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Metaphysics as praxis : Rereading Dōgen's Metaphysics through Deleuzian pragmatism and Pratīyasamutpāda

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CHAPTER THREE

DHĀTU-VĀDA AND FOUR “COMPARATIVE” APPROACHES TO DŌGEN’S METAPHYSICS

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter we analyzed how Critical Buddhism’s interpretation of Dōgen’s metaphysics was limited by its insistence that *pratīyasamutpāda* is incompatible with ontology based on their implicit prejudice that metaphysics is by nature ‘representational.’ Consequently, it concludes that Dōgen’s metaphysical ideas are *dhātu-vāda*. We also analyzed that despite the above prejudice, much of Critical Buddhism’s understanding of *pratīyasamutpāda* and its criteria for *dhātu-vāda* are in continuity with its historical predecessors. Therefore, their criteria were doctrinally sound, and applicable as a general tool to assess if other “Buddhist” philosophies adhere to *pratīyasamutpāda* or not.

There are Dōgen interpretations which I believe are in contrast with the Critical Buddhist approach yet equally short-sighted in their use of Dōgen’s metaphysics. These readings are what I call “comparative philosophical interpretations” exemplified by scholars like Abe, Heine, Kasulis, and Glass. I call them “comparative” due to the fact that many of these scholars are (or were) involved in the field of comparative philosophy surrounding the academic journal “Philosophy East and West” published by Hawaii University. These interpretations share varying degrees of influence by ‘Western’ philosophical perspectives. They take a “comparative” approach by which they utilize ‘Western’ philosophical concepts to interpret Dōgen’s philosophy. In the current chapter, I will provisionally adopt Critical Buddhism’s criteria for what does or does not concur with *pratīyasamutpāda* in order to critically analyze to what extent these comparative interpretations are *dhātu-vāda*, and to examine what can be learned from these interpretations that may be of significance for our “new” interpretation to be offered in chapter five.

While Critical Buddhism supports *pratītyasamutpāda* yet denies metaphysics, my view is that the “comparative” readings may affirm metaphysics yet neglect *pratītyasamutpāda*. How do Abe, Kasulis, Glass, and Heine interpret Dōgen’s ideas of Buddha-nature and time? Are their readings concurrent with *pratītyasamutpāda* or is it proximal to *Hongaku-shisō*? If not in agreement with *pratītyasamutpāda*, why is that so? Is it because they share the same prejudice with Critical Buddhism that metaphysics/ontology is de facto ‘representational’? If so, how does such a prejudice condition each of the comparative interpretations that I will analyze? My hypothesis is that this prejudice is implied in their common assumption that the goal of Buddhist practice lies in attaining the ‘true nature’ of reality or consciousness, rather than the perfecting of compassion based on the correct insight into no-abiding-self. This brings these scholars in line with *Zen/Hongaku-shisō* which also implied the view that the goal of Buddhist practice lies in the attaining of the ‘Truth’ of reality. Consequently, such presumptions concerning ontology in relation to practice may be conditioning the way these scholars interpret Dōgen in proximity to *Hongaku-shisō*.

The goal of the current study is to present a “new” reading of Dōgen’s concepts of temporality and Buddha-nature in relation to practice. That is, a reading that interprets Dōgen’s metaphysical concepts, through Deleuze’s pragmatism, as instrumental for the sake of spiritual practice based on *pratītyasamutpāda*. In order to make a “new” reading of Dōgen, the study cannot reiterate any of the shortcomings or limitations in both the Critical Buddhist or the comparative interpretations of Dōgen. Therefore the current chapter critically analyzes the arguments Abe, Heine, Kasulis, and Glass use concerning Dōgen’s ideas on Buddha-nature and temporality in relation to practice. The directive is to learn from the strengths and to discard the shortcomings in each of the four types of comparative Dōgen interpretations in question. Through the course of analyzing their interpretations, I will seek if their shortcomings imply the common prejudice that metaphysics is ‘corresponding’ to an Absolute ‘reality’ and that attaining this ‘Truth’ is the goal of Buddhism. Since the current study also attempts to offer an interpretation of Dōgen via the philosophical tools I borrow from ‘Western’ philosophy, the analysis will ultimately clarify how the current study is differentiated from these past interpretations and why Deleuze’s pragmatism becomes the preferred solution to the

problems found in their interpretations.

The reasons as to the selection and order of the comparative interpretations I will deal with are as follows. I will begin with a critical analysis of Abe Masao's "dialectical" reading of Dōgen's view of Buddha-nature and temporality. The priority I grant to Abe's interpretation is befit considering that his book, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion* was one of the first influential book-length studies on Dōgen's philosophy published in English. Whether positively implied or critically alluded to, the influence of Abe's interpretation of Dōgen is identifiable in all the comparative scholars dealt with in this chapter. Elements of Abe's ontological argument recur in both Kasulis and Heine, while Glass critically refers to Abe's view as a point of departure. In short, Abe's interpretation reiterates the concept of Original Enlightenment as an ontological 'ground' by introducing an ultimate ontological category he calls 'nothingness' (無 Mu). Abe attempts to dislocate the dhātu-vādic nature of this 'ground' by incorporating a Hegel inspired dialectics that merges opposites into a transcendental unity. Does Abe's "dialectical" reasoning successfully keep his views on Dōgen's Buddha-nature and time exempt from Dhātu-vāda? If not, why? Is it because he implies that Dōgen's metaphysics 'corresponds' to an ultimate reality and the mystical attainment of such a reality? What can be learnt from his reading for our "new" interpretation of Dōgen?

We will see that the Heidegger inspired reading of Dōgen exemplified by Steven Heine follows most closely in line with Abe's "dialectical" reasoning. For this reason, Heine's interpretation of Dōgen will be the second to be analyzed. Examining the Heidegger inspired interpretation of Dōgen is important since this type of reading has become, whether consciously or latently, a strong influence within Dōgen studies. Perhaps due to the lasting influence of the Kyoto school's early attempts in comparing Dōgen and Heidegger's ideas on time, the Heidegger-Dōgen hybrid has long been a recurring theme in comparative philosophy.¹⁶⁵ So much so that in certain cases, a Heidegger inspired interpretation of Dōgen's concepts has been latently taken for granted without any critique or

¹⁶⁵ Correlations between Heidegger and the Kyoto school can be traced back to the 1930s when several Kyoto school philosophers as Tanabe Hajime, Keiji Nishitani and Kuki Shūzō were in direct contact with him. This perhaps lead to mutual influence and the Zen-Heidegger amalgamations found in their philosophy. Comparisons of Dōgen and Heidegger is not limited to the Kyoto school (as in Abe) and Western scholars like Heine and Stambaugh, but is also adumbrated or alluded to by Dōgen scholars like Jikisai as well as many of those who contributed articles to the book *Dōgen Studies*. The comparison seems prevalent and influential on how many people interpret Dōgen.

justification.¹⁶⁶ Given the similarity between Heine's reasoning for his Dōgen interpretation with that of other Heidegger inspired scholars such as Joan Stambaugh, I believe we can take Heine's study as an exemplary case. Do his interpretations of Dōgen's Buddha-nature and time in relation to practice adhere to *pratīyasamutpāda*? If not, is it because he implies the prejudice that ontology is 'corresponding' to an ultimate reality and that Buddhist practice is aimed at 'attaining' such a reality? Is there something we can learn from Heine's reading that may be useful for our "new" interpretation of Dōgen?

Third, T.P. Kasulis's 'phenomenological' approach to Dōgen. I consider Kasulis's reading of Dōgen's philosophy in his book *Zen Action Zen Person* holds a distinct position in Dōgen studies. The reason is that his study attempts to read Dōgen's fundamental premise for the primacy of practice from a purely practical perspective founded on what he calls the 'phenomenological' perspective as opposed to the 'ontological.' In this reading, Kasulis denies any claims for ontology and metaphysics in Dōgen by arguing that anything that sounds like ontology by Dōgen is in fact a 'phenomenological' description of the way the mind perceives reality. Kasulis's attempt to break away from interpreting Dōgen from a purely theoretical ontological basis may be of significance for the current study. By avoiding ontology all together, Kasulis may be exempt from *dhātu-vāda*, but is this really the case? How does Kasulis interpret Dōgen's Buddha-nature and time through his 'phenomenological' approach? Does his interpretation successfully integrate metaphysics with practice based in *pratīyasamutpāda* or not? What can be learned from his approach that may be of use for our interpretation of Dōgen?

Finally, I will analyze Robert Glass's 'Buddha essence' reading. Robert Glass's reading of Dōgen presented in his book *Working Emptiness* is significant since it is the only book-length study which attempts to incorporate Deleuze's philosophy in interpreting Buddhist philosophy. Though Glass's work is not a study of Dōgen per se, nor does it treat Deleuze in depth, his interpretation of

¹⁶⁶ For example widely available modern Japanese translations of Dōgen's *Shōbōgenzō* like that by Kyoji Ishii takes certain Heideggerian interpretations of terms such as *Genjōkōan* and *Uji* for granted when he replaces Dōgen's language into modern Japanese. He does not take cautious steps to justify this move nor explain why he considers the interpretation valid with consideration of the differences between the two ontologies. It seems that Ishii's philosophical framework for understanding ontology is itself conditioned by his leniency towards Heidegger's ontology.

Dōgen’s view on Buddha-nature and Deleuze’s ideas on desire does constitute an important part of his ‘new’ perspective on Buddhist ‘emptiness’ and practice. Hence I will analyze Glass’s work from two angles: his interpretation of Dōgen and his use of Deleuze. How does Glass interpret Dōgen’s view on Buddha-nature? Does it concur with *pratītyasamutpāda* or not? How does Glass utilize Deleuze in his reading of Buddhism? Does it allow Dōgen to be freed from ‘representation’ or not? What can be learned from Glass’s interpretation of Dōgen and his use of Deleuze?

3.2 Criteria for Dhātu-vāda Revisited

In critically analysing the Dōgen interpretations by Abe, Heine, Kasulis and Glass, I will utilize Critical Buddhism’s criteria for what adheres to *pratītyasamutpāda* or not as presented in the last chapter. The analysis will seek to what extent the comparative interpretations veer off from *pratītyasamutpāda* towards *Hongaku-shisō* or not. For this reason, a brief reminder of the criteria for *pratītyasamutpāda* and how *Hongaku-shisō* is *dhātu-vāda* will be beneficial.

Pratītyasamutpāda entails that all of phenomenal reality whether tangible or not are a product of the process of cause and effect. Our experience of the ‘self’ and world is a product of a causal relationship amongst the perceptive and cognitive process of the *skandhas*. Hence all phenomena is of ‘no-abiding-self’ meaning there can be no intrinsically existing ‘Self’ or Being which persists independently of causality. Therefore *pratītyasamutpāda* cannot accept any views claiming the existence of an ontological or epistemological ‘locus’ in whatever form it may be (i.e. whether as objective existence of things, ‘individual-essence,’ or a metaphysical ‘supreme truth’ or ‘realm,’ or objective ‘meanings,’ and ‘reasons’). Causality always implies an irreversible movement of time or ‘impermanence.’¹⁶⁷ The practice of *pratītyasamutpāda* prioritizes altruistic ethics and necessitates *prajñā* or analytical thinking. The goal of practice is the perfection of compassion through correct analytical insight into no-abiding-self, and not personal liberation, based on an attainment of some form of ultimate transcendental ‘Truth.’

¹⁶⁷ Refer to the list of ontological criteria for *dhātu-vāda* in chapter two for a more detailed list of ontological claims that will consequently negate *pratītyasamutpāda*.

Hongaku-shisō or the “Doctrine of Original Enlightenment” found in Sino-Japanese Zen Buddhism is archetypical dhātu-vāda for four reasons. First, it accepts an ultimate ontological locus in the form of an “originally enlightened” metaphysical reality. Second, it interprets ‘Buddha-nature’ as a pure ‘essence’ or ‘True Self,’ whose purity is assured by its primordial identity with the ultimate locus by nature of ‘constant-abiding.’ Third, it neglects prajñā and the priority of altruism, by considering the goal of Buddhist practice as personal liberation via the ‘attainment’ of a transcendental experience of the ultimate reality. Fourth, it further neglects altruistic ethics by considering the whole of reality as primordially “enlightened,” and “perfect,” including all of its suffering and vices, hence in need of no betterment or change.

The following analysis may reveal that much of the interpretive arguments made by the comparative scholars neglect praṭīyasamutpāda by reiterating such Hongaku ideas in varying degrees. They may not use the same terminology as Hongaku-shisō, but may reiterate the same ideas, reasoning or logic under a different label. We shall begin with Abe Masao’s interpretation of Dōgen.

