgehend in seiner Unverborgenheit*).⁴⁷

What is stressed here is beholding the phenomenon and rising in the phenomenon for a mode to build up new knowledge. The moment of rising is conspicuous in the first principle of Nishida's philosophy, the "pure experience" (*junsui keiken* 純粹經驗): The experiencing Self, without subject-object-splitting, melts into the dimension of experience.⁴⁸ The experiencing self, in spite of the dissolution of the subject-object-splitting, is the experiencing being; from the inside of

experience it beholds the given whole. From the “experiencing being” Nishida in his mid-life arrives at “active beholding – active self” (*kōiteki chokkan* 行為的直観).⁴⁹

What is striking is the active insight: Ego and world remain in a discontinuous continuum – a pre-term for the thought of Field (*basho*). The active ego is one that presents itself from day to day as a dimensional being for realising the one truth, an intelligible self as bodily being.⁵⁰ The late Nishida speaks of critically, reflectively beholding the world and all things by the intelligible self. The ego-less self points to a dying entity, fulfilling itself in an unlimited entity to absolute truth. Beholding the phenomena of the things that are, the self successively transgresses the depth of intelligible insights and presents itself as the embodiment of open, absolute and unlimited comprehensive truth (*mu* 無).⁵¹

In the transition to beholding the phenomena, the philosophy of Nishida shows a certain relation to the phenomenological thinking of Rombach, with the focus on beholding the self as a part of the universal unchangeable order of the system of recognition as a whole. In this a genealogy of Buddhist and related modes of recognition becomes obvious. In my terminology it can be marked up as “corpus”, a principle for living, grasping and realizing the recognition of the intelligible self in the midst of life.⁵²

The results of phenomenology, derived from comparative reflection with Buddhist philosophy can be summarized as follows:

- The phenomenon of “Zeitigung” (in the term of Heidegger, the significance of passing and executing time as itself and in relation to our Being/Dasein) can, stimulated by Buddhism, be looked at from another perspective, with the perception of being and non-being as an indivisible pair of opposites, which is inherent in our bodily being. In Buddhist philosophy this is treated not as a *phenomenon across from us*, but is considered as our original factual corporality with direct relation to real empirical day-to-day life. This opens a new perspective for phenomenology, to explain the connection of life and corporality as well as the establishment of a living philosophy;
- For “beholding the phenomenon from the inside of the given phenomenon” (theory of Rombach’s phenomenology) Buddhism has a new contribution, i.e. that even beholding the given phenomena can begin with “beholding our bodily existence with its mortality”;
- In this way, the category of “beholding the given phenomena from the inside” is integrated into our corporality. The self is a

living mediator to reflect the given phenomena being conscious of ourselves (theory of Nishida and the Kyoto school); thereby our self designs a phenomenon of truth in connection with the surrounding beings. Truth, however, must not freeze into a certain pattern, but – stimulated by the surrounding beings – must change from one phenomenon to another, with the self forming a “circle of a circumference subject to unlimited change” (the position of Nishida, Nishitani and other philosophers of the Kyoto school) in the centre of different phenomena of truth.

5. About the “embodiment of the perceived truth” – the perceived recognition anchored in place

Knowing or recognizing truth – in the religious and philosophical movements in South and South East Asia – is understood as perception of the whole body and mind. This means that the truth perceived must be integrated into the bodily presence of a self. An embodiment of the truth perceived into one’s own life is an indispensable basic mode of the perception of a non-European (Asian) religion or philosophy. In Buddhism this close connection of the perceived truth to the bodily existence in one’s own life is of special importance. Experiencing, perceiving, embodying and realizing truth is based on a fully concentrated unity of body and mind. As mentioned, Zen, Tiantai, Huayan and other Buddhist movements in East Asia *do not* envisage a meditation visualizing a divine creator, or a rebirth of a substantial kind, an ecstasy etc. There is a transparency of the mind without clinging to any fixed idea. A subjective attitude in thought or imagination is not given. Instead there is an objective and transparent attitude of mind, which leads to a clear perception of given things without subjectivity interfering. There is no connection to a monotheistic belief, no special visualization of things in meditation, no rebirth (as a substantial one). Emotional ecstasy is unknown at those schools. Instead, there is transparent silence, deep breathing, a clear intention of the affectivity of the bodily ego (self), of the here and now in space and time. There is no split between subject and object, no subjectivism of any kind. On the one hand, the corporality of the breathing subject is clear and unambiguous. On the other hand, a continuum of the self to the beings and to the world surrounding it is established. Out of the transparency and silence of the mind a unity arises of mind and body, which is active as a dimensional unity destined to collecting and creating what is good for oneself and for others. This unity is a basic ethical mode, a principle for the creation of what is good in life.

