


## Book Review

# Book Review: Jannel, R. *Yamauchi Tokuryū (1890–1982). Philosophie occidentale et pensée bouddhique*; Éditions Kimé: Paris, France, 2023; ISBN: 978-2-38072-114-0

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**Abstract:** A recent book by Romaric Jannel on the work of the 20th Century Japanese philosopher Yamauchi Tokuryū is reviewed as a prolegomenon in this journal to more detailed studies of Oriental philosophy. Emphasis is placed on the similarities and overlaps of Eastern and Western thought.

**Keywords:** Buddhist; contradiction; Eastern (Western); intuition; lemma; logic; logos; natural; non-contradiction; negation; Oriental; knowledge; philosophy

## 1. Introduction—Eastern Philosophy and *Philosophies*

The stated objectives of *Philosophies* do not explicitly include one of providing access to the work of Oriental philosophers, classic or contemporary. Since its first publication in 2015, Eastern philosophy, that of China, India, and Japan, has received only limited attention or analysis. This is also true of Eastern logic and its possible relations to and between science, logic, and philosophy, East and West. Elsewhere in the West, substantial relevant work is to be found in the literature of East–West studies, for example, that of Lu [1] and Gu and Guo [2]. Unfortunately, such work is often general and does not address fundamental issues including, for example, negation and the appropriate way of addressing those noted above. The most easily accessible and authoritative studies of key figures in Eastern philosophy are to be found in the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*; these also include the two 20th Century figures, Suzuki Daisetsu and Nishida Kitarō [3,4].

Note also in the currently active literature, the *Tao of Physics* by the American sociologist Fritjof Capra [5]. As I have discussed, it is possible to establish such relations by applying the principles of the non-standard logic of processes, i.e., “Logic in Reality” (LIR) [6].

The very recent book by the French philosopher Romaric Jannel reviewed here discusses two major figures in Oriental philosophy—the Indian Nāgārjuna (2nd–3rd Century C.E) and the 20th Century Japanese Yamauchi Tokuryū, 山内得立. In this review of Jannel’s book [7], *Yamauchi Tokuryū (1890–1982). Philosophie occidentale et pensée bouddhique (Western Philosophy and Buddhist Thought)*, Éditions Kimé, Paris, 2023, the vast literature on Eastern and Western philosophies and the possible meanings of this distinction is itself a vast field that can only be touched on. The motivation for such studies is however shared by this writer as part of a highly necessary de-fragmentation of knowledge for the common good. This seemed to me sufficient justification for writing a review of a French book in English.

## 2. Romaric Jannel, *Yamauchi Tokuryū (1890–1982). Western Philosophy and Buddhist Thought*; Paris; Éditions Kimé (2023) [7]

In the last few years, the French geographer, philosopher, and authority on Japanese philosophy Augustin Berque has published a series of articles in French on the philosophy of the Japanese thinker Yamauchi Tokuryū. Jannel collaborated with Berque in the recent French 2020 translation and interpretation of Yamauchi’s central book, *Logos and Lemma* [8].



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Apart from their academic interest, both Berque and Jannel bring out the relevance of Yamauchi's ideas for current society and its problems [9]. Jannel's book can and should be read as a truly remarkable summary of and an essential introduction to these books and the entire context in which they should be read.

### 3. Methodological Notes

#### 3.1. *East and West; Orient et Occident*

It is clear that one may argue about the limits of the domain of application of these terms. The author uses them to correctly present Yamauchi's philosophy but notes that such a distinction is inherently problematic. The focus (Japan, India, China) is given by the context, and it does not seem necessary to this reviewer to be more precise, and the "West" can be read in the text as the tradition from Aristotle to today.

#### 3.2. *Oriental Thought*

No prior expertise in the fields of Oriental thought and logic is necessary to understand and appreciate Jannel's study. Without this, like this reviewer, however, readers may be unable to evaluate this book from a historical perspective. In my view, the focus should be on the value per se of the theory which Jannel summarizes and explicates. In any event, since the theory challenges the universal application of standard logic, it cannot be judged from the standpoint of that logic.

### 4. Structure of the Book

Jannel's book is organized perspicaciously into four chapters corresponding to key topics that emerge in Yamauchi's writings, as follows (from now on, references to them will be given in English). Chapter 1: The Question of the *Logos* in Yamauchi Tokuryū; Chapter 2: The Question of the *Lemma* in Yamauchi Tokuryū; Chapter 3: The Passage from the Conventional Truth to the Ultimate Truth; Chapter 4: Objectives of the Philosophy of Yamauchi Tokuryū: the Principle of Causality and the Foundation of Being. (My discussion will not follow exactly the same order.)

#### 4.1. *Natural Philosophy*

For this reviewer, it is clear that Jannel finds evidence in Yamauchi for and in a sense promotes a Natural Philosophy, that "seeks above all to establish concrete knowledge of real entities". The Buddhism in which Yamauchi found the basis for his system contains some transcendental elements, like any system of religious belief. This does not detract from Jannel's conclusion that there is, *pace* Heidegger, no looming "end" of philosophy. If there is an "end" to something, it is the "splendid" isolation of philosophy from science that amounts to a simplistic idealistic position. Philosophy retains some transcendental aspects as essential to its existence as a domain of knowledge. But these are not essential to Natural Philosophy, even if concessions to unsatisfactory aspects of the scientific paradigm may have to be made. Philosophy and Natural Philosophy retain their specificities as disciplines within a transdisciplinary framework of which science and logic are parts, note, for example, Lakoff and Johnson in their "Philosophy in the Flesh" [10].