3.3 Abe Masao’s Dialectical Theory of Dōgen’s Metaphysics

Abe interprets Dōgen with the assumption that Dōgen’s ontology successfully solved the paradox of Hongaku-shisō which rendered meditational practice superfluous.¹⁶⁸ This is a point that is in contrast to Matsumoto’s view that Dōgen failed to solve the paradox. We will see that Abe’s argument relies on an ultimate metaphysical ‘locus’ he borrows from Zen to call Mu 無 or ‘no-thingness.’ Abe equates this ‘no-thingness’ with Tathātā,¹⁶⁹ Dōgen’s ‘impermanence-Buddha-nature’

¹⁶⁸ The paradox in short: since Hongaku-shisō considers reality primordially ‘enlightened’ and ‘perfect’ without the need for spiritual practice, all forms of Buddhist practice loses its significance; why would one practice Buddhism at all? See chapter 1 section 1.3 for how significant this “paradox” was for Dōgen’s life’s quest as a Buddhist. Also see chapter 2 section 2.3.3 for a more detailed ontological description of this “paradox.”

¹⁶⁹ Abe considers the ontological locus to defy representation, and naming, and that it is un-substantive, bottomless limitlessness itself. It can only be referred to negatively as ‘no-thingness’ or ‘emptiness’ and positively with interrogatives such as “whence” “thus” or “what” implying the Buddhist notion of Tathātā (thusness or suchness). Abe Masao, *A Study of Dōgen: His Philosophy and Religion*, ed. Steven Heine, (New York: State University, 1992), 45-49. Abe mentions, “for Dōgen Buddha-nature is neither being or non-being but thusness, or as-it-is-ness, of any and everything.” *Ibid.*, 143.

Abe considers that this limitlessness or no-thingness is the ‘truth’ of Buddha-nature as realized by Dōgen and expressed by Dōgen’s terms ‘impermanence Buddha-nature’ and ‘Whole-being is the Buddha-nature.’ *Ibid.*, 49-51, 142.

and ‘All existence is Buddha-nature.’ Abe attempts to escape his seeming reliance on a ‘locus’ by utilizing a dialectical reasoning influenced by Hegel.¹⁷⁰ Does Abe’s interpretation of Dōgen successfully avoid dhātu-vāda or does it fall prey to what Matsumoto called a theory of ‘universal Buddha-nature’? If Abe tends towards dhātu-vāda does it imply the presumption that ontology is ‘representational’? What can be learned from his interpretation as significant for our own interpretation of Dōgen?

3.3.1 Abe’s Foundational ‘Dialectic’

Abe believes Dōgen overcame the inherent paradox in Hongaku-shisō by developing the idea of the “unity of practice and enlightenment” or *Shushō-Ittō* 修証一等.¹⁷¹ According to Abe, *Shushō-Ittō* denotes how the primordial enlightenment of reality functions as the “ground or basis” on which one’s act of meditating becomes the “occasion or condition” through which the grounding reality is realized.¹⁷² In other words, the necessity for meditational practice is maintained by considering ‘original enlightenment’ as immediately manifest while one is in the act of successful Zazen meditation.¹⁷³ This is possible since, while the individual realizes Tathātā during practice, the individual transcends both ground and condition in what Abe calls ‘no-thingness.’ According to Abe this “attained reality” is not subject to accusations for objectification or for being an ontological ‘essence’ since,

Attainment (the Buddha-nature) however is not something substantial; in itself, it is nonsubstantial and nonobjectifiable no-thingness. Accordingly, through a realization of the nonsubstantiality of its ground, practice as the condition is realized as something real in terms of the ground. Thus in going beyond the irreversible relationship between attainment (the Buddha-nature) and practice (becoming a Buddha), these two aspects come to be grasped in terms of reversible identity.

Furthermore,

¹⁷⁰ Abe, 61-64. While Abe’s reference to Hegel in his discourse of Dōgen takes the form of comparison, a look at his interpretation of Dōgen shows that Hegelian dialectics is implied as part of his latent framework for understanding Dōgen’s ontology and in effect plays a more fundamental role than a simple subject for comparison.

¹⁷¹ Again for what the paradox is, refer to chapter 2 section 2.3.3.

¹⁷² Abe, 21, 26.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 29.

Attainment (the Buddha-nature), indispensable as the ground of human existence, is not a being or something substantial, but is in itself empty and no-thing. [...] It is a ground that is different from ground in the ordinary sense as simply distinguished from a condition. In this way the distinction between ground and condition in the ordinary sense is overcome. Further, the irreversibility between them is also overcome. At that point, that which is the condition is directly realized as the ground.¹⁷⁴

I consider the above as exemplary of the basic rhetoric Abe utilizes to interpret the entirety of Dōgen's metaphysics. I hope to prove this point when I will analyze Abe's interpretation of Dōgen's views on Buddha-nature and time in the following two sections. Here, Abe introduces a third metaphysical category he calls 'no-thingness' which ultimately transcends dualistic ontological categories while being inclusive of the former dualities. The dualities are not reduced into a One, whereby their differences would be eliminated by a universal unity.¹⁷⁵ Rather, the original differences between the polarities are kept intact since dualities are 'united' by virtue of the third ontological category which functions as an all-embracing locus in which all things exist and spring forth.

Abe claims that the immediate identity between normative existence and no-thingness ensures a dynamic reversibility between these ontological categories. An "enlightened" person is not suspended within either one or the other side of a polarity. Rather he/she exists in a reversible relationship between all dualities. Simply put, successful practice allows the practitioner to participate in the superior ontological 'truth-of-reality' denoted by 'no-thingness' in which all dichotomies are transcended whilst inclusively maintained. As we will see in the following analysis, such dualistic concepts found in Dōgen as in the case of 'without-Buddha-nature'/'having a Buddha-nature' and the seemingly paradoxical notion of temporal continuity/singularity, are mysteriously overcome by the mystical experience of a superior, non-substantive locus called 'no-thingness.' I will also argue how this 'dialectical' ontology cannot exempt Abe's interpretation of Dōgen from dhātu-vāda.

¹⁷⁴ Abe, 28.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., 48. According to Abe, "[...] Buddha-nature is not One substance. All beings without exception are *equally and respectively* 'What-is-this-that-thus-comes.'"

3.3.2 Why Buddha-Nature as ‘Nothingness’ is Dhātu-vāda

Abe’s application of the rhetoric of resolving dualities by virtue of a transcendental ontological ‘ground’ is evident in his interpretation of Dōgen’s equating of impermanent reality with Buddha-nature as ‘impermanence-Buddha-nature’ (無常仏性 *Mujyō-Busshō*). According to Abe, the term ‘impermanence-Buddha-nature’ denotes how ‘Buddha-nature’ is neither describable as existent (i.e. “having” a Buddha-nature) nor as non-existent (i.e. ‘without-Buddha-nature’), but solely as ‘no-thingness.’

Abe contends that Dōgen’s term, ‘impermanence-Buddha-nature’ and his statement that “all existence is Buddha-nature,” describe how the “enlightened” who have experienced ‘no-thingness’ view the ‘truth’ of Buddha-nature as at once transcending the duality between condition, (i.e. act of meditation, practice), and ground, (i.e. ‘original enlightenment,’ attainment), only to simultaneously unite both with the totality of existence.¹⁷⁶ In Abe’s words, in enlightenment, “impermanence itself, which is strictly limited to time and space, is realized in its suchness as the Buddha-nature that is beyond time and space. [...] Therefore, a reversible relationship between attainment and practice, the Buddha-nature and becoming Buddha, is realized.”¹⁷⁷ This means, the ‘truth’ of ‘impermanence Buddha-nature’ as ‘no-thingness’ functions as a mediator amongst all dualities which create a “reversible” connection between them by virtue of placing them within the superseding totality of ‘no-thingness.’ As I will explain below, Abe utilizes this reasoning to make sense of the duality between ‘having’ a Buddha-nature and ‘without-Buddha-nature’ in combination with what is essentially the Hongaku logic of constant-abiding.

Metaphysical ‘no-thingness’ functions as the ultimate ontological ground on which the seeming paradox between what Dōgen describes as the idea of “having” a Buddha-nature and being “without-Buddha-nature” are united.¹⁷⁸ In addition, Abe mentions “all beings ceaselessly manifest the

¹⁷⁶ Abe, 58-59.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 28.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 60-62.

Buddha-nature while they are ever changing.”¹⁷⁹ This means, all phenomena are immediately identical to Buddha-nature by virtue of the connective function of ‘no-thingness’ without having to change or transform from one state to another. Thereby Buddha-nature transcends both existing and not existing while being simultaneously inclusive of all ontological categories without having to obstruct their respective differences. I consider this view is in effect identical to what Matsumoto pointed out as the Hongaku idea of ‘constant-abiding’ in which all being was considered “enlightened” due to its participating in the primordial purity of Tathātā while maintaining their normative form/roles. For this reason we can say that Abe’s Dōgen interpretation already veers towards dhātu-vāda by presupposing an ultimate ontological ground¹⁸⁰ and its identity with normative reality.

Abe assumes this concept of ‘no-thingness’ is exempt from critique of dhātu-vāda for it does not objectify the ontological ground. This assumption is founded on Abe’s implication that ‘no-thingness’ is empty of self-nature or intrinsic existence, and therefore does not qualify as ‘being’ or an ontological ground.¹⁸¹ However, Abe utilizes ‘no-thingness’ as an ontological ‘space’ where differences comes to inter-connectively co-exist and where paradoxes are mysteriously resolved by virtue of their emptiness. As we saw in the proximity between Abe’s ontology and the Hongaku notion of constant-abiding, I consider such a ‘no-thingness’ merely reiterates the Hongaku notion of ultimate reality as the “originally enlightened” Dharma realm or Tathātā. The idea of constant-abiding implies that since the ultimate metaphysical reality is identical with normative reality, the ultimate reality does not exist apart from the normative, but as an overlapping metaphysical ‘realm’ constituted of one constantly-abiding, inter-connective web of relations amongst all existence. The ontological interdependence amongst beings leads to its ‘emptiness’ of individual-essences.¹⁸² This is a view

¹⁷⁹ Abe, 66.

¹⁸⁰ Abe himself seems to find no problem in calling what he considers Dōgen’s supposed ‘truth’ concerning impermanence Buddha-nature as an “ultimate ontological ground.” Ibid., 44. In fact his whole system of Dōgen interpretation relies on the necessity of such a ground as the ‘truth’ attained in practice.

¹⁸¹ According to Abe, “Buddha-nature is the ground that is realized only through practice as its condition, it is not a substantial ground or a ground that is some particular thing, but a ground as no-thing, that is nonsubstantial and nonobjectifiable ground.” Ibid., 28.

¹⁸² In Mahayana Buddhism, this nature of ultimate reality existing as a web of relations is often alluded through the metaphor of the “Indra’s Net.” The Indra’s Net spreads infinitely across the whole universe with a jewel positioned at every cross-section of the net. Each jewel reflects upon every other jewel placed upon the net, each one reflecting each other onto infinity. The metaphor describes the complete lack of self-nature (sūnyatā) of all phenomena in the

described in Tendai/Huayen Buddhism as *Jiji-muge-hokkai* 事事無礙法界, or in English, the “metaphysical dimension of the unobstructed mutual interpenetration among all things and events.”¹⁸³

In my view, Abe’s ‘no-thingness’ is proximal to *Jiji-muge-hokkai* in constructing a sense of unity amongst all existence while preserving their differences by giving ultimate reality a ‘spatial’ quality in which all things are embraced without obstruction. *Jiji-muge-hokkai* is not exempt from *dhātu-vāda* by claiming that ultimate reality does not exist substantively, but only as a web of co-dependent relations amongst all things ‘empty’ of individual-essence. Regardless of the non-substantiality or ‘emptiness’ of this metaphysical ‘web-space,’ it is still an ontological locus and the fact that the idea is reliant on this locus stays intact. Similarly, Abe’s reading of Dōgen cannot escape *dhātu-vāda* since his ‘no-thingness,’ regardless of its ontological emptiness, continues to function as a grounding locus in which all other existence is embraced and subordinated. Despite resorting to the rhetoric of such an ontological locus to be empty of self-nature, the whole metaphysics continues to function on basis of the idea that individual existences reside by virtue of an ontological foundation. Hence, Abe’s idea is thoroughly embedded within *dhātu-vāda*. It simply displaces the locus from being an obvious ontological ‘absolute being,’ ‘essence,’ or ‘ground’ by claiming that it is neither ‘Being’ nor ‘non-Being,’ but ‘no-thingness’ whose nature can only be discerned by the “enlightened” mind.

