A QUEST BEYOND ENLIGHTENMENT: BUDDHISM AS COUNTER-ENLIGHTENMENT AND MODERNITY'S OTHER BEING IN THE PRACTICES OF ANTONIN ARTAUD, JOHN CAGE, TATSUMI HIJIKATA, KAZUO OHNO, AND XINGJIAN GAO

by

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Abstract

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I use this idea that a single term (Enlightenment) can incorporate contradictory meanings, to argue that counter-enlightenment inspiration is itself the imbedded "other being" of modernity and had already emerged not only in the East but also in the West. In this project, I use examples from the works of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao, in order to argue that although they originated in different contexts of modernity, West and East, and studied the philosophy of Enlightenment rationalism, all these theatre artists have pursued an Enlightenment "beyond" and realized and practiced insights of oriental religious thinking, similar to or exactly be Buddhist transcendent illumination and Zen enlightenment as the token of redemptive awakening that is cross-genre and trans-cultural. The theories and practices of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao concerning transcendence are at the same time similar to yet different from each other. The chief similarity among these four cases is that they all endeavor to emancipate the ultimate poetic truth of the genuine theatre or essential aesthetic transcendentality of performance from the confinements of discursive logic, dramatic/literary representation, and explanatory linear narrative.

Chapters one and two provide the introduction of two different enlightenment backgrounds and ideas and sketch the historical contexts of diverse hermeneutics converging around the

theme of “enlightenment.” In chapters three through six, I have discussed that the mystical achievements these theatre artists have presented are re-oriented by Buddhist enlightenment philosophy and aligned with the truth of emptiness. The uniting thread of the theatre of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao is the manifestation of the true absolute, that is, the appearance of the profound, through their performing the physical phenomena of the spiritual/empty substance with subtlety and intricacy. Through performing the empty essence and ultimate reality, the agendas of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao reverberate with Buddhist spiritual revelation, because the crux of enlightenment--“on the outside, while within form, separate from form; on the inside, while within emptiness, separate from emptiness”--is perpetuated in their arts of “profane illumination.” I conclude in noting that instead of integrating into their experiments oriental thoughts and religious traditions as mere elements or exotic artifice, their theatre shapes a particular form of performance language and a new philosophy/epistemology of performance.

This dissertation is dedicated to my father,

Jen-Hon Lin

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1

Enlightenment in the West: The Truth of Enlightenment and Modernity

Preface

The term "Enlightenment" refers to two nearly contradictory concepts. The first is the legacy of the unprecedented movement that began in seventeenth-century France and England and reshaped the entire European world. This concept underlying the Enlightenment project refers to a belief in progress, positive outlook, and optimism about the human condition that produced what some argue are negative consequences. The second concept of Enlightenment, arises in the context of Asian hermeneutics, and is associated with notions of Buddhist (or, Zen) didactics, culminating in Great Perfect Wisdom and the accomplishment of Buddha Nature seeing into the ultimate reality, that is, the unclouding of mankind's pure Self-Nature and Original Mind. This second concept of Enlightenment refers to a process of "retreating" backward, looking inward, and a negative outlook on the human condition which, in turn, manifests as a positive realization and correct view of the law of the world. Both of the two concepts incorporate the notion of being cultivated, developed, and emancipated from circumstances of darkness and innocence, moving towards a state of illumination through the path of "awakening." As Foucault, in citing Kant's explication of the term, writes, "the 'way out' that characterizes Enlightenment is a process that releases us from the status of immaturity into the stage of adulthood."[1] Taking my cue from the very title of the eminent work of Horkheimer and Adorno, this dissertation seeks to offer another version of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

[1] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?" in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 34.

In short, Enlightenment was an intellectual movement that began in the mid-seventeenth century, fused with the vortex of modernity and modernization and spread throughout the Western world by the late eighteenth century. Thus, Enlightenment thinking is characterized by a number of significant attitudes and determinant factors that form a teleology, a metaphysics. The first is an attitude of human audacity or courage, and the desire "to know," in other words, the desire to view oneself as an authoritative embodiment of all-encompassing subjective rationality. This is, as Foucault points out, "A faith in the ability of reason to solve social as well as intellectual and scientific problems, an aggressively critical perspective on what were perceived as the regressive influences of tradition and institutional religion, a faith in humanism and the ideal of progress, the espousal of a politics of toleration and free thinking."[2]

Horkheimer and Adorno in their collaborative work *Dialectic of Enlightenment* clearly present a radical and unprecedented historical critique of Enlightenment problems. According to a critical theorist's problematization of world civilization, like that of Adorno, the grand Enlightenment project is nothing more than the triumph of a new myth of historical development that replaces the obsolete ones and masks itself in the form of "Enlightenment." Seen as a meddling hand from the post of the *Dialectic*, scientific rationalism is fundamentally engaged in this whole process. *Dialectic* echoes the Weberian idea of the ever-changing intervention of "instrumental rationality" in its analysis of the relationships among history, nature, science, and rationalization as a selection of efficacious means instead of determining values. *Dialectic* concludes with an observation of how the brutality and crudeness of rationality manipulates and is applied. To Adorno and Horkheimer, "Reason is the organ of calculation, of planning; it is

[2] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," 38.

neutral in regard to ends; its element is co-ordination."[3] Resonating with Weber in this regard, *Dialectic* provides an even more pessimistic perspective: it is deeply grounded in the belief held by Adorno and Horkheimer that the entire course of Western history originated in the scheme of rationalization. Therefore, it begets the consequence "that history's inner meaning involves the ineluctable triumph of instrumental rationality."[4] Indeed, this is the legacy of Enlightenment epistemology, which has dominated the European mind for more than three hundred years. It is mankind's awareness of his own being and his objectification of the outer world, both physically and "metaphysically," as perceived and projected through his subjective awareness. Even today, this Enlightenment epistemology exerts a tremendous impact on almost every domain of human thought and life. However, the paradox lies in the fact that regardless of the counter-discourses' dismissal of and resistance to the Enlightenment epistemic violence (taking for example the positions of the Frankfurt School critical theorists), these counter-discourses simultaneously could not get thoroughly away from such a maelstrom of the incomplete and still-evolving Enlightenment project, emphasized, in particular, by Habermas. Later in the chapter, I provide evidence to support my claim.

Nonetheless, there exists another perception of Enlightenment fundamental to Buddhist (Zen) tradition. That is, Enlightenment is a spiritual awakening to the ultimate reality and consummation of the state of emptiness as the very essence, the "true nature," or Buddha nature of all worldly beings. As the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Zen Buddhism, Hui-Neng, proclaimed, "Set up no-thought as the main doctrine, non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the

[3] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso, 1979), 88.
[4] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 88.

basis."[5] Obviously, this Zen precept of Enlightenment as a total abandonment of the subjective self, an ultimate spiritual illumination of true nature and its state of being as emptiness and non-attachment, seems to completely contradict the core of Western Enlightenment logic. According to Enlightenment epistemology, human reason, or, rationalism, is the most vital ingredient in "modern philosophy"[6] manifested as the study of everything knowable and logical performed by the Cartesian subject and expressed as the omnipotent self-conscious transparency: *cogito ergo sum*, "I think therefore I am." Nevertheless, both of these seemingly opposite doctrines and uncompromising concepts of Enlightenment—the prevalence of Enlightenment reason and the search for Enlightenment as spiritual awakening, whether Oriental or Occidental, religious or scientific, metaphysical or materialistic—share as their foremost aim the utmost attainment of humankind's emancipation.

Why "Modernity's Other Being?"

The central idea in this dissertation and my inspiration for the term, "modernity's other being," comes from one of the best-known definitions of the term "modernity" and its janus-faced idiosyncrasies on display in Charles Baudelaire's 1859-60 treatise, *The Painter of Modern Life*. According to Baudelaire, modernity means, on the one hand, the ephemeral, the fleeting, the transient, the contingent. On the other hand, it is the eternal and the immutable. Interestingly, Baudelaire's articulation of these contradictory definitions as the phenomenon and substance of modernity is not foreign to the cardinal dialectics of Buddhist philosophy. I use this idea that a single term can incorporate contradictory meanings, to argue that counter-enlightenment

[5] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: The Text of the TUN-HUANG Manuscript*, translated by Philip B. Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 137-138.
[6] Here, the use of the term modern philosophy is inspired by Michel Foucault, who explicates that modern philosophy is the kind of philosophy intending to answer the gigantic question brought up three centuries ago, that is, "What is Enlightenment?"

inspiration is itself the imbedded "other being" of modernity and had already emerged not (only) in the East, but (also) in the West. The four cross-cultural cases that I have selected to study in this project provide support for my argument.

According to Matei Calinescu's 1987 book *Five Faces of Modernity*, there are five faces, or five facets of Modernity. The five faces of modernity may be seen as the five facets of the phenomenology of modernity, consisting of modernism, avant-garde, decadence, kitsch, and postmodernism. Calinescu's argument is structured around these five diversified currents characteristic of many of modernity's offshoots, and provides a broader view to re-investigate modernity's universality and particularity and re-frame the singularity of modernity into a multi-dimensional structure. Although on the surface, modernity appears to be singular, further examination reveals the presence of these five trends which re-shape it into a phenomenology of dialogical rhetoric.

Inspired by Calinescu's work and borrowing its very title, I have structured this dissertation as the sixth face of modernity and the sixth facet of the phenomenology of modernity. I would call this sixth face of modernity its "other being," because it is symptomatic of a quest for Enlightenment of the transcendent beyond-ness through the lens of Buddhist anti-Enlightenment philosophy. For me, "the other being" signifies the kind of "alternative" performance or "feminine" dialectic of an orthodox writing and masculine discourse. In his book *An Illustration of The Heart Sutra*, Hong-Shih Chang mentions that in the mythical tradition of Tantric Buddhism, the goddess of wisdom, one of the supreme feminine deities, is herself the embodiment of flawless wisdom, *prajnaparamita*. Thus, Enlightenment illumination in Tantric Buddhism is the unfolding of the true state of emptiness as the ultimate and the essential. Associating the idea of "modernity's other being" with the Buddhist symbolic quintessence of

perfect wisdom in this feminine divinity, I classify the theatrical attempts of Artaud, Hijikata and Ohno, Cage, and Gao because they share the intent to undertake a quest for the mythological Enlightenment revelation. Compared to the supremacy of writing, text, speech, and all forms of conventional linguistic expression that are deeply rooted in Western Enlightenment orthodox discourse, the performance of esoteric Enlightenment, or the dialectic of mystical religion acted out through these theatre figures via their theory and practice is similar to a gesture of the alternative and the feminine.

I use examples from the work of Antonin Artaud, John Cage, Xingjian Gao, and the Japanese modern dance form of Butoh, in order to argue that although they emerged in different contexts of modernity, West and East, and inherited the legacy of Enlightenment rationalism, all the individuals have endeavored to pursue a kind of *Enlightenment beyond* as the token of redemptive awakening that is cross-genre and trans-cultural. These four examples yearn toward the dimensions of Enlightenment's "other half" and modernity's "other being." To a certain degree, the position of these "counter" discourses in the West is in alignment with the idea of Enlightenment in Buddhist philosophy. This dissertation uncovers the crosscurrents that connect East and West, mapping out constructions of the multifarious "Enlightenment" discourses. In addition, I argue for the necessity of exposing the embedded "other being" in order to subvert the "grand narratives" and evoke an alternative posture of Enlightenment. In this dissertation, I argue that practicing counter-Enlightenment dialectics, Artaud, Cage, Gao, and the Butoh pioneers Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo are all seeking a kind of transcendental Enlightenment in a realm beyond. Thus, modernity's "Other Being" materialized in their performances is similar to a deep realization of Buddhist (Zen) philosophy through the profane forms.

Organization

I have divided my study into six chapters. The first two chapters provide background and contextualize the various interpretations and realizations of Enlightenment discourses, both West and East. Chapters one and two not only cover the general introduction of this entire dissertation. Both chapters also provide the introduction of two different Enlightenment backgrounds and ideas and sketch the historical contexts of diverse hermeneutics converging around the theme of "Enlightenment." I have organized them dialectically as Enlightenment in the West--"Enlightenment and Modernity" in chapter one and Enlightenment in the East—"Enlightenment and Buddhism" in chapter two. "Enlightenment and Modernity" focuses on Enlightenment discourses that are based on the understanding that the mode of systematic reasoning and progressive, logical thinking is the creation of scientific methodology and positivistic rationalism of the seventeenth-century Western intellectual tradition. "Enlightenment and Buddhism" focuses on presenting how this specific contra-Enlightenment discourse was carried out in the form of ancient oriental religious thought aimed at a quest for *Enlightenment* and an attainment of such *beyondness*. Organizing the two chapters in this way places in conversation Western Enlightenment idea and Eastern Enlightenment realization and highlights the contradictions between Western and Eastern uses of the term, "Enlightenment." I situate the two different Enlightenment expressions as "one half" of modernity and its integrated "other being."

Chapter one discusses the structure of Western Enlightenment thinking. I argue that discussions about the development of human civilization and existential predicaments are implicated with conventional phenomena and physical reality, thereby becoming relative "truths." They rely on verbal texts and systemized knowledge for philosophical dialectics and contextualized theoretical discourses about Enlightenment and rational intelligence. If chapter

one argues for "phenomenal existence" centered on the manipulation of "subjective mind-consciousness" and the concept of interpretation through the view of "relative truth," then chapter two presents the other side of the phenomenal, which is "outside" the domain of physical reality. It is a realization of total "emptiness" when seeking for absolute reality, and a realization that finding the true self transcends ordinary time and space. In the Buddhist idea of Enlighenment presented through "emptiness," there lies an irreconcilable confrontation between "existence" and "non-existence" in conventional reality (the material world). However, instead of remaining at the level of conflicting ideas, being existent and being non-existent are unified under the ultimate performance of the true suchness on a deeper level. And, the consummation of this "one thus-ness" is "emptiness" in its supreme form.[7]

The case studies in the succeeding four chapters are based on the contextual backgrounds and theoretical foundations set forth in the opening two chapters. Chapters three through six explore four trans-cultural case studies. These chapters are structured as dialectical exhibitions of the four theatrical examples' pursuits of Buddhist transcendent illumination and mystical Zen enlightenment through the variations and similarities in their theories and practices. In order to illuminate their historical context, chapters three through six contain case studies of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao which analyze the imbrication of enlightenment and modernity and the impact that these concepts had on their eras. My study starts from an observation that the Enlightenment epistemological project and modernity gave birth to Artaud, Cage, Hijikata and

[7] The conceptual terms of "true suchness" and "one thus-ness" are peculiar to Buddhist expression. Both ideas are subject to a total compatibility of essential emptiness and its functional perturbation (that is, performance) at the level of material phenomena. Attaining such ultimate reality blurs the incongruities between the absolute and the relative, essence and appearance, and the sublime and the profane. The presentations of true suchness and one thus-ness are especially crucial to *The Heart Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, and *Fundamentals of the Middle Way (The Mulamadhyamaka-Karika)*. All four are important Buddhist classics. They are also the central texts in my dissertation because the theories I use to support my major arguments are chiefly based on these four sutras. I explain these notions in detail in chapter two.

Ohno, and Gao's counter-enlightenment impulses that transcended boundaries of culture, genre, discipline, and exceeded historical and geographical differences.

The Relationship between Enlightenment and Modernity

To start, chapter one focuses on the dialectical narratives of the orthodox Enlightenment tradition and the currents of modernity and modernization since the seventeenth-century in Europe, which contains an embedded counter-Enlightenment alternative. According to Foucault, "Modernity is often spoken of as an epoch, or at least as a set of features characteristic of an epoch… and then we find ourselves asking whether modernity constitutes the sequel to the Enlightenment and its development or, whether we are to see it as a rupture or a deviation with respect to the basic principles of [the seventeenth century]."[8] Arguably, modernity is a historical epoch, a concept, a fashion, an ethos, a phenomenology, an *angst*, and above all, a peculiar symptom belonging to the temperament and "the spirit of the age," to use Hegel's term; hence, it is impossible to understand modernity in terms of just one of its many dimensions. It would be problematic, however, to separate modernity from the Enlightenment ideas from which it originated. The concept of modernity is not only more complicated than the idea of Enlightenment, it is also highly ambiguous. And modernity's multifaceted phases could always be unpacked, contextualized, and opened to question. According to Alex Callinicos's *Social Theory*, the concept of modernity can be re-categorized into at least three conceptual phases.[9] Consider for example the concept of modernity that contributes to a "philosophical idea." [10] In such a context, this idea is seen as the historical realization of the Enlightenment's philosophy of

[8] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 39.
[9] Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory: A Historical Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 298. In addition to my major focus on seeing the concept of modernity as a philosophical idea, the other two conceptual phases that Callinicos mentions are "form of society" and "historical experience."
[10] Ibid., 298.

the present. The present legitimizes itself by making obsolete as well as distancing and differentiating itself from the "debris" of the past, to use this notion with which Walter Benjamin displays a continued fascination in his writings. Paradoxically, it is indeed out of this past, the phenomenology of the present spirit ascends. Pointing toward indefinite progress, this spirit of the present promises to achieve calculable and predictable improvements in every aspect of the social world for the foreseeable future. In this respect, Callinicos sees the philosophy of modernity as corresponding to and affirming what Habermas labels an "incomplete project" more than a century later.

The Essentials of Enlightenment Thought, Ethics and Mentality, and Historical Significance

To properly trace the trajectory of Western Enlightenment thought, I have divided my discussion into two parts. One is primarily concerned with pro-Enlightenment voices and the other with contra-Enlightenment voices. Within each of these parts, I discuss the representative voices in chronological order. Both parts draw attention to the dialectical relationship between arguments for and against Enlightenment and the theoretical sophistication they deploy. With the rise of science, challenging the singular authority of the church, a new belief system burgeoned in Europe. This belief system was characterized by faith in human rationality as a means of attaining truth. The "Age of Enlightenment" began more or less simultaneously in a number of countries, such as England, France, Spain, Italy, and Germany in seventeenth-century Europe. The Age of Enlightenment arose in the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688 and the scientific discoveries of Isaac Newton in the late seventeenth century. In a sense, Enlightenment movements may be seen as an affirmation of the ideas of humanism which proliferated during the Renaissance. The spirit of the Age of Enlightenment fundamentally altered the tenor of

European mindset; as a consequence, the Enlightenment ethos imprinted itself on modern European ethics.

Not all Enlightenment philosophers claimed to be against religion, however. Under the influence of Descartes, Enlightenment philosophers had confidence in the capacity of the human mind to reason as well as in the power of empirical knowledge, perceptive rationality, and discursive thought. As a result of a new belief of French Enlightenment philosophers, many of whom were taken to be atheists or materialists, mysterious religions and the belief in God as the Almighty were questioned. Instead, taking back the power was the optimism in the new world structure that was established by and subject to human rationality, empiricism, calculation, and order. According to these criteria, the way to unveil the secret behind the universe and nature, to conquer the unknown instead of being vanquished, to unlock human beings' *raison d'etre* and establish an earthly paradise, blissful, progressive, and free of repression, was through human rationality and its logic propositional calculus, that is, reasoning. The confidence in the power of (scientific) rationality was developed into a set of universal values espoused as the ethics of Enlightenment. As Robert Anchor points out, the historical significance of the Enlightenment legacy is on one hand that the ethics the Enlightenment mentality espoused were "a rallying cry of the ascendant bourgeoisie during its heroic age."[11] The justification of Enlightenment thought, which was not unlike a conspiracy that stood for the interests of a certain social class, brought forth exacerbating contradictions and competing voices. On the other hand, through its underlying themes (which I focus on in this chapter), this zeitgeist of Enlightenment also manifested itself as the "real…relevance of the Enlightenment tradition to contemporary Western society."[12]

[11] Robert Anchor, *The Enlightenment Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), xiv.
[12] Ibid., x.

Pro-Enlightenment Voices: A General Map

Enlightenment epistemology has dominated the European world and reached every corner of the globe during the past few centuries and will almost certainly continue to exert its impact on the development of human civilization and the order of the world. Generally, the ascendance of Enlightenment thinking is dated back to late seventeenth-century Europe with the publication of John Locke's key work, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). Unlike the Cartesian heritage manifested in Descartes and Newton's thinking, which values humankind's ability for abstract reasoning and logical calculation, Locke claims that the primacy of experience is far more determinant for human understanding. Locke argues that all concepts about things stem from man's subjective experience and are shaped by the way he perceives and interprets the empirical world that surrounds him through his mind projection. It is from this argument that Locke derives his crucial notion of empiricism, which turns out to be the kernel and the legacy of Enlightenment epistemology. Locke's avowal that intellectual knowledge is a product of empiricism stemming from the human thinking faculty and subjective consciousness is as influential as the Cartesian Enlightenment rationalistic tradition. The theory of Locke's empiricism is based on a presumption that there exists no other individual reality or any external world-entity independent of the "real" world of the human mind.

Building on Locke's empiricism, David Hume constructs his own way of seeing—through skepticism. Hume's skepticism is based on the controversial issues surrounding knowledge and human intelligence that have been debated since the days of Francis Bacon and Descartes and Enlightenment thought and concerns reached the first peak in Hume's advocacy of skepticism. Within the framework of Enlightenment rationalist knowledge, the core of Hume's more radical self-reflexive criticism is his verification of the insufficiency of rationality. Based on his theory

of how humankind's inner states and the outer worlds operate and interact with each other, Hume argues that the most fundamental "faith system" (or, the capacity of believing) is beyond the reach of perception and comprehension and cannot be affirmed by the application of reason.[13]

The Height of Pro-Enlightenment Achievements through Kant

Influenced by Locke and Leibniz in his early years, another principal Enlightenment thinker, Immanuel Kant, however, came to believe deeply in Hume's ideas about skepticism, which had a significant impact on him; through skepticism, Kant discovered the strengths and weaknesses of human rationality. Kant's philosophical dialectics as well as his theoretical critiques of "pure reason," "practical reason," and "judgment" are based on arguing for the strengths and weaknesses of human rationality—an extension of Hume's Enlightenment skepticism through the application of reason. Kant invents an argument for mankind's capacity for skepticism by employing his own priceless gift--human reason, which also affirms the sense of a subjective self. Kant's famous maxim, "Dare to know, dare to understand," highlights the apparent confidence and optimism that characterized Enlightenment modes of thinking.