#### 4.2. *The Tetralemma of Nāgārjuna*

Nāgārjuna used "lemma" in opposition to "logical axiom" as better reflecting non-linguistic reality. The usual form of his tetralemma is as follows: 1. there is; 2. there is not; 3. there both is and is not. 4; there neither is nor is not. As already explained by Jannel in an article published in *The Eastern Buddhist*, Yamauchi's originality lies in the "inversion of the last two lemmas in order to present, according to Yamauchi, the binegation as the third position and biaffirmation as the fourth", cf. Jannel [11]. The first two lemmas taken together are equivalent to or define the basic principles of Western binary, bivalent logic. As shown by Yamauchi, they encode (as one says today) the three key Aristotelian *logical-epistemological* principles of identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle. These

principles found separability as exemplified by the categorial exclusion and exhaustivity of standard category theory. As Jannel shows, the third Lemma of double negation and the fourth Lemma of double affirmation are qualitatively quite different: they state that duality exists but does not imply exclusivity. (We may contrast Jannel's view of negation with that of the relatively well-known French philosopher Gaston Bachelard [12]. However, his *Philosophie du non* remains for me an exercise in epistemology, without reference to the processes of change in the real world.) The fourth lemma, which should be read as both the precondition and the consequence of the third, together with it, define a new set of conditions for existence. In the lemmic logic of Yamauchi, nothingness is not in a relation of relativity between affirmation and negation, as noted above but a double negation, negating negation itself, without return to the *status quo ante*. The application of the third Lemma, in particular, represents a fundamental shift in thought regarding the domain of real phenomena and their changes. The third Lemma is an "absolute" negation, transcending the distinction between affirmation and negation. The logics of the first and second lemmas are Boolean logics, and of the third and fourth, non-Boolean.

#### 4.3. The Grounding of Lemmic Logic

Both Berque and Jannel note that Yamauchi does not refer to a relation of lemmic logic to science, but Brenner has shown in "On Middles and Thirds" [6] that this is possible and supports the spirit of Jannel's work. The grounding for lemmic logic as stated by Berque in [8] is in human intuition, and this might make it unacceptable to many as a basis for knowledge. A pertinent view, as suggested by Brenner, is to see intuition as a process, intuiting, non-separable from the generation and processing of "hard" knowledge.

The English logician and philosopher Graham Priest is one of the founders of paraconsistent logic in which the principle of absolute contradiction is also refuted, and Jannel also cites Priest in relation to Nāgārjuna [13]. Accepting a recursive movement between the two realities of Western and Eastern thought permits the recovery of "ordinary" logic, but at a higher cognitive level due to the recursion that has taken place.

The Eastern world view as represented by Nāgārjuna and Yamauchi can define an inclusive logic for society. In all societies, contradictions are present between individual and collective wants and needs. In one individual, they are between genetically and non-genetically determined predominance of altruism or selfishness.

### 5. General Comments and Conclusions

Jannel's book thus accomplishes two major objectives that should ensure its interest to readers of *Philosophies* (a resumé of *Logos and Lemma*) [9], and an analysis parallel to it and Yamauchi's other major work, *The Philosophy of Latency*, 1993, not yet available in English or French.

As noted above, this review presents Jannel's results for their own significance. His book, which is mainly based on Japanese- and French-language sources, can be criticized for the absence of sufficient references to contemporary English- and German-language research. Those that could be the subject of further work are Whitehead [14] as well as Priest [13] (see above). Priest is one of the few contemporary logicians who has directly addressed the universal philosophical implications of Eastern philosophy, specifically that of Nāgārjuna. A direct intellectual link between this work and that of Jannel is more than sufficient to justify careful reading of the latter.

The book reads easily without being superficial; it is an excellent approach to further study the relevance of Eastern thought, philosophy, and logic to their Western counterparts and of the necessity of avoiding stereotyped references to "mysticism" and a lack of rigor in the former.

Metaphysical issues of "being" and "becoming" and their relation to science remain unresolved. But it has not been long since the appearance of *Being and Becoming in Modern Physics* [15], and Prigogine's famous *From Being to Becoming: Time and Complexity in the Physical Sciences* [16]. Jannel in a way forces upon us the necessity of rethinking this relation

between science and philosophy. Eastern logic, especially Buddhist, then takes on a new role as the most appropriate logic of/for what is generally called Natural Philosophy, that is, science. This is in addition to its value as part of the intuitive apprehension of being.

Jannel thus adds nothing less than a new dimension to today's discussion of what philosophy is/is not. His work helps to re-establish the proper balance with what is uniquely human in knowledge. It is in the spirit of another French author and sinologist, François Jullien, whose concept of “decoincidence” (*dé-coïncidence*) opens a new domain of debate about the meaning of human existence [17]. I therefore conclude this brief review with my strongest recommendation to readers with French-language ability to read this modestly priced book (EUR 27).

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