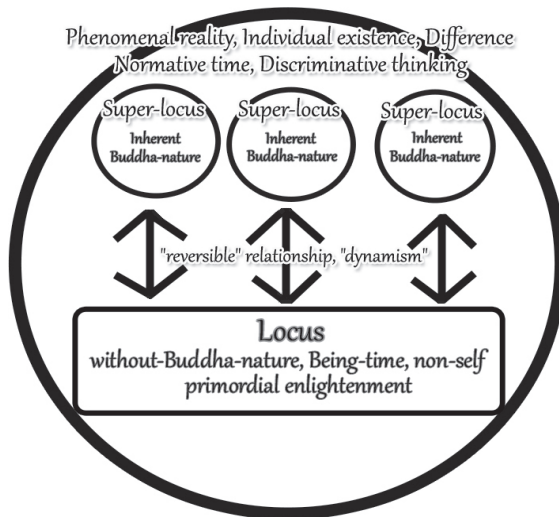
The conjuring of ‘no-thingness’ simply means an introduction of a mediating ultimate ontological locus, which now includes within it and simultaneously grounds both locus (‘original enlightenment’) and super locus (difference/individual being). Therefore, rather than discarding or overcoming the necessity for an ontological ‘ground,’ Abe has in fact regressed deeper into *dhātu-vāda* (see diagram 2). Instead of having a simple structure of normative reality being indebted to one ontological locus, Abe places a second ultimate ontological locus in which both the prior locus and

universe and thus how each thing is fully interdependent on every other thing in creating one universal field of relations with no beginning, no end. David Loy, “Indra’s Postmodern Net”, *Philosophy East and West* 43.3 (1993), 481-483. Although I believe there is a way to utilize this metaphor without alluding to the web of interdependence as an ‘ultimate reality,’ i.e. simply as a pragmatic tool to expand one’s view of experience, utilizing this metaphor as a description of an ontological locus most certainly leads to the view of *Jiji-muge-hokkai*.

¹⁸³ Izutsu Toshihiko, *Toward a Philosophy of Zen Buddhism*, (Boulder: Prajñā Press, 1977), 53. Izutsu also sees a connection between Hongaku/Zen views of a “true selfhood” with the nature of ultimate reality as *Jiji-muge-hokkai*. Zen “True Self” is the actualization of the ultimate field in the form of the conventional self. See: 1-7, 50-58, 65-82.

normative reality are embraced. Again, this structure is identical to what Matsumoto had analyzed as the Hongaku idea of ‘constant-abiding.’ If we recall from the last chapter, constant-abiding stood for the idea that all existence while being singular and distinct is simultaneously absolute by virtue of its inclusivity in the totality of Tathātā. By virtue of Tathātā functioning as an all-inclusive locus, all phenomenal differences and opposites are reconciled (without changing) as immediately *the* absolute. Abe simply supplements Tathātā with the term ‘no-thingness’ and adds that this primordial identity between phenomena and the absolute needs practice to be realized.

Diagram 2 :
Dhātu-vādic Structure of Abe’s theory of Dōgen



Key: Outer circle symbolizes the all-embracing ultimate locus (‘nothingness’). Also equated with Impermanence-Buddha-nature, Zen ‘True Self,’ and ‘Nothingness-time.’ It is beyond discriminative thought and temporality. Nothingness embraces both individual existence (super-locus) and originally enlightened reality (locus).

I consider Abe’s theory of Buddha-nature is in effect identical to what Matsumoto described as the Hongaku-derived “universal Buddha-nature” reading of Dōgen’s theory of practice. Much akin to Matsumoto’s reading, Abe understands that the concept of Buddha-nature for Dōgen is

‘universalized’ as identical to the whole of reality in the form of ‘impermanence Buddha-nature,’ or ‘all existence is Buddha-nature.’ Abe merely supplemented Buddha-nature with the term ‘no-thingness.’ Either way, Buddha-nature forms a metaphysical locus equated with the “originally enlightened” nature of reality that is only revealed while successful practice is pursued. As I had previously analyzed, Abe’s debt to Hongaku-shisō was also evident in the way he justified the identity between normative reality and the ultimate locus by the logic of constant-abiding. Abe’s proximity to the universal Buddha-nature based theory of Dōgen’s practice inevitably ensues another dhātu-vādic trait in Abe, that of accepting an ‘individual-essence’ in the form of a Zen ‘True-Self,’ as I will explain below.

Recalling Matsumoto’s analysis,¹⁸⁴ we saw that maintaining the need for meditational practice in accordance to the universal Buddha-nature logic compromises the monism of universal Buddha-nature. This is because the unconditionally “enlightened” nature of reality must become concealed for the sake of practice to become necessitated as a means to realize what is not immediately apparent. This logic reverts back to a duality between ‘inherent Buddha-nature’ and the ultimate locus. Consequently, a theory of practice based on universal Buddha-nature must reintroduce the idea of an ‘individual-essence’ which is somehow in continuity with the universal locus and ensures one’s possibility to be enlightened.

Abe ignores the above fallacy altogether in accepting without question that a theory of practice based on universal Buddha-nature solves the paradox of Original Enlightenment. Yet Abe’s theory is no exception to the above critique as his interpretation of Dōgen inevitably needs to accept an ‘individual-essence.’ This is evident when Abe mentions that “for Dōgen, this absolute nothingness is the true Self, and the true Self is this absolute nothingness.”¹⁸⁵ Here, Abe uncritically accepts the Zen idea of a “true Self” as unitary with the ultimate ontological locus of ‘no-thingness.’¹⁸⁶ Again, whether Abe claims this ontological essence is non-substantial due to it being ‘no-thing,’ the idea cannot be exempted from dhātu-vāda. Any functional and practical reliance on an ontological

¹⁸⁴ See chapter 2 section 2.3.3

¹⁸⁵ Abe, 144.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 88-99.

‘ground’ is dhātu-vāda regardless of its ‘emptiness.’ Consequently, Abe veered to dhātu-vāda by denying the doctrine of no-abiding-self on two grounds: by accepting an ultimate metaphysical locus, and an ‘individual-essence’ both transcendent to causality. As we will see in the next section, Abe’s theory of Dōgen’s view on temporality follows a similar route as he continues to reiterate Hongaku-shisō by utilizing the logic of constant-abiding through his application of dialectical ‘no-thingness.’

3.3.3 Why Time as ‘No-thingness’ is Dhātu-vāda

Abe employs the same logic of ‘no-thingness’ that we encountered in the previous section to interpret Dōgen’s theory of temporality. Dōgen’s paradoxical claim for time as a collection of singularities inexplicably related to each other is explained by virtue of a superior form of time realized in no-thingness through practice. According to Abe, Dōgen’s idea that each instant constitute a singular ‘Dharma-position’ denotes how every instant is by virtue of no-thingness, the “spontaneous manifestation” of the entirety of all reality.¹⁸⁷ The Hongaku logic of constant-abiding is reiterated again in the way the paradoxical duality of Dōgen’s singular instant and continuity is transcended by the superseding ultimate reality of no-thingness, which at once includes and ties both sides of the dichotomy without negation of their difference. No-thingness then “returns” this inter-penetrative nature of ultimate reality as immediately identical to the absolute present (as Uji, ‘Being-time’).

Consequently, the duality of time and space, as well as the paradox of singularity and continuity is reversibly reconciled within the absolute present by a superior liberation from normative temporality realized via no-thingness. Therefore, temporality experienced as no-thingness, that is as “nothingness-time,”¹⁸⁸ “transcends the ordinary dimension of time and space.”¹⁸⁹ As a result, the experience of no-thingness leads time to be converted to a spatial concept (i.e. *Uji*, or ‘Being-time’) that identifies time to the entirety of existence. Albeit, this identity between temporality and ‘spatiality’ is claimed to exist in a manner that is beyond conventional comprehension of ‘space’ by

¹⁸⁷ Abe, 82-83.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 81.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 84.

virtue of one's realization of a-rational no-thingness. This means that Abe's version of Dōgen's theory of time veers towards dhātu-vāda by constructing a transcendental realm of time untouched by impermanence which simultaneously embraces the whole of impermanent reality.

Abe's above interpretation of Dōgen's time is a negation of impermanence. Because it claims the irreversible impermanence of reality is an in-authentic understanding of 'Being-time' which can only be rectified through liberation qua no-thingness that discloses the true nature of time as the absolute now. For Abe, the locus of reality (the 'originally enlightened' nature) is universal, omnipresent, and therefore beyond time,¹⁹⁰ which means his theory of Dōgen is bound to negate praṭītyasamutpāda on the grounds of denying impermanence. Rather than reflective of irreversible impermanence, the singular moment of the "absolute now" is a form of ontological time as a permanent sub-stratum that includes all other moments as coexistent within a constantly-abiding totality. Therefore, Abe neglects the criticality of impermanence and denies the causal unfolding of praṭītyasamutpāda by presenting an ontological time beyond causality. Such a view of time de-necessitates the analytical observance of lived impermanence without which we cannot analyze the cause and conditions of our sufferings. Abe's version of Dōgen simply diagnoses this impermanence as delusional and solves the problem of our critical existence by relegating 'true time' beyond said impermanence. Consequently, the need to face critical impermanence in practice is denied in favor of a transcendental experience that will realize an absolute manifestation of the true nature of time as no-thingness.

Such a view on temporality inevitably conditions Abe's view on Dōgen's spiritual practice. Abe views that reality in its primordially enlightened state (i.e. as 'no-thingness') cannot be idealized, conceptualized or objectified.¹⁹¹ Hence, the nature of how the ultimate reality unites difference and singular moments exist in a transcendental relationship to analytical thought. Therefore Abe cannot but emphasize the transcendental experience of 'no-thingness' as the crux of Dōgen's practical philosophy. This neglects the view that Buddhist practice as based in praṭītyasamutpāda prioritizes the cultivation of prajñā for the sake of altruism. Abe presumes that the goal of spiritual practice for

¹⁹⁰ Abe, 25-26.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., 21.

Dōgen lies in realizing the ‘truth’ of impermanence Buddha-nature or no-thingness only by which practice can become undefiled and expressive of the originally enlightened ‘ground.’¹⁹² Not only does this prove Abe’s interpretation to be dhātu-vāda on practical grounds, but also indicates Abe’s presumption that Dōgen’s practical philosophy is founded on and aimed at the realization of an ultimate metaphysical truth and that his ontology attempts to ‘describe’ such a ‘truth’ experienced through practice. Consequently, Abe’s interpretation of Dōgen’s ontology remains bound in correspondence theory.

In conclusion, Abe’s reading of Dōgen proved to be problematic on two grounds. First it failed to uphold *pratītyasamutpāda* on all levels of his interpretation of Dōgen’s metaphysical concepts, including Buddha-nature, temporality and their relation to the nature of practice. This is due to Abe’s fundamental reliance on an ultimate ontological locus he called ‘no-thingness’ which was considered the ultimate ‘Truth’ of reality including the Self and time beyond causal impermanence. This nature of ‘no-thingness’ as transcendental to causality inevitably lead to the idea that this ‘Truth’ can only be realized through experience beyond analytical thinking. Hence the priority of altruism and *prajñā* was negated and Buddhist practice was misconstrued as centred on the realization of a cosmological ‘Truth.’ Second, such a view on Dōgen’s ontology and practice implied the unquestioned presumption that Dōgen’s metaphysics ‘corresponds’ to the ‘Truth’ he experienced through practice. Thereby, Abe’s theory of Dōgen remained confined within correspondence theory.

One thing that can be learned from Abe’s interpretation is that a dialectical reasoning for Dōgen’s metaphysics which relies on an all-embracing ultimate locus as its pivotal argument should be avoided regardless of its claim for ontological ‘emptiness.’ Any reliance on an ontological ground, whether substantive or not, leads to *dhātu-vāda* and therefore, if we are to interpret Dōgen in concurrence with *pratītyasamutpāda*, this line of reasoning needs to be abandoned altogether. In addition Despite Abe’s insistence on ‘no-thingness’ or Mu (無) as a key concept for interpreting Dōgen, the idea is not utilized by Dōgen to any significant depth throughout the *Shōbōgenzō* and

¹⁹² As Abe says, “Dōgen finds the basis for human’s liberation in a thoroughly cosmological dimension,” he seems to take for granted that the aim of Buddhist practice lies in attaining a cosmological or metaphysical ‘truth.’ Abe, 44. This prejudice is implied in several statements Abe makes throughout his book. See for example *Ibid.*, 40, 49-51, 67-68.

therefore it seems unlikely that Dōgen himself considered the concept crucial for his own philosophy. As I had pointed out in the previous chapter, I consider Dōgen's concept of 'Total-function' to be a much better contender for a key to unlocking Dōgen's metaphysics as a whole and in a manner which does not have to conjure Hongaku oriented ideas of an ontological locus. Demonstrating this case must wait till chapter five, for now we shall move onto analyzing Heine's Heideggerian interpretation of Dōgen.