Unlike most of his Enlightenment predecessors and contemporaries who posited themselves as materialists or atheists, Kant never denied he was a Christian; indeed, his Christianity signified the dynamics of constructing a genuine Enlightenment rationalism from amidst the contradictions of science and religion, or, more broadly, "philosophy" and religion. Although centering his discourse on the truth structure of Newtonian physics and empirical

[13] The descriptions of these sections: *The Essentials of Enlightenment Thought, the Ethics of Its Mentality, and Its Historical Significance*, and *The Account of Pro-Enlightenment Voices: A General Map* are chiefly taken from these thought-provoking books: Robert Anchor, *The Enlightenment Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967). E. Cassirer, *Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961). Robert C. Solomon and Kathleen M. Higgins, *A Passion of Wisdom: A Very Brief History of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997). Bertrand Russell, *History of Western Philosophy and Its Connection with Political and Social Circumstances from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

knowledge of new science, Kant reconfirms the necessity of leaving room for faith and religion. And he insists on seeking the ultimate expression of rationality from inside rationalistic knowledge and religion. To Kant, there exists the possibility that beyond scientific reality, philosophical truth, and faith, reason might be the answer. Kant posits the notion of the "transcendental" to suggest the compatibility of, for example, God, the "existence" of external world-entities, faith, scientific reality, and human reasoning.

Kant's philosophical system is the descendant of transcendental idealism. The theory of Kant's "Two worlds," which consists of the sensible world and the intelligible world, suggests pure reason's autonomous faculty and its limitations.[14] The sensible world is subject to the phenomenal world and the appearance of reality. The intelligible world relates to the noumenal world and the metaphysical reality which is beyond categorization, inconceivable, and unconditioned.[15] This transcendental sphere of "the thing-in-itself"[16] that which is unknowable, can be verified only through the dialectical and theoretical hypothesis. Thus an understanding of the transcendental sphere and the intelligible world is cognified by humankind's "synthetic a priori knowledge."[17]

For Kant, the magnificence of reason lay in its two distinct phases: the practical and the functional. These phases at once combined with and were governed by the unknowable, which could be conceptualized and "translated" through the probability of "synthetic unity of apperception."[18] In other words, reason was comprised of both a logical and a transcendental faculty. As a logical faculty, rationality produced reconciled conclusions through abstraction and

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[14] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, edited by Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998). I paraphrase Kant's words.
[15] Ibid., 223-224. I paraphrase Kant's words.
[16] Robert Anchor, *The Enlightenment Tradition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 108.
[17] Ibid., 109.
[18] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 113-114.

discursive thoughts. As a transcendental faculty, reasoning established the object of theoretical knowledge, created perceptions, and processed conceptions. Even more importantly, the transcendental faculty of reasoning verified an enclosure of a priori cognitions whose object, say, metaphysical reality, was not cognizable or understandable subjectively, nor was it projected on the empirical world.[19] As Kant confirmed in his *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> The transcendental conception of reason is therefore nothing else than the conception of the *totality of the conditions* of a given conditioned. Now as the *unconditioned* alone renders possible totality of conditions, and conversely, the totality of conditions is itself always unconditioned; a pure rational conception in general can be defined and explained by means of the conception of the unconditioned, in so far as it contains a basis for the synthesis of the unconditioned.[20]

Robert Anchor would agree that by limiting the sovereignty of empirical subjectivity and intellectual rationality as well as denying the possibility of unmasking metaphysical reality by cognitive reasoning, dialectic, and conceptual perception, Kant intended to mark a departure from orthodox Enlightenment tradition. Kant's "assertion of this limitation bolstered his faith in reason, because he believed that it stemmed from reason itself and is known by reason's own law."[21] Viewed in this way, Kant rejected exactly what he defended. Kant also posits a deductive assumption to solve this unresolved inconsistency between the fields of the transcendental and the empirical. In conclusion, Kant admits the effectiveness and triumph of reasoning. Ultimately, the field of the transcendental is a deducible and presumptive truth integrated into the empirical faculty of the human mind for the justification of the supremacy of rationality. To resolve the

[19] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 211-215. I paraphrase Kant's words.
[20] Ibid., 223-224.
[21] Ibid., 109.

disagreement, Kant argues that in our ideas, some of which do not derive from experience, perception, or understanding, there is non-empirical, or, *a priori* empirical knowledge and the transcendental.

A Modern-Day Sparkle of Pro-Enlightenment Gesture: Brecht

In a sense, Bertolt Brecht may be viewed as a modern-day descendant of Enlightenment thinking. Departing from the anti-Enlightenment aspects of the first-generation Frankfurt School social theorists, Bertolt Brecht's positive gestures, political and aesthetic, gave credit to the legacy of the Enlightenment. Brecht's defense of Enlightenment ideas is based in his theatrical practices and experiments. Instead of a philosophical discourse that argues for Enlightenment rationalism, Brecht endorses a "real dialectic" even more "sober," "alienated," positive, and radical.[22] Brecht employs the Enlightenment zeitgeist, the human rational faculty, and intellectual, critical consciousness as genuine revolutionary weapons of social change. Brecht's pro-Enlightenment position manifested in his epic theatre, which is characteristic of education, self-reflexive awareness, transformation, and progressing, illuminates Walter Benjamin. Benajmin supported Brecht because Brecht's theories of and practices in epic theatre as well as his obsession with objects and the material world echoed Benjamin's continued fascination. Such fascination as a shared characteristic of Brecht and Benjamin is clearly seen, for example, in Benjamin's *The Arcades Project.*[23] But Benjamin's intention is also clearly expressed in his 1936 essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." However, Brecht and

[22] Bertolt Brecht, "The Modern Theatre is the Epic Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 33-42.
[23] Walter Benjamin had worked on his *Arcades Project* for at least thirteen years from approximately 1927 until his death in 1940 while fleeing the Nazi Occupation and left this astounding work uncompleted. See Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (New York: Belknap Press, 2002).

Benjamin's pro-Enlightenment positions provoked harsh criticism from Adorno. In many ways, Brecht may be seen as at the forefront of critical aesthetics in developing his "dialectical" materialism. His experiment in epic theatre as a posture of the modernist vanguard was rooted in the foremost Marxian notion of historical specificity; this notion was expressed through the historicization of *Gestus* in Brecht's performing theory and his materialist revolutionary aesthetic dialectic.

Benjamin observed that Brecht's emancipating art from the bourgeois outlook of its autonomy and using theatre as a powerful, revolutionary weapon for the praxis of life and for encouraging the proletariat to change the world,[24] was provocative and progressive. Furthermore, Brecht used the products of scientific development, technological civilization, and human rationality as his theatrical techniques (e.g., montage, the teaching/learning play, *Gestus*, the alienation effect) and combined these with elements of popular culture for his experimental epic theatre. Thus, theatre was placed in the forefront of social action to serve historical materialism, which pointed toward the necessity of reshaping human history and the possibility of transforming the world order and societal reality.

Introspection and Unease From Inside the Framework of the Heritage of Western Enlightenment: Desperate For A Way Out and A Predictable Departure

The essential characteristics of Enlightenment epistemologies that have been incorporated into the projects of industrialization, revolution, modernity, modernization, and especially capitalism since the eighteenth century are many. According to Eugene Lunn's analysis, these fundamental characteristics exist in the "Enlightenment philosophical materialism...[that]

[24] Bertolt Brecht, "Theatre for Pleasure or Theatre for Instruction," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 70-76.

stress[es]…social progress through science and technology, a faith in 'natural law,' and a remaking of the objective world of politics and economics."[25] These factors stemming from Enlightenment epistemologies were so dominant that they have re-shaped the European mindset with the phenomenology of modernity; it is not possible to get away from its frame of reference. Indeed, by the turn of the twenty-first century, Habermas's statement of enlightenment as an unfinished and ongoing project has very much confirmed this.

Marshall Berman renders in great detail the contours of the paradoxical dynamics of modernity in his book, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (1982). Berman, in particular, explicates the phenomenology of modernity as an idiosyncratic concept that should be identified with a particular type of historical experience connected with a certain kind of society. In his introductory chapter, Berman emphasizes that the project of modernity has generated progress with respect to the human condition. The epochal culmination of mankind's self-fulfillment has been encouraged by

> great discoveries in the physical science, changing our images of the universe and our place in it; the industrialization of projection, which transforms scientific knowledge into technology…generates new forms of corporate power and class struggle.…[I]ncreasingly powerful national states, [which are] bureaucratically structured and operated, constantly striv[e] to expand their power.…[F]inally, [the mechanism of human's self-fulfillment] bear[s] and driv[es] all the people and institutions along,

[25] Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism: An Historical Study of Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin, and Adorno* (London: Verso, 1985), 30.

> [and is manifest in] an ever-expanding, drastically fluctuating capitalist world market.[26]

Once again, the indispensable interrelations of Enlightenment epistemology, modernity, and the modernization project are due to the awareness that these ideas are based in rationalism, subjectivity, empiricism, self-consciousness, positivism, and pragmatism. These interrelations reflect a deep faith in free thinking, free will, the autonomy of action, independence, individualism, liberalism, the right to criticism, knowledge (especially science and mathematics), technology, and in particular in the promise of human power, progress, and emancipation. Enlightenment thinking in the late eighteenth century, swept up in the whirlwind of modernization, industrialization, and revolution, became the most paradoxical consequence of "modernity." On the one hand, this compelling project lifted human beings toward the zenith of historical development as the center of this "haven." On the other hand, it shattered man's subjectivity into bits and pieces, alienated him from his products, and led him far away from "home." As Berman observes, "Modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But, it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity….To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, 'all that is solid melts into air.'"[27] Worse still, this phenomenology of modernity and the modernization project, according to Walter Benjamin, results in providing an "*ur*history of the modern."[28] This means that in its exhibition of the most glamorous, phantasmagoric hallucination in some modern metropolis, it nevertheless "uncovers a mythical compulsion to repeat under the guise of modernization—the representation of the always-the-same as the 'new'

[26] Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air:The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982), 16.
[27] Ibid., 15.
[28] Walter Benjamin proposed this idea in his uncompleted *The Arcades Project*.

which characterizes the consumption of commodities under capitalism."[29] In this sense, Benjamin concludes: "Myth demonstrates that the human species, hopelessly depraved in its quest for a good and just life, is condemned to the cycle of the reproduction of mere life and survival."[30]

Echoing Benjamin's more pessimistic stance towards modernity that Benjamin used to endorse the kinds of revelational "illuminations" of rebellious forces through his theory of dialectical images, Max Horkheimer's remark calls for our attention. Horkheimer's severe critique of "the authoritarian state"[31] envisioned by "whether Stalinists or Fascists [in] a form of state capitalism"[32] came after the 1939-40 Nazi conquests, which caused him and fellow members of the Weimar intelligentsia to seek political asylum in the United States. By this time, the provocative thought of the Frankfurt School had to "say farewell, for the foreseeable future, to the prospect of socialist transformation."[33] In the seventeenth century, as the modernity project had entered the age of capitalism, social critical theorists began no longer to see the possibility of fundamental socialist revolution. Once the conspiracy of modernity and its reincarnation in the form of capitalism reached its culmination, social revolution would no longer be, as Horkheimer notes, "a further acceleration of progress, but a qualitative leap out of the dimension of progress, for as long as world history follows its logical course, it fails to fulfill its human destiny."[34] Facing the absence of any real revolutionary, dialectical criticism (like that of Walter Benjamin's theory of dialectical images), Callinicos is thoughtful to point out that Horkheimer seems to

[29] Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption*, 51.
[30] Ibid., quoting Walter Benjamin.
[31] Max Horkheimer, "The Authoritarian State," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, edited by Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1978), 107.
[32] Alex Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 253.
[33] Ibid., 252.
[34] Horkheimer, "The Authoritarian State," 117.

imply that "revolution no longer has any social anchorage, and is thus reduced to a mere, [empty] hope."[35]

At the turn of the twenty-first century, debates centering on Enlightenment and modernity remain heated and unresolved. The competing positions in these clashes are left open to challenge, regardless of whether they sided with or against the arguments of "the revolutionary transformation, critical acceptance, or outright rejection of modernity."[36] For example, as Alex Callinicos reminds us, the unresolved questions in dispute are: 1) is the concept of modernity, interpreted as a philosophical idea, perceived as a particular form of social world, or realized through a peculiar historical experience, a response to (or a product of) capitalism? and 2) does capitalism, in general, represent merely one facet of the elusive dimensions of modernity? The debates surrounding these questions signify an uneasiness, even a desperation to emancipate from the framework of the tradition of Western Enlightenment.

Counter-Enlightenment Discourses: Nietzsche, Adorno and Horkheimer, Marcuse

I begin my account of counter-Enlightenment voices with Nietzsche not only because I am proceeding chronologically but also because he is of great importance in the context of Western anti-Enlightenment discourses. This importance derives from the fact that projects ranging from the dialectics launched by the Frankfurt School's leading theorists, Benjamin and Adorno, to Foucault's post-structuralist agenda, all find their starting point in Nietzsche's writings.

If the 1960s post-structuralist agenda is to contest the phenomenology of modernity which is supported by the Enlightenment belief system, it is worth looking back to the end of nineteenth century and discussing how Friedrich Nietzsche's work became a jumping-off point for anti-

[35] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 253.
[36] Ibid., 296.

Enlightenment genealogy. Foucault first used the term, genealogy, in order to position his work as part of the vanguard seeking "to re-establish the various systems of subjection: not the anticipatory power of meaning, but the hazardous play of dominations."[37] He used this term to re-contextualize the criterion of post-structuralist dialectics of truth, history, knowledge, and any type of systematic thinking as "genealogy," instead of "History," the idea initiated by Nietzsche. In brief, two crucial points position Nietzsche at the center of the effort to provoke post-structuralist counter-Enlightenment genealogical discourses. First, according to Alex Callinicos's analysis, Nietzsche endeavored to wipe out the landscape of historical progress and scientific (technical) civilization inspired by Enlightenment evolutionist optimism and logical positivism "with the grim panorama of an endless struggle for domination; [second], at the same time, [Nietzsche] offered the artistic life—or, life as a work of art—as the best way to responding to this situation."[38] Nietzsche promised an essentially aesthetic "form-giving" process of mastering and creating oneself by transforming life into a work of art as a drastic provocation of perceiving the world through "a cosmic process of self-overcoming."[39] Nietzsche also proclaimed the intimate, particular aesthetic experience as one that could only be achieved by a handful of individuals who perform a "revaluation of all values."[40] Emphasizing the necessity of negation, Nietzsche saw it was possible to reverse the established truth system and its repression and turn upside down Christian civilization. Antonin Artaud's project echoed that of Nietzsche, especially in this endeavor.

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[37] Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," in *The Foucault Reader*, edited by Paul Rabinow (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984), 83.
[38] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 122.
[39] Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil: Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future*, trans. Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 33.
[40] Ibid., 91.

In his critique of modernity, Nietzsche expressed contempt for a variety of contemporary mottos—progress, evolution, democracy, nationalism, and socialism. He also deprecated the pursuit of the ideas passed down as part of the Enlightenment legacy, which achieved its zenith in the mottos of the French Revolution—liberty, equality, and fraternity. To Nietzsche, these abstract ideas connote a ubiquitous ideology invented and propagandized by the dominant classes. The Nietzschean rebellious philosophical position "reinstates a system of valuation in which select individuals can…affirm themselves and life."[41] It somehow foretells and legitimates the coalition of artistic/aesthetic modernism (as demonstrated by, for example, the bloom of anti-realistic and anti-narrative theatrical attempts) that prevailed conspicuously in the early 1930s (and even earlier, if dated back to the historical avant-garde movements during the First World War) as a stance that opposes the epistemology of rationalistic modernity and its singularity. The trend of artistic/aesthetic modernism also triggered fierce debates amongst the Frankfurt School Theorists for decades.

The famous Nietzschean philosophy of the dialectics of "nature as/of the will to power"[42] is developed as a framework for problematizing modernity. In his summary of the Nietzschean anti-Enlightenment discourse about the will to power, Callinicos offers the following analysis: "The human subject is naturalized, reduced to an incoherent cluster of biological drives, while nature is subjectivized, since all aspects of the physical as well as the social world are expressions of the will to power."[43] Nietzsche's overt approach to nihilism is revealed, and we learn what his view of nature is really about. Nietzsche understands nature as a totality; in no way is its development a directional one, nor can it be motivated by a goal or led towards a

[41] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 118.
[42] Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche: Volume One and Two*, trans. David F. Krell (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 231, 234.
[43] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 115.

terminable, accomplished end. The idealized concept of nature stems from a false belief fabricated by Enlightenment evolutionist optimism when it adopts a linear progressive outlook of world history and human civilization that is internally and cohesively. Above all, it helps in mapping out the possibility of making the realm of truth attainable, predictable, calculable, determinate, and definite. Nietzsche's way of seeing the material occurrence never depends on a unified, logical principle or the "precedence" of internal necessity; instead, it emerges from randomness, purposelessness, accidents, and fragments. In this regard, Nietzsche's idea finds its resonance in the agenda that the existentialist and historical avant-gardists embrace. In his *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche reveals that in the discernable inner structure out of nature as a totality is an unfolding of undying struggling for domination among many competing centers of power. As Nietzsche stated, "This world is the will to power and nothing else besides! And you yourself are also this will to power and nothing else besides!"[44] Here, the dynamics embedded in nature and power are deemed the result of a shift from a nihilistic tone to an energetic force of life. This force of life is not associated with an abstract universality of life but rather with specific forms of life (the particularity) that are subject to and served for "the relativity of knowledge to the interests of those concerned."[45] For nature, the nature of the development of world history and the progress of human civilization could be re-valued, according to Nietzsche's assertion, as "the most fantastic anthropomorphism—the megalomaniac projection of…intentional human action onto nature as a whole."[46] Richard Schacht argues that in Nietzsche's thought the will to power

[44] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter A. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage, 1968), 550.
[45] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 119.
[46] Ibid., 119.

is the primary tendency or the "nature" of "all forces and configurations of forces to extend their influences and dominate others."[47]

Nietzsche's outlook on the phenomenology of truth, world-entity, and human's existence is supported by his statement: nature as the will to power. Nietzsche negates the possibility of seeing coherence or unity in individual human subjects. He also invalidates the epistemology of a single substance, nullifying the myth of an "unhistorical"[48] articulation, which is eventually identical with a "supra-historical"[49] whole being and the supremacy of the transcendental realm. In his *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche announces his philosophical agenda as "an inverted Platonism;"[50] for to him, "the farther removed from true being the purer, the finer, the better it is. Living in semblance as goal."[51] The only way to perceive what is called reality, truth, or world-entity is through its inherent ambiguity, which results from a continuous process of transformations or paradigmatic shifts in relation to the forces of ceaseless struggle amidst many oppositional centers of power. Therefore, what we call truth always reflects that which has been forgotten, enclosed, included, and omitted from the very selective viewpoint of "necessary

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[47] Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 1983), 220.

[48] Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals: A Polemic: by way of Clarification and Supplement to My Last Book, Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Douglas Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), ix, 12. In his writings, Nietzsche especially expressed his dismissal and rejection of unhistorical and supra-historical understandings. Nietzsche invented these two conceptual terms along with "the historical" in order to form what he called "the hygiene of life." As a philosopher-genealogist, Nietzsche utilized what he called the "critical approach" to combat the historical, unhistorical, and suprahistorical attitudes (ways of seeing, writing, and understanding). According to Nietzsche, the unhistorical implies the process of deliberately forgetting the past in the interest of only the present; however, the suprahistorical nature (which is more fundamental) suggests a historical man who sees/lives in a suprahistorical way, thereby retaining an unquestioning faith in the meaning of life/existence as progressively coming to light in the course of it process.

[49] Ibid.

[50] F. Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and No One*, translated by R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Penguin Books, 1961), 160.

[51] Ibid.

perspectivism,"[52] to use Nietzsche's term. As Nietzsche claims, "Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species could not live. The value for life is ultimately decisive."[53]

Likewise, to combat the promise of the infinite realm beyond the phenomenal world—in which man's existence is the means of transitioning towards the eternal, cultivated by the tradition of Christian civilization—Nietzsche proposes his idea of "the eternal recurrence of the same,"[54] which is the "abysmal thought that everything eternally repeats itself."[55] Although originally, Nietzsche presented the notion of "the eternal recurrence of the same" in a highly negative, pessimistic light, it can be viewd in a more positive way. Simply put, the eternal recurrence of the same means that truth and reality may always be understood as a spiral, revolving reversion of the eternal, out of which the state of permanence, paradoxically, arises in its fuller, purer, and higher presence of "now-time" (that is, Walter Benjamin's messianic monad) or "instantaneous momentariness," to use a Buddhist idea. The similarity among Nietzche's eternal recurrence/return, Benjamin's higher aim of an apocalyptic, absolute reflection in the now-time and the monadic union, as well as the Buddhist transcendental momentariness is a (re)valuation of genealogist dialectical particularization (specification) and an affirmation of a-historical spiritual revelation. In a sense, Nietzsche's realization is similar to the dialectics of the ultimate versus the conventional and the absolute versus the relative. His denial of abstract permanence and claim for living in the present resonate with the following element of Buddhist philosophy: there are not two separate realities; the essence and the form, the substance and the

[52] Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*.
[53] Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 272.
[54] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 178.
[55] Ibid., 178-179.

appearance are rather one in a state of total unanimity.[56] Thus, phenomenal appearance is the key to the substance and absolute reality.[57]

To explore the question raised by this Nietzschean notion, I borrow the term, grand narrative, or master narrative, introduced by the post-structuralist thinker, Jean-Francois Lyotard, in his 1979 book, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* and re-locate my discussion of Nietzsche. This work is a critique of the institutional truth system and ideological forms of knowledge. Together with the discourses of two fellow philosophers, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, all three can be seen as having revitalized post-structuralism and a Nietzschean, anti-Enlightenment dialectics. The grand narrative is the language of the oppressor and the minor narrative is the language of the oppressed. In other words, Lyotard (and the post-structuralists), following Nietzsche, sees the historical development of humanity as a universal collective and a sum totality, which has been "oriented towards a goal"[58] in the form of the grand narrative that selects, forgets, encloses, and omits. The post-structuralist revitalization of the minor narrative that includes the "particularized" and detailed, the microscopic and individual (aesthetic) awareness is provoked by the Nietzschean perspective which sees that the history of human (humanity) is an enclosure and erasure under the dominance of Christian civilization. Nietzsche proposed as a counteraction the revaluation of the undercurrent Dionysian elements that looked positively on the chaotic, the dissonant, the rebellious, the ecstatic and lunatic. Uproars aroused by the Dionysian undercurrents were, to Nietzsche, "constitutive of human history,"[59] for the Dionysian essence of aesthetic, intoxicated absoluteness occurs in the realm of

[56] I explain in detail this paramount Buddhist idea in Chapter Two.
[57] The ideas are fuller explained in Chapter Two.
[58] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 118.
[59] Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 160.

the accidental, consisting of "fragments and limbs and dreadful chances."[60] The master narrative created, for example, by Christian civilization of historical evolution and the progress of humanity signifies "a sociology of moral belief."[61] This belief is aimed at an ethical or political goal in the same way that the "natural forces" of life declared by certain ruling classes are expressions of power. Nietzsche saw the possibility that such a grand narrative may be replaced by the minor narrative of the microscopic particularities through "the imposition of some new pattern of ordering relations upon forces not previously subject to them,"[62] which was an essentially aesthetic "form-giving,"[63] in order to achieve the self-becoming "highest exemplars of humanity."[64]

Throughout the specification of an evolutionary social theory and its performance of philosophical critiques, the concept of modernity is more concretely served for the purpose of dialectical discourse. The importance of the dialectics (polemics) of modernity is attributed to a specific structure of society that needs to be situated as a juncture in human history, as Alex Callinicos explains.[65] In general, the chief program that connects a group of Weimar intellectuals is a reflection and continuation of the impact of different variations of classical Marxist theory incorporated in an idiosyncratic form of contemporary philosophical discourse. Under Horkheimer's directorship since the 1930s, the agenda of the Institute for Social Research at Frankfurt turned towards an aspiration to problematize the relationships among and re-locate the dialectics of rationality, history, and societal truth from the stance of Critical Theory.