Thus the recognition of the perceived truth has a dimension. The perceived truth is an *embodied cognition*, connected to the thinking and acting self and its environment.

III. Results of the Comparisons and Further Steps

Questioning and checking of what “absolute being” is or may be is regarded as co-operative topic of two different disciplines (or thinking systems). On this basis further topics are to be defined, leading towards global ethics:

- a) Comparative thinking in societies, which are primarily based on a theistic culture and those based on a non-theistic culture; with results to be used for the establishment of a more peaceful society in a global world.
- b) Comparative Thinking as a basic concept for evaluating “the greatest good” – applying it to the current state of our society.
- c) Development of a theory of communication, whereby one’s own discipline of thinking (in short, the „*intra-system*“; for details cf. the project promoted by the Cultural Department of the City of Vienna, “Komparative Philosophie – Wozu?": <http://kophil-interdis.at>, “Gründungsmodus”) maintains a fruitful exchange with the discipline of the scientific partner, i.e. the *intra-system* is compared with the *extra-system*; both systems complement each other and are subject to mutual integration.

Summary of paper:

Retrospectively, there are three points defended here:

- By means of introducing the comparative method, interdisciplinary thinking is stimulated to critically and reflectively check the system of one’s own discipline (*intra-system*) vis-à-vis aspects of other disciplines (*extra-systems*).
- The tangents of *intra-system* and *extra-system* regarding a given topic comprise a number of “accidents” (cf. Aristotle) as “reality”; the traditional system of thinking is stimulated to undergo a re-orientation.
- The possibility of new ideas emerging at the tangents *intra-system* and *extra-system* is extended, thereby furthering the multi-structural potential for increased presence and competitiveness by mutual reflection of both systems.

The paper shows concretely how comparative thinking works in every aspect of cultural sciences and how effective it is in devising an applied theory for cultural philosophy. This method, by recognition of the “intra-system” and the “extra-system”, by *inter-action* and the *emergence* of new ideas opens a gate to grasp the basic principles of cultures. From this viewpoint, comparative thinking shows an effective way to realize an interdisciplinarity which supports the basis of human and cultural sciences in this globalizing world.

Notes:

¹ See *Pāli-Kanon, sanmyutta nikāya*, and *digha nikāya* in G. Nagao, ed., *Genshi Butten (Sutras of Early Buddhism)*, Tokyo: Chūō-kōronsha, 1989 and in E. Steinkellner, *Zur Lehre vom Nicht-Selbst (anātman) im Frühbuddhismus*, in H.-D. Klein & J. Figl, eds., *Der Begriff der Seele in der Religionswissenschaft* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2002), 171-186.

² See Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamādhyamaka Kārikā*, in: Weber-Brosamer & Back, 2005, Ch. 4, p. 16, Chapt. 11, p. 42. Izutsu, 1986, Ch. 1.

³ Nagao, 1989. Nakamura, H., 2004, Vol. 7.

⁴ Nāgārjuna, *Mūlamādhyamaka Kārikā*, Chapters 19 and 21, in: Weber-Brosamer & Back, 2005, Nishijima, 1996, 1997. Nakamura, H., Vol. 1, 2003, Vol. 7, 2004, Vol. 5, 2005.

⁵ For the original position of Mahayana Buddhism, see Nakamura, 2005, Vol. 3, 2004, Vol. 7.

⁶ Takasaki & Hayashima, K., eds., 1994, pp. 338-340, pp. 316-319.

⁷ Takasaki & Hayashima, 1994, pp. 265-269. Suzuki Daisetz, 1967, *Complete Works*, Vol. 5, 13, 16. Akizuki, 1993, Chapters 3 and 4.

⁸ Nakamura, ed., 1990, p. 542, 193, 550. pp. 155-156. Takasaki, & Hayashima, 1994, pp. 484-485, 488-489, 112-118.

⁹ Hashi, 2005, II. Main Section, Chapters IV, V. Hashi, 2004, *Die Dynamik von Sein und Nichts*. Hashi, 2012: LIT, “Prolog.”

¹⁰ Rombach, H. 1965.

¹¹ Cf. Klein, H.-D., ed., 1994. Klein, *System der Philosophie*, Vol. IV, 2005. Wallner, 2005.

¹² Hashi, 2012 by LIT, Prolog. <http://kophil-interdis.at>.

¹³ Nakamura, 2003, 2004, 2005, compare Vol. 6 and Vols. 1, 5, 7.