3.4 Heine's Heidegger-Inspired Reading of Dōgen's Metaphysics

Heine's Heidegger inspired interpretation of Dōgen is presented within the grounds that he wants to see how insights found in Dōgen may illuminate the shortcomings and potentials of Heidegger's philosophy. While Heine does try to distinguish the differences of Heidegger and Dōgen, my view is that Heine involuntarily reads his own Heidegger oriented ontological biases into his understanding of Dōgen's metaphysics. Consequently he may be taking for granted that Dōgen's metaphysics 'corresponds' to an ultimate reality experienced through his enlightenment. I will argue through this section how Heine's interpretation of Dōgen maybe repeating a Hongaku-shisō oriented reasoning akin to Abe and that his Heideggerian biases enhances these dhātu-vādic tendencies rather than to counter it. The section will seek the following questions. Does Heine's interpretations of Dōgen's Buddha-nature and time in relation to practice adhere to *pratyasamutpāda*? If not, is it because he has a Heidegger oriented bias in understanding ontology? Does this bias imply the prejudice that ontology is 'corresponding' to an ultimate reality and that Buddhist practice is aimed at 'attaining' such a reality? Is there something we can learn from Heine's reading that may be useful for our "new" interpretation of Dōgen?

3.4.1 Hongaku-shisō and Heine's View on Buddha-Nature and Temporality

Heine's interpretation of Dōgen's ideas on Buddha-nature and time is presented in his analysis of the idea of 'impermanence Buddha-nature' in relation to *Uji* 有時, or what he translates as "Being-time." Heine defines Dōgen's idea of Being-time as a "primordial time" that is hidden behind our normal experience of reality and "constitute the foundations of existence itself."¹⁹³ According to this understanding Heine supports the idea that there is an ultimate ontological locus behind the ordinary appearance of existence and that this locus is identical to the 'true-way-time-is' as "primordial time."¹⁹⁴ Successful meditational practice reveals this reality to the practitioner.

While Heine does not use the term 'constant-abiding' or *Jojiyū* per se, he does utilize a reasoning much akin to Abe which reiterates the logic of constant-abiding in order to make sense of the relationship between individual existence and the ultimate locus as well as moments to the whole of "Being-time." This tendency can be observed in Heine's definition of Dōgen's 'impermanence Buddha-nature' as the fundamental identity between primordial time and Buddha-nature. According to Heine, "beings are invariably temporal occurrences; time always presences as *all* beings."¹⁹⁵ This means, the true nature of time is identical with the 'truth' of the whole of existence in the form of a universalized Buddha-nature or *Tathātā*. This idea reiterates the Hongaku concept of constant-abiding in which every individual existence is itself the whole of Buddha-nature without having to go through any qualitative change. Heine applies this idea in combining Dōgen's views on Buddha-nature with time as singular 'dharma-positions.' Each instant becomes singular and complete unto itself without

¹⁹³ Steven Heine, *Existential and Ontological Dimensions of Time in Heidegger and Dōgen*, (Albany: State University, 1985), 61.

¹⁹⁴ This presumption that there is an ultimate 'truth' to reality which embraces both normative reality without obstructing it is shared by Stambaugh. However Stambaugh does try to avoid a pure repetition of the constant-abiding logic and Abe styled dialectics by describing this ultimate reality in terms of process metaphysics. According to Stambaugh, the "third" ontological category which transcends and includes within it all dualities without obstruction "do not land in a third term at all but continuously leap off into another dimension." Stambaugh replaces this third "term" with a non-objectified, limitless dynamic movement that is not a place-thing, but a process, a *doing* or, *happening* that cannot be categorically divided. This does not exempt Stambaugh's interpretation from *dhātu-vāda* since she has merely replaced the ontological locus with the 'process' itself. Her fundamental reliance on the idea of an ontological 'ground' remains. Joan Stambaugh, *Impermanence is Buddha-nature*, (Honolulu, University of Hawaii, 1990), 93.

¹⁹⁵ Heine, *Existential and Ontological*, 51.

having to change: “There is no-thing/no-self which changes. Impermanence is no more or less than the impermanently innate and unceasing dynamism of non-self without reference to or contrast with other supposedly stable thing or process outside it.”¹⁹⁶ Furthermore, the singular moment becomes the absolute totality of all primordial time (i.e. the entirety of Buddha-nature) where, “The total penetration and realization of any single practice, explanation or experience at this very time fully discloses the entire Dharma-realm because all beings, all selves, and all Buddhas at each and every moment are harmoniously and simultaneously linked together.”¹⁹⁷

Heine is saying that authentic time fully manifests in the present moment by virtue of its connection to the whole of impermanent existence. Since all existence is co-dependent and interconnected to each other, each singular moment constantly-abide as the full totality of Buddha-nature. Every singular instant is, while being innately impermanent, already the totality of Buddha-nature without having to change. Thereby the paradoxical connectivity between singular instants is explicated. Each moment as it is, non-obstructively extends limitlessly, and multi-directionally throughout all times due to it constantly-abiding as the entirety of Buddha-nature.¹⁹⁸

Heine concludes that Dōgen surpasses Heidegger in the sense he overcomes any sense of substantive ontology by completely merging all existence with the non-self-existing totality of primordial time.¹⁹⁹ However, Heine, like Abe, overlooks that simply escaping from substantive ontologies in which things intrinsically exist, cannot free a philosophy from being dhātu-vāda. As I had presented in the last chapter, any idea reliant on an ontological or epistemological ‘locus’ regardless of it being in-substantive or not, neglects causality and therefore is dhātu-vāda.

Heine argues that Dōgen is claiming the presence of a ‘true nature’ of reality in the form of primordial time or ‘impermanence-Buddha-nature,’ which can only be manifested authentically through practice. This argument presupposes a dhātu-vādic design of thought whereby there is a locus to super-locus structure of reality. Whether or not this ontological locus is claimed to be non-self-

¹⁹⁶ Heine, *Existential and Ontological*, 90.

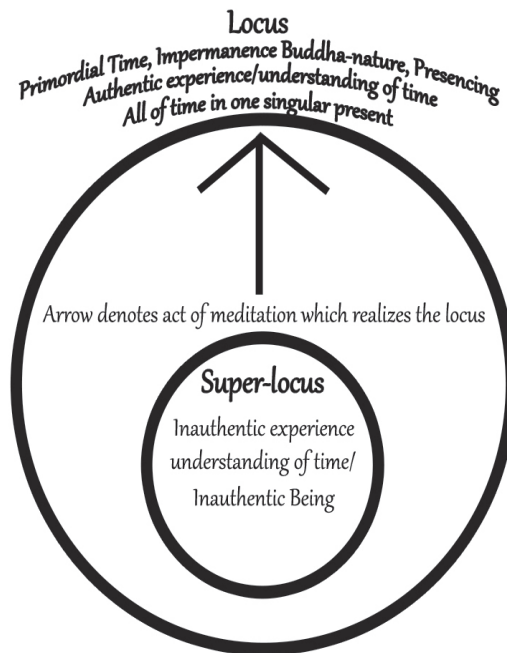
¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 127-130.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 98-99.

existence, or non-substantive as a “insubstantial presence,”²⁰⁰ the foundational presupposition that there is some form of ‘true nature’ of reality that is not immediately accessible yet foundational to all other existence and knowledge cannot be but dhātu-vāda (see diagram 4). Such a dhātu-vāda oriented interpretation of Dōgen has direct consequences on Heine’s understanding of Dōgen’s view on practice as we shall see in the following section.

Diagram 4: Dhātu-vādic Structure of Heine’s Interpretation of Dōgen



3.4.2 The Heidegger Bias and its Consequence on Dōgen’s View on Practice

The presumption that Dōgen’s philosophy ‘corresponds’ to an ultimate nature of reality that is only attained through practice, seems to come hand-in-hand with Heine’s Heidegger oriented prejudice in understanding ontology. The greatest problem of Heine’s use of Heidegger as a

²⁰⁰ Heine, *Existential and Ontological*, 95.

referential framework in reading Dōgen maybe that his interpretation of Heidegger is itself dhātu-vāda in structure and therefore non-compatible with a Buddhism strictly founded on *pratītyasamutpāda*. Heine equates Dōgen's impermanence Buddha-nature, and Being-time with a Heidegger inspired sense of ultimate Being which he calls "presence."²⁰¹ However, no matter how Heine may consider the problem of the "being of beings" as not that of a 'thing-in-itself' but an "insubstantial presence," the fundamental nature of how he understands Heidegger's metaphysics where the "being of beings" functions as an ontological locus remains.

Furthermore, Heine implies that an authentic mode of Buddhist life is possible only when one sheds mistaken ontologies and realizes the 'true' nature of impermanence Buddha-nature, Being-time or primordial time through practice. Heine considers the realization of non-self in meditational practice is necessary for an authentic ontological understanding of primordial time.²⁰² Realization of non-self and an authentic ontology jointly manifests the 'true nature' of primordial time as one's own authenticated being. This presupposition that Dōgen is suggesting the need to search for an 'authentic ontology' through practice is further evidenced when Heine mentions such statements as, "Both Heidegger in *Sein und Zeit* and Dōgen in the *Shōbōgenzō* maintain that the problematics of existence and the limitations of metaphysics are fundamentally and directly related to basic misconceptions concerning time."²⁰³ And, "Heidegger and Dōgen agree that primordial time is the starting point of philosophical reflection, the ground of existential freedom, and the basis for the convergence between these dimensions."²⁰⁴ Furthermore, "Dōgen unhesitatingly stresses that existential awakening to non-self is necessarily coterminous with the overcoming of derivative ontologies based on an inauthentic self-fixation."²⁰⁵

Such an idea of searching for an 'authentic ontology' that is founded on an ultimate assurance, reason, ground, cause, or 'true nature' of existence, as central to a philosophical praxis, is

²⁰¹ Joan Stambaugh in her comparative study of Dōgen and Heidegger shares Heine's presumption that Dōgen is promoting the need to penetrate into a 'true nature' of existence and that this nature is some kind of "*presencing*." Stambaugh, 100.

²⁰² Heine, *Existential and Ontological*, 125.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 1.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 65.

incompatible with the central doctrine of *pratītyasamutpāda*. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the concern for Buddhism as founded on *pratītyasamutpāda* is not to reveal the ‘true’ or ‘authentic’ nature of reality, but to cultivate altruism by way of achieving a correct insight into the causal nature of one’s experience of the world and self through *prajñā*. When we consider the above, Heine’s Heideggerian or existentialist premise that a more ‘authentic’ mode of Buddhist life can only be realized through one’s attainment of an authentic experience of reality becomes a tremendous limitation when imported into Buddhism. Such an idea dislocates the centrality of practice founded on *pratītyasamutpāda*. It relegates altruistic compassion and *prajñā* to a secondary position, valuing practice as a method to attain the ‘true nature’ of reality and self, which will automatically ensure “enlightenment.” In addition, such a view that Dōgen’s ontology ‘authentically’ corresponds to the ‘true-way-reality-is,’ implies that ontology is by nature descriptive or ‘representational’ to reality and therefore continues to tie down Dōgen to correspondence theory. Consequently, Heine’s utility of Heidegger as a tool to elucidate Dōgen proves inapplicable for a pragmatist understanding of metaphysics as compatible to *pratītyasamutpāda*.

Despite the concern for authentic ontology, Heine also shows a tendency towards a view of practice as transcendental experientialism. For example, he mentions the primordial unity of ‘impermanence-Buddha-nature’ and ‘Being-time,’ “Represent two-fold perspectives of the selfsame, holistic, dynamically unfolding reality conceptually ungraspable yet experientially ever-manifest in each and every particularity.”²⁰⁶ If Heine means that the nature of primordial time is “conceptually ungraspable,” it cannot but jeopardize his claim that an authentic ontological understanding of the ‘true nature’ of existence is essential for an authentic mode of Buddhist life. What is conceptually ungraspable can never be authentically ontologically articulated; how can one even talk about some kind of ‘authentic’ ontology? If such was the case, this would also position Heine’s idea closer to *dhātu-vāda* by reiterating the Hongaku premise that the locus is beyond analytical thought.