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[60] Ibid.
[61] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 117.
[62] Schacht, *Nietzsche*, 229.
[63] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 120.
[64] Nietzsche expressed this aesthetic-oriented idea, highest exemplars of humanity, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in which Nietzsche used Zarathustra as the presence of the "higher man."
[65] I paraphrase A. Callinicos's description. See Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 297.

The tenets of the Frankfurt School were molded into a distinctive approach in its Critical Theory and were aimed at subverting what they believed to be an obsolete paradigm. Contrary to the pedagogies of traditional social theory, which were dominated by a systematic Enlightenment epistemology,[66] critical theory assumed a self-reflexive and dialectical posture towards the world and all things in it. The Frankfurt School theorists claimed that all things (including themselves) were "conditioned" by historical, economic, social, ideological, and political forces. Although some may disagree, Horkheimer and Adorno's critiques of Enlightenment and modernity are pertinent and legitimate. They note that Enlightenment thinking would contribute to the unveiling of a critical position and a renewal of a skeptical spirit, thereby removing the central states of myth and superstition in constructing human life. However, perhaps predictably, once this social theory developed further, the facilities of criticism, skepticism, and rationalism eventually "ceased to be self-critical; [they] made [their] own principles absolute and thus they became a new myth, accepted without reason. In becoming dogmatic, the Enlightenment itself became authoritarian and found itself manifest in the brutal but efficient administration."[67] From the vantage-point of first-generation Frankfurt School critical theorists (Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse) who interpreted world history as "the triumph of myth masked as enlightenment"[68] and the modernization project as a Frankenstein's monster created by the seventeenth-century Enlightenment, modernity itself faces several profound crises. Shockingly, most of the time, the apparent solutions for these crises are themselves other crises.

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[66] What I mean by a systematic Enlightenment epistemology is an epistemological enlightenment understanding starting from the seventeenth century that championed a belief in scientists' independence from and objectification of things they studied.

[67] *Cultural Theory: The Key Concepts*, edited by Andrew Edgar and Peter Sedgwick (London: Routledge, 2002), 152.

[68] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 254.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, a central text of the Frankfurt School, written from a Hegelian, Marxist position by its two principal figures during the course of their exile in the United States in the 1940s, Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno problematize traditional Western Marxist confidence in the ability of the proletarian revolution to drastically change the world order and turn upside-down the political, economic, and historical systems of bourgeois society. Moreover, given the more knotty circumstances of the advanced capitalism of their time, Horkheimer and Adorno question the affirmative optimism and "romantic" championing by Marx among others of Enlightenment products, such as rationality and technology for stimulating future social progress, the likelihood of political revolution, and the emancipation of mankind from oppression. In the trajectory of the development of critical theory, the *Dialectic* on the dialectics of *Enlightenment* presents a crucial new phase. It marks the starting point at which a definitive break was made with the Enlightenment doctrine of progress as perpetuated in the Hegelian and Marxist legacies that conceptualizes the continual relapse of historical development into new forms of myth. In so doing, the entire modern spirit of an ostensible demythologization of Enlightenment can be read as the fabrication of another inherently new form of myth. This way of thinking (and criticizing) is what Horkheimer and Adorno adopt in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as an initial point of departure. It is worth mentioning that the extent to which, for Horkheimer and Adorno, Walter Benjamin's conception of history was mythic and thus his notion of "the eternal recurrence of the always-the-same"--in its negative sense--was taken up by the authors of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. It is expressed clearly in Adorno's corresponding idea of seeing the totality of such universal history constituted by merely abstract conjecture as a "spell." According to *Dialectic*, the storm of historical progress in

conjunction with the "Angel of Reason," as in Richard Wolin's term, "led not to utopia, but to renewed barbarism."[69]

In addition to their problematizing an abstract speculation of the uncritical totality of world history as the universal truth, Horkheimer and Adorno evoke even more fundamental interrelationships among the culture industry, the massive collectivity, individual subject, nature, Enlightenment, and instrumental reason. The philosophical stalemate that has been brought forth by the ethics of the Enlightenment is discussed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* in terms of how commodified capitalist society achieves its zenith. In their analysis of the culture industry, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that individual particulars are characterized as "the one united collectivity"[70] and thereby "firmly stamped with sameness,"[71] which deprives individuals of their own subjective thoughts. Under the domination of the culture industry and its propaganda, the idea of individual subjectivity (which turns out to be nothing more than an obsolete and abstracted reference) is legitimized and can only "be tolerated so long as [a human individual's] complete identification with the generality is unquestioned."[72] For under the control of the culture industry and its means of technological (re)production, which is deemed "the unleashed colossi of the manufacturing industry,"[73] a "rational universality"[74] presupposed by the culture industry subordinates the specificity and particularity of an individual by not offering him fuller contentment as it promises. Instead, the structure of commodity reification eliminates the character of the individual subject, that is, he is "other-ed" and enclosed by an abstracted (and absent) subjective generality and a universal totality.

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[69] Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 269.
[70] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 13.
[71] Ibid., 128.
[72] Ibid., 154.
[73] Ibid., 205.
[74] Ibid., 58.

The extinction of "a distinct individuality and particularity,"[75] paradoxically, is attributed by *Dialectic of Enlightenment* to the outcome of the systematic subordination of nature to this very human Subject as the initial agenda of the Enlightenment progressive project. Emerging out of conflicting modernity discourses, Horkheimer and Adorno raise the idea of the fundamental contradictions between humankind and nature/faith that are opposite where the latter (nature or faith) is subordinate to the former (human) and "ultimately degenerate into a swindle [that] becomes the myth of the twentieth century."[76] Horkheimer and Adonor consider that such a disagreement between enlightenment rationalism and nature is even more fatal in its essence than any extant forms of struggles. Marked as "the spirit of the age," the Enlightenment ethics of the eighteenth century claimed a more enlightening prospect than the status quo. For its aim was to liberate humans from the domination of the mythical, unknown, superstitious, and innocent, which are included under the rubrics "nature" and "faith."[77] This same Enlightenment insurgency that battled its rival nature, transforms itself into a "second nature," which is similar to regressing into another dark recess of mythology, to use Adorno and Horkheimer's idea. In order to make a statement that "Enlightenment is as totalitarian as any system,"[78] whose scheme is to subjugate and manipulate nature yet in turn proves that human beings are understood as nothing more than part of this (objectified) nature, Horkheimer and Adorno argue that "all the power of nature was reduced to mere indiscriminate resistance to the abstract power of the subject."[79] This argument summarizes Enlightenment philosophy as an intent to escape from domination; yet it turns out to produce an even more profound domination. In other words, what is refused in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is that Enlightenment justifies itself as a force of emancipation in terms of

[75] Ibid., 14, 62.
[76] Ibid., 20.
[77] Ibid.
[78] Ibid., 24.
[79] Ibid., 90.

scientific knowledge and rational intelligence. The *Dialectic* stated that this Enlightenment project made "civilization the victory of society over nature which changes everything into pure nature."[80] Adorno and Horkheimer thus situated Enlightenment and its dialectics from an extreme Frankfurt School critical position.

It is evident that in Adorno and Horkheimer's writings, there exists no possibility of an affirmative stance of resistance or a reliance on revolution. Under the precondition in which Horkheimer and Adorno deem the world to be beleaguered by capitalist commodity fetishism that acts as a "totally administered society,"[81] any affirmation of carrying out a "positive solution" [82] could be seen as impotent and ineligible. For the only practical "positive solution" lies in an assertion of its total absence. To a great extent, this is the crucial reason why Adorno opposes Benjamin's stance in the latter's essay "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," which takes a more Brechtian position. From this standpoint arises Adorno's agenda of avant-gardist modernism to place in discourse negative dialectics. Jürgen Habermas sees in Adorno's 1966 work *Negative Dialectics* the inspiration and influence of Benjamin's idea "profane illumination," shaped by the latter's apocalyptic theoretical approach towards "redemptive critique." *Negative Dialectics* problematizes the tradition of German classical idealism, especially the character of this philosophical legacy which aims to "systematically deny any validity to what is called the non-identical—the individual, the particular, the material, the empirical. Everything is instead reduced to the product of absolute, self-constituting subjectivity."[83]

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[80] Ibid., 186.
[81] Ibid., 88.
[82] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (London: Routledge, 1973), 5.
[83] I quote Callinicos's analysis of Adorno's idea proposed in the latter's work *Negative Dialectic*. See Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 251.

Adorno rebuked the inadequacy of an all-inclusive subjectivity, and he specified the brutality of its totalization: "This mind [of human subjective consciousness] is indeed not capable of producing or grasping the totality of the real, but it may be possible to penetrate the detail, to explode in miniature the mass of merely existing reality."[84] Adorno's critique of the totalitarian subject exposes the impact of Benjamin's influence on him, in particular through the latter's work *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* in 1928. The major argument that Benjamin presents in his writings is a proclamation that this world-ness is filled with fragmentations; apocalyptic illumination and redemptive dialectic lie in seeing into the systematic knowledge, which is concerned with conceptualizations of empirical phenomena, the "constellations." These unfamiliar constellations are managed like a montage in film or expressed through techniques of collage, which, for example, Cubism adopts. It is obvious that these revelatory constellations, consisting of haphazard combinations and odd juxtapositions of symbols, material objects, and poetic images, aim at summoning up an idea—an idea that is connected with the truer, the purer, and the higher. To replace the philosophical insufficiency manifested in the Enlightenment discourses, Adorno looks to Benjamin's more "enlightening" work *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* for solution and is fascinated with the dialectic of "micrological approach"[85] pointed out by Benjamin. In Benjamin's obsession with the details and the particularized as well as his appraisal of the accidental and the random, an alternative vista unfolds that reveals the interconnections between form and content, thought and appearance, and dynamics of the subjective and the other.

Nonetheless, there emerge different positions against Adorno that problematize his critique of the Enlightenment heritage presented in *Negative Dialectics*. For example, Andreas

[84] Theodor W. Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy," *Telos* 31 (Spring 1977): 133.
[85] I quote this theoretical notion of Benjamin from Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 251.

Huyssen in particular reminds us in his book *After the Great Divide* (1987) of Adorno's irrevocably negative posture that results in historical inaccuracy. Due to his pessimistic and one-sided tone, which links together the brutality of Fascism, the barbarism of consumer capitalism and commodity fetishism, as well as the paralysis of mass culture (especially jazz, which was a particular target of Adorno's disdain) to create what he called the culture industry, Adorno places himself in a totalizing position, the type that he elsewhere attacks, leaving no room for mankind's historical development.[86] Also due to his defense of high culture and serious art through his loathing of the culture industry (mass culture) as a hypnotizing mechanism, Adorno attributes to popular art the status of an ally of technology, instrumental rationality, reified commodification, commercial fetishism, and, at worst, Fascism, all of which were fostered by advanced capitalism. Likewise, Adorno attacked Benjamin's overly optimistic affirmation of the revolutionary power and redemptive potential that existed in technology, cinema, and industrial civilization. Benjamin's willingness to embrace these evil children of capitalist modernity, along with his close relationship with Brecht, are targets for Adorno's critique. Compared to the dialectical counter-balance stemming from Brecht's deliberate posture that embraces the Enlightenment idea and Benjamin's tamer critique of the flaws of modernity and capitalism, Adorno denounces the possibility of historicizing the Enlightenment, modernity, and capitalism through his theory of the culture industry. Therefore, his ideas impede dialectical dynamics and inevitably lead to confrontations and contradictions. As Habermas affirms, Adorno's Frankfurt School Critical Theory thus collides with its own limitations and reaches an impasse. Initially Adorno depicts a utopia in some neverland that could only be achieved through an ever-becoming negation. Though Adorno's theory of resistance sounds fascinating and provocative,

[86] Andreas Huyssen, "The Hidden Dialectic: Avantgarde-Technology-Mass Culture," "The Cultural Politics of Pop," in *After the Great Divide: Modernism, Mass Culture, Postmondernism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 3-15, 141-159.

the dialectics of perpetual negation may leave his Frankfurt School successors in a vacuum of darkness and despair.

It is worth mentioning that not all of the Frankfurt School critical theorists take the same radical stance and agree with the pessimistic conclusions of Adorno and Horkheimer—in particular, the kind of "redemptive critique" they employ to comment on the irredemptive situation caused by the Enlightenment and modernity. *Dialectic* ends up in a theoretically and philosophically irredemptive discourse, which leaves no room for further "dialectics" on *Dialectic*. Although engaged in the anti-Enlightenment posture of the Frankfurt School with his work *One-Dimensional Man* seen as "a popularization of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,"[87] Herbert Marcuse is more positive because he looks to the possibility of "an affirmative feature [in] the negative thinking,"[88] as Habermas writes. Habermas's point of departure in re-writing his account of the "dialectic of Enlightenment" that separates his philosophical gist from that of Adorno and Horkheimer is the argument that life itself presents the force within which subject and object are put into union. Although not as disagreeable as Habermas's posture to Adorno's *Dialectic*, it is clear that Marcuse adopts a tamer stance to make gentle adjustments and reverse what he sees as the dead end of the Enlightenment project in *Negative Dialectic*. Distancing himself from the philosophical stalemate in which the *Dialectic* is embroiled and leaning to Freudian psychological concepts, Marcuse depicts an obviously "utopian state" of human society that is based on aesthetics, sensuality, and play. As a recurring theme in his 1955 book *Eros and Civilization*, Marcuse raises the idea of the "performance principle." Marcuse affirms the

[87] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 256.
[88] Jürgen Habermas, 'Psychic Thermidor and the Rebirth of Rebellious Subjectivity,' in *Marcuse: Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, eds. R. Pippin et al. (South Hadley, Mass.: Bergin and Garvey, 1988), 3.

"surplus repression"[89] through the device of the performance principle in the established societal reality. When human instincts, released from "the exigencies of exploitation"[90] in the apparatus of the performance principle, seek for the likelihood of true liberation, real social and political revolutions emerge. Marcuse's aim is to reshape the history of world development, which is seen from the perspectives of Adorno and Horkheimer as a history of repression of scientific expansion, technological civilization, and the mindset of instrumental rationality.

Search for A Beyond Solution out of the Counter-Enlightenment Discourses: A Revival of Pro-Enlightenment Spirit: Habermas

I select Jürgen Habermas's revision of Frankfurt School Critical Theory as an instance, which champions Enlightenment epistemology to modify the outcome of Enlightenment rationalism and solve the problems of modernity and modernization. Habermas endeavors to reconstruct an Enlightenment epistemology and phenomenology of modernity; therefore, he re-substantiates human reason and rejuvenates the tradition of Western rationalism by situating his points of argument from the more conceptual "system world"[91] in the "life world." Habermas is the chief figure among the second-generation Frankfurt School theorists whose concepts are significant to culture theory after the 1950s. Instead of inheriting the theoretical methodologies from his predecessors Adorno and Horkheimer, Habermas owes more to Kant, Hegel, and,

[89] Known as a Marxist-Freudian theorist, Marcuse introduced his notions of performance principle and surplus repression in his *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (New York: Vintage, 1962). The basis of Marcuse's theorecial stance is framed by classical Marxist historical materialism and incorporated into such a philosophical foundation the Freudian psychoanalysis, in order to pave the way for revolutionary resolutions of the Enlightenment rational stalemate.

[90] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 256.

[91] Accordingly, Habermas believes that the system is the opposition to the life world, that is, the social world. Habermas claims, on one hand, that this life world shall be decolonized from the domination of a hegemonic capitalist system in terms of power, money, administrative bureaucracy, etc. that has resulted in obsolete, authoritative instrumental rationality. On the other hand, Habermas contends that human beings' potential of reason exists in daily communicative interaction as a social practice through the medium of language. It should be rescued, in order to attain human emancipation.

certainly, Marx. In particular, Habermas contributes to a revival of Hegelian dialectics on the issues of the human's subjective consciousness, history, philosophy, and modernity, in order to emancipate the potential of rationality. Habermas writes his best-known statement on the Enlightenment, describing it as an evolving and unfinished project; the only solution for all insufficiencies caused by the Enlightenment ideas is higher, deeper, fuller, and truer Enlightenment. For Habermas, it is evident that by diagnosing the status quo of humankind as imprisoned within the authoritative structure and the universal truth system invented by capitalist social myth, the argument of the *Dialectic* very much places itself in a predicament where there exists neither a theoretical/philosophical nor a practical/dialectical escape from established reality. Despite his understanding that "as instrumental, reason assimilated itself to power and thereby relinquished its critical force,"[92] in order to problematize the critique of Enlightenment in the *Dialectic*, Habermas comes up with the idea, "performative contradiction,"[93] to nullify the dialectical legitimacy and re-confirm the philosophical flaw and logical impasse in which the *Dialectic* is embroiled. In his critique of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, especially the concept of "instrumental reason" that Horkheimer and Adorno proposed, Habermas explains that

> this description of the self-destruction of the critical capacity is paradoxical, because in the moment of description it still has to make use of the critique that has been declared dead. It denounces the Enlightenment's becoming totalitarian with its own tools. Adorno was quite aware of this performative contradiction inherent in totalized critique.[94]

Habermas points to Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental reason and suspects that their intention is not unlike "add[ing] up the cost incurred in the usurpation of reason's place by

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[92] Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 119.
[93] Ibid., 127.
[94] Ibid., 119.

a (same) calculating intellect."[95] He argues that Horkheimer and Adorno's statement about the abolition of rational thought whose "irrationality turns it into an instrument of rational administration by the wholly enlightened"[96] is a paradoxical demonstration of the capacity of critical rationality. Habermas later uses the accusation that the *Dialectic* is philosophically incorrect to attack Michel Foucault in their disputes over Enlightenment rationalism and modernity. Based on this argument as his "post" and "pro" enlightenment vantage point, Habermas establishes his discourse of communicative rationality[97] and elaborates when "purposive rationality, overblown into a reality, abolishes the distinction between what claims validity and what is useful for self-preservation, and so tears down the barrier between validity and power."[98] It is obvious that Habermas's point of departure writes a new chapter or marks a kind of "paradigm shift" from inside the Frankfurt School Critical Theories.

In order to accomplish Enlightenment and simultaneously, to reverse Adorno and Horkheimer's renunciation of instrumental rationality (which is locked in the metaphysical domain of the system world, to use Habermas's idea), Habermas claims that it is the life world that ought to be recovered from the obsolete "system world." In his idea of "life world," Habermas sees no such thing as an Absolute, authoritative subjectivity, or abstract all-encompassing system of reason; instead, there is an enduring "inter-subjective, communicative action" that propels the moderate use of reason through mutual understanding in the language of everyday life, in which the systems of ethics, morality, and democratic politics can be re-established.[99] This stance is endorsed by many late twentieth-century social theorists (such as Anthony Giddens), who seek to revitalize the tradition of classical social theory inherited from

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[95] Ibid.
[96] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 20.
[97] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 129.
[98] Ibid., 119.
[99] My paraphrase of Habermas's argument is based on his *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* (1987).

Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. Also, appealing to "the revolution of language"[100] is seen as a solution to undo the theoretical deadlock caused by Adorno and Horkeimer's polemics. Habermas explains the importance of using language as a practical strategy for the healing power of rationality: if the critiques of the critical capacity of human reason(ing) were to continue, "[critical theorists] will have to leave at least one rational criterion intact for their explanation of the corruption of all rational criteria."[101]

To refute Habermas's agenda of "the revolution of language" as one lasting "rational criterion" by criticizing the possibility of an all-encompassing, abstract universality (manifested in Habermas's privilege of "intersubjective understanding and consensus"[102]) represented in language, Horkheimer argues that this universality, interfering within the scheme of language (and its adequacy), is presupposed by "the regulative reason…by virtue of the same rational order."[103] In other words, subjective reason is equivalent to the monological subjectivity that manipulates a reductive conception of reason. Therefore, an expression of a universality of language as "subsumed…into the dominant forms of generality"[104] is structured by and succumbs to an abstract deduction of instrumental rationality, maneuvering within the framework of "the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness"[105] that governs the Western modes of thinking as the Cartesian legacy.

