

*A COMPARATIVE  
HISTORY OF IDEAS*

by

Hajime Nakamura



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## Preface to the Second Edition

We are living in the age when things should be viewed and discussed on a global scale. No event is isolated from other events.

We are in need of a kind of global history of ideas in which the developments of ideas should be viewed in the global scope, and yet we are afraid that no work to the effect has been brought about. Of course, there have been published a number of authoritative works, such as *History of Philosophy Eastern and Western* or *History of World Religions* and so on. But in these works separate courses of development of ideas in various cultural areas were set forth in different chapters by different scholars from different angles, and the final outcomes seem too disparate, providing us with no conformity in the purpose and the style.

I thought that in order to keep conformity, developments of ideas in various cultural areas should be viewed by a single author and then the details should be corrected by other scholars specialising in various aspects of human intellect or in different traditions.

To this end I have toiled presumptuously to write a comparative history of ideas covering various traditions in global scope. In launching this project I tried to avoid elaborate theorising and allow the data to speak for themselves, as a glance at the following pages will show. Some theoretical considerations are, of course, unavoidable, but whatever theories emerge in this work do not wander far from the problems that emerge from the data of intellectual history.

I have attempted to describe and assess certain key problems in the history of ideas, both East and West. The material has been patiently collected; it was there, and it seemed a pity not to put it into some kind of order and present it to a public that might, after all, find something of value hidden within these pages.

This work does not necessarily cover all important religions and philosophical systems. It covers only those features or problems of thought which are common to East and West through the end of the nineteenth century. Synchronical considerations are chiefly presented in the main text, while diachronical similarities between thinkers of different ages are mentioned mostly in the footnotes.

This work was originally based upon a series of four public lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1963. For my lectures there I should also like to thank especially: Professor Robert H. L. Slater, former Director of the Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University; Professor Daniel H. H. Ingalls of Harvard; Mr. J. Masson, a student at Harvard. The suggestions and arrangements by Professor Charles W. Morris and Professor Delton L. Scudder of the University of Florida were helpful to me in my studies.

Since then I engaged in revising and developing the theme. In summer, 1969, I joined the Fifth East-West Philosophers' Conference held at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii, and remained in Honolulu after the close of the Conference to complete the manuscript. I am most grateful to Dr. Minoru Shinoda, Professor of History, University of Hawaii, and formerly Director of the Institute of Cultural Learning, East-West Center, who kindly assisted me in my work during my stay then. Without his kind arrangements this book would not have been brought to existence. Mr. Clifford Miyashiro kindly went over the manuscript up to the end of the second chapter, spending a great deal of his time to check various points and to improve the style.

I came again to Honolulu in summer, 1971, at the invitation of the East-West Center under the thoughtful arrangements by Dr. Everett Kleinjans, Chancellor of the Center, and Professor Eliot Deutsch, Editor of *Philosophy East and West* to revise the manuscript in its finalised form. Also, I am much indebted to Professor Winfield E. Nagley of the University of Hawaii for his kind friendship for many years.

The merit of completion of the manuscript should be ascribed especially to Professor Gerald Larson of the University of California at Santa Barbara, who kindly consented to come to the Center solely for the purpose of revising the manuscript. He and I worked together every day from 8 o'clock a.m. to noon, and worked in the afternoon also. I learnt quite a lot from conversation with him. Without his kind collaboration this book would not have been brought to this state of completion.

After Professor Larson left for California, Mr. Ronald Burr of the East-West Center came to Tokyo for the purpose of completing the work and editing the manuscript. During his stay in Tokyo in August of 1971 through December he kindly devoted most of his time to editing. I am greatly thankful for his enthusiasm in collaboration.

For publication of this work in its final form I was especially honoured and encouraged by Professor Charles Morris who kindly read the whole work through. I am very grateful to him for a long chain of friendship extending for many years, almost a quarter of a century.

I feel greatly honoured by the kind help of all these gentlemen.

Although I know full well that this work has many passages which

need much revision and further enlargement, I decided to bring it to the public as a stepping stone for further studies.

The original work was published in Tokyo, now it is being published by KPI, in a new and revised form, and I feel myself greatly honoured in the hope that this work might be read widely.