Heine’s tendency to emphasize the transcendental experience of the ‘true-way-reality-is’ as

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 28. Again, Stambaugh coincides with Heine on the point that Dōgen’s meditative practice aims at attaining a transcendental experience or “spiritual intuition” that “involve a different way of perceiving both space and time; they perceive the world differently from the way it is usually perceived.” Such a view veers to *dhātu-vāda* by neglecting *prajñā* and altruism. Stambaugh, 106

central to Dōgen, together with his reliance on a Hongaku oriented logic of identity between individual existence and the ultimate locus may also be endangering *pratītyasamutpāda* on ethical terms. I previously pointed out how Heine’s ontological understanding of Dōgen’s time and Buddha-nature reiterates Hongaku-shisō. This was apparent in his interpretation of ‘impermanence Buddha-nature’/‘primordial time’ as an ultimate ontological locus and how he explained its identity with normative reality through the logic of constant-abiding. Consequently, Heine promotes the Hongaku idea of direct identity between locus and super-locus whereby individual existence is understood as it is in the present, the perfect totality of the locus. In Heine’s words, “Dōgen stresses that the totality of the present moment is not to be considered a metaphor for eternity, but the full discovery, realization and affirmation of being-time just as it is.”²⁰⁷ Such a philosophy of unconditional affirmation of immediate reality as ‘enlightened’ cannot necessitate practice and ethics based on *prajñā*. The necessity for analytical thought that discriminates what is good or bad becomes displaced in favor of attaining a transcendental experience that reveals primordial time. Indeed, *prajñā* is never a concern for Heine. According to him, Buddhism is about becoming an authentic being through uncovering of a fundamental ontology based on an authentic experience of the ‘true nature’ of reality.²⁰⁸ This leaves no recourse for Heine but to understand Buddhist compassion as something transcendent to thought and is endowed within the ‘true nature’ of reality. As a result, compassion becomes a non-personal “automated response” which spontaneously acts through us²⁰⁹ as opposed to being a quality that must be actively cultivated through analytical evaluation in every situation.

In summary, Heine’s interpretation of Dōgen’s Buddha-nature, time and their relation to practice was analyzed as entailing *dhātu-vāda*. His view on Buddha-nature is *dhātu-vāda* since he interpreted it as an ultimate ontological locus. His view on time is *dhātu-vāda*, since he interpreted Dōgen as claiming a ‘primordial time’ outside causality. And Heine’s view on Buddhist practice also went the same route, since Heine neglected *prajñā* and altruistic ethics by considering the transcendental experience of ‘primordial time’ as primary to practice. These views implied both his

²⁰⁷ Heine, *Existential and Ontological*, 129.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 150.

Heideggerian bias that an authentic mode of life necessitates the understanding of a fundamental ontology which describes the ‘true-way-reality-is,’ and his prejudice that Dōgen’s metaphysics must be describing reality realized through enlightenment. These presumptions kept his interpretation of Dōgen within the confines of correspondence theory. In this way, while Heine’s comparative reading of Dōgen is a bold attempt to read²¹⁰ Dōgen side by side with the ideas of a Western thinker, it cannot be considered as affirming Dōgen’s metaphysics while adhering to *pratītyasamutpāda*.

One thing we can learn from Heine is that to the extent Heidegger is understood as promoting the idea of an ultimate ontological ‘truth’ and that an authentic life is only possible by the attainment of such a ‘truth’ of Being, the Heideggerian approach inevitably veers towards *dhātu-vāda* and correspondence theory. Therefore, Heidegger may not be the best tool to interpret Dōgen beyond ‘representation’ and in line with *pratītyasamutpāda*.

The following section will analyze how Kasulis’s “phenomenological” approach to Dōgen, though distinguished from the purely representational approach to ontology taken by Abe and Heine, still repeats many of the shortcomings I had pointed out in both of their Dōgen interpretations.

3.5 T.P. Kasulis’s ‘Phenomenological’ Approach to Dōgen

Kasulis’s interpretation of Dōgen is presented within the context that he attempts to create a universal theory of Zen philosophy based on what he calls the “phenomenological” approach. This approach largely departs from the view found in Abe and Heine where Dōgen’s philosophy was understood as ‘corresponding’ to an ultimate ontological locus. The “phenomenological” understanding sees Zen philosophy as not involved in explaining the world but with how the mind interacts with reality. Consequently, Kasulis refuses to read Dōgen’s philosophy as ontology but as a phenomenological enterprise. According to Kasulis, anything that Dōgen says which may sound like

²¹⁰ Whether this is intended or not is a different story. Heine does not claim to be making a “new” philosophy by combining Dōgen and Heidegger, but in effect his comparison ends up doing so largely due to his latent Heidegger influences. Hence his Dōgen interpretation is neither purely Dōgen nor Heidegger, but an integration of the two. Though this may have been unintended on Heine’s side, such an attempt to read disparate ontologies into each other should be respected as a creative move. Although from the perspective of the current study, his particular choice of Heideggerian philosophical tools, and his tendency towards *Hongaku-shisō* proved unacceptable.

ontology is in fact a description of the way we experience reality through consciousness.²¹¹

However, my view is that Kasulis's approach may not successfully free Dōgen from correspondence theory and dhātu-vāda due to two presumptions that he takes for granted. That is his basic acceptance of Zen/Hongaku philosophy in interpreting Dōgen and his presumption that there is a 'true' mode of consciousness behind our normative state of mind. In the course of analyzing if this is the case I will answer the following questions. How does Kasulis interpret Dōgen's Buddha-nature and time through his "phenomenological" approach? Does Kasulis successfully stay away from dhātu-vāda by avoiding ontology altogether? Does his interpretation successfully integrate Dōgen's views on Buddha-nature and time with practice based in praṭīyasamutpāda? What can be learned from his approach that may be of use for our interpretation of Dōgen?

3.5.1 Buddha-Nature as "Pre-Reflexive Consciousness"

Kasulis interprets Dōgen's concept of the unity of practice and enlightenment with a particular predisposition concerning the nature of consciousness. This is to presume there exists a state of pre-reflexive consciousness that is prior to any sense of discriminative thought or the reflexive effort to stop thought. Kasulis equates this primordial state of the mind with Dōgen's ideas of Buddha-nature, the Zen 'True Self' and enlightenment. This means that Kasulis already veers towards dhātu-vāda by uncritically accepting the Zen premise for the existence of a 'True Self.' In order to elaborate the above, Kasulis concurs with Abe's use of dialectics to explain how the concept of 'impermanence-Buddha-nature' at once transcends, makes possible, and includes within it both 'with Buddha-nature' and 'without Buddha-nature.' Applying the same logic allows Kasulis to conceive pre-reflexive consciousness (Dōgen's 'without-thinking') as preceding, superseding and making possible both thought and non-thought without hindering their individual functions.²¹²

Meditational practice is thus the method by which one 'returns' to this pre-reflexive state

²¹¹ T.P. Kasulis, *Zen Action Zen Person*, (Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 1981), 69.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 73-74, 81-82. Also 75-76 concerning the functional primacy of without-thinking over all other modes of thinking.

while not negating the functions of thinking and non-thinking, but simply observing them as what is happening. Thereby, practice and enlightenment are one “as long as one maintains a pure state of without-thinking, one is a Buddha.”²¹³ Dōgen’s equating of impermanence with Buddha-nature is understood as the way we experience reality as a continuous flux from the side of pre-reflexive consciousness without referring them to discriminating concepts, since in this state of ‘without-thinking’ “the ceaseless unfolding of experience is the only reality.”²¹⁴

Here Kasulis implies that replacing an ontological concern for explaining reality with the concern for describing experience by pre-reflexive consciousness is enough to counter accusations for dhātu-vāda.²¹⁵ Placing religious practice as the foundations from which Dōgen is interpreted will deter readings from having to directly concern ontological and metaphysical problems. In addition, by conceiving discussions on reality as strictly a problem of how it is experienced as opposed to how they exist, Kasulis’s “phenomenology” at first sight seems as if it returns to the basic Buddhist phenomenology of understanding the experience of reality as a causal composite of the skandhas. However, this is not the case, as I will explain below.

Kasulis’s “phenomenology” is not Buddhist, but Western in scope and overlooks the fact that it foundationally function with dhātu-vādic ontological and epistemological presumptions. These presumptions involve the view that there can somehow be an “objective” consciousness that can observe the nature of our experiences without itself having to be entangled within the relation of our experience and our observing consciousness. There is irony in claiming a way of experiencing reality that is unmediated by various causal factors that conditions the mind such as the contexts in which we exist and the various conceptualization we either latently or consciously accept in making sense of ourselves and the world. The irony lies in the ignorance towards its own status as a concept. A concept created out of a particular framework of experiencing and making sense out of the concept of consciousness. Rather than adhering to the Buddhist idea that any experience of a ‘self’ that observes reality is itself a product of the causal process of the skandhas, Kasulis’s phenomenological method is

²¹³ Kasulis, 84.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid., 82.

problematic in that it somehow places consciousness outside of experience. This ignores the problem that we cannot but understand and conceptualize consciousness without our experiencing of it, that consciousness is itself conceived through our experiencing of the phenomena of consciousness. From the perspective of the twelve *nidānas*/five *skandhas*, the consciousness we come to feel as ‘ourselves’ and through which we experience reality is itself a product of the causal connection of the *skandhas*. Instead, Kasulis supports the existence of a form of consciousness that is itself transcendent to causality, and therefore transgress *prāṭhyasamutpāda*. Such a view is in agreement to Kasulis’s Zen presumption that there exists a ‘True Self’ behind normative consciousness.

In other words, Kasulis’s “phenomenological” approach functions by the epistemological presupposition of a primary state of consciousness (as pre-reflexive consciousness) that is unmediated by conditions. This pre-reflexive consciousness then functions as a transcendental ground for all subsequent states of consciousness. Kasulis equates this pre-reflexive consciousness with Dōgen’s concept of ‘without-thinking.’ This however does not overcome the fact that this primary state of ‘without-thinking’ functions as a locus to the arising of discriminative thought (the super-locus). Therefore, Kasulis’s system of Dōgen interpretation cannot escape *dhātu-vāda* as it fundamentally relies on the absolutizing of a transcendent notion of consciousness to function as an epistemological ground.

Consequently, the “phenomenological” stance is incapable of escaping a correspondence theoretical framework. This is because Kasulis necessitates a ‘transcendent absolute’ not in the form of a ‘thing,’ or ‘truth’ but in the form of an ‘objective’ consciousness which somehow lies outside experience. According to such a perspective, Dōgen’s philosophy must be understood as ‘correspondent’ to the ‘true’ state of consciousness he has experienced. Strangely, Kasulis also defeats his own purpose for avoiding ontology when he introduces an ontological element in his claim that the unmediated “pure consciousness” experiences reality as the “pure presence of things as they are.”²¹⁶ Furthermore, Kasulis mentions that ‘without-thinking’ through a “proper sitting authenticates the enlightenment already there.”²¹⁷ Such statements evidences how Kasulis’s view on Dōgen does

²¹⁶ Kasulis, 73.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 78.

not oppose the prevalent Hongaku-shisō based ‘universal Buddha-nature’ reading where Buddha-nature is equated with the ‘universal enlightenment’ of the whole of existence that is revealed while meditation is maintained. This means that Kasulis’s interpretation latently accepts an ontological ground to reality.

In an effort to escape accusations for dhātu-vāda, Kasulis borrows from Heidegger to describe the ultimate way things exist ‘as they are’ as a “presence”²¹⁸ rather than an ontological thing-in-itself:

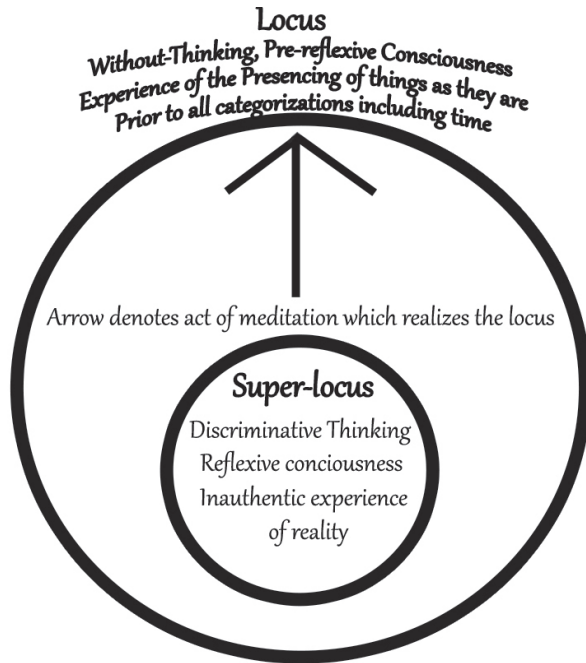
Phrases like *being such*, *the presence of things as they are*, and *the what-is-in-front-of-me* are not meant to be illuminating statements about the nature of the universe. But they do indicate the pre-reflective experience at the basis of consciousness. [...] It is not an objective description so much as a pointer showing us the way to authenticating what we are.²¹⁹

Despite the above explanation, the use of the concept of ‘presence’ does not allow Kasulis’s framework to escape dhātu-vāda. Because of Kasulis’s dhātu-vādic presumption about a ‘true experience’ of reality that enables normal experience. Kasulis’s claim transposes this ‘true nature’ from a ‘truth’ of existence to a ‘true nature’ of consciousness. Regardless, the locus to super-locus design of thought stays intact (see diagram 3).

²¹⁸ Kasulis, 83-86.