Habermas argues that the critique of Adorno and Horkheimer on subjective reason, which is characterized by "the philosophy of consciousness" and shaped by "an unbalanced

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[100] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 282.
[101] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 126-27.
[102] Callinicos, *Social Theory*, 287.
[103] Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 44. The idea of the regulative rationality used by the Dialectic indeed is the Kantian idea of "regulative principle of pure reason" in relation to the cosmological idea of universal totality.
[104] Ibid., 130.
[105] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 390.

institutionalization of available cognitive potentials,"[106] no longer suffices. Habermas sees that the heritage of "the philosophy of consciousness" originates in Max Weber's theory of rationalization, which unquestionably asserts "the one-sided and narrow conception of reason."[107] His theory of communicative action endorses the practical, linguistic reasoning of "the paradigm of the philosophy of language"[108] and values the philosophy of language as "the real reason for the dialectic of rationalization"[109] embedded in the innate dialectic of reason and as the possibility of completing the Enlightenment evolution at the expense of instrumental rationality in the metaphysical "system world." According to Habermas's preliminary definition of the process of communicative rationality in which ongoing arguments are central, it reflects a communicative employment that is geared towards "achieving, understanding and reviewing consensus."[110] The assumptions about communicative ethics are based on the intersubjective recognition and reconciliation of "criticizable validity claims."[111] Habermas aims to alter the emphasis of emphatic "rationality" (or rationalization)[112] from the conceptual realm to the social realm. This alteration is vital to his theory of communicative action, whose foundation is based in presuppositions of "implicitly shared and imminent rationality of speech…that expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus."[113]

Habermas offers a solution, which would hope to do away with the philosophical dilemma that derives from the Weberian reductive conception of reason which was passed down to Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic* and continued through poststructuralist theory, like that

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[106] Ibid., 242.
[107] Callinicous, *Social Theory*, 285.
[108] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 390.
[109] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, I* (London: Beacon Press, 1984), 241.
[110] Ibid., 27.
[111] Ibid., 26.
[112] Ibid., 92.
[113] Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests* (London: Heinemann Educational, 1972), 314.

of Foucault. As a defender of reason who aims for a reconstruction of Enlightenment rationality, Habermas proclaims the necessity of

> giv[ing] up the paradigm of the philosophy of consciousness—namely a subject that represents objects and toils with them—in favour of a paradigm of linguistic philosophy—namely that of intersubjective understanding or communication—and [relocating] the cognitive-instrumental aspect of reason in its place as part of a more encompassing communicative rationality.[114]

From the perspective of Habermas's theory of communicative action that includes a stronger argument for a more wide-ranging conception of rationality—for instrumental reason is only one facet of this broader rationality—modernity as an heir to an Enlightenment mode of thinking is understood through the lens of a limited recognition with potentials inherent in an even more "enlightened" communicative rationality not yet revealed. Identifying his theory with this prerequisite, Habermas concludes that modernity is "an incomplete project."[115]

As for the questioning of language that is derived from the questioning of abstract discursive logic, Habermas's insistence on language and standing for its adequacy appears diametrically contradictory to poststructuralist stance, which upholds a fundamental distrust of language, thereby denying that language has any ability for exact and sufficient communications. In other words, Habermas relies on utilizing rational language as a secret weapon for reviving "rationality" that has been deemed deficient and criticized for decades. He uses the "logic" or philosophy of linguistic intersubjective consensus[116] embedded in the performative language (as

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[114] Habermas, *The Philosphical Discourse of Modernity*, 82.
[115] Habermas, "Modernity—An Incomplete Project," in *Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (London: Pluto Press, 1985).
[116] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, Two* (London: Beacon Press, 1985), 59, 256.

an efficient tool that is manifest in everyday communicative actions among human subjects) to once again support the adequacy of language and the effectiveness of human reason.

Nietzsche's Vengeance: A Post-Structuralist Counter-Enlightenment Revolt in Dispute with Habermas

It is worth mentioning that due to his opposition to poststructuralist and postmodernist thinkers like Lyotard, Foucault, and Derrida, Habermas was embroiled in the "end-of-history/philosophy" debates during the 1980s. Foucault's theory aims to invalidate the supremacy of "obscure abstractions shoved between subjective consciousness and an objective reason."[117] Therefore, the debates were structured around Habermas's disapproval of Foucault's faculty of reason as a critique of the Enlightenment's legacy of rationality in which a possible solution is replaced with a total denial. For Habermas, Foucault constructs his own theory—as obviously an attempt to succeed Nietzsche's critique of reason—which is as transparent and arbitrary as the pro-Enlightenment ideas he condemns. Habermas argues that Foucault's critique of reason ends up "the same kind of performative contradiction that wrecks *Dialectic of Enlightenment*."[118] The fact that Habermas forms his theoretical approaches on language, especially his affirmation of communicative action manipulated through language—"a different way out of the philosophy of the subject,"[119] which is seen as necessary—has incited reproach against him by poststructuralists as a conservative and moralist who authoritatively proclaims a universal consensus. Since the hermeneutics of post-structuralism and strategies of deconstruction have been privileged during the course of the late-twentieth-century "linguistic

[117] Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, 43.
[118] Ibid., 301.
[119] Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action, I*, 301.

turn,"[120] any narrative that looks to the ideas of the trans-cultural, the trans-historical, the universal, the transcendental, the ontological, and the metaphysical, was categorized by the post-structuralists as a conspiracy with the Cartesian subject or the violence of Kantian comprehensive mind and authoritative self-consciousness. According to Foucault, hegemonic power, which is the aftermath of Western Enlightenment rationalism run wild, is the result. In short, the theoretical stance of the poststructuralists—to problematize "man's relation to the present, man's historical mode of being, and the constitution of the self as an autonomous subject"[121] can be traced back to the critique initiated by Nietzsche and developed by a genealogy of social theorists, such as Benjamin, Adorno, and Horkheimer. The aims of the poststructuralists are to re-interrogate the logos-centered discourses of history, language (including speech, writing, and text), subject, and all that is involved in the established systems of truth. The poststructuralist agendas are manifested through Foucault's genealogical approach to the farcical reconstructions of "effective history," Lyotard's debunking of rebellious "petite narratives," and Derrida's dissemination of the concept of "*differance*," in order to demolish the Enlightenment's "meta-narratives" and deliver these master narratives from notions of authenticity, singular identity, teleological continuum, and traditional metaphysics.

Conclusion

The major point of this chapter is to reshape the theoretical context of "one half" of Enlightenment and modernity. This chapter analyzes "one half" of the Enlightenment project and positions this orthodox Western Enlightenment tradition as a system for producing truth. In so

[120] Or, did it occur even earlier, right at the moment when Walter Benjamin's "Angel of History" was ascending from the ashes of ruins and posturing toward the apocalyptic messianic power of revolutionary redemption refracted from debris and fragments in a profane terrain?
[121] Michel Foucault, *The Foucault Reader*, 42.

doing, I present competing voices, including the voices championing the Enlightenment zeitgeist in the West along with the internal oppositional voices. I argue that pursuing an ever-evolving, fuller, and truer Enlightenment realization may be the healing power for the flaws of Enlightenment epistemologies. However, subjective understandings seeking to reveal the nature of Enlightenment (e.g., what Enlightenment really is) and arguments in which, to cite Foucault, "one has to be 'for' or 'against' the Enlightenment,"[122] are no longer fruitful methods for untangling the philosophical impasse of Enlightenment debates. Foucault's shift of his early antagonistic view of the Enlightenment to a more equivocal view is noteworthy. To conclude this chapter, I cite one of Foucault's gentler, more neutral, yet "enlightened" gestures, which espouses a new theoretical awareness for performing in a productive way the Enlightenment project that remains "incomplete:"[123] "[Enlightenment] is an attitude, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them."[124]

[122] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," in *The Foucault Reader*, 43.
[123] I use, once again, Habermas's idea of Enlightenment as an incomplete project to express my agreement with Habermas in one way, and more importantly, Foucault in another, for it is not possible to see the phenomenology of the Enlightenment or the spirit of modernity as "dialectics" that are finished.
[124] Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment," in *The Foucault Reader*, 50.

2

Enlightenment in the East: The Truth of Emptiness in Buddhism as an Alternative "Counter-Enlightenment" Discourse

Preface

Chapter Two analyzes an alternative tradition of Enlightenment, that is, the "other being" of Enlightenment epistemology in terms of the Buddhist framework of "truth." This tradition has a systematic structure and represents a specific mode of thinking. The topic of this chapter is broad and has been explored in an immense amount of literature. In order to narrow down and frame this huge and abstract subject matter, my chapter focuses on a number of crucial issues with the goal of engendering a different mode of thinking from the system of Western thought on Enlightenment examined in Chapter One. The points I discuss in Chapter Two provide a platform for the case studies in chapters three through six. There I investigate how the Western and Eastern men of the theatre, who studied the philosophy of Enlightenment rationalism, absorbed the provocative insights of oriental religious thinking (in realizing and practicing the nature of Enlightenment) through their theatrical approaches—either via theories or performances.

The theoretical foundation upon which I base my structure and discussion in Chapter Two contains several parts. I sort out a number of principles from the immense primary Buddhist scriptural texts that have been passed down in the form of Buddha's teachings and revered as the core of Buddhism as a spiritual tradition, accompanied with the secondary scholarly resources. There are three crucial aspects that I take from the Buddhist guideline to theorize the discourses of "enlightenment," "emptiness," and its "truth," and perform religious revelation under the

Buddhist system of knowledge and mode of thinking. These three aspects include: 1) emptiness as performing the presence through the "two truths" that comprise reality and a de-legalization of identifying with self (or self-nature); 2) the dialectical performance and methodological discourse of true reality of the absolute manifested in negative affirmation, methodology of total negation (double refuting), simultaneity of contradictions, and eight aspects of emptiness (eight noes), as well as 3) emptiness as the absolute of "not two (and not one)" and the profundity of true suchness and one thusness: a final consummation predicated by *The Heart Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, *The Platform Sutra*, and Nagarjuna's Middle-Way philosophy. I take from Buddhist philosophy and literature these principal precepts because I see Artaud, Cage, Hijikata and Ohno, and Gao, consciously or unconsciously, embracing these above-mentioned aspects in their theories and practices. Along with an explanation of its primary philosophies, I offer a brief historical context as the introductory material of this chapter, the Buddhist background that situates this principal theory.

To expose the idea different from the Western Enlightenment thought, this chapter is structured around examining what Enlightenment is in Buddhism. Furthermore, it asks: Enlightenment about/of what? Arising from the experience of attaining Buddhist spiritual Enlightenment is the issue of what the concept of emptiness is and the importance of understanding the relationship between relative reality and absolute reality. The connection between the conventional truth and the ultimate truth, and the seeming contradiction between two distinctive realms of the phenomenal (the physical) and the transcendental (the mysterious) are keys to realizing what the Buddhist doctrine means by attaining Enlightenment experience and seeing emptiness as true reality. The way I use the Buddhist idea of Enlightenment is an

attempt to respond to, even generate a dialogue with its counterpart, the Western Enlightenment structure.

It is interesting that although these two enlightenment ideas are derived from such different sources—one from the philosophical tradition of rationalistic, logical thinking, and the other from religious "mysticism" and a spiritual tradition—they both engage with similar concerns about humans and their enlightened status. Both structures, which deal with these "enlightenment" ideas, place their emphasis on issues that are attributed to unresolved controversies, unfinished projects, or unsettled enigmas. For centuries, these two philosophical trends have been obsessed with the topics of (human) historical progress and the development of (world) technological civilization. Both structures display aspirations for a fuller exposure and more profound illumination of the "truth" of this universe and human existence. On their quests for the very "answers" to these fundamental questions, be they attempts for re-confirmation, or conversely endeavors of "disenchantment" with these questions related to the ontological, the metaphysical, the transcendental, the universal, the essential, the highest, and the absolute, both thinking structures of Buddhist philosophy and orthodox Western Enlightenment thought have at one time confronted a dialectical impasse. More precisely, what these enlightenment systems have confronted is an unsettled epistemological dissonance.[125]

That is, is it rationalism or spiritualism, intelligence or illogicality that can lead humans to realize true reality and perceive their own selves? Moreover, are the substance of ultimate/conventional reality and the essence of humans' true beings in effect existent or non-existent? Why does the issue matter? Is the tangible, corporeal, phenomenal, concrete, and reachable doomed to be incompatible and irreconcilable with the abstract, essential, absolute,

[125] My statement here is inspired by Chang-Rae Lee, *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*, eds. Wei-Hsun Fu and Hui-Nan Yang (Taipei: Tong-Ta Publication, 1998), 97-192.

and inaccessible? The fundamental logic of enlightenment is to make progress and to achieve a better human life condition. Such a logic works for both systems despite the fact that the major differences between scientific/technological/civilized enlightenment and religious/spiritual/retrospective enlightenment lie in the former's intention to make progress/change through construction (piling up) and to develop an awakening from the materially insufficient and deteriorated state of a collective society by studying the process of naming and writing in order to determine the future. The latter aims to make progress/change through deconstruction (undermining or un-concealing) and by proposing an awakening of one's own mind-state so that the present, here-and-now, and momentariness are experienced through the process of being and presenting/performing. If problems and quandaries with regard to the enlightenment issues exist because of an epistemological point, then struggles occur in physical reality, and conflicts that are concerned with relative truth and dualistic values once again mark the archaeology of human subjectification. What would happen if humans gave in to modes of thinking and ways of perceiving that primarily depart from and center on the supremacy of their subjectivity (even those discourses claiming for de-subjectification or pluralistic and centerless subjectivities can still be attributed to an epistemological subjectification)? Michel Foucault may not disagree that when a realization about enlightenment has been programmed around an epistemological subjectification and turned into an object of knowledge that is placed under a distanced and scientific (even "pluralistic") investigation, it (re)produces and is expended on a mass of (material) documentations, fortified by more and more theories, more and more discourses. The urgency to transmit knowledge/truth turns out to be the reproductive power-form manifested in the mechanism of a systematic social structure. So that in the end, we are still left

with the question of whether or not the project of enlightenment has really transformed the societal truth and human's daily life.[126]

I present in this chapter an alternative "way of seeing," or a distinctive interpretation originated in Buddhist philosophy, which is divergent from its scientific-logical-positivist-driven Enlightenment counterpart, grappling with a dialectical (philosophical) irreconciliation and epistemological stalemate. According to Tze-Wan Kwan's essay "Phenomenological Distinctions and the Buddhist doctrine of Two Truths,"[127] the fundamental disparity between these two modes of thinking--East and the West—is obvious both dialectically and epistemologically. As Kwan, who sided more with the oriental religious perspective, notes in the occidental enlightenment context in general, there is a lack of compassion, perfection of wisdom, and altruism distinctive of Buddhist core philosophy. Therefore, in the rationalistic Enlightenment thinking, there emerges less explicitly an essential wisdom that guides all sentient beings towards true liberation, nor does it claim an intention to release living creatures from the revolving cycles of reincarnation.[128] By contrast, the oriental enlightenment alternative offers a more illuminating way of seeing the conventional phenomena as subject to physical reality and oriented by "relative origination,"[129] out of which an utmost principle is pointed out, that is, "emptiness of the ultimate and emptiness of what has passed beyond the extremes."[130] Therefore,

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[126] My argument in this section pointing out the unsettled epistemological dissonance is inspired by Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Volume One*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
[127] In this paragraph, I paraphrase Tze-Wan Kwan's analysis with my re-interpretation. See Tze-Wan Kwan, "Phenomenological Distinctions and the Buddhist Doctrine of Two Truths," *Phenomenology & the Human Sciences*, Vol. 3 (Taipei: July 2007), 187-221.
[128] See also The Dalai Lama, "Altrusim," in *The Dalai Lama at Harvard: Lectures on the Buddhist Path to Peace*, edited and translated by Jeffrey Hopkins (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications, 1989), 162-172.
[129] Nagarjuna, *The Madhyamaka-Sastra*, in *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, translated and edited by Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1991), 1. I spend a section in explaining this conceptual term later in this chapter. Relative origination means that relativity and relationality in all the conditions is the universal law subject to the material world. Dependent origination (dependent-arising, or interdependence) and causation are the best examples to define relative origination.
[130] Chong-An Lin, *Basic Chinese-Tibetan-Sanskrit-English Budddhist Terminology* (Taipei: Torch of Wisdom Publishing, 2002), 87. See also Hui-Nan Yang, *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*

Buddhism not only provides the key to enlightenment but also affirms that getting rid of the cyclic reincarnations is possible. This ultimate principle gestures towards a profound awakening of the transcendence of "total unanimity" as the "essential being." Ultimately, this essential being is presented through the realization of "no-cessation, no-origination, no-annihilation, no-abiding, no-one-thing, no-many-thing, no-coming-in, no-going-out,"[131] substantiated by Nagarjuna's enlightened revelation, which points to the phase of "True Reality." The above description is paramount to Buddhist thought, yet it remains absent or less-valued in the rationalistic and progressive evolutionism-seated enlightenment tradition. Different from the theory-based methodology employed by Enlightenment rational thinking which counts on calculative reasoning, theoretical analysis, intellectual empirical knowledge, deductive speculative conception, and dialectical criticism, Buddhist tradition fundamentally highlights practicing Enlightenment (as the form of essential discourse) and presenting "performance."[132]

In the succeeding pages, I analyze the similarities and differences between the two mainstream schools of Mahayana Buddhism—Tantric Buddhism and Chinese Mahayana Buddhism—rooted in different historical backgrounds, to explore what Enlightenment means in Buddhism and the unfolding of the "truth" of "emptiness" through Enlightenment experience. To

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(Taipei: Tong-Ta Publication, 1998), 35-56. Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness* (Hsin Ju: Cheng-Wen Publication, 2000), 1-9, 47-55. These books make efforts to deal with this utmost principle of emptiness as the ultimate and emptiness as what has passed beyond two extremes: the extreme of eternalism (the extreme of existence) and the extreme of nihilism (the extreme of non-existence) which has been the core of Buddhist philosophical system and the theoretical foundation of the Middle Way School of Tantric Buddhism. In this chapter, I use the definition in Chong-An Lin's book (2002:4) when mentioning the Buddhist conceptual terms regarding "two extremes" and what they are concerned with. My explanation of the ideas: "two extremes" and its "transcendence" appears as a recurring theme in this chapter.

[131] Nagarjuna, *The Madhyamaka-Sastra*, in *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, 1.

[132] I reserve an explanation of why I relate the Buddhist way to discuss "emptiness" or absolute truth to a "performance" (or a practicing discourse). In a later section, I will argue for it by using a famous example: in order to answer the Buddha's metaphoric question about what enlightenment (truth) is, a disciple provides an answer by directly "performing" his realization of "emptiness." Therefore he successfully proves himself as awakened. His spontaneous performance delicately avoids the danger of "philosophizing" (theorizing) emptiness as an indescribable state of being.

reveal that Enlightenment is not merely a concept but an experience of approaching the unapproachable and realizing emptiness as its "truth state," I base my theoretical foundation on discourses distilled from three central Buddhist classic sutras. These scriptures all elucidate Enlightenment and Emptiness. The texts used as the primary resources of my study are: *The Heart Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, and *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. Canons of *The Heart Sutra* and *The Diamond Sutra* are vital to both Tantric (Tibetan) Buddhism and Chinese Mahanaya Buddhism. However, *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* is the product of Chinese Mahayana Buddism. In particular, *The Platform Sutra* is seen as the cardinal sutra of the Zen School of the Chinese Mahayana Buddhist legacy, and it has remained a Buddhist/Zen paradigm since Zen achieved prominence during the Tang Dynasty. *The Heart Sutra* and *The Diamond Sutra* present the most insightful discourses in explicating the heart of Enlightenment and emptiness. All three scriptures were completed before the eleventh century, around the time of Chinese Tang Dynasty when Buddhism had become popular. Furthermore, all three texts are exalted because they expose the essence of *Prajnaparamita*, which illuminates the Great perfect Wisdom, and unfolds its flawless state with exceptional brilliance.[133]

The term *prajnaparamita* is Sanskrit, the language in which all Buddhist sutras were initially set forth by Buddha prior to their documentation. When any Buddhist sutras are used for theoretical analysis or interpretation, the use of Sanskrit is extremely important, despite its relative "inaccessibility" in comparison to other languages, even today, when almost all scriptures have been circulated worldwide and appear in multiple translations. Even in these translations, certain important terms and concepts remain in Sanskrit, in order to preserve their original meanings. One reason for this is that certain terms and concepts are deemed

[133] Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 137-200. Tong-Chu Shih, *A Complete Analysis of The Heart Sutra: Its History and Theory* (New York: Dharma Drum, 1998).

untranslatable—their true meaning remains unapproachable in another language. *Prajnaparamita* is one such term that remains untranslated in order to maintain its spiritual (metaphysical) integrity. The innate meanings of these Buddhist terms and concepts that remain untranslated in Sanskrit is similar to the untranslatability of Enlightenment state (experience) and realization of emptiness as inexplicable and inconceivable through the mechanism of linguistic convention. Literally, *prajnaparamita* is what *The Heart Sutra* reveals through the closing lines of its text: "Gone, gone, gone beyond, gone altogether beyond, O what an awakening, all-hail."[134] Edward Conze's translation, which is loyal to the decrees of Shakyamuni Buddha, delicately grasps the original scriptural gist of the unfolding and completion of "the very heart of transcendental wisdom."[135] *Prajnaparamita* is the very heart of transcendental wisdom, which signifies a realization that from the outlook of this "side-ness," there displays a yearning for the "other shore" beyond and expresses a necessity of transcending towards true reality.

Both *The Heart Sutra* and *The Diamond Sutra* are crucial texts included in the collection of *Maha-prajna-paramita-sutra* (*The Prajnaparamita*), which is known as the most voluminous extant Buddhist sutra. *The Heart Sutra* and *The Diamond Sutra* begin with an invocation to spiritual enlightenment and end with the complete fulfillment of the perfection of great wisdom. Like all Buddhist canonical texts, *The Prajnaparamita* supposedly is an outpouring of the Buddha's empty mindfulness when entering into trance. This trance-like state of deepest meditative absorption in which Buddha abides is "the king of all *samadhis*[136] [that] miraculously persists throughout the preaching of the sutra."[137] The uniting thread of *Maha-prajna-paramita-*

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[134] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books: The Diamond Sutra and The Heart Sutra* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1958), 101-02.
[135] Ibid., 102.
[136] *Samadhis* is a Sanskrit term. It refers to the state when performing deepest tranquil abiding, when true stillness is thus triggered. In the ultimate *samadhis* phase, the perfection of wisdom, or, the penetrative insight is also accomplished.
[137] Edward Conze, *the Diamond Sutra*, in *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 22.

sutra is *prajnaparamita* expressed in the transcendental wisdom and the absolute truth of emptiness preached by "the Enlightened One" (the Buddha) in sixteen individual congregations, which took place on four different occasions in India over the course of his lifetime. *Maha-prajna-paramita-sutra* places a statement on the core spirit of Mahayana Buddhist tradition whose true meaning is fully enclosed in the concept, *prajna*.[138] The essence of *Prajna* signifies "the deep concentration of tranquil abiding and penetrative insights."[139] It means that through reaching the profundity of meditative stillness, thorough "enlightened clarity, and unimpeded awareness,"[140] the truth of emptiness is conceived. Also, as the Dalai Lama notes, *prajna* suggests the unified wholeness of "compassion and great wisdom."[141] In Zen's view, as Sheng-Yen Shih specifies, *prajana* is a delicate stabilization, consisting of an indispensable dynamic and translucency of "silence (silent illumination) and illumination (illuminating silence)."[142] *Prajana* assumes total unanimity of "tranquil abiding" in the state of still oneness as well as the appearance of "penetrative insight" out of which "true suchness" is manifested and the transcendentality of the absolute is present. In this conceptual term *prajna*, the fundamental tenet of Mahayana Buddhism is fully transmitted.[143]

I include in my study as secondary resources Buddhist masters and scholars' commentaries explicating their understanding and re-investigations of Enlightenment ideas and emptiness from the perspectives of East and West. In addition to three Buddhist scriptures, I also

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[138] Tong-Chu Shih, *A Complete Analysis of the Heart Sutra: Its History and Theory*, 25-74.
[139] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra,* trans. Geshe Thupten Jinpa (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2002), 24-25.
[140] Kalu Ripoche Kyabje, *Luminous Mind: The Way of the Buddha*, trans. Maria Montenegro (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1996), 23-24, 235.
[141] This realization has been proposed and continues to be mentioned throughout all of the Dalai Lama's writings as a performance of complete Enlightenment and the unfolding of true essence of emptiness.
[142] See Sheng-Yen Shih, *Zen Wisdom: Knowing and Doing* (New York: Dharma Drum, 1993). Also see Sheng-Yen Shih, *The Spirit of Ch'an* (New York: Dharma Drum, 1998).
[143] Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation. Hui-Nan Yang, *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 57-106.

place the dialectic of Indian master-philosopher Nagarjuna (150-250 CE) (especially the one presented in his eminent work, *Fundamentals of the Middle Way*) at the center in my discussion. Nagarjuna's thought acts as a guideline and exerts great influence on the philosophical stance of the Middle Way School of Tibetan Buddhism. Heir to the norm of Nagarjuna's dialectical tradition, the Middle Way School's approach—which gave birth to the Consequence School (the leading sect of the Middle Way School)—is astounding. In particular, the Consequence school, deploying the precepts of "Middle-Way emptiness of the ultimate,"[144] has confronted challenges to the Buddhist fundamental creeds. Buddha's teachings predicated throughout these scriptural canons and the elucidation by current scholarly works reinforce my argument and strengthen my point that transcendental emptiness as ultimate reality characteristic of Buddhist Enlightenment realization posits itself as an alternative discourse of "modernity's other being."