For this new edition I am very grateful to Mr. Peter Hopkins, and Dr. Mark Nathanson, of KPI. I am also greatly indebted to Mr. Trevor Leggett of the BBC, who knows Japanese and Sanskrit very well and whose works are cordially welcomed in both Japan and India, for his kind help on many points. Herewith I express my sincere gratitude to them.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE

PROFESSOR Nakamura's book represents an effort to discuss the history of ideas primarily from the perspective of Asian thought, though perhaps sometimes with an Indian emphasis. As a result, it presents problems in intellectual history from quite a different perspective than most European and American historians of ideas, who view the history of philosophy using European thought as a norm or criterion. This is part of the genius of the work; but it must not be overly stressed because it is based on the *differences* in traditions. For it becomes clear as one works through Professor Nakamura's book that the old East-West dichotomy in many respects is simply inadequate. Certain common intellectual problems have surfaced wherever man has appeared; and methods must be found for getting beyond the East-West preoccupation if significant intellectual progress is to be made with respect to understanding the history of ideas. At the same time, however—and this is the paradox of Professor Nakamura's book—it becomes clear in the end that many of the problems of what is called "modern thought" (by Western philosophers) did not manifest themselves in India, China, and Japan before the period of "Westernization" except in scattered and tentative ways. In place of the Western scientific orientation, however, very human ethical considerations were often emphasized.

The reader will find Professor Nakamura's work to be a source book in at least two important ways. In the first place, he stands in a tradition of scholars who have held the chair of philosophy at Tokyo University, and who are of astonishingly high caliber in the amount and quality of the scholarship they have produced. Going back only two generations from Professor Nakamura is Junjiro Takakusa who, among other things, oversaw the publication in his own lifetime of the Taisho edition of the Buddhist Tripitaka. Succeeding him was Professor Nakamura's famous teacher Dr. Hakuju Ui, who, in addition to an immensely helpful Buddhist dictionary and other important works, published what stands as *the* authoritative work on Chinese Zen, his three-volume *Zenshū Shi Kenkyū*. In that work, Professor Ui offered long quotations and commentaries from works that would be very difficult for the average (and sometimes not so average) reader to find. In a somewhat similar way, the reader will

find Professor Nakamura's scholarship to be authoritative and documented in the extreme, and that in place of hiding his sources behind paraphrases he often offers quotations from the widest range of texts and commentators imaginable so that the reader may constantly appreciate the original touch of great figures in the ongoing history of ideas.

This work also serves as a source book in that scholars of the history of ideas (especially those in comparative philosophy and comparative religion) will find it to be especially rich in ideas. Many of the comparisons mentioned by Professor Nakamura have been elaborated on under this cover. In some instances, however, eager to explore other areas, he has moved on, leaving behind a challenge for succeeding authors to do further research on what has been brought to light. Many times Professor Nakamura has suggested specific points that deserve further scrutiny. If he had elaborated all of the comparative points of interest himself, this book would have been larger by at least another volume.

As to the editing of the work, it was done, so to speak, in two "shifts." Dr. Gerald Larson began work on the task early in the summer of 1971 in Honolulu. After reading for publication Chapter I and a large portion of Chapter II (parts I and II) his previous commitments necessitated his return to "the mainland." At that time Professor Nakamura was preparing to return to Tokyo for resumption of his duties as chairman of the department of Indian and Buddhist philosophy at the University of Tokyo. So it became necessary to engage a second editor to complete the work. It was then decided that Ronald Burr would go to Tokyo in August of 1971 for this purpose. Beginning with Part III of Chapter II, he completed preparation of the manuscript in Tokyo in March, 1972. Then it was sent to Santa Barbara, California, where Dr. Larson gave the entire manuscript a final reading.

Of the people without whom this editing task could not have been accomplished, the highest inspiration came from Professor Nakamura himself. Simply by working with him many a colleague has been prompted to persevere in the mentor's fashion (see for instance Professor Inada's foreword to his new translation of Nāgārjuna's *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikās*, Hokuseido, 1970). Professor Nakamura unconsciously gets the best from those who come into contact with him. He is jolly, kind and willing to give complete concentration at a moment's notice to the problems that arise in each of the myriad projects in which he is constantly involved.

As to the people without whom the editing in Tokyo could not have taken place (at least as smoothly and happily as it did) thanks must go first to Dr. Dorothy Roberts at the East-West Center in Honolulu, who got us all together when it was learned that the editing must be completed in Japan. Secondly, without the friendship, companionship, and myriad assistances of Yoshihiro Matsunami, who manages the affairs of

Professor Nakamura's Eastern Institute in Tokyo, the task would have been much more lengthy and difficult as well as much less enjoyable. Mrs. Miriam Gould of the East-West Center offered many suggestions on proof reading the finished copy. Finally, the Tokyo editing could not have been done without the day-to-day typing and doctoring of Mrs. Nancy Burr, whose uncanny feel for good idiomatic English has made it possible to present a book which is, hopefully, as easy to read as it is important.

RONALD BURR

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A COMPARATIVE  
HISTORY OF IDEAS

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