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

Diagram 3:
Dhātu-vādic Structure of Kasulis's Phenomenological Reading of Dōgen



3.5.2 Temporality Experienced from “Pre-Reflexive Consciousness”

Kasulis's interpretation of Dōgen's view on time follows the same logic of reducing Dōgen's concept to a 'pre-reflexive consciousness.' Much like how Kasulis interpreted 'impermanence Buddha-nature' as the nature of reality experienced by an enlightened being, the concept of Uji or "Being-time" is also interpreted as denoting how the enlightened person experience time through pre-reflexive consciousness as "neither time nor being per se; we experience temporal existence."²²⁰ In other words, the inseparability of being and time expresses the nature of how reality from the side of pre-reflexive consciousness is experienced as a non-categorized temporal flux. Kasulis also describes

²²⁰ Kasulis, 79.

this as follows: “When we take the experience of change as it is and make no projections beyond what is directly given, there is simply the unending experience of flux.”²²¹

Kasulis interprets Dōgen’s seemingly paradoxical notion of isolated instants and the continuity between those instants as follows. The isolated instant simply denotes the way a practitioner experiences reality as a “right now” through ‘without-thinking’ since conceptual concerns for past and future do not arise.²²² This does not mean past and future do not exist, but only that the practitioner is freed “from considerations of past and present,” and experiences reality within a “total involvement in the nowness of temporal events.”²²³ Dōgen’s singular moments are yet another way reality is experienced from a different state of consciousness where the perceiver understands reality as a “flow.”²²⁴ Kasulis’s point is that these concepts do not represent the objective ‘true-way-time-is,’ but how they are experienced in accordance to different states of consciousness. Consequently, the different ways temporality is experienced can simultaneously exist without obstructing each other since they are not the ‘true-way-reality-is’ but are varied descriptions of the way the mind experiences it. Ultimately the nature of ‘without-thinking’ does not negate the continuity of past, present, and future since the state of ‘without-thinking’ does not cause the rise of categories, and therefore the way reality is experienced in terms of such categories is neither affirmed or denied.²²⁵ Kasulis’s interpretation of ‘without-thinking’ therefore reiterates Abe’s dialectics within his “phenomenological” context. ‘Without-thinking’ becomes the all-inclusive mode of consciousness which embraces both the experience of the singular instant and time as “flowing” continuity without hindering their distinctive nature. In spite of Kasulis’s concern for spiritual practice, his interpretation of Dōgen’s theory of time is dhātu-vāda as I will show below.

By locating without-thinking prior to either the creation of categories of time or the reflexive negation of it, Kasulis admits that “it is in this sense that zazen is outside temporal categories.”²²⁶ What is experienced by pre-reflexive consciousness, whether it be the nature of reality or time, must

²²¹ Kasulis, 81.

²²² Ibid., 80.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Ibid., 79.

²²⁶ Ibid.

be transcendent to analytical thinking and normative reality.²²⁷ In other words, pre-reflexive consciousness makes lived time as impermanence insignificant. While he also adds that this “does not reject temporality itself,”²²⁸ such a statement is mere formality. The reason is, placing ‘without-thinking’ as the aspired state of consciousness in meditation, displaces the practitioner’s need to observe the nature of impermanence in relation to his/her suffering. Therefore, the “phenomenological” approach necessarily ends up taking the transcendental experientialist understanding of Buddhist meditation to its logical extreme. Attaining the ‘true’ experience of time as Being-time necessitates the transcendental experience of reality through pre-reflexive consciousness as the goal of Buddhist practice.

Positioning the “enlightened” mind and the nature of reality he/she experiences as beyond the normative leads to a lack of concern for the critical situation that we are living an irreversible time in which we ultimately die. Consequently, the necessity for the foundational affirmation of *prāṭīyasamutpāda* in practice, as unfolded in irreversible impermanence, loses its significance. When the ‘true nature’ of experiencing reality becomes located beyond discriminative thought and lived time, there can no longer be any edge to the necessity of observing impermanence regardless if ‘pre-reflexive consciousness’ does not reject the notion.

Akin to what we observed in Heine, the above transcendentalism also leads to an ethical fallacy. The idea that altruistic compassion needs to be cultivated through one’s use of *prajñā* in gaining correct insight of the nature of no-abiding-self becomes completely displaced. Leaving ethics only to the unverifiable authority of a transcendently experienced automated “compassion” that cannot be critically evaluated.²²⁹ Hence, Kasulis’s application of pre-reflexive consciousness to Dōgen’s notion of time deny *prāṭīyasamutpāda* for it neglects impermanence, and the necessity for altruism and *prajñā* in practice.

²²⁷ Not surprisingly, Kasulis interprets *prajñā* as “intuitive wisdom” to have it concur with his view that enlightened experience of reality is beyond discriminative thought. Thereby he ignores the definition of *prajñā* as analytical thinking. See Kasulis, 97.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*

²²⁹ Much like Heine, Kasulis supports the idea that authentic Buddhist ethics is based on the automatic response made possible by the enlightened mind who has transcended analytical thought. See 93-99. The danger of such a view has already been pointed out earlier by Critical Buddhism that it leaves action non-subject to critical evaluation, but solely reliant on the unverifiable authority of transcendental religious experiences. Refer to chapter 2 section 2.2.1.3.

One point we can learn from Kasulis's interpretation of Dōgen is his introduction of a major turn in perspective from Abe and Heine in terms of how to approach the relation between Dōgen's philosophy and his priority for practice. Kasulis's view that Dōgen's ontological ideas are utilities for spiritual practice rather than "ontology" descriptive of reality per se, may be beneficial for reading Dōgen beyond a correspondence theoretical framework. This view, if understood from a pragmatist perspective that ontology or epistemology do not need to 'correspond' to a 'truth,' but are significant to the extent they fulfill practical functions, may help free Dōgen's metaphysics from correspondence theory. As I will try to show in the next chapter, Deleuze's pragmatism may help provide a framework to take such a practice-centred understanding of Dōgen's metaphysics to its logical extreme.

However, Kasulis did not take the possibility of this practice-centred approach to its full as he prematurely dismissed ontology/metaphysics, without critical analysis of his own latent choice of a dhātu-vādic onto-epistemology as the foundation for his "phenomenology." Kasulis harboured a fear towards ontology in a manner similar to the Critical Buddhists in that he considers ontology as *by nature* 'representational' and therefore entailing an attachment to 'truth.' Consequently, Kasulis refrains from affiliating Dōgen with ontology altogether and is not able to present a way to understand ontology/metaphysics as itself non-representational and purely practical. Instead, Kasulis forced Dōgen's ontology into his dhātu-vādic "phenomenology." Therefore, Kasulis stays short of constructing an interpretive framework that can reconcile metaphysics with practice without recourse to dhātu-vāda. Instead of following the Buddhist phenomenology of the skandhas based in prañīyasamutpāda, Kasulis's interpretation of how reality is experienced by Dōgen proved the foundation of his "phenomenology" to be dhātu-vāda.

In summary, Kasulis's "phenomenological" approach inevitably lead him to dhātu-vāda since he considered a 'pre-reflexive consciousness' to exist beyond causality and prañī. Equating the Zen theory of a 'True Self' to this 'pre-reflexive consciousness' meant that in effect this consciousness functions as an 'individual-locus' or 'true state' of consciousness superior to all other forms of consciousness. Despite Kasulis's seeming avoidance of ontology, he also accepted the existence of an

ontological locus when he claimed the reality experienced by the enlightened is the “pure presence of things as they are.” Kasulis jeopardizes his own “phenomenological” approach by introducing a fundamental ontology of “presence” as the ‘true-way-reality-is.’ Together with his presumption of a ‘pre-reflexive consciousness’/‘True Self,’ this acceptance of an ultimate ontological locus of “presence,” reverted his interpretation of Dōgen to Zen/Hongaku-shisō.

Kasulis’s “phenomenological” approach also steered Dōgen’s ideas on time towards dhātu-vāda, since Being-time was interpreted as the ‘true-way-time-is-experienced’ transcendent to normative consciousness and lived impermanence. This presumption that there is a ‘true’ experience of consciousness and reality, whether it be Being-time or “presence,” also had consequences in Kasulis’s view of Dōgen’s practice. Kasulis’s idea of Dōgen’s practice was centred on the attaining of the ‘true’ state of consciousness which revealed the ‘true’ transcendental experience of reality. Therefore, Kasulis neglected praṭītyasamutpāda on practical and ethical terms since his idea of Buddhist practice did not respect the primacy of cultivating altruism through praññā.

As we can infer from the above, Kasulis reiterated the prejudice also shared by Abe and Heine, in considering Dōgen’s practice as centred on the attainment of some grounding ‘truth.’ Albeit for Kasulis this was not only an ontological ‘truth,’ but also an epistemological ‘true’ state of consciousness. Consequently, Kasulis also took for granted that Dōgen’s ontology ‘corresponded’ to the way reality is experienced through the ‘true’ state of consciousness attained by the enlightened. This means that Kasulis’s approach to Dōgen, despite his prioritizing of its practical significance, could not overcome correspondence theory.

3.6 Robert Glass’s “Buddha-Essence” Reading of Dōgen

Robert Glass’s interpretation of Dōgen tries to critically depart from the kind of ontology found in Abe and Heine in a different manner from Kasulis’s “phenomenological” approach. Glass’s views on Dōgen is presented within the context of his aim to construct what he calls a “third” view on Buddhist ‘emptiness’ (Skt. *sūnyatā*) that can give the idea of Buddha-nature a positive role in

Buddhist practice by overcoming two versions of what he sees as a flawed interpretation of ‘emptiness.’ The first is the reading of emptiness which interprets it as “presence.” The second is emptiness interpreted as a tool for negation to negate all ontological grounds into an infinite deferral.

Glass’s use of Deleuze is limited to the concept of ‘desire,’ which he does not utilize in direct reference to Dōgen, but in the process of presenting what he considers authentic Buddhist practice based on his “third” view of emptiness. This is a view of meditation as a practice subtracting negative desires, rather than as a method to stop or transcend thinking. We will see in the following analysis if Glass’s interpretation successfully affirms Dōgen’s metaphysics without neglecting *pratītyasamutpāda* or like Abe, Heine and Kasulis results in *dhātu-vāda*. In addition, I will analyze if Glass’s use of Deleuze is concurrent with *pratītyasamutpāda* and if it helps construct a view of Buddhism freed from correspondence theory.

The current section will try to answer the following questions. How does Glass try to solve what he finds to be problematic in Abe and the Critical Buddhist understanding of emptiness / Buddha-nature? Is it successful? How does Glass interpret Dōgen’s view on Buddha-nature? Does it concur with *pratītyasamutpāda* or not? How does Glass utilize Deleuze in his reading of Buddhism? Does it allow Dōgen to be freed from ‘representation’? Does Glass’s interpretation of Dōgen and his use of Deleuze imply the prejudice that ontology is ‘representational’? What can be learned from Glass’s interpretation of Dōgen and his use of Deleuze?

3.6.1 The Two "Flawed" Views on Emptiness and Buddha-Nature

According to Glass the “presence” type of understanding ‘emptiness’²³⁰ or *sūnyatā* defines it as a conceptual tool that “empties” each existence of its ‘self-being’ by virtue of their inclusivity within the co-dependence of all existence. This leads to a positive ontologization of

²³⁰ Though Glass uses the term emptiness, he is referring to Abe’s use of ‘no-thingness.’ While the term emptiness and nothingness often tend to be utilized interchangeably in Western Buddhist scholarship. Glass doesn’t seem to be so concerned about the fact that these terms are actually distinct, the former is the Japanese *Ku* 空 and the later *Mu* 無, both can be read as having very different connotations. The former a tool to designate how phenomena is empty of self-nature, and the later an ontological nothing, an empty dimension or realm. Glass does not distinguish between the terms much in the same way Kyoto school philosophers like Abe also seem to conflate the two.

prafītyasamutpāda akin to what I previously explained as the Tendai concept of Jiji-muge-hokkai. ‘Emptiness’ becomes the term which describes the totality of co-dependent relations amongst all existence constituting a primordially ‘pure’ metaphysical ‘realm’ or ‘space’ that is inclusive of normative existence. This type of emptiness ultimately affirms the entirety of existence as “presence” connected through a dialectical inclusion of both is/is not by the mediation of emptiness.²³¹

Glass considers Abe, Kasulis and the Heidegger inspired interpretations of Dōgen to be more or less in line with the above mentioned “presence” type of interpretation of prafītyasamutpāda and emptiness.²³² The common problem Glass finds in this type of reading is that ‘emptiness’ as the dialectical affirmation of both is/is not through the superseding inclusivity of ‘no-thingness’ ends up unconditionally affirming everything and therefore undermines ethics by disregarding the need to distinguish between good and bad.²³³ Such an all-embracing affirmation does not sit in well with Glass’s view of Buddhist practice. Glass considers Buddhist practice to be based on the idea of transforming desire from one form to another. He sees meditation as the process through which negative, or unnecessary desires are subtracted in order to leave necessary virtuous desires such as the aspiration for enlightenment, and finally to uncover the individual’s primordial Buddha-nature.²³⁴ Therefore, the “presence” type of ‘emptiness’ which ends up unconditionally affirming everything cannot support the idea of Buddhist practice as a choosing and subtracting amongst favorable and unfavorable desires.

