

JAPANESE PHILOSOPHY ABROAD

JAPANESE
PHILOSOPHY
ABROAD

edited by

JAMES W. HEISIG



CHISOKUDŌ

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Foreword

The story of philosophy in Japan has been told and retold for the better part of a hundred years by historians within Japan and from abroad. From the initial importation of western philosophies, to the dispatch of students to study in the academies of Europe and the United States, to the introduction of philosophy into university curricula, to the emergence of an indigenous Japanese philosophy, the broad outlines of the history of philosophy in Japan are well documented both in Japanese and in the major languages of the western philosophical world.¹ Important as this body of information is, it is not the whole picture. For one thing, the story of how Japanese philosophy has fared outside of Japan has yet to be told. For another, the philosophical resources scattered through Japan's intellectual history prior to the arrival of western philosophy have yet to be recognized as part of the fuller history of philosophy.

The essays brought together in this book attempt to address both of these issues. They were first presented at the twelfth biannual symposium of the Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture held in Nagoya, Japan, from 7 to 10 June 2004. They are offered here in

1. Rolf Elberfeld has drawn my attention to what may well be the first historical account in a western language, a Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Princeton University in 1915 by Kishinami Tsunetzō under the title *The Development of Philosophy in Japan*. Among the most recent research to be undertaken on the subject is a new project being directed by Fujita Masakatsu of Kyoto University whose aim is to study in detail the formative years of Japanese philosophy from the beginning of the First World War to the end of the Second.

the original languages of their composition. A Japanese translation is currently in preparation.

Concerning the reception of Japanese philosophy abroad, thirteen scholars from six language groups—Chinese, English, French, German, Italian, and Spanish—provide historical data and a prospectus for the future. Reading through these pages, it becomes clear that there is more at stake than simply differences of idiom. The very connotations of the term *philosophy* and the cultural expectations that surround it are far from uniform, even among the countries of continental Europe. Thus, for example, the inclusion of Buddhist thought is self-evident in some linguistic frameworks and largely ignored in others. Or again, the same postmodern modes of thought that give certain trends in Japanese philosophy a foothold in one country serves to cast a shadow of political suspicion over those trends in another.

These differences aside, there is one crucial point on which all the essays seem to be in fundamental agreement: the convention of drawing the contours of philosophy contiguous with the contours of classical western philosophy, while dominant within Japan, is unacceptable to scholars of Japanese philosophy abroad. Where the mass of Japanese scholars of philosophy have been preoccupied with earning recognition alongside their colleagues in the western academy for contributions to western philosophy, growing numbers of western scholars have struggled to equip themselves with the necessary linguistic and historical tools in order to mine the unknown resources of Japan for new philosophical ideas and perspectives. The fruits of their efforts—books, conferences, professional associations, university courses, and so forth—have begun to attract the enthusiasm of more and more young Japanese for rethinking the philosophical thought within their own intellectual traditions.

It is here that research on the fate of Japanese philosophy abroad dovetails with the second focus of the symposium, the preparation of an extensive anthology of Japanese philosophical resources from

ancient times to the present. The project of compiling and translating such a *Sourcebook*, initially in English but later in other languages as well, will require a network of collaborating scholars from within Japan and around the world, and will take several years to bring to completion.

The symposium provided an opportunity not only formally to launch the Sourcebook but also to clarify the aims and parameters of the project as a whole. To this end, essays on how the definitions of “philosophy” are evolving to include the non-western world, and on the absence of clear-cut distinctions between religion and philosophy in eastern thinking, were the occasion for extended discussions among the participants. A concluding dialogue was also held at Kyoto University with Fujita Masakatsu, Hase Shōtō, Kōsaka Shirō, Ōhashi Ryōsuke, and Keta Masako, all of whom kindly agreed to collaborate in the effort.

On behalf of all the contributors, the editor would like to acknowledge a grant from the Promotion and Mutual Aid Corporation for Private Schools in Japan which made this symposium and the publication of these papers possible. Thanks are due also to Sylvain Isaac, Ralf Müller, and Enrico Fongaro for generously offering to proofread portions of the final text.

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