Theatres of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao Performing Mystical Achievement by way of the Buddhist Enlightenment Philosophical Framework

Chapter Two presents how Buddhist philosophy conveys "Enlightenment" and uses it to shape the theoretical foundation of my study. In the succeeding case-studies, I examine the methodological performances (including both theories and theatrical practices) of these Western and Eastern theatre practitioners in the way they seek to achieve the beyond-ness of spiritual Enlightenment as a "way out" of the philosophical stalemate caused by the Enlightenment rationalistic tradition. I attempt to expose that the mystical achievements these theatre artists have presented are re-oriented by Buddhist Enlightenment philosophy and aligned with the truth

[144] This notion as the essence of the Buddhist philosophy is clarified and explained in detail by the Dalai Lama. See the Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom: A Commentary on the Ninth Chapter of Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva way of life*, trans. Jin-Fu Chen (Taipei: New Century Publishing, 2003), 191-204. See also Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 201-217.

of emptiness. The uniting thread of the ideas of these theatre practitioners Artaud, Cage, Hijikata and Ohno, and Gao is the presentation of the absolute (Buddhist) essence: "the appearance of the profound"[145] through their performing the physical materials of the (spiritual) substance with depth and subtlety. The real intricacy of these two different enlightenment structures--both having their manifestations on these theatre artists' theatrical realizations--lies in the fact that these theatre experimentalists are rooted in (or have learnt with) the Western Enlightenment tradition, and their theatres basically deal with (against) logical rationalism and positivism imbricated in the Enlightenment dialectical impasse. Nevertheless, breaking from instead of continuing this Western Enlightenment mentality is a radical posture for these theatre artists to take in their time. Both John Cage and Xingjian Gao's agendas aspire to thorough awakening experience in enlightened spontaneity, unimpeded luminosity along with total unanimity of the spiritual and material, supermundane and ordinary through the elitist and self-reflective (reflexive) way. However, Antonin Artaud's esoteric, elusive theoretical project of total theatre expresses in the materialization of sacred cruelty and lucid "no-identity (identification)"[146] while the aesthetics of Ankoku Butoh's de-subjectivity, anti-individuality, pre-language, and non-form transcendence aims to stage the mysterious ultimate and emptiness detouring profanity and filthiness. The grotesqueness and profound darkness expressed by both Artaud and the original form of Butoh's physicality-motivated and the spontaneity of body-sense-oriented methods are integrated with the sublime, the mystic, and the metaphysical.

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[145] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 69.

[146] Nagarjuna is known for his philosophy of no-identity. I relate Nagarjuna's philosophy of no-identity as an expression to Artaud's ideal presentation of the theatre of cruelty in its total lucidity because of the similarity between the two. It is interesting to realize that the core of both Nagarjuna's discourse and Artaud's idea stems from their intention to "terminate the conventional linguistic expressions." See *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, eds. Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1991).

Artaud is particularly obsessed with a quest for absolute truth by renouncing relative reality (the phenomenal appearance and conventional realm). In so doing, he accomplishes his "enlightening" revelation through a peculiar philosophy, which is based in the Artaudian theoretical ideal and is hardly accessible to a "normal" mental consciousness. Interestingly, the inadequacy of acting in accordance with standard mental consciousness, on a certain level, is an advantage in Artaud's search for translucent luminosity. The collapse of conscious mind ends up driving Artaud to an odd world view, which is manifested in his eccentric "awakening" experience, alternating between the threshold of reality and hallucinatory truth; the playfulness of Artaud's mad language turns upside down the dynamism of order and chaos. As in other words, Artaud achieves an Enlightenment revelation that situates his alienated, subversive, and provocative theoretical agenda within the mainstream theatrical norm of his day. Through their dance with the profundity of utter darkness, Butoh founders Hijikata and Ohno are involved with a search for the essential empty being that is set free from the cycles of reincarnation. These Butoh dancers immerse themselves in ritualistic dance as religious mystics and commit their full body and mind-consciousness to a sacred altar of self-negation similar to the cult of martyrdom; they contribute their spirit and soul to the occult rite of self-annihilation for a thorough transformation and transmigration into the being of sublime transcendence. Living wholly in their Butoh aesthetics as a (non-) form of pure expression, Hijikata and Ohno directly undertake physical-spiritual Enlightenment and call forth the presence of empty absoluteness. John Cage incorporates the influence of Zen Buddhism in his philosophically-oriented performing arts. As a result, Cage's artistry appeals to enlightened experiences and blurs the line between music/art and life, thereby demolishing categorization (discrimination) and binary opposition such as noise and silence, object and essence, as well as relativity and absoluteness. John Cage's practice

internalizes Zen philosophy, transforming its creeds into illumination and perpetuating a Zen project.

Buddhism, or quasi-Buddhist thoughts explicitly or implicitly pervade the works of the Eastern and Western theatre experimentalists I discuss in my case studies. These are both the thread that links these diverse case studies and the chief argument of this dissertation. On the one hand, these theatre avant-gardists re-mold the selected Buddhist elements or key Zen materials and absorb them into their practices as individual components. On the other hand, Buddhist theoretical predications are incorporated, permeating and shaping the philosophy of their art. All these theatre artists search for Enlightenment as a spiritual awakening (experience); they revere the beyondness of the truth state and seek to achieve these ends through their theory and performance, discourse and practice.

It is intriguing to notice that compared to Cage and Gao's embracing of Zen precepts as the means of navigating towards the other shore of the transcendence, Artaud, Hijikata and Ohno look to the elusive, esoteric, unapproachable, unconditioned, and absolute being through the peculiar Artaudian englightened/lunatic vision and Hijikata and Ohno's Butoh "soul."[147] For Cage and Gao, through the lens of Zen, the essential trueness expressed in their art is realized as nothing even purer, higher, or truer, because ultimate reality exists nowhere other than manifestations of this natural, ordinary sphere. Cage and Gao display in their works the profound suchness in the form of full presence, whose true nature of unimpededness and interpenetration unfolds without cancelling conventional phenomena. To put it another way, what I have pointed

[147] The idea of soul has been presented as a recurring theme and a crux not only in both of Hijikata and Ohno's ankoku Butoh performances as a soul-essence aesthetic form. The idea of soul is also reinforced in their statements and writings as Butoh's "manifestos." See Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World: from Without and Within*, trans. John Barrett (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2004). In other words, I argue that Hijikata and Ohno would associate the dance of utter darkness with the dancing presence of an undying soul-essence in the occultist martyrdom of the individual human physical body and an annihilation of subjective mind-consciousness.

above are the differences in the methods of the theatre practitioners in my case studies, regardless of their common search for an alternative "truth state" through quasi-oriental religious (mysterious) revelation inspired and guided by the quintessence of Buddhist Enlightenment. In this way, these champions of religious enlightenment present themselves as performing dialectic discourses and gesturing competing voices as modernity's "other being."

Legitimacy of Buddhist Enlightenment Discourse: A Methodical Science, Philosophical System, or Religious Mysticism

The major argument of this chapter is that the Enlightenment idea in Buddhism can be used in a discourse with and critique of Western Enlightenment thought. However, to a certain extent, I prefer to posit Buddhist Enlightenment understanding—whether from the perspective of its philosophy or practice—as a systematic, theory-grounded type of "science" under the rubric of metaphysical religion. Buddhist scholars and mystics prefer to posit Buddhism in the same way. A practicing Buddhist should always scrutinize and re-interrogate the so-called doctrines, or truth in Buddhism.[148] It is necessary to re-examine Buddhist fundamental truth to prove its legitimacy and capability of sustaining rigorous scrutiny, not because these preachings are passed down from the fully enlightened mindfulness of Buddha, but because the tenets disclose the ultimate truth of "emptiness." The Dalai Lama points out in his book, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard: Lectures on the Buddhist Path to Peace*, that it is necessary and important to re-investigate Buddhist canons because over the centuries Buddhism has been divided into various schools with different lineages. As a result, Buddhist practitioners must examine various translations of classic sutras as well as re-interpretations of and commentaries on Buddhist

[148] See the Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard: Lectures on the Buddhist Path to Peace*, 11-14. See also Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006.

doctrines. They also have to look to the teachings of their own master for the essence of Buddhist law and thought. As the Dalai Lama emphasizes,

> Therefore, reasoning is taken as the prime means of differentiating what is definitive….About this, Buddha set forth the principle of four reliances: 1. Do not rely on the person, rely on the doctrine and teachings. 2. About the doctrine, do not rely on the words, or expression, rely on the meaning. 3. About the meaning, do not rely on the interpretable meaning, rely on definitive meaning. 4. About the definitive meaning, do not rely on ordinary consciousness, rely on exalted wisdom.[149]

Interestingly, Buddhism urges the interrogation of the validity and efficacy of what is taught through the paradigmatic creeds; this is not alien to Western Enlightenment thinking, which extols an application of human reasoning and critical analysis.[150]

Under the rubric of mysterious religion, Buddhism has confronted misunderstandings and controversies. There is a presumption that idolatry, fetishism, and the indulgence of superstition are an inherent part of religions generally, including Buddhism. Notions of deity, the highest universal power, the dominance of the mystical and mythological world, as well as clandestine ceremonies are associated with religious belief and practice. In particular, my discussion in this chapter is composed of religious terminology and ideas that—without careful contextualization within Buddhist discourse--seem to suggest the abstract and universal or to endorse the metaphysical and ontological as the supreme being that governs. When a system of thought holds out the promise of an all-inclusive, authoritative discourse that verifies a totality of the universal sum and subjective abstraction without sufficient support, it falls prey to the kind of harsh criticism directed at the critical theories of the Frankfurt School and the post-structuralist anti-

[149] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard: Lectures on the Buddhist Path to Peace*, 22.
[150] Chang-Rae Lee, *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*, 89-94, 256-327.

Enlightenment narrative. However, to theorize and analyze Buddhist religious concepts, such as true essence, profound suchness, absolute reality, and ultimate truth (which is indispensable to and structured around the central yet inconceivable notion of "essential emptiness"), one must attempt to see into the other realm of the inexpressible "beyond-ness" from the spectacle of this side of worldliness.[151]

For example, the essence of emptiness would be reachable, "eligible," and "confirmed" only when the concept of essential emptiness is based on the principle of interdependence (dependent-arising) and the law of causation/causality (cause and condition).[152] The "essence" of emptiness is inconceivable, indescribable, and inaccessible to human intelligence and consciousness bound by physical time and space. Thus, the manifestation of emptiness is part of consciousness and occurs in the conventional phenomena (in other words, how can one realize that there indeed "exists" this true being of emptiness if not by seeing the materialization of its "full presence" "everywhere" ?) and is interconnected with material reality, the relational realm, in which the rule of dependent-arising is leading.[153] The essence of emptiness, or empty essence (empty nature) is interpenetration and unimpededness; to this true nature of emptiness *per se*, there is no discrepancy in the sphere of appearances and translucency. It is according to this philosophical theory--that absolute truth is itself emptiness which suggests the unfolding of the essential self-nature of all beings in gaining "enlightenment"--that Buddhism substantiates its dialectic. Due to the recognition that dependent-arising (interdependence) is the one universal principle, nothing is more legitimate than claiming such a realization of empty nature (emptiness)

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[151] Chang-Rae Lee, *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*, 63-94. See also Hui-Nan Yang, *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 7-13.

[152] See the Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 25-36. See also Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness: A Tibetan Buddhist Interpretation of Madhyamika Philosophy Emphasizing the Compatibility of Emptiness and Conventional Phenomena* (Boston, M.A.: Wisdom Publication, 2003).

[153] This notion has appeared as a recurring theme and explicated in depth in Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006.

as the essence of one's true self and ultimate reality of the true being.[154] Buddhism develops the idea further and states that the full presence of this essential emptiness in conventional reality, or its materialization in physical phenomena is exactly "the presentation of empty essence"[155] through performing its "functional perturbation"[156] as "things just as they are."[157] The two seemingly contradictory phases wrestle with each other in a binary opposition, like the relative and the absolute, ultimate and phenomenal, mythological (the spiritual) and material (the physical), essence and form, substance and appearance (function) fundamentally gesturing towards the same empty trueness.[158]

Contexualization of My Use of Language

The language I have used in this chapter (and perhaps continued throughout part of my discussions in the case-studies chapters) containing true/profound suchness, one thusness, the presence of absolute transcendence/transcendentality, centrist-path or middle-way ultimate self-emptiness, the way things are/things just as they are, the very summit of existence, final mode of subsistence, not two, in union, and a state of total unanimity are all characterized into Buddhist semantics and lexicons that express the impossibility of making these concepts clear or straightforwardly pointing out what exactly *is*. In other words, the idiosyncratic non-clearity is

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[154] See Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 45-53, 89-93, 108-113. See also the Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 235-252. The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 54-86.
[155] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 117. See also, Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 105-114.
[156] See The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 117.
[157] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 69.
[158] The notions of essential emptiness and relational interdependence are considerably tackled in Nagarjuna's philosophy, especially in his prodigious work, *Fundamentals of the Middle-Way*. Nagarjuna's rendering on emptiness plays an influential role as the core of the Consequence school's tenets. Basing most of his theoretical explication of emptiness in Nagarjuna's philosophy, the themes of "not two individual realms, but one reality in union" recur incessantly in the Dalai Lama's books, *Transcendent Wisdom, The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, and *Essence of The Heart Sutra*. The Dalai Lama, *Answers: Discussions with Western Buddhists*, ed. Jose Ignacio Cabezon (Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publication, 1987), 9-34. See also Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth* (Taipei: Tong-Ta Publication, 2004).

necessary in the Buddhist discourse, in order to theoretically analyze inexplicable like emptiness and to discuss inconceivable like ultimate reality. As the most famous Zen criteria state, the fundamental core of Zen upholds a "wordless teaching," thereby is "a method that involves no-method" and discards dependence on calculative discursive thought, which is no-thought. Zen "refuses to take its stance in words and written texts" and stands "apart from doctrinal formulations," as it aims to "point directly and uncompromisingly to the original nature of the mind."[159] Therefore, the theoretically necessary absence of clarity, exactness, and specificity is manifested in the peculiar Buddhist dialectical methodology, which includes double refuting, total negation (eight noes), negative affirmation, along with simultaneity of contradictions like yes and no or not two and not one. The missing clarity in Buddhist semantical language and the elusiveness of its verbal meaning is necessary, because it is part of the dialectics characteristic of the Buddhist context. In order to initiate a thinking or actually an "un-thinking" of the frame of reference embedded in conventional linguistic use, the "abosolute truth" is not referred to or substantiated.

A Brief Introduction to Buddhism, its History, and Core Doctrines

Although a religion, Buddhism, according to the Dalai Lama, is of the non-theistic religious tradition.[160] The Dalai Lama's address echoes the idea given by Pure-Land School master Ging-Kong Shih.[161] Instead of seeing Buddhism as religious mysticism, Ging-Kong Shih

[159] The preceding quotations are all classical Zen principles. See Sheng-Yen Shih, *Hoofprint of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master*, trans. Dan Stevenson (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), ix.
[160] See more elaborations on this idea in the Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra: The Dalai Lama's Heart of Wisdom Teachings*, 21-2.
[161] Master Ging-Kong Shih is a great master of the Pure Land school under the system of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. Master Ging-Kong Shih has delivered a brilliant interpretation of the canonical *Diamond Sutra*, and a number of his crucial elucidations on the state of Enlightenment and the truth of emptiness are employed in this dissertation.

defines Buddhism as a methodical thinking structure consisting of dialectical discourses in both theory and practice predictated on the universal principle that acts on the universe and all living creatures. From the Dalai Lama's viewpoint on behalf of Tantric Buddhism and Sheng-Yen Shin as well as Ging-Kong Shih's theories which are characterized by Chinese Mahayanist Buddhism, I argue that regardless of its categorization under the rubric of religion, Buddhism is much more than the stereotype of mysterious religion.

Buddhism initially originated in India twenty five thousand years ago. The religion evolved, spread through, and affected almost the entire Asian continent before its transplant to the West around the middle of the twentieth century. The history of Buddhism is also characterized by the development of a great many movements and a number of schisms. The original form of Buddhism is the Theravada. Theravada, known as "the small vehicle," is usually translated as "the ancient teaching," or "the oldest surviving Buddhist school." Coupled with other teachings known as "the great vehicle," including Mahayana and Vajrayana (which is sometimes attributed to the third principal vehicle of Buddhism), all three systems[162] form the core structure of the Buddhist spiritual tradition.[163] Briefly, the small vehicle may be differentiated from the great vehicle in terms of the empty mindfulness of the Bodhisattva.[164] Although both systems uphold the realization of emptiness as ultimate reality, the Theravada

[162] Theravada is relatively a minority branch of Buddhism. It is said that by the fifth century CE, Mahayana started to replace the central post of Theravada, becoming an influential Buddhist school in India. Nowadays, the small vehicle has been principally practiced over most of Southeast Asia. And, the countries in which Mahayana heritage is most popular with the majority of its practicing Buddhists are China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea. The widely-known Zen and Pure-Land are two of the chief lineages in the composition of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. Mahayana established its clandestine Tantric Buddhist practice as one of two subdivided Mahayanist categories (together with its Chinese counterpart) at the latest stage of its development around the eighth century. Vajrayana was initiated in Tibet and blossomed in Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan, and Mongolia.
[163] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 4-17.
[164] Ibid., 9-10, 177-200.

stresses only self-enlightenment, deemed a wayward path towards the "Bodhisattva altruistic mind,"[165] which is cultivated and exalted as the heart of Mahayana and Vajrayana.[166]

Some may argue that Vajrayana is another dominating independent Buddhist theoretical/practical system. This view makes Tantric Buddhism a branch distinct from Mahayana Buddhism. From a Tantric Buddhist point of view, the Tantric approach is part of the historical development of Mahayana, in order to yearn for the utmost accomplishment of Buddhism. Although based on the fundamental Buddhist tenets which it basically shares with Mahayana counterpart, Vajrayana claims to be as encompassing and, in certain respects, transcendant as all previous schools. One of Vajrayana's compelling aspects that separates it from Mahayana tradition is the former's application of advanced and secret techniques in addition to the coverage of Buddhist cardinal philosophy. This is why Vajrayana is also called the "secret mantra vehicle;" the highly mystical approaches play key role in the legacy of Vajrayana's teachings as esoteric practices.[167]

One of the oldest extant religions practiced worldwide, Buddhism consists of 84,000 pedagogies and teachings, including dialectics, methods, and practices which together transmit the core philosophy of Buddha's doctrines. The spiritual tradition of Buddhism was founded by Shakyamuni Buddha in the form of non-permanently-fixed "pedagogical tools"[168]: first, as the illumination on the inexplicable state of ultimate truth, and second, for the sake of the full

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[165] Ibid., 189-200.
[166] Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006. See also The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 9-11. See also Hui-Nan Yang, *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 169-202.
[167] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 235-257. See also Hui-Nan Yang, "Clear-Light of Empty Mindfulness and the Later Development of Buddhist Philosophy Endorsing True Reality as Permanence," in *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 151-202.
[168] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 37.

emancipation of all sentient beings.[169] The Buddhist state of full emancipation and final liberation is also known as nirvana. Within the Buddhist belief system, accompanying the state of nirvana is its opposite, the state of *samsara*. The concept of *samsara* could be described as bound by the revolving karmic cycle of rebirth and reincarnation for those whose mind-consciousness is clouded. True liberation would only be attained when attachment to the notion that worldly beings possess some inherent existence, or independent solidity as stern reality gives way to the belief that such recognition is illusory and delusive.[170] To use Edward Conze's term, "the very summit of existence" and the very substance of the true self or true nature[171] is enlightenment of essential emptiness. Because ultimate emptiness is itself absolute truth, Buddhist cosmology refuses to provide answers to the inquiry concerning the very First Cause. In doing so, the Buddhist dialectic requires abjuring specific "affirmations" when discussing emptiness.[172] Also, Buddhism negates the "confirmation" of an immutable, all-inclusive, omnipotent, ontological One as the First Creator and the First Cause of the universe; [173] the idea of the Soul as a perpetual, penetrable immortality and an undying continuum of some independent entity or individual solidity is abandoned. As the Dalai Lama would agree, the display of "negative affirmation" in the above cases corresponds to his statement that Buddhism

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[169] This term refers to all worldly beings, or, living creatures that are thought of as not yet enlightened or awakened, especially in the realm of the spiritual. Therefore, from the outlook of Buddhism, all are bound by this revolving karmic cycle of reincarnation and rebirth.

[170] The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 54-86, 163-210. Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*. See also Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 19-56.

[171] In Buddhist dialectic, the concepts of one's own being, true being, essential being, true nature, true self, or self-nature are most of the time used as equivalence. They all refer to seeing essential emptiness, or, empty nature as not only the own being, the true being, the self-nature, the very essence of all dharmas (in general, the concept, all dharmas, contains all worldly beings, living creatures, all phenomena, and simply anything that is inside and outside of the reach of human intelligence and experience). But, the very concept of essential emptiness, which equals the substance of one's own being, true being, or self-nature, also refers to the absolute truth and ultimate (true) reality.

[172] The Dalai Lama, *Answers: Discussions with Western Buddhists*, 9-34.