Glass’s above critique of the “presence” type of theory of ‘emptiness’ is a case in point which parallels what we examined as the Critical Buddhist’s critique of Hongaku-shisō. Abe’s unconditional affirmation of all existence is identical to the Hongaku logic of constant-abiding in which ‘all phenomena equals the Absolute’ without transformation. The idea of constant-abiding affirmed all existence as originally ‘pure’ due to its participation in the primordially “enlightened” totality of Buddha-nature, Tathātā or emptiness. In both Abe and the original Hongaku doctrine, ‘emptiness’ as the ultimate ontological ground includes all dichotomies and therefore nullifies the need for their

²³¹ Glass, 47-48.

²³² Ibid., 30.

²³³ Ibid., 47-48, 63.

²³⁴ Ibid., 63-67.

distinction, thereby neglecting the need to discriminate what is good and bad.

Glass does not problematize Hongaku-shisō per se, and he does not seem to realize that these features he considers the “presence” version of emptiness are philologically rooted in Hongaku doctrine. As I have analyzed to this point, the recurrence of the logic of constant-abiding in Abe, Heine and Kasulis merely means that these scholars reiterate Hongaku-shisō. I will later analyze how Glass’s neglect for analyzing Hongaku-shisō as related with what he saw as the problem of the “presence” reading of emptiness, may be influencing his interpretation of Dōgen’s Buddha-nature to veer towards dhātu-vāda. For now we shall return to Glass’s second pole of the dichotomy of views on emptiness.

What Glass considers the second interpretation of emptiness utilizes sūnyatā as a tool to negate all ontological grounds into an infinite deferral. Glass considers this type of emptiness to be most strongly present in the negative theology of Mark C. Taylor and the various Derrida influenced readings of Buddhist emptiness.²³⁵ Glass also considers the Critical Buddhists as embracing the second type of understanding.²³⁶ I consider this an inaccurate assessment on the side of Glass, the reason of which I will offer later. Glass’s overarching critique of the above views of emptiness is that they both cannot affirm a sense of “ground” for Buddhist practice in the form of a positive Buddha-nature, let alone to support a form of meditational practice that is based on such an affirmation of Buddha-nature as being a positive ontological reality.²³⁷ Glass’s view is that when ‘emptiness’ is understood as the infinite negation of svabhāva,²³⁸ this leads to a “negative” understanding of praṭīyasamutpāda whereby the co-dependence of existence results in an infinite “absence” of Being. Glass’s concern is that such a “negative” view on emptiness and praṭīyasamutpāda allows no sense of ground to be created for practice.

The above view may be more or less appropriate to the Derrida influenced deconstructivist approach to Buddhism Glass finds in Taylor. However, I will argue in the next section that Glass’s

²³⁵ Glass, 48-51. Glass seems to have in mind such Derrida-Buddhism studies as: Robert Magliola, *Derrida on the Mend*, (West Lafayette: Purdue University, 1984).

David Loy, “Indra’s Postmodern Net”, *Philosophy East and West* 43.3 (1993).

²³⁶ Glass, 64.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Svabhāva means ‘self-being,’ ‘individual-essence,’ or ‘to exist independently of causality.’

premature inclusion²³⁹ of the Critical Buddhists in this camp is not only shortsighted, but may be revealing of the fundamental flaw in his understanding of *pratītyasamutpāda*. Together with an analysis of Glass's attempted solution to the above problems he finds in both the "presence" and "negational" view on emptiness, a closer look at what may be his limited view on *pratītyasamutpāda* may clarify if Glass is conditioned by *dhātu-vāda* or not.

3.6.2 Glass's 'Essentialist' Buddha-nature and its Relation to *Pratītyasamutpāda*

Glass's solution to the lack of ethics in Abe's interpretation of Dōgen, as well as the lack of practical grounds in the negational reading of emptiness, is to read Dōgen from what he calls the "subtraction/essence" view of emptiness whose inspiration comes from *Tathāgatagarbha*.²⁴⁰ In doing so Glass seems to be unaware of Matsumoto's critique of *Tathāgatagarbha* as the nascent theory which eventually developed into *Hongaku-shisō*.²⁴¹ Glass's wholehearted acceptance of *Tathāgatagarbha* as the solution to the problems of emptiness is ironic. As I previously pointed out, Glass does not identify the roots of the problem of what he called the "presence" version of emptiness as really the problem of ideas reiterated from *Hongaku-shisō*. In order to present a solution to the problem, he in fact delves into the very roots of the development of *Hongaku* doctrine rather than avoiding it. This choice may lead to Glass's interpretation of Dōgen to inevitably veer towards *dhātu-vāda* as we shall see in the following analysis.

From Glass's "subtraction/essence" view, emptiness is not understood negatively as the emptiness of intrinsic nature of phenomena, or positively as an all-inclusive whole. Rather, Buddha-nature is positively existent as a universal primordial 'essence.' Glass argues that Dōgen does not interpret Buddha-nature from the perspective of co-dependent arising. Since Dōgen does not say Buddha-nature or *Tathātā* is a collection of many individual existences that are causally inter-

²³⁹ While Glass does name the Critical Buddhists, he does not offer any kind of analysis of their ideas to prove his point.

²⁴⁰ Glass, 64-67. See chapter 2 footnote 135 for a brief explanation on *Tathāgatagarbha* thought.

²⁴¹ Refer to chapter 2 section 2.3.1 for Matsumoto's linking of *Tathāgatagarbha* with *Hongaku-shisō*. Also refer to chapter 2 section 2.2.2.2 footnote 99.

penetrating, but is One. To support his claim, Glass largely resorts to phrases in the “Ikka-no-myōju” fascicle of the *Shōbōgenzō*:

The whole universe in ten directions is one bright pearl.²⁴² [...] This bright pearl’s possession of reality and lack of beginning are limitless, and the whole universe in ten directions is one bright pearl. Without being discussed as two pearls or three pearls, the whole body is one right Dharma-eye, the whole body is real substance, the whole body is one phrase, the whole body is brightness, and the whole body is the whole body itself.²⁴³

According to Glass, the pearl is a metaphor for Buddha-nature/Tathātā. He emphasizes that Dōgen never says the whole universe is equal to many pearls co-dependently existing, but simply says that it is *one* substantive bright pearl.²⁴⁴ Buddha-nature is One universal ‘essence’ that is shared amongst all individuals. Yet, the fact it is shared does not indicate the unconditional inclusion of the individual in the One, but a unilateral relationship of the superior primordially ‘pure’ One whose ‘purity’ shared by individuals must be revealed through practice.²⁴⁵ The meditational practice which gets rid of unnecessary desires finally reveals this primordial ‘essence’ as one’s true ‘pure’ nature. Such a view of Buddha-nature as primary to practice is indicative of Glass’s stance that he considers praṭīyasamutpāda not as a primary teaching in Buddhism, but secondary to Buddha-nature as ontological essence.²⁴⁶ This view of Buddha-nature as a universal ‘essence’ is in violation of praṭīyasamutpāda and no-abiding-self, for it is tantamount to claiming that such an ‘essence’ exists independently of causality.²⁴⁷ This means that despite Glass’s critique of Abe, he also reiterates Hongaku-shisō, albeit in its ‘inherent Buddha-nature’ form and with an additional concern for practice which subtracts negative desires. Glass’s choice of Tathāgatagarbha as a tool to go beyond the problem of emptiness as “presence” and negation in fact does nothing but to regress him back to Hongaku-shisō.

I consider Glass’s above tendency towards dhātu-vāda is also conditioned by his shortsighted view on praṭīyasamutpāda. Glass is oblivious to the foundational practical significance of

²⁴² *Shōbōgenzō*, Vol.1, “Ikka-no-myōju,” 50.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 52.

²⁴⁴ Glass, 76.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 76-78

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

²⁴⁷ As Glass himself admits, “enlightenment is somehow ‘uninvolved’ with the conditioned realm.” Glass, 77.

praṭītyasamutpāda in its most basic form as the twelve nidānas and how it ensues the mainline teachings of impermanence, altruism and no-abiding-self.²⁴⁸ Here, Glass is in harsh contrast to the stance of the current study as well as that of the Critical Buddhists who consider praṭītyasamutpāda as ethically and practically fundamental to Buddhism. Consequently, Glass misreads the Critical Buddhist position on praṭītyasamutpāda and emptiness as confined within what he defined as the negative or deconstructionist views on emptiness which lack a ground for practice. According to Hakamaya, sūnyatā (emptiness) defeats its own purpose if interpreted as an ultimate metaphysical ‘Truth’ or mediator which ties all existence into the whole of Tathātā, for it will end up functioning as a ‘locus.’ Emptiness is only an ontological tool to negate all sense of a ‘locus’ to reality, and cannot be endorsed as itself some form of absolute reality.²⁴⁹ Matsumoto adds that even emptiness as a tool to negate ontological and epistemological ‘loci’ must be criticized if it ends up negating praṭītyasamutpāda / twelve nidānas. In other words, Matsumoto claims that emptiness as a negating tool to critique dhātu-vāda, functions efficiently only when praṭītyasamutpāda is the very ground upon which it is based.²⁵⁰

Glass’s view that praṭītyasamutpāda understood as a negative emptiness endangers a ground for practice is mistaken since he overlooks the fact that praṭītyasamutpāda as the twelve nidānas/no-abiding-self/impermanence is the very grounds for Buddhist practice.²⁵¹ Buddha-nature cannot replace

²⁴⁸ Refer to the section on praṭītyasamutpāda in chapter 2 to see how the ideas of no-abiding-self and impermanence are tightly woven into praṭītyasamutpāda.

²⁴⁹ Hakamaya, *Hihan-Bukkyo*, 335-339. Also *Bukkyo Nyumon*, 205-206.

²⁵⁰ Matsumoto, *Engi to Ku*, 355-359. Matsumoto’s point is in contrast to the popular misconception found largely in scholarly readings of Nagarjuna which claim that Nagarjuna’s emptiness negates all ontological positions and puts forth no views of its own, or that Nagarjuna’s thesis is emptiness itself. It is an established view for example in Tibetan Buddhism which takes praṭītyasamutpāda as fundamental to its practice, that ‘emptiness’ is a tool to reinforce praṭītyasamutpāda/causality and puts forth no views of its own for its ground is praṭītyasamutpāda itself. This view was argued for and cemented by the Tibetan master of the Madhyamaka path, Tsongkhapa (1357 - 1419) in his interpretation of Nagarjuna.

See: Thupten Jinpa, *Self, Reality and Reason in Tibetan Philosophy: Tsongkhapa’s Quest for the Middle Way*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), 28-29.

Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness: A Tibetan Buddhist Interpretation of Madhyamaka Philosophy*, (Somerville: Wisdom, 2003), 150.

Ewing Chinn also argues for the view that praṭītyasamutpāda is the grounds on which Nagarjuna’s Madhyamaka system functions to reject ontologically realist views. Ewing Chinn, “Nagarjuna’s Fundamental Doctrine of Praṭītyasamutpāda,” *Philosophy East and West* 51.1 (2001), 54-72.

²⁵¹ Glass is also shortsighted in his view that emptiness as negation destroys the ground for ethics. As Thupten Jinpa points out in reference to Tsongkhapa’s interpretation of Nagarjuna, ‘emptiness’ as a negational tool cannot undermine ethics for it is a purely practical tool to cause change upon oneself through the application of praṭītyasamutpāda in life. Negation based on ‘emptiness’ must be used in moderation in accordance to the practical necessities of praṭītyasamutpāda and cannot be used for purely theoretical speculation that may refute conventional reality. ‘Emptiness’ is utilized on the grounds of ethics founded on praṭītyasamutpāda. (Thupten Jinpa, 31.) In this

this ground if we are to understand that *pratītyasamutpāda* is essential for an ethically viable practice of Buddhism. To the extent that Dōgen himself uses the concept of Buddha-nature, we can agree to Glass that the idea should be affirmed as significant for practice. Yet, if we are to interpret Dōgen's use of the term in adherence to *pratītyasamutpāda*, we cannot follow Glass's example. Buddha-nature should not be understood as a 'locus,' but a practical tool which functions within the confines of *pratītyasamutpāda*. What kind of form such a view on Buddha-nature may take will be explored in chapter five, for now I shall conclude the section with a summary on how Glass veered to *dhātu-vāda*.