¹⁴ Hashi, 2012 by LIT. Hashi, Prolog. <http://kophil-interdis.at>

¹⁵ For the terminology of “intra-system” and “extra-system,” see Hashi, 2009, p. 10. Hashi, 2012, Prolog. Hashi, acknowledged project, „Komparative Philosophie – Wozu?“ (2012), <http://kophil-interdis.at> Gründungsmodus. Hashi, 2012: *intercultural*, 2012/1, pp. 22-24.

¹⁶ Hashi, 2012, acknowledged project, “Komparative Philosophie – Wozu?“, <http://kophil-interdis.at>, “Gründungsmodus.”

¹⁷ Wallner, 2011. Cf. Wallner, 2005, 2012.

¹⁸ Akizuki, 1993, Chapters 4 and 5. Nakamura, Vol. 5, 2005, p. 197. Nakamura, Vol. 7, 2004.

¹⁹ For the concept of “God” and “absolute substance” cf. Spinoza, *Ethica*, Chapt. I, 1976; Descartes, *Discours de la Méthode*, Ch. IV, 2009. Klein, 2002, in: Figl, Klein, eds.,

- pp. 41-43. Klein, 2005, Ch. IX, "Gott." Heintel, 2004, in: W. Heintel & S. Haltmayer, B. Mittelteil: *The problems of Christianity*.
- ²⁰ Heintel, 1968. Klein, *Metaphysik*, 2005. Klein, 1973, 1975. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie*, Frankfurt a.M. 1996.
- ²¹ Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Philosophie der Geschichte*, 1975.
- ²² Nakamura, Vol. 1, 2003, Vol. 7, 2004. Takasaki, Hayashima, 1994, p. 25, pp. 88-89.
- ²³ Hashi, 2009, Main Section II, Chapt. VII. Saigusa, 1982, p. 145, II. Main Section, Chapters 1 - 2.
- ²⁴ Nakamura, 1990, p. 550.
- ²⁵ Takasaki & Hayashima, 1994, pp. 112-118.
- ²⁶ Cf. Klein, in: Figl & Klein, 2002, pp. 41-43. Cf. Klein, 2003, pp. 78-79.
- ²⁷ Cf. Hashi, 2012: LIT, Main Section I.
- ²⁸ Kant, 1990, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, B 116ff, A 84ff.
- ²⁹ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, § 7, 1993, p. 27: „Zu den Sachen selbst!“. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, translated by Macquarrine & Robbinson, 1962, p. 50.
- ³⁰ Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*, § 7, 1993, p. 27. *Being and Time*, pp. 49-50.
- ³¹ Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*, § 7, A, pp. 28-31. *Being and Time*, pp. 51-55.
- ³² Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, § 45 - § 53. *Being and Time*, "Dasein and Temporality," 45 - 53.
- ³³ Dōgen, shōbō genzō. Cf. Yorizumi, 2005.
- ³⁴ Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*, § 47, 1993, p. 237. *Being and Time*, pp. 280-281.
- ³⁵ Heidegger: *Sein und Zeit*, 1993, p. 250. *Being and Time*, 1962, pp. 293-294.
- ³⁶ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1962, p. 311.
- ³⁷ Nakamura, S., ed., 1993, pp. 22-25. Also see References, section Dōgen.
- ³⁸ Inagaki, 1991, p. 94. Iriya & Koga, 1991, p. 374. Akizuki, 1993, p. 452, "Mumonkan", Ch. 48.
- ³⁹ Nakamura, 2004, Vol. 7, Ch. I ("The Philosophy of Emptiness"). *prajñā-pāramitā-hṛdaya-sūtra*, in: Nakamura & Kino, eds., 1990.
- ⁴⁰ See References, section Dōgen, Nakamura, S., ed., 1993.
- ⁴¹ See Reference, section Dōgen, shōbō genzō, editions of Mizuno&Terada, Masutani, and Nakamura, S. Lectures of Akizuki, 2004. Philosophy of Dōgen: see Yorizumi, 2005. Hashi, 2004, Main Section II. Hashi, *Transzendenz sive Immanenz*, in: Hödl, Futterknecht, eds., 2011.
- ⁴² Heidegger, *Zeit und Sein*, in *Complete Works*, vol. 14, 2007.
- ⁴³ Takasaki, Hayashima, 1994, pp. 261-262, 刹那滅.
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- ⁴⁶ For the term "corpus" see Hashi, 2012: LIT. Hashi, 2012: Ed. Doppelpunkt, Main Section I, Chapt. 2.
- ⁴⁷ Rombach, 1980, p. 29.
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⁵² Hashi, 2012: LIT, I. Main Section, Chapt. 2. Hashi, 2012: Ed. Doppelpunkt, III. Main
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