[173] The ideas about renunciation of the very first cause and substantiation of the very first creator are cancelled out as posted in Buddhist theoretical prerequisite. Both notions have been mentioned and discussed in the scholarly works of the Dalai Lama's *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, Ging-Kong Shih's *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, and Pei-Jian Chen's *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 1-9.

is an idiosyncratic non-theistic religion and spiritual tradition.[174] It is worth noting that in a sense, the adjective "negative" used in describing the theoretical notion "negative affirmation," or "non-affirmative confirmation" under Buddhist philosophy in contextualizing its "statement" of "truth,"[175] is not unlike Adorno's idea of "negative dialectics." The "scheme" of Adorno's negative, dialectic discourse is remarkable (though controversial), which criticizes the machinery of cultural industry as the offshoot of modernity's phenomenology in the era of high capitalism in mid-twentieth-century Europe and United States. The "non-affirmative" statements concerning the First Cause and Soul also substantiate Ging-Kong Shih's denial of Buddhism as a metaphysical mysticism.

The compatibility of dependent-arising and essential emptiness, which means these two seemingly independent ideas are ultimately "in unity," or "in a state of total unanimity,"[176] forms the fundamental framework of Buddhist dialectical structure. Buddhist thinking nullifies a recognition of a first cause and regards such an identification as verifying the subject-object subordinate relation.[177] According to the Dalai Lama, the "theistic-inclined" philosophical structure and religious mysticism assert the "existence" of some universal, ontological, metaphysical "ultimate cause," and that this ultimate cause is most of the time associated with a first cause (the Creator).[178] A contemporary Buddhist scholar Pei-Juan Chen echoes the Dalai Lama's explication of the fundamental doctrine on which Buddhism's theory is based, rejecting "a struggle for Being" which is the utmost creed of most worldly philosophical structures and

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[174] See more information in the Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 22. The point of view I adopt here is based on the insight of the Consequence School which is one of the two primary lineages under the system of the Middle Way School in Tantric Buddhism.
[175] Yin-Shuen Shih, "Discussions of Nagarjuna's Centrist-Path Philosophy of Interdependence, Essential Emptiness, and Conventional Phenomenon," in *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 201-265.
[176] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 119.
[177] Ibid., 4.
[178] The Dalai Lama, *Answers: Discussions with Western Buddhists* (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publications, 2001).

religious systems. Buddhism, by contrast, claims that in the state of trueness, there "exists" nothing as real existence; it does not lie in an ontological entity, in a metaphysical, independent solidity, in the first cause, ultimate end, or an immovable, unitary state of being. Although abstract terminology abounds in Buddhist theory, many terms used in this dissertation are employed to verify and discuss the idea of emptiness and explicate the absolute truth, in Buddhism, language (word, speech, text) is subject only to conventional use and is manipulated in the form of "worldly designation for naming and speaking."[179] It is what lies beyond linguistic expression and complex terms that requires deep contemplation with penetrative mindfulness. Unlike theistic religious traditions and metaphysical philosophies which wrestle with "a struggle for Being," Buddhism at its core engages with the dialectic of "struggling for non-Being."[180] Using "negative affirmation" as its dialectic tactic—like the term, "the methodological peculiarity"[181] to illustrate Nagarjuna's "philosophical enterprise"[182] in explicating ultimate truth[183]--to theorize the ideas, such as "emptiness" that likely cause misunderstanding, Buddhism negates the subject-object relation, transcends the duality of "the appropriator and the appropriated,"[184] and invalidates both "first" and "ultimate" ontologies that suggest a metaphysical, arbitrary entity. By defending the compatibility of total emptiness (self-emptiness, or emptiness of/as self-nature)[185] and "relational origination"[186] (the law of dependent-arising

[179] A traditional Buddhist term also known as conventional speaking and naming or social discourse, through which the Buddhist philosophy established its basis of theoretical discourse and way of seeing. See Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, X.
[180] Both the terms "struggle for Being" and "struggle for non-Being" are adopted from Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 4-6.
[181] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, I.
[182] Ibid.
[183] There is a specific section in the later pages to explain this ancient Indian great thinker and mystic Nagarjuna's philosophy and his centrist, or middle-way point of view in expounding the true reality of ultimate emptiness that exerts tremendous impact on the theoretical framework of Tantric Buddhism, especially its leading lineage the Consequence school. The Dalai Lama is an heir of this philosophical heritage.
[184] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 84.
[185] Ibid., 116.
[186] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, II.

and cause and condition) as essentially "in union" (meaning, "not two—nondualistic and not one"[187]) from the perspective of true reality of the absolute, Buddhism by no means upholds ontologism, nor does it support metaphysical philosophy in the traditional sense.[188]

The concluding lines of *The Diamond Sutra*--"See anything brought by cause [and condition] as like a star, an obstruction of the eye, a lamp, an illusion, the dew, or a bubble; a dream, or lighting, or else a cloud"[189]—mark how true nature manifests itself through conventional phenomenon as the emergence of things "as such."[190] *The Diamond Sutra* displays well how Buddhist theory is structured around the compatibility of empty essence and "conditioned relationality"[191] as "the presentation of essential emptiness."[192] The presentation of emptiness in the phenomenal exhibition of "as such" simply emerges as "the way things are," or "things just as they are."[193] Usually, these Buddhist terms refer to the most "natural," "ordinary," non-attempted, and unintentional state, which is in the performance of the "profound" and appearance of the true. The Dalai Lama notes in his explanation of *The Heart Sutra* that a thorough realization of the compatibility of ultimate emptiness and law of interdependence undoes the barricade that stands in the way of the relational and the essential and conveys true

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[187] I will analyze this Buddhist (Zen) core idea in the following section.
[188] Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006. The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 34.
[189] See English translation by Michael Roach, *The Diamond Cutter, An Exalted Sutra of the Greater Way on the Perfection of Wisdom, 87*, http://www.fodian.net/world/dcutter.pdf. I here choose to use Roach's translation instead of Conze's version due to the fact that in this case, Roach's translation is able to convey even more delicate meanings.
[190] Terms like "as such," or, "such-ness" have their specific and "profound" meaning as frequently used in Buddhist terminology. In particular, either of them is used when the compatibility of essential emptiness and dependent-arising is rendered. In some sense, the concepts of "as such" and "such-ness" are similar to the idea of "full presence." Likewise, the idea "as such," or "suchness" in referene of "full presence" is also associated with the concept, "the way things are," or, "things just as they are." See also Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 5.
[191] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, XXIV.
[192] This notion is explained in the Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 117-119. See also Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 44-49, 94-108.
[193] These frequently-used Buddhist conceptual terms in expressing the idea, emptiness and the state of its true beingness or true naturalness are seen in the Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 69, 83.

reality in a display of "the profound suchness of the appearance."[194] To put it another way, by affirming the compatibility of emptiness (as the essential true being) and physical existence (as the empty nature which is manifested throughout material occurrences), the idea "the way things are as such" may be explained: all dharmas are idiosyncratic presentations of no-existence yet no non-existence, non-abiding, non-form, no-thought, no-self, and non-I.[195] As *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* explains: "Set up no-thought as the main doctrine, non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis."[196] Elaborations of ideas concerning the dynamic playfulness and innate integrity of the absolute and relative are perpetual themes throughout the three major classics my study covers: *The Heart Sutra, The Diamond Sutra,* and *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. Nagarjuna's *The Fundamentals of the Middle Way,* whose argument I also rely on, centers around debunking the ambiguities and dialectics of philosophy and language that are based on the law of relationality, in order to unveil the absolute emptiness through legitimate discourse.[197] "[To] propound relational origination for termination of all linguistic descriptions its quintessence"[198] is the stance that Buddhism takes by addressing the practice of negative affirmation. More importantly, the theory of Nagarjuna's (Buddhist) negative affirmation results in no attempt to construct another system of affirmation to replace the one deemed obsolete after the act of deconstructing it. This position differentiates Buddhism, as a systematic dialectic in non-theistic religious context, from theistic-rooted structures of philosophies and religions.[199]

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[194] Ibid., 69.
[195] Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 81-85, 167-173.
[196] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, trans. Philip B. Yampolsky, 137-138.
[197] Tong-Chu Shih, *A Complete Analysis of The Heart Sutra: Its History and Theory*, 19-24, 29-35. Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 174-194, 243-265. Hui-Nan Yang, "*The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* and its Core Philosophy," in *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 331-372.
[198] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, II.
[199] See Yin-Shuen Shih, "Nagarjuna's Centrist-Path Philosophy of Interdependence, Essential Emptiness, and Conventional Phenomenon," in *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 201-265.

In the renunciation of metaphysical philosophies and "the termination of linguistic description"[200] to find essence through negative affirmation, or non-attempted affirmation, Nargarjuna develops his Middle Way methodological peculiarity to theorize emptiness. Nagarjuna reminds us that the statement of ultimate emptiness as essential truth can only be verified if "self-emptiness" of this ultimate emptiness is irreversible. It means that this transcendental emptiness is devoid of inherent self-sufficiency and is independent of some immovable, supreme existence as real being. For the true being, or the true self of this emptiness, too, possesses an empty nature. Ultimately, "emptiness" is what is "named" in the form of "conventional presentation,"[201] not what is "an extreme of reification—imputing to phenomena a solidity or a palpability, that they in fact lack."[202] Ultimately, emptiness is referable only for a nominal use, so that even claiming self-emptiness as absolute reality is deemed verifiable only in the nominal phase, and the "existence" of essential emptiness and ultimate truth is a nominal fact rather than a substantial fact.

At the time of Buddha's second turning of the wheel of Dharma on the Vulture Peak Mountain in India, Buddhism sets forth its fundamental philosophical legacy: the perfection of great wisdom and total emptiness.[203] In the meantime, the importance of *The Heart Sutra* and *The Diamond Sutra* and their being placed within the canon is confirmed. To reinforce the idea that total emptiness is the essence of trueness and absolute reality, Buddha stated that those theories that had been taught by him for forty-nine years were no more than "nothing," right before his entrance into final nirvana. Nothing had been said or taught; not a single dharma had

[200] Nagarjuna, *Madhyamaka-Sastra*, in *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, eds. Ramchandra Pandey and Manju (Delhi: Eastern Book Linkers, 1991), 1.
[201] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 42.
[202] Ibid., 37.
[203] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 3-11, 32-35.

been preached, given, or expounded by someone named the Buddha. Not a single dharma in the world had ever been performed or produced; likewise, the uncreated substance of the Buddha Dharma did not perish or vanish. Nothing needed to be abandoned or annihilated. Nothing had ever been originated or born; nothing had ever been accomplished or claimed dead.[204] The statement that all being is nothing--no more, no less—encapsulates the most important Buddhist philosophy of the dialectic playfulness of absolute emptiness.[205] The true suchness and substance of relatedness cannot be grasped via the worldly designations of verbal conventions or be perceived via analytical assumptions, concepts, signs, or philosophical discourses. Therefore, in his teachings, Buddha practiced a peculiar form of expression which blends a wide variety of "pedagogical tools."[206] He used similes, metaphors, symbols, parables, mysteries, poetic images, and physical gestures as a most spontaneous and instantaneous way to transmit the untranslatable, inexplicable, unapproachable, and essential.

One of the most famous examples is a demonstration of "performing emptiness," or practicing/presenting "enlightenment." This case was later transformed into a renowned Zen *koan,* a meditation for Buddhist practitioners. It is said that one day, Buddha was on the Vulture Peak delivering doctrines. He picked up a flower and began a "silent," metaphoric, and mystical inquiry into who, in the midst of the herds of great many spiritual mystics, would be the one to attain the state of Enlightenment and directly penetrate the profundity of true suchness with

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[204] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra,* 121-129. Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Yin-Shuen Shih, "Buddhist Theoretical Framework of Emptiness and Its Development," in *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 79-134.

[205] The above description as Buddha himself concluded his 49 year preachings on the Buddhist core philosophy of empty nature in all dharmas as the one and ultimate truth is my synthesis. It is chiefly taken from the following texts, including Ging Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*; Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness;* Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*.

[206] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 37.

"unimpeded awareness" and "clarity."[207] In sheer silence, Buddha's most talented and enlightened disciple, Kashyapa, did nothing; instead, he smiled at Buddha, giving an instantaneous, metaphorical response to Buddha's question. By this beyond-language, spontaneous, and obviously "meaningless" and "non-sensical" way of performing emptiness in reply, Kashyapa demonstrated himself the one who attained fuller spiritual awakening. In this poetic image, Kashyapa expressed the illuminating lucidity and unimpeded essence of empty nature by directly performing in front of Buddha the absolute state and presenting the true being, or "true self" without word or speech. Kashyapa would by no means have intended to defend the "truth" through calculable knowledge, philosophical assumption, discursive thought, or deductive speculation. When analyzing the philosophical peculiarity employed by Nagarjuna in order to discuss the ultimate self-emptiness from the Middle-Way outlook, Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju point out: "The realm of truth always defies being trapped in the theoretical framework and remains what it really is (*tathata*) [or, Tathagata]."[208] Their analysis of Nagarjuna's theoretical/methodological peculiarity further explains the necessity of using trans-linguistic, non-sensical "absurdity" (like performing "silence" or presenting the dialectics of negative affirmation as explained ealier) when discussing emptiness. The theoretical framework used to properly situate discussions about emptiness is "without exception predicated to

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[207] According to Tantric Buddhism, predicated by Kyabje Kalu Ripoche, clarity and unimpeded awareness are significant idiosyncracies as the presentation/manifestation of emptiness. See Kyabje Kalu Ripoche, *Luminous Mind: The Way of the Buddha*, 23-24. Chinese Mahayanist Pure-Land School master Ging-Kong Shih, very much in the same way, concludes that the three fundamentals characteristic of emptiness would be lucid clarity, equality, and awareness. See Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006.

[208] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, XI. The conceptual term tathata, stemming from the meaning of "Tathagata," is the marrow and the substance of *The Diamond Sutra*. It equals the naming of Buddha to emphasize his achieving the consummate fruition of the Buddhahood, thereby being revered as the Fully Enlightened One. (See Edward Conze, *The Diamond Sutra*, in *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 23.) More importantly, by this notion Tathagata, it also unfolds the ultimate reality, the absolute truth, the profound suchness, the true nature, true self, and essential being of emptiness. Here, the "is" indeed signifies the supreme state of Tathagata.

relationality"[209] through "the various intermediaries [conceptions] of bondage, nirvana, noble truths,"[210] rather than "one supreme standard language"[211] that "transcends theorization"[212] and "the intervening viewpoint underlying this linguistic system."[213] For this reason "the Buddha refused to answer certain questions and preferred to remain silent because these questions demanded a trans-theoretical answer vis-à-vis tathata."[214] All that is subject to "the relatedness"[215] or "mutually dependent being"[216] "is "inextricably expressed through the structure of a language and thus language is an enlargement only of the theory, not of the essence…. [This finding is similar to the idea that] any constructed theory reveals the identity only *about* the thing [rather than] the identity *of* the thing."[217]

A performative silence offered by an illuminated awareness to convey the enlightened absoluteness is similar to a dialectic of total negation or negative (non-intentional) affirmation which aims to "deconstruct" and present the essential "presence" rather than re-confirm or "re-construct." Regardless of their contextual differences, I discover that there exist many similarities in the methods and even theories between Buddhism and poststructuralism (or de-construction). I find it intriguing to relate Foucault's often quoted and very careful analysis of an alternative structure of practicing the strategy, "silence-as-resistance"[218] to the mystical performance of silence (as experiencing/discussing emptiness) in Buddhism. Foucault delineates,

> That silence itself—the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the

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[209] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, XXIV.
[210] Ibid.
[211] Ibid., IV.
[212] Ibid., IX.
[213] Ibid., X.
[214] Ibid., XI.
[215] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 1.
[216] Ibid., IX.
[217] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, IX. I mark the terms in italics for emphasis.
[218] David M. Halperin, *Saint Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 15.

> discretion that is required between different speakers—is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying things, how those who can and those who cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is authorized, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourse.[219]

Taking a step back and employing his idea into my discussion, what I use here is the logic of Foucault's language that he uses to argue against the abstract discursive logic and manifests in his theoretical/philosophical strategy or silence/deferral as resistance. This is similar to the methodological logic employed in Buddhism when analyzing emptiness including negative affirmation, simultaneous contradiction of yes and no (like not two and not one), and double negation (like non-existence and not non-existence). However, re-situating his theoretical strategy (or silence as resistance) in an original text, *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault refers to the "tangible," "precise," and "concrete" genealogy of sexuality and a theory of pleasing in Western society which dates back to the seventeenth century. It is interesting to see how a concrete issue (discourse of power and knowledge and dialectics of sex) and an esoteric abstract subject (Buddhist theoretical presentation of emptiness) can come together through Foucault's poststructuralist concept.

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[219] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Volume One*, 27.

On the other hand, Foucault's discussion of sexuality also reveals his relentless critique of Enlightenment, in particular enlightenment as a form of power deepened and transformed into a kind of "power over life" implanted in the interests of cultivating, reforming, and protecting of a "healthier" life. By refusing to attribute sexuality to repressive (and silenced) hypothesis but as simultaneously repressive and (re)productive, Foucault once again connects his ideas about sexuality with his theory of power and knowledge/truth, out of which the classifications and discourses about discipline and punish, law and transgression, civilization and madness, order and chaos are established. He argues that sex is a social construction through which sexual discourse reflects different power manipulations and power kinships that bring the human body under a severe political control. "The deployment of sexuality" transforms sexuality into both an art of sensual pleasure and an object of knowledge subject to distanced and scientific examinations. Rational culture has intensified and proliferated sex into theories and discourses with the hope that discussions of sexuality create knowledge (reproduction) and pleasure (due to social silence and repression). Foucault's view also proposes that compared to two centuries ago, sex has been hardened into a systematic knowledge, social discourse, and a commodity which is manifested in daily life and every aspect of social structure. By recognizing that paradoxically, the human condition and the relationships between humans at the level of societal reality have not progressed, Foucault moves his argument from a critique of the development of sexuality into a critique of Enlightenment.[220]

[220] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction: Volume One* (1978).

Cancelling either of "two extremes," whether the extreme of "absolutism"[221] and eternalism or the extreme of "stark nihilism and agnosticism,"[222] in others words, nullifying attachments to both the extreme of existence as real being and the extreme of non-existence as real being,[223] the Consequence School[224] advocates the Centrist Path, which is the Middle Way philosophy, to interpret the essential absoluteness and its empty nature. Even attaching to the idea "emptiness of emptiness, emptiness of the ultimate, [or] emptiness of what has passed beyond the extremes"[225] and seeing the concept itself as the substance of absolute, total suchness can result in a deluded perception which falsely affirms ultimate emptiness with an intrinsic, autonomous existence. Clinging to "emptiness of emptiness" is similar to transforming an illumination of "emptiness of emptiness" into a name, a design, a theory, a conceptualization, and a duality. In the subtlest sense, even the notion of emptiness should be emptied out. Namely, the so-called absolute emptiness should be realized in the way that emptiness's true nature, true essence, or true being is empty.[226] This is what is called the ultimate reality in the self-emptiness of emptiness throughout *The Heart Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, and *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. This emptiness is independent of nihilism, which upholds sheer voidness, as all

[221] Ramchandra Pandeya and Manju, *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, I.
[222] Ibid.
[223] This notion has been introduced in the Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 54-86, 163-208. See also the Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 121-131.
[224] The Consequence School is known as the leading subdivided sect of the Middle Way School Tantric Buddhism. The principal philosophy that the Dalai Lama harbors belongs to the Consequence School. The Consequence School's historical, theoretical development and its philosophical framework can be traced back to the pedagogy and philosophy of the Middle Way proposed by Indian master Nagarjuna and is passed down in around the second century.
[225] These conceptual terms, in Buddhism, are more frequently to be used to describe the kind of state of total emptiness. That is, in essence, even emptiness is itself self-emptiness. See Chong-An Lin, *Basic Chinese-Tibetan-Sanskrit-English Buddhist Terminology*, 87. See also Yin-Shuen Shih, "Emptiness and Its Essential Nature," in *Profound Investigations of Emptiness,* 47-55.
[226] Hui-Nan Yang, "The Middle-Way Philosophy," in *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 35-56. See also Hui-Nan Yang, "A Re-Interpretation of *The Heart Sutra*," in *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 57-106.

dharmas are "utterly non-existent;"[227] meanwhile, the idea self-emptiness of emptiness dissociates itself from the transcendental, ontological, highest being characteristic of absolutism and eternalism, and the Dalai Lama affirms in Buddhist criterion that "finally…even emptiness itself is devoid of intrinsic existence."[228]

Explicitly or implicitly, the essence of Buddhist theory is reflected in the presentation of transcendence using parables, metaphors to transmit the inexplicable, the inexpressible, and the ultimate. These techniques are seen in Artaud's highly elusive, magical, and occultist theatre of cruelty. He bombards binary oppositions and notions of relationalities, such as the occidental and the oriental, the representational and the absolute (the total), the blasphemous and the sacred. In his exacerbated lunacy, out of which there emerges an illuminating, lucid soberness, Artaud becomes very disillusioned about material reality which is subject to linguistic truth, dualism, custom, and standardization. He yearns for the alchemical, mystical, metaphysical truth that is eccentric and is scarcely accessible to anyone other than himself. By gesturing towards reversion and perversion, Artaud invokes the sacred "presence" of total lucidity in the esoteric "in-betweeness" (momentariness) of before birth and after death. Buddhist philosophy is expressed through Cage's poetic, mythical, Zen koan-interwoven experimentation on *Indeterminacy* in transcending traditional music. In *Indeterminacy*, the embedded Zen precept of "not two" ("a state of total unanimity") is manifested through Cage's display of the juxtaposition of the unimpeded translucency and interpenetrable discrepancies. In Butoh, Hijikata and Ohno uphold the creeds of killing the center/self, anti-form, depriving dance of standardized techniques and rigidity as well as perverting cleanness. Through the presence of Hijikata and Ohno's dancing

[227] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 40.
[228] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 84.

essence (soul), there unfolds the substance (spirituality) of dance in the realization of utter purity, carrying out the empty absoluteness which is perpetuated from the other world of total darkness and sublime grotesqueness. In his deep-seated, essentially Zen theatre, Gao displays his yearning for a transcendental awakening through the ordinary facet and mundane spectacle of "this side-ness." Penetrating into "the profound suchness of the appearance," Gao's theatre practices the highest meditation of the presentation of transcendent emptiness in "the way things are."

Emptiness as the Presence of "Two Truths" that Comprise Reality and Refutation of Self-Nature and Self

Realizing "two truths that comprise reality"[229] is significant in this dissertation in two respects. First, two truths comprising one reality is the focal point of Buddhist theory. Second, this notion is central for me in situating Artaud's project in Buddhist "mystical achievement"; the two truths that comprise Reality are also manifest as the focal point of Artaud's total theatre and his realization of lucid cruelty. For Artaud's theoretical ideal (that is, the theatre of cruelty as a presentation of total theatre) works exactly within the framework of smashing up the "relative truth" for the "absolute one." Likewise, the unfolding of empty essence through an invalidation of individual "self-nature" and cancellation of identification with the subjective self is paramount to Hijikata and Ohno's Butoh sacred space. Tracing the connection to Buddhism, this section attempts to explain emptiness by seeing it as performing its essential presence through the realms of two truths. These two truths, according to the Dalai Lama, comprise what has been called reality (the knowledge of reality), and these realities interconnect with each other.

[229] The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 11.

Prior to describing these two truths, and above all, what this reality *is*, I offer an approach to Buddhist thinking. Buddhist rhetoric is predicated on the issues of the relational world or conventional phenomena.[230] For those that possess lesser enlightened mind-consciousness are the ones who may yearn for spiritual enlightenment and true liberation. In Buddhist philosophy, in the sphere of the true absolute and unimpeded awareness, there lies no necessity to affirm the ideas of Enlightenment, total emancipation, ultimate reality, and transcendental emptiness. It is in this sphere, subject to the "relative truth," one has grown accustomed to the division of the mystical from the material. One has also gotten caught by binary oppositions or a dualistic system.[231] Within Buddhist scripture, there appears a mix of shifted, evolved tones that are developed throughout the Buddha's revelatory predications in different stages (*The Diamond Sutra* presents a good example). Sometimes, these altered, evolved tones associated with different stages of enlightenment even appear to be conflicting. In effect, Buddhism is subject to "the so-called relativity."[232] Preaching to those who live in relative reality also explains why Buddhist texts focus on clarifying two distinct spheres of realizations that seemingly contradict one another. In the face of abandoning the illusory one and questing for the flawless other, a transcendent state arises, like an affirmation of true reality and a promise of the attainable, thorough awakening experience. After this stage, an even more legitimate statement radically subverts its previous one: whatever is suggested requires a total negation, for no one attains it; in fact, there exists no one who attains; nothing is attainable, therefore, it is a non-attained state. Ultimately, there comes a statement declaring that whatever emerges in the physical realm is the

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[230] See Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006. The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 9-34. Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 181-194. Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 65-84.

[231] See Chang-Rae Lee, "The World that is Seen Through the Enlightened Beings' Eyes," in *Buddhist Philsophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*," 19-94.

[232] Nagarjuna, *Madhyamaka-Sastra*, in *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, 1.

unfolding of the state of total "suchness," for form and essence, appearance and substance are "not two." True suchness is a manifestation of essential, ultimate reality, out of which it presents the natural, ordinary appearance of the absolute, profound "trueness." Therefore, there is no need to renounce anything.[233] In general, Buddhist theory is structured around the complete enlightenment of "the transcendentality";[234] in its essence, neither of the above-mentioned statements contradicts the other.[235] My argument in the remainder of this chapter develops this understanding.

In Buddhist discourse, the two truths include the conventional truth (which is also known as relative reality, the phenomenal truth) and the ultimate truth (which is also known as absolute reality, the absolute truth). Nagarjuna explicates the two truths in his *Fundamentals of the Middle Way (The Madhyamaka-Sastra)*, "The teachings revealed by the Buddha are done so in terms of the two truths—the conventional truth of the world and the ultimate truth."[236] Reverberating with Nagarjuna's statement, Shantideva's *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* raises an even subtler realization: "Without contacting the imagined existent, its non-existence is not apprehended."[237] From the perspective of relative reality, to approach the absolute is by all means a total abandonment of or non-attachment to "the profane" (the physical world). Nonetheless, the interrelation between the phenomenal and the ultimate is much subtler and "unimpeded." Although both are described as "truth," the term "truth" when referring to conventional

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[233] Hui-Nan Yang, "The Middle-Way Philosophy and the Later Development of Buddhist Thought Endorsing True Essene as Permanence," in *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 169-202. Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 174-178, 255-265.
[234] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books: The Diamond Sutra and The Heart Sutra*, 83.
[235] This argument is my synthesis inspired by the Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 54-86. Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 19-56, 85-108. Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 85-121. Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*.
[236] Nagarjuna, *Fundamentals of the Middle Way*, 24:8, quoted in The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 118.
[237] *Bodhicaryavatara*, in *Bibliotheca Indica, Vol. 280*, ed. Vidhushekara Bhattacharya (Calcutta: the Asiatic Society, 1960), 221.

phenomena, suggests a view of "truth-for-a-concealing-consciousness."[238] That is, the so-called conventional truth does not infer the truth *of* the truth; but, what is represented in relative reality is rather the knowledge *about* the truth for a particular mental awareness.[239] Buddhist teachings concerning true reality are composed of two realms of truths or dominated by two laws which are chiefly subject to the apparatus of human mind-consciousness manipulated by relationality, conceptualization, discursive thought, cognitive intellectual knowledge, and empirical perception. To the mental consciousness which is bound by the revolving cycle of *samsara* reincarnation, all dharmas[240] are concerned with two "seemingly" irreconcilable states or two independent realities, such as the relative and the absolute. From the perspective of physical reality, there are two conflicting aspects of all dharmas. One is the phenomenal occurrence framed by the structure of conventional truth; another is the essence, substance, or the sublime characteristic of ultimate truth and absolute transcendence that is out of reach. What one perceives in conventional truth is characterized by "mutually dependent being,"[241] "the relatededness,"[242] the conditioned, and "provisional"[243] subject to the form of "conventional presentation."[244] Such conventional

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[238] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 136. See also Chang-Rae Lee, "There lies Nothing as Real Existence other than Causation and Reflection of Mind-Consciousness," in *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scentific Finding*, 35-62.

[239] This description is quoted from The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 134 and with my paraphrase.

[240] According to Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche's elucidation, there lie at least ten different kinds of explanations and uses of the phrase, "dharma," or, the so-called "law" in Buddhist tradition. Note that in this dissertation, when the term "dharma" is applied without any additional description, it means I would like to make use of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's interpretation of dharma as "appearance," "phenomenon," and "event" when suggesting that all worldly beings emerge as nothing more than conditioned and provisional occurrence in the physical world and material domain inside ordinary time and space. That all, without exception, is a lack of an independent, immovable, real, intrinsic solidity. Likewise, all possesses no autonomous, self-certain, inherent self-nature within itself. See the Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom: a Commentary on the Ninth Chapter of Shantideva's Guide to the Bodhisattva Way of Life*, 29.

[241] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arsing and Emptiness*, IX.

[242] Ibid., 1.

[243] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 103-105. See also Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 76. These two conceptual terms, "the provisional" and "the definitive," are contradictory. The provisional (interpretation) suggests that what is bound by relative reality, such as all systems of world knowledge. The definitive (interpretation) suggests that what is characteristic of absolute reality, such as the statement explained by the Dalai Lama--the Middle Way perspective of ultimate self-emptiness (emptiness of emptiness)--is the true reality.

presentation should be recognized and interpreted through the contextualization of "semantic and epistemological" systems.[245] For example, what has been exhibited in the system of world knowledge arguing for or against the theory of "truth" is attributed to the relative truth. By contrast, ultimate truth remains something essential, absolute, and "definitive."[246] For instance, what has been seen through an experience of spiritual Enlightenment as "the manifestation of emptiness"[247] or "true reality of the absolute"[248] is peculiar to the ultimate truth.

When the Dalai Lama explains that "all things are by nature interdependent, originating entirely as a result of other things and other factors,"[249] it is worth noting that his saying is subject to the realm of conventional truth. Because of the principle of interdependence manifested in relative reality, there arises the revelation that nothing but ultimate, total emptiness is the true essence and absolute reality. The Dalai Lama states:

> Buddha teaches that the very fact that something is dependently originated means that it is necessarily devoid of an essential, or independent, reality. For if something is fundamentally dependent, by logical necessity it must be devoid of having a nature that is independent of other phenomena, of existing independently. Thus it is said that anything that is dependently originated must also be, in actual fact, empty. All phenomena are empty of any independent existence.[250]

In Buddhist philosophy, understanding the (fallacious) concept of "self-nature" plays a crucial role. To understand the definition of self-nature (self), or true nature, true being, it helps to

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[244] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, XI.
[245] Ibid., 2.
[246] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 103-107.
[247] Ibid., 117.
[248] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 29.
[249] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 30.
[250] Ibid.

clarify what total emptiness refers to in an "unattempted" way, or, more precisely, what this emptiness does *not* refer to.[251] In Buddhism, claiming that all dharmas possess a real being means that any attempt to confirm all dharmas' state of existence (such as that of a subject, object, state of mind, truth, and the "space particle"[252]) itself confirms the reality of a deep-rooted "self-nature." Buddhist philosophy proposes that self-nature, as a matter and a being in real existence, is permanently undivided, fixed, unitary, immutable, and autonomous. This independent self-nature possesses within itself a definite, indivisible, unyielding solidity. This sovereign self-nature could break freed of the rule of dependent-arising and transcend the boundary of phenomenal truth where the principles of beginning and termination, origination and cessation, birth and demise govern. If this assumption were true, the fundamental Buddhist theory should be destroyed. It is apparent that there exists by no means a thing which is a possessor of self-nature (self), real being, or supreme existence.[253] As the Dalai Lama points out, Nagarjuna's analysis in *Fundamentals of the Middle Way* argues for the realization that "whatever comes into being in dependence upon other conditions must be devoid of intrinsic origination. As the sutra states: That which is born from condition is unborn, for it is devoid of intrinsic origination. That which depends upon conditions is declared empty. One who knows this emptiness remains tranquil."[254] All statements can be legitimate only when total emptiness is

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[251] Chang-Rae Lee, "The World that is Seen Through the Enlightened Beings' Eyes," in *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*, 3-34.

[252] According to the perspective of traditional Buddhist cosmology as stated in *The Kalachakra Tantra*, when the state of the so-called "space particles" (the kind of preliminary particle as a constituent of the universe) is referred to, it means that these space particles are not absolute or fixed but are rather subject, like all matter, to the laws of impermanence and change (in other words, the space particle, like all dharmas, is bound by a perpetual state of ever-becoming instantaneous momentariness).

[253] The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 11-34, 54-86, 171-223. Tong-Chu Shih, *A Complete Analysis of the Heart Sutra*, 65-126. Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 3-17.

[254] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 111. The Dalai Lama explains that the excerpt of passage from Nagarjuna's philosophical classic has been frequently interpreted and cited in Tsongkhapa's writings on the centrist-path view of ultimate emptiness.

recognized as the essential being and "the very summit of existence,"[255] "the final mode of subsistence."[256]

To undo a misconception that one must totally demolish one thing for another (such as abandoning the physical for the mystical, the conventional for the absolute, the phenomenal appearance for the substance of essential emptiness), Buddha employs examples of this illusory nature as a transient phenomenal occurrence whose essence is self-emptiness: stars, an illusion, a dream, a mirage (a hallucination), a shadow, a reflection in a mirror, an echo, a magic play, a reflection of the moon in the water, a rainbow, a bolt of lightning, a water bubble, and so forth.[257] These symbols are constantly used, especially in canonical texts which focus on gaining Enlightenment in order to realize the truth of total emptiness which is demonstrated in *The Diamond Sutra*. These recurring metaphoric images presented in Buddhist texts indicate the compatibility of "two truths that comprise (one) reality" in the ultimate sphere of "true suchness." In the profound suchness, absolute truth is reflected in its co-existence with physical phenomena.[258]

The ultimate "self-nature" in all dharmas is absolute emptiness; however, out of this total self-emptiness, arises "perturbation," or the empty being's capacity to perform and function. The Dalai Lama expounds on the attainment of *pajraparamita*, the utmost perfection of wisdom,

> we perceive conventional truth, that is, the relative world in all its diversity, through our everyday use of mind and our sense faculties. However, it is only through penetrating

[255] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 42.
[256] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 18.
[257] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 68.
[258] Yin-Shuen Shih, "Emptiness and all Dharmas," in *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 188-200. Chang-Rae Lee, "The World that is Seen Through the Enlightened Beings' Eyes," in *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*, 63-94.

> analysis that we are able to perceive ultimate truth, the true nature of things and events [in the material world]. To perceive this is to perceive the suchness of [conventional] phenomena, their ultimate mode of being, which is the ultimate truth about the nature of reality…[to] understand the nature of reality [which is exactly the "final mode of subsistence,"[259] the true essence of the absolute reality] in terms of [as "in the very summit of its existence,"[260] a compatibility of] two truths, the more subtle understanding entails the realization of the two truths not as two separate, independent realities but rather as two aspects of a single reality. It is essential that we clearly grasp this distinction.[261]

From the Dalai Lama's analysis, it is clear how Buddhist cosmology realizes these two truths performing as singular reality. This absolute trueness is carried out in the perfection of all "in union" in *The Heart Sutra*. *The Heart Sutra* presents the highest Enlightenment that is a leitmotif within Buddhist literature. In this way,

> the perfection of wisdom is the ultimate truth, thus the statement "it is true." In the realm of the ultimate truth, there is no disparity [nor dualistic dichotomy or binary opposition], as there is in conventional reality, between appearance and reality, and thus this manifest ultimate truth is "not deceptive." From this perspective too, we can say that it is the truth.[262]

To realize the profundity of this empty, essential being "as such," the unveiling of true suchness "is in fact a fusion of both deep meditative equipoise upon emptiness and full cognizance of the world of phenomena continually unfolding."[263]

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[259] Elizabeth Nappar, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 45.
[260] What I use here is Edward Conze's term which infers the ultimate mode of being and the profoundest suchness as the presentation of "the way things are" in his English translation version of *The Diamond Sutra*.
[261] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra,* 118-9.
[262] Ibid., 130.

Dialectical Methodology of Discussing "True Reality of the Absolute": Negative Affirmation, Total Negation, Simultaneity of Contradictions, and Eight Aspects of Emptiness

In Buddhism, discussions of the ultimate reality of absolute emptiness often take the form of a dialectic.[264] Employing a playful stance or dynamic methodology in order to contemplate the dialectics of essential emptiness and theorize absoluteness through negative affirmation is used by Artaud, Hijikata and Ohno, Cage, and Gao. Performing the dialectic of the empty essence and displaying the poetic, spontaneous juxtaposition of contradictory simultaneities are especially obvious in the practices of Ankoku Butoh dancers, Cage, and Gao. This section discusses how in Buddhism, emptiness as the essence of the true absolute is presented as the theory and revelation given by *The Heart Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra,* and *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. I also discuss, via the Middle Way School endorsement of the Centrist Path, the ultimate state of essential emptiness as represented in the sentence, "the world of form is a manifestation of emptiness."[265] In the end, I focus on whether the quest for consummation of great perfect wisdom is conceivable? Or, is it a realization of "no attainment and no non-attainment"[266] as the absolute profundity presented "unintentionally" in "the way things are?"

Known as profound suchness as well as a truth state of non-existence and not non-existence, when put into theoretical discussion, emptiness is realized as a concept or a philosophical dialectic and analyzed through the "methodology of double negation."[267] In Buddhist methodology, "double refutation"[268] (total negation) is used as a "technique" for pointing out "essential" ideas that are impossible to translate in a more legitimate way. By

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[263] Ibid., 134.
[264] Hui-Nan Yang, "The Middle-Way Philosophy," in *Some New Thoughts on Buddhism and Its Theoretical Development*, 39-56.
[265] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 117.
[266] This is a Buddhist term which is frequently used in *The Heart Sutra*.
[267] Pei-Jian Chen, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 22, 24.
[268] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 35-54.

placing double negation at its heart, the tactic of total refutation conveys the substance which suggests the indefinable. The dialectical methodology of "double refuting," comparable to "negative affirmation" that was mentioned earlier, is frequently used as an analytical method, especially in theorizing the inexplicable in Buddhism, such as the ideas in regard to Enlightenment experience, emptiness, and absolute transcendentality. Using double negation to contemplate the trueness of essential emptiness as the state of non-existence yet no non-existence, the tactic aims at thorough refutation of any assumption of "epistemological duality" in rational logistics.[269] It is necessary to use "meta-language" in order to "paradoxically" structure the dialectics of emptiness. The analytical strategy legitimately frames the statement of emptiness and presents true reality. To avoid siding with nihilism or skepticism, double negation as a dialectical strategy is employed throughout the texts of *The Heart Sutra, The Diamond Sutra, The Platfrom Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch,* and Nagarjuna's elucidation of ultimate emptiness through philosophy of the middle way. Nagarjuna's distinctive "eight aspects of emptiness," which is the tenet of the transcendental middle way, performs the idea of emptiness in a perfect state of "transcendence" by cancelling the duality of concepts without re-constructing another. The eight aspects of emptiness, also called the eight types of refutation, liberate the idea of emptiness from the likelihood of theoretical imperfection or from a philosophical impasse,[270] as Nargarjuna states in the salutation of *Fundamentals of the Middle-Way*: "being the termination of linguistic description, it is the Good."[271] Nagarjuna's precept of "eight negations" is concerned with "cessation and origination, annihilation and permanence/abiding, coming-in and going-out,

[269] This is an idea raised by Pei-Jian Chen in his book, *A Comprehensive Analysis of Buddhist Philosophy and Truth*, 82.
[270] Yin-Shuen Shih, "Nagarjuna's Centrist-Path Philsophy of Interdependence, Essential Emptiness, and Conventional Phenomenon," in *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 201-232.
[271] Nagarjuna, *Madhyamaka-Sastra*, in *Nagarjuna's Philosophy of No-Identity*, 1.

as well as the different/many-thing and the same/one-thing."[272] The eight aspects of the middle-way empty transcendentality reverberate with that on which *The Diamond Sutra* and *The Heart Sutra* focus.

Similarly, *The Heart Sutra* discloses "the very summit of the existence,"[273] that is, all dharmas are realized as self-emptiness, or "emptiness of self-nature,"[274] out of which the absolute substance "presents and manifests."[275] In other words, an inherent existence of self-nature would "not exist"[276] "in an absolute sense as ultimate natures of things and events."[277] Edward Conze notes that absolute emptiness is unmasked through "the eight aspects of the profound:"[278] "all phenomena are emptiness; they are without defining characteristics; they are not born, they do not cease; they are not defiled, they are not undefiled; they are not deficient, and they are not complete."[279] Conze's insight on the crux of *The Heart Sutra* echoes Nargajuna's negative affirmation of the ultimate emptiness through eight aspects of de-construction without promising or re-constructing any affirmation of what emptiness *is*. Nagarjuna reminds us: "There is no ignorance, there is no extinction of ignorance and so on up to no aging and death and no extinction of aging and death."[280] Through a negative affirmation (or total negation) of the twelve links of dependent-arising in *samsara*[281] as also emphasized by *The Heart Sutra*, these eight aspects of perceiving essential emptiness and transmitting the state of

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[272] Ibid.
[273] Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 42.
[274] The Dalai Lama, *Eessence of The Heart Sutra*, 116.
[275] Ibid., 122.
[276] Ibid.
[277] Ibid.
[278] Ibid., 121.
[279] Ibid.
[280] Ibid., 126.
[281] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 90-99.

profound suchness echoes a deeper realization. That is, ultimately, "even this negation is itself negated, [therefore] there's no attainment and no non-attainment."[282]

Using double refutation to transcend the duality of two extremes and discuss "the transcendentality," to use Edward Conze's term, I recall to mind the eight aspects of emptiness achieved through the dialectical performance of eight different types of negation in an unconditioned and deconstructive way which was proposed by Nargajuna's *Fundamentals of the Middle Way.* "He who taught dependent origination—no cessation and no origination, no annihilation and no permanence, no coming and no going, neither different nor same—this thorough calming of conceptual elaborations: To you, who is supreme speaker among all fully enlightened buddhas, I pay homage."[283] According to Nagarjuna, it is obvious that "a dependently originated thing lacks eight characteristics and is thereby free of intrinsic existence [emptiness of self-nature]."[284] Consummation of the Buddha Dharma as the Dharma of all beings in a transcendence of total unanimity corresponds to Pure Land School master Ging-Kong Shih's commentary on *The Diamond Sutra*. Ging Kong Shih sees ultimate emptiness as a manifestation of the Dharma without origination or cessation, the Dharma of the unproduced, the Dharma of uncompounded phenomenon, and the Dharma of no-self (the Dharma without self).[285] Similarly, the Dalai Lama believes the legacy of the middle-way philosophy is a descendent of Nagarjuna. He describes this ultimate self-emptiness in the way that

> these eight characteristics *do* exist as qualities of things and events on the conventional level; that is, phenomena do conventionally cease and are conventionally born, and so on, but these characteristics *do not* inhere in them on the ultimate level. On the ultimate level,

[282] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 127.
[283] Ibid., 122.
[284] Ibid., 122-23.
[285] I paraphrase the explication of Ging Kong Shih. See Ging Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996, Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006.

> there is only the absence of these characteristics—namely, an absence of intrinsic nature, absence of defining characteristics, absence of origination, absence of cessation, absence of defilement, absence of non-defilement, absence of decrease, and absence of increase.[286]

Particular forms of negative affirmation and double refutation are dialectical tactics that reach beyond the limits of "conventional speaking and naming"[287] as well as philosophical conceptualization. These forms allow the discourse of empty essence to be exposed "in the true reality of the absolute," in Conze's words. *The Diamond Sutra* creates its idiosyncratic, esoteric, "non-attempted" (non-affirmative) discourse which displays "the principle of the simultaneity of contradictions."[288] For example, two of the notorious dialectical patterns in *The Diamond Sutra* are "*as a non-…that is how* the Tathagata *speaks of*"[289] and "are just *not…that is why* they are *called*"[290] which are characteristic of expressions of the "dialectical nature of reality"[291] and the "unconditioned transcendentality."[292] *The Diamond Sutra* supports the idea that everything is concerned with "objectively as absolute"[293] and "subjectively as unperverted."[294] The canonical crux of "objectively as absolute" means that in true reality, no being exists. The "subjectively as unperverted" suggests "the subjective experience of emptiness"[295] illuminated by the truth: "personal identitylessness"[296] (selflessness of persons) and "phenomenal identitylessness"[297]

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[286] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 123. .
[287] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, X. This conceptual term is also known as and can be substituted by "worldly designation," "social discourse," "making known," and "notation," out of which the world system of conventional truth and relative reality thus has been established, in order to refer to those that are empty of self-nature and intrinsically non-existent.
[288] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 65.
[289] Ibid., 39.
[290] Ibid., 40.
[291] Ibid., 52.
[292] Ibid.
[293] Ibid., 24.
[294] Ibid.
[295] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 53.
[296] The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 89.
[297] Ibid., 125.

(selflessness of phenomena) for a total denial of two "graspings of *self* (as an intrinsic 'I'),"[298] the subjective and the objective. The display of the simultaneity of the contradictions in *The Diamond Sutra* reaches its height in the completion of self-emptiness, which is the core Buddhist notion of personal and impersonal identitylessness. This issue is important because it is embraced by Hijikata and Ohno, who include it in the Ankoku Butoh criterion of undertaking a mysterious "killing of self" in the form of corporeal distorting and physical tormenting, which is the "descendent"[299] path towards the spiritiual sacredness and "ascendent,"[300] essential sublimity. I summarize Edward Conze's interpretation of the ideas of subjective and objective identitylessnesses expressed in *The Diamond Sutra*. *The Diamond Sutra* is based on these core principles: no-self in persons and no-self in objects. According to Conze, most important is the elimination of all fraudulent conceptions of persons and dharmas in the conditioned phenomenon.[301] *The Diamond Sutra* points to the necessity of a total extinction of the concepts of self (subjective I or independent self-nature) in both subjective, empirical realities and objective, observational phenomena for the unfolding of enlightened mindfulness and its luminosity that has been concealed and clouded.[302] Therefore, the negative affirmation that derives from denial of the "four notions or perceptions,"[303] of "a self, of a being, of a living soul,

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[298] The Dalia Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra,* 37, 128, 145. The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*, 89.
[299] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness,* XI.
[300] Ibid.
[301] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 49-59.
[302] Both the terms "be concealed" and "be clouded" are vital in Buddhist philosophy. All sentient beings and living creatures are seen as less enlightened and are oriented by a state of mental consciousness that is deemed concealed or clouded. Such less enlightened mind-consiciousness thus causes all living beings to be bound by and struggling for the revolving karmic cycle of *samsara* reincarnation. However, what is revealed is just partially the "truth." For the truth is, all sentient beings are, without exception, in possession of the kind of Buddha nature which is exactly comparable to the one that the fully Enlightened Buddha possesses. The "ownership" of such Buddha nature in all is a promise for the high likelihood for all unenlightened ones to gain the spiritual awakening awareness and attain fuller Enlightenment state. Therefore, it is said that the situation of human mental consciousness in attaching to any falsehoods or misconceptions is due to the fact that his "clear-light of the natural mind" is "concealed" and "clouded," instead of proposing that humans do not at all possess this clear-light of the natural mind.
[303] According to Ging Kong Shih's elucidation, the "notions or perceptions" of a self, for example, is the type of attachment and obstruction that is relatively easier to notice and do away with. However, compared to the notions or

and of a person,"[304] coupled with a repudiation of the four attachments of "having a self in view, having a being in view, having a living soul in view, or having a person in view"[305] are of critical importance. Doing away with these attachments is a prerequisite for achieving the absolute reality of non-abiding, no-self, no-thought, signlessness, and non-form. The essence of non-abiding, no-self, signlessness, no-thought, and non-form repeats throughout the Mahayanist texts[306] that are discussed in this dissertation. And, the ultimate state of non-abiding, no-self, signlessness, no-thought, and non-form presents as the focal points that are nurtured by Ankoku Butoh, Cage, and Gao.

The manifestation of non-abiding yet no non-abiding "in the true reality of the absolute"[307] in terms of the Buddhist view of performing "emptiness as a self-contradictory unity of yes and no,"[308] according to Conze, corresponds with the message of *The Diamond Sutra*. In effect, the same contradiction is perpetuated through Cage's artistic experiments with music. Gao's avant-garde endeavor to establish a modern Zen total theatre is also characterized by the uneasy reconciliation of conflicting elements. According to Ging Kong Shih, due to an illumination of the state of "non-abiding and no non-abiding," the lengthy *Diamond Sutra* can be summed up in just few words: "non-abiding and no non-abiding."[309] Performing non-abiding as total detachment nullifies the extremes of absolutism, thereby allowing for emptiness.[310]

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perceptions of a self, having a self "in view" also acts as the type of attachment and obstruction, but, in a more implicit and subtler way. Oftentimes, they are hard to be aware of or get rid of.

[304] According to Ging Kong Shih's explication, carrying out the kinds of attachments to a self, a being, a living soul, and a person in human mental-consciousness is comparable to enacting a diversity of self-graspings ranging from the realms of the subject and the object to the boundaries of time and space. See also Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 25-26, 33-34, 55-62.

[305] Edward Conze, *The Diamond Sutra*, in *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 55-56.

[306] See Tong-Chu Shih, *A Complete Analysis of the Heart Sutra*.

[307] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 29.

[308] Ibid., 90.

[309] Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996, Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006.

[310] Here allowing for emptiness means allowing for emptiness to perturb and function. Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 167-178, 188-200.

Performing no non-abiding demonstrates the (essence's) "capacity to perform functions,"[311] thereby refuting the extremes of nihilism. That non-abiding and no non-abiding are manifested in the union of contradictions suggests the perfect compatibility of the absolute and the profane. The total unanimity of the sublime and the conventional is what I argue for in the practices of Ankoku Butoh, Cage, Gao, and Artaud. As Conze comments, "True perceptions are the prerogative of those [enlightened ones], but there is a paradox hidden here: All perceptions are *ipso facto* false, and a 'true perception', or a perception of what is really there, is…strictly impossible. In fact, it is a *miracle*, and that is why we should seek for it."[312]

Emptiness as the Absolute of "Not Two," True Suchness, and One Thusness: Final Consummation Predicated by The Heart Sutra, The Diamond Sutra, The Platform Sutra, and Nagarjuna's Middle-Way Philosophy

In its ultimate yet most "natural" performance, emptiness is the essential absolute manifested in the presence of "not two." Briefly, "not two" suggests "that polarized aspects of reality, such as [substance and appearance], matter and mind, are neither/both the same nor/and different."[313] The profundity of true suchness and one thusness, which is the presentation of "not two," is especially expressed in Cage and Gao's Zen-inspired projects. A citation from an ancient Chinese religious treatise and literary classic, *On Believing in Mind,* attributed to the third patriarch of Zen school, Tseng T'san, of approximately 606 A.D., is noteworthy. I highlight Tseng T'san's illumination as an expression of the essence of the *Prajanaparamita* canons and the core message of *The Heart Sutra, The Diamond Sutra,* and Nagarjuna's middle-way

[311] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 41.
[312] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 31.
[313] Jackson Mac Low, "Cage's Writings up to the Late 1980s," in *Writings Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, eds. David W. Bernstein and Christopher Hatch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 213.

philosophy. As *On Believing in Mind* remarks: "In the higher realms of true Suchness, there is neither self nor other. When direct identification is sought, *we can only say, Not Two*. One in All, All in One….If only this is realized, no more worry about your not being perfect."[314] Here, "one" means emptiness of emptiness as the profound suchness, or the way things are "as such." The idea "perfect" means "accomplishing" the perfection of great wisdom and gaining enlightened mindfulness to see into the truth. In the absolute, there exists "not two" or one. Even the inference of "one" contained in the description "one in all, all in one" as the "all-pervading greatness of the DharmaBody"[315] must be empty of an intrinsic reality and detached from its own-being. Therefore, the empty transcendence is the realization of not one and not two.[316]

From the standpoint of emptiness as the presence of total unanimity, *The Diamond Sutra* reveals: "the Tathagata[317] has taught this discourse on Dharma,"[318] which is "wisdom that has *gone beyond* and *'as such'* should you bear in mind."[319] To illustrate what is suggested by the ideas of "as such," "what is," and "the truth," the sutra exposes, "the Tathagata speaks in accordance with reality, speaks *the truth*, speaks of *'what is,'* not otherwise. A Tathagata does not speak falsely. But nevertheless…with regard to that dharma which the Tathagata has fully known and demonstrated, on account of that there is neither truth nor fraud."[320] In the presence of the Tathagata ultimate state, *The Diamond Sutra* reveals self-emptiness in the unfolding of "the white heat of wisdom [subjective identitylessness] intent on the luminous transparency of

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[314] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 89.
[315] Ibid., 48.
[316] Ging Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*.
[317] If straightforwardly translated and literalized, the Tathagata easily triggers mis-interpretations as "sometimes goes or comes, sometimes stands, sits, or lies down," as *The Diamond Sutra* points out, in particular, when one simply relies on the verbal meaning to define what is transmitted by the Tathagatha "literally." To realize the true essence and thorough meaning of the Tathagata, one must transcend the boundary of linguistic convention and directly looks to the unexpressive and untranslatable. This is what *The Diamond Sutra* leaves as an advice to Buddhist meditators and practitioners.
[318] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 53.
[319] Ibid., 51.
[320] Ibid., 54-5.

the void [objective identitylessness],"[321] to use Conze's analysis. The Tathagata true suchness of the unimpededness and interpenetration echoes the most famous quotation from *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*: "Bodhi originally has no tree, the mirror also has no stand.[322] Buddha nature is always clean and pure, where is there room for dust. The mind is the Bodhi tree, the body is the mirror stand. The mirror is originally clean and pure; where can it be stained by dust?"[323]

When confirming the attainment of spiritual enlightenment, *The Heart Sutra*, *The Diamond Sutra*, and Nagarjuna's centrist-path philosophy take advantage of strategies, like performing the kind of accidental affirmation of true absolute in beyond-ness, which is, in the meanwhile, "in between-ness."[324] This "natural," "ordinary" yet ultimate and perfect state is confirmed in *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*. The suggestive Tathagata is one of a many names of the Buddha which is presented at the end of *The Diamond Sutra*. "Tathagata is synonymous with true suchness."[325] This elucidation, according to Michael Roach, means "the very idea One Gone Thus/Tathagata[326] is an expression that refers to the real nature of things."[327] The Tathagata, a consummate stage, is used in particular to convey the crux of "as such," "what is," "the truth of suchness," and "one thusness." All the ideas posit the realization that the

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[321] Ibid., 48.
[322] Bodhi and mirror here both exactly refer to the Buddha nature, namely, the essential own-being, the alleged self-nature of the sublime emptiness. Also, from this presence of the Buddha nature, we see the very suchness and the "true reality." This Buddha nature is itself possessed by all worldly beings—there is essentially no difference between the true nature of the enlightened ones and that of the unawakened beings—yet it is clouded by the ignorance in the case of the unenlightened beings. This Buddha nature lies static, complete, utmost, fullest, perfect, and in its state of total stillness and true serenity. See more in *The Platform Sutra of the Six Patriarch*, 39.
[323] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 132.
[324] Yin-Shuen Shih, "Nagarjuna's Centrist-Path Philosophy of Interdependence, Essential Emptiness, and Conventional Phenomenon," in *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 216-218, 255-260. Chang-Rae Lee, "The World that is Seen Through the Enlightened Beings' Eyes," in *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*, 63-88.
[325] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 58.
[326] These two namings both signify the Buddha. These are two of the many identities/personifications of the Buddha. The Buddha is identified with the One Gone Thus and the Tathagata when he preaches *The Diamond Sutra*.
[327] Michael Roach trans., *The Diamond Cutter: An Exalted Sutra of the Greater Way on the Perfection of Wisdom*, 56, http://www.fodian.net/world/dcutter.pdf.

profundity, like ultimate suchness and the idea of empty nature as the highest truth, explains everything. Furthermore, the state of the transcendentality or total unanimity, such as the performance of "the way things just are" and the manifestation of "the true suchness of essential reality" unfolds through the mysterious Tathagata. The complete Enlightenment of the Tathagata highlights the fact that the importance of total transcendence lies not in discarding the relative for the ultimate; instead, to an unimpeded, empty awareness, true reality is nowhere on the other shore. It displays itself everywhere in phenomenal appearances. The transcendental "other shore" is attained via the non-destruction of this-side-ness. The ascendent (supermundane) is not accomplished through an annihilation of the descendent (mundane).[328] The Tathagata state of true suchness corresponds to what *The Platform Sutra* states, "the supreme, the foremost…not leaving, not staying, not going or coming, with the identity of wisdom and meditation and unstained in all things….It leads toward the other-shore-reached, putting an end to birth and destruction."[329] The precept of essential thusness is especially incorporated into Cage and Gao's practices, while Artaud, Hijikata and Ohno relatively more likely intend to abandon the relational world for the esoteric absoluteness.

Conclusion

I would like conclude chapters one and two with a provisional thesis. Chapters one and two provide summaries of very different traditions of thought. These traditions contain noticeably conflicting elements and points of argument. One mode of value is based on the orthodox Western rationalistic system and the other is based on the spiritual tradition of Eastern philosophy. Interestingly, these two systems share characteristics. Not only do both structures

[328] Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness*, 81-91, 261-265.
[329] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 147-48.

stem from the concept of Enlightenment, but also, they rely on the idea of Enlightenment, seen as an ongoing pursuit or an unfinished project, as the heart of their theoretical discourse.

Inspired by Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, I have placed the discussion in chapter two of (the Eastern-derived) Enlightenment performance and its dialectic of "Dialectics" within (the Western-engendered) Enlightenment. In other words, I have argued that an alternative Buddhist Enlightenment and spiritual illumination predicated on the ideas of the transcultural and the transcendental is the (counteractive) dialectic of the Western Enlightenment zeigeist. Spiritual Enlightenment in Buddhist philosophy advances a deeper realization of "true reality" and provides a resolution to the philosophical upheavals in which Enlightenment ethics have been embroiled. Buddhist discourse also offers a way of negotiating the uncompromising epistemological impasse between materialism and idealism, empiricism and transcendentalism, positivism and mysticism. Buddhist dialectical performance blurs the line between science and religion, technology and nature, self and other, subject and object.

Chapter two shapes the theoretical framework for my case studies' alternative dialectics in chapters three to six. Through performing the empty essence, performing the true absolute, and performing ultimate reality, the avant-garde agendas of Artaud, Cage, Hijikata, Ohno, and Gao reverberate with Buddhist spiritual revelation, because the crux of the Buddhist Enlightenment idea, "on the outside, while within form, separate from form; on the inside, while within emptiness, separate from emptiness,"[330] is perpetuated as the uniting thread in their arts. In particular, "profane illumination" is achieved through the quest for enlightened transcendentality in "beyond-ness" and in "between-ness" in the projects of Artaud, Cage, Ankoku Butoh, and Gao which display the principle: "when functioning things and non-functioning things, do not abide in front of one's mind, then since no other aspect appears, there

[330] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 172.

is pacification in unapprehendability."[331] Moreover, these aesthetic modernists and their vanguard performances through the endorsement of Buddhist truth or the adoption of quasi-Buddhist theory show that oriental religious traditions can be seen as a dialectic or critique of Enlightenment rationalism. To a certain extent, what is manifested in the presentation of the sublime given by these theatre artists is attributable to an alternative facet of Enlightenment's phenomenology, modernity's other being, and its sixth "face."[332]

[331] Ibid.

[332] To close this chapter, I place my conclusion in stating that in this dissertation, I principally argue for performing Buddhist discourse of Enlightenment transcendence as positing a counter-Enlightenment, alternative dialectic. However, in a sense, I also see such diversified posture as not unlike displaying the sixth face of modernity. My idea of "the sixth face" is inspired by Matei Calinescu's book, *Five Faces of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1987), in which Calinescu proposes the idea that modernity includes these five faces of modernism, avant-garde, decadence, kitsch, and postmodernism.

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Antonin Artaud's Enlightenment: Emptiness Fulfilled through a Search for the Absolute Truth and Renunciation of Relative Reality

Preface

In order to provide a structural frame for this dissertation and in particular to support the case studies in chapters three through six, my analysis in the beginning of this chapter serves to outline the premise for the remaining chapters and posits that this theoretical framework was also used in chapters one and two, thereby linking the two divergent systematic theories with the case discussions in chapters three to six. In the study, I position Modernity and its Other Being in relation to each other and demonstrate how they translate into an eccentric form of modernism providing a legitimized hermeneutics of discourse for my work. The dialogic presentations and expression of modernism are herein attributed to the vanguard performances of celebrated modernists: Antonin Artaud, John Cage, Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno's pioneering Butoh, and Xingjian Gao. These modernists' art works interplay with a dynamics of modernity and its Other Being—a quest for transcendental emptiness or a yearning for Enlightenment beyond the ordinary plane. In their works, the entwining of modernity and its alternative (be it modernity's Otherness, transcendentality, or Enlightenment Beyond) plants early seeds from which a flower of modernism blossoms.

Chapters three through six examine case studies that support the major argument of this dissertation. Each provides an introductory overview of the related historical, political, societal, and cultural background, in order to situate these figures in relation to currents of modernity and modernism in their respective epochs. For example, in my analysis of Antonin Artaud in chapter three, I place Artaud's critical posture against the excruciating maelstrom of the Western

Enlightenment and modernity that have stimulated high modernism. My argument posits Artaud's position as a counter-Enlightenment avant-gardist and as modernity's most rebellious "other being"—originating in yet wrestling with orthodox Western discourse.

In chapters five and six, I examine the cases of Butoh forerunners, Hijikata and Ohno, as well as Gao. I investigate the way Ankoku Butoh dancers and Gao search for mystical and religious enlightenment and an aesthetic insurgence against modernity by reshaping the historical, dialectical discourses that turn out to be different from Artaud and Cage. Both the Butoh antecedents and Gao derive from contexts that embraced yet resisted modernity and industrial civilization (transplanted and exerted by the Occident). My discussion of their art works includes the historical contexts of the post-war period during which China and Japan (especially after Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the renewal of the mutual treaty for the continuation of American occupation in the 1960s) negotiated and adjusted themselves to industrialization on their road to modernization. The four examples I have selected to study —Artaud, Cage, Ankoku Butoh, and Gao—belong to different disciplines: theatre, music, dance, and playwriting (literature). However, their common denominator is the quest for an alternative enlightenment. They all deal with "the presence of performance" in blurred genres, the kind of cross-/interdisciplinary conversations on/with performance where the barriers between theory and practice, traditional and experimental, text and body, philosophical and theatrical, and dialectical and performative are no longer valid.

To allow for deeper interrogation, I contextualize these four figures' positions as acting in a performative action/theatrical performance through practicing/performing theory and theorizing performance in their distinctive methods. I posit John Cage's music-essence which transforms Zen theory into a performing transcendentality as practicing/performing theory.

Artaud's theorization of absolute lucidity and sacred cruelty in his total theatre is a display of theorizing performance. The cross-cultural cases I have chosen to investigate, whether because of their practices and experiments with theatrical and artistic genres or because of their insights and contributions to aesthetic and philosophical theories, are all in search of alternative illumination. Embarking on this path towards enlightenment, all four cases combine theoretical understanding, a demonstrative practice, and final "illumination" (in terms of Buddhist principle in emphasizing the normal transition on the Path towards Enlightenment). I contend that the Artaudian macroscopic pursuit of life and truth in reforming theatre, Butoh creators' revelation of lucidity and sacredness via a dance of grotesqueness, Cage's philosophic-aesthetic practice, and Gao's spiritual pilgrimage through theatre toward a total Zen spectacle all conclude in a search for transcendental Enlightenment. Taking the metaphysical/religious pursuit of these cases into consideration and associating them with the foundation of Buddhist tenets (in particular, from the perspectives of grand-vehicle and its Zen lineage) is also legitimate. For example, one of the paramount Buddhist ideas of seeking the ascendent and the transcendental from within the descendent and physical reality is profoundly realized through the artistries of these theatre artists.

These theatre artists, while practicing religious Enlightenment, consider themselves part of the mundane reality dedicated to the revolving cycles of *samsara* reincarnation bound by life and death in transmigrations, but they do not abandon the material world or detach themselves from physical reality. On the contrary, recognizing the necessity of executing a total transformation of the human mind and the fundamental predicament of existence confronted by modern men, these Enlightenment pursuers seek "answers" through the esoteric by simultaneously engaging in the ordinary frontier and committing to material phenomenon. Their

ideal is to work through their theatrical approaches in order to transcend the imprisonment of birth/life and death, crossing over outside the captivity of reincarnated mortality. While they practice acts that profit the self, they are at the same time echo benefiting others, a realization also called "self-profit profit others."[333] For these theatre artists, attaching Oriental religious Enlightenment to their art is a practice of self-Enlightenment. On the one hand, a presentation of such self-Enlightenment is the unfolding of "true self" through the paths of retrospective, self-reflexive introspection and inward completeness. It is different from Western Enlightenment ethics endorsing forward/outward expansion and evolutionary progress. On the other hand, as declared by the Dalai Lama in a 2003 documentary film *Wheel of Time*,[334] this so-called "self" referring to self-Enlightenment is a disclosure of "true self" which is the essential being of no-self or selfless and unlimited centerless self. Explaining a revelation of self from the perspective of Buddhist altruism contradicts the core beliefs of the Western humanistic tradition, which has valued the (genius of) an individual and subjective self. Through their works, a realization is manifested: "to discipline or to perform oneself in order to convert or transform others."[335] Invoking and cultivating one's bodhicitta[336] (which is concerned with compassion, clarity,

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[333] See William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, and Trubner, 1982), 218. According to the description in this book, a saying of self-profit profit others means the essential nature and work of a Bodhisattava, to benefit himself and benefit others, or himself press forward in the Buddhist life in order to carry others forward. The criterion of the small vehicle is considered to be self-advancement, self-salvation by works or discipline; however, the grand vehicle bears in mind the very spirit of Bodhisattava Buddhism while entering into the path of complete enlightenment as saving and rescuing oneself in order to salvage others, or making progress and assisting others to achieving progress, Bodhisattavism thus being essentially altruistic.

[334] I paraphrase what the Dalai Lama predicates on the core of Buddhism excerpted from the documentary film *Wheel of Time*. See *Wheel of Time*. DVD. 2003. Directed by Werner Herzog. Germany: Wellspring Studio.

[335] William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 219. Accordingly, an expression of being self-disciplined or performing oneself in order for converting and transforming other sentient beings indeed means the same as by an act of one performing self-profit shall be profitable and beneficial to other living creatures. According to an explanation presented in the same book, the hardcore of Buddhist or Bodhisttavist spirit on Altruism, purpose of self for the sake of others' purpose is one thing though with seemingly two purposes. See Chuan-An Lin, *Basic Chinese-Tibetan-Sanskrit-English Buddhist Terminology,* 1.

[336] According to a description presented in William E. Soothill and Lewis Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 388. This term means the mind for or of bodhi; the enlightened, or fully aware mind; the mind that perceives the real behind the outer surfaces, believes in moral consequences, and has a deep faith that all are born with the

unimpeded awareness, and awakened empty mindfulness) is the paramount principle of entering into the saintly stream and attaining enlightenment in order to perfect great wisdom and consummate the Buddhahood. Buddhist practitioners (or true mystics) should never discard the ordinary profanity nor should they renounce the material phenomenon. This is all in spite of a realization that "without-abiding" (non-abiding) detachment is necessary to gain access to the path of genuine liberation, release any bindings, and attain the completion of nirvana.

I posit that the cases I discuss in chapters three to six are similar to the examples presented in *The Hua-Yen Sutra* Buddhist scripture. It is this enlightened absolute truth and occult holiness that Artaud exposed through his philosophical discourse of the theatre of cruelty. It is this essential spirituality, sacred lucidity, and sublime beauty