By considering Buddha-nature a positive ontological 'essence' that is more important in practice than *pratītyasamutpāda*, Glass's view of Buddhism proved to be purely contrary to *pratītyasamutpāda*. Consequently, rather than fulfilling his aspiration of presenting a "new" way of reading Dōgen's Buddha-nature, his reading regresses to *dhātu-vāda*. Glass's claim about one substantive Buddha-nature, which is shared as essence amongst all individual beings, results in something resembling pure Brahmanism. Glass merely adds a penchant for meditational practice to it, which focuses on subtracting desires as opposed to reiterating the Zen fixation on transcending discriminative thought. In this sense we can see that Glass followed in the Zen/Hongaku premise of affirming the positive ontological existence of an 'individual essence' whether it be called Buddha-nature, emptiness or the 'True Self.' As a result, he could not present an adequate counter argument to Abe's ethically flawed all-affirmative 'no-thingness,' since he neglected the entirety of *pratītyasamutpāda*, no-abiding-self, *prajñā* and altruism.

To the extent Glass accepts a primordially existent 'individual-essence' that must be revealed through practice, and that he considers Dōgen's statements to be proof of this 'essence,' his interpretation of Dōgen also took for granted that it 'describes' a corresponding reality. Consequently, much like Abe, Heine ad Kasulis, Glass's interpretation confined Dōgen to correspondence theory. Glass reiterated the prejudice that Buddhist practice is centred on the attainment of some primordial 'Truth' and that Dōgen's ontology describes the attainment of such a 'Truth.' This prejudice that ontology is 'representational,' conditions Glass's view on Dōgen to be fundamentally *dhātu-vāda* for

 sense, Glass's observance that certain negationist theories of emptiness lack ethical ground maybe attributable to the fact that such theories also neglect the grounds of *pratītyasamutpāda*.

it presupposes an ontological or epistemological ‘ground’ to be revealed and represented. In addition, understanding the revealing of such a ‘ground’ to be the goal of Buddhist practice neglects practice as the realization of altruism by use of *prajñā* to achieve correct insight into no-abiding-self through *praṭītyasamutpāda*.

I will argue in the next section that Glass’s use of Deleuze may be equally unsatisfactory from the perspective of *praṭītyasamutpāda*. Glass simply reduces Deleuze’s philosophy to his own ‘essentialist’ ontology rather than using it within the context of Deleuze’s endeavor to leave behind correspondence by pragmatism.

3.6.3 Glass’s Use of Deleuze in Connection to Buddhism

Glass utilizes Deleuze’s idea on desire within the context of articulating his view of Buddhist meditation as a method to choose between necessary and unnecessary desires. Deleuze defines two qualities of desire: plateau and climax. The former designates the maintenance of habituated desire, a repetition of the same, the maintenance of a plateau state of being. The later designates flight from the plateau state, desire for constant change, movement or becoming. Glass identifies the former with unnecessary or unfavorable desires that needs to be subtracted in meditation and the later with necessary desires that needs to be strengthened.²⁵² Glass’s use of Deleuze in connection with a theory of Buddhist practice may be praiseworthy for being a bold attempt at a creative integration of philosophies. However, Glass’s use of Deleuze may be fundamentally flawed, as I will clarify below.

The problem in Glass’s use of Deleuze is that he forces Deleuze’s ideas into his old-school ‘essentialism’ and consequently neglects Deleuze’s philosophical context. As I will analyze in the next chapter, Deleuze’s philosophical system attempts to do philosophy outside the tradition of correspondence by creating a particular pragmatism developed out of empiricism. The objective is the ethical and practical search for what we are capable of, or how one should live, beyond representation and pre-determined designs. Any idea that there is a pre-determined, or primordial ‘truth’ or ‘being’

²⁵² Glass, 85-89.

that is waiting to be revealed or identified, as in the case of Glass's view on Buddha-nature, is incompatible with Deleuzian thought. In other words Deleuze's philosophy is antithetical to Glass's theory of 'essence.' Glass simply fails to interpret Deleuze within the wider context of how and for what purpose his philosophy functions.²⁵³ As a result, Glass's use of Deleuze not only reduces Deleuze to 'essentialism,' inasmuch as it does not add anything new to his articulation of desire, but it also continues to confine Dōgen's ideas to dhātu-vāda and correspondence theory. If we are to utilize Deleuze to read Dōgen's metaphysics beyond correspondence theory and dhātu-vāda, we cannot follow Glass's example.

How can Deleuze be utilized in ways other than Glass? Can Deleuze help free metaphysics from correspondence theory? How can Deleuze's philosophy be understood as compatible with praṭīyasamutpāda? Can Deleuze help interpret Dōgen's metaphysics in congruence with praṭīyasamutpāda and beyond dhātu-vāda? We will explore these questions in the next chapter where I will present Deleuze's concepts that will become necessary tools for our "new" interpretation of Dōgen in chapter five.

3.7 Conclusion: The Limitations of the Four Frameworks of "Comparative" Interpretation

Whether it was Abe, Heine, Kasulis, or Glass, all the four comparative frameworks for reading Dōgen that I have analyzed proved inadequate to reinterpret Dōgen beyond dhātu-vāda. Abe simply reiterated Hongaku doctrine by introducing a third ontological locus he called 'no-thingness' in order to unite dichotomies in a transcendental unity untouched by causality. Heine failed to rid dhātu-vāda by reiterating Hongaku-shisō in accordance to his Heidegger inspired bias that Dōgen is claiming a 'truth-of-being.' Kasulis, introduced an important shift of focus in reading Dōgen as purely practical, and attempted to escape ontological dhātu-vāda, but ended up presenting a dhātu-vādic view

²⁵³ Consequently, Glass also misinterprets Deleuze's use of the term 'essence' as in continuity with his own understanding. For Deleuze 'essence' is a term which appropriates a concentration of 'forces.' Forces meaning 'becoming' which is the process of internal-differentiation/multiplicity, which is also equated to empiricist 'experience.' Deleuze's limited use of the term 'essence' therefore is not as an ontological locus, but a provisional articulation of the nature of how a multiplicity of forces concentrate and appropriate a particular phenomenon.

of the human mind by claiming a ‘pure consciousness’ independent of causality. While Glass introduced the creative possibility of utilizing Deleuze to read Buddhism, he failed to make effective use of Deleuze to steer away from dhātu-vāda as he claimed a positive ontological reality to Dōgen’s Buddha-nature.

These four readings shared a common prejudice which tied their interpretation of Dōgen to correspondence theory. A conclusive analysis of this common prejudice may help clarify what it is in their readings that should not be repeated for our interpretation of Dōgen to be freed from correspondence and dhātu-vāda.

3.7.1 The Common Prejudice that Metaphysics is ‘Representational’

All four scholars repeated the prejudice that Dōgen’s philosophy ‘corresponds’ to some ‘true’ nature of reality, whether this be of existence or the mind, and presumed that the purpose of his practice is to experience such a ‘truth.’ In Abe, Heine, and Kasulis these assumptions lead to an understanding of meditational practice as a transcendental experientialism through which prajñā and altruism is negated. Glass introduced a new sense of practice as the subtraction of desires, but neglected praṭītyasamutpāda as secondary to the uncovering of ‘essence.’ Hence, Glass also reiterated the same prejudice that practice is aimed at the revealing of the ‘truth’ of one’s primordially ‘pure’ essence. Therefore, while each scholar attempted to respect the priority of practice in Dōgen as expressed in his idea of Shushō-Ittō, none was able to meaningfully connect Dōgen’s ontology and practice in a manner that respected praṭītyasamutpāda, prajñā, and altruistic ethics.

Much of these fallacies have their cause in a fundamental problem in the way these thinkers analyze Dōgen. They conceive of ontology as representational, and as an explanatory or descriptive venture supposed to mirror the ‘true’ nature of reality, whether this be objective reality or the reality of consciousness. As I have previously explained, correspondence theory is essentially dhātu-vāda for it must always propose an assertable ground or ‘truth’ to which our experience and knowledge correspond. The idea that there is a more ‘authentic’ reality, a more ‘authentic’ way of experiencing

reality, or a more ‘authentic’ state of consciousness than what we normally perceive, is founded on correspondence theory. This is so since the idea assumes the assured existence of a ‘true-way-reality-is’ which, while not being susceptible to representation by our normative ways of understanding, can be mirrored through transcendent or religious experiences.

Therefore, the idea that Buddhist practice must strive to more accurately mirror this reality in our understanding and that we must strive to attain the experience through which the ‘truth’ of reality or the mind is realized are bound to be dhātu-vāda. In the case of all four scholars, an emphasis on practice did not lead them to make a leap beyond metaphysical thinking in terms of correspondence, but rather to place practice/experience as a form of ‘verification’ or the assertable source for the contents of Dōgen’s ontology. These views suggest the reader to conform to a predefined set of answers concerning what ‘reality’ is, the ‘mind’ is, or what ‘enlightenment’ is, whose authority is only asserted by the ‘truth’ of Dōgen’s enlightenment. Thereby, the representational structure of their understanding of Dōgen was very clear: meditational practice is prioritized since it reveals the hidden ‘truth of reality’ which then grounds Dōgen’s claims. In order to overcome such ‘representational’ presumptions in reading Dōgen, a pragmatist turn must be made in the way we understand Dōgen’s philosophy in relation to spiritual exercises.

3.7.2 Turning Towards Deleuze’s Pragmatism as a Solution

We saw that several lines of thought found in Kasulis and Glass may still be useful for the current study. This was Kasulis’s view that Dōgen’s ontological ideas are utilities for practice rather than as “ontology” descriptive of reality per se. And, Glass’s view that the concept of Buddha-nature has a positive role in practice and therefore should not be neglected, and that Deleuze’s philosophy may help elucidate that role. However, both Kasulis and Glass did not pursue the possibilities of these lines of thought to much effect as their interpretive frameworks were fundamentally rooted in dhātu-vāda. Therefore, they could not utilize these perspectives for the sake of interpreting Dōgen’s metaphysics in a manner congruent to prafityasamutpāda and beyond correspondence theory. How

can Dōgen's ideas on Buddha-nature, and time as dharma-positions be interpreted in a manner that does not need to reiterate Hongaku ideas as constant-abiding or a 'True Self,' and in a manner which does not neglect practice based on altruism and *prajñā*?

Critical Buddhism dismissed Dōgen's metaphysics entirely according to their presumption that ontology is by nature corresponding to a grounding 'truth'; a view which also conditioned their prejudice that *pratyasamutpāda* is incompatible with ontology. The comparative interpretations affirmed Dōgen's metaphysics yet in a manner that reiterated Hongaku-*shisō*, hence veered to *dhātu-vāda*. To the extent they understood Dōgen's metaphysics as founded on his enlightenment experience, they also reiterated the common prejudice with Critical Buddhism that Dōgen's metaphysics must be 'describing' a 'truth-of-reality.' According to these perspectives, Dōgen's metaphysics was either denied or affirmed in accordance to the common prejudice that his ideas must 'represent' a grounding 'truth,' thereby confining Dōgen's philosophy to correspondence theory. This means that, if we are to depart from the fear towards metaphysics as harboured by the Critical Buddhists, or the influences of Hongaku-*shisō* that was repeated throughout the comparative interpretations, we must adopt a completely different framework of understanding metaphysics.

Deleuze's pragmatism and metaphysical concepts may be the solution to overcome these shortcomings. Through this pragmatism, metaphysics may be released from the role of mirroring reality to being purely practical tools to achieve a desired effect. Thereby, Dōgen's idea of the priority of practice can be stressed in a much radical form than Abe, Heine or Kasulis, so that practice can be reconciled with the centrality of *prajñā* and altruism without any concern for having to 'represent' or 'attain' a grounding 'truth.' From this perspective, the entirety of Dōgen's philosophy consists of "tools" to enhance practice in accordance to *pratyasamutpāda* without the necessity for mirroring or pointing at the 'true-way-reality-is.' The existence or non-existence of 'truth' is irrelevant; rather, it is only significant to the extent that it conditions the function of any philosophical concept for achieving the practical aim of Buddhism as founded on *pratyasamutpāda*. Hence, Dōgen's concepts as Buddha-nature, and dharma-positions may be given new life as practically significant in accordance to *pratyasamutpāda*.

In order to draft the frameworks for offering such an interpretation of Dōgen, the next chapter will introduce Deleuze's pragmatism and several of his metaphysical concepts within the context of his vision of making philosophy practical for the sake of exploring how we may live. Through the course of introducing Deleuze's ideas that are necessary for our "new" interpretation of Dōgen, I will ultimately argue why Deleuze's philosophy is not dhātu-vāda and therefore, is compatible with praṭītyasamutpāda. Furthermore, Deleuze's pragmatism may help us to cast away Critical Buddhism's prejudice that praṭītyasamutpāda is incompatible with ontology and to reconceive praṭītyasamutpāda as conditional for Buddhist metaphysics. In opposition to Glass's failure of utilizing Deleuze to free himself from dhātu-vāda and correspondence theory, we will see that Deleuze's pragmatic metaphysics is by nature antithetical to dhātu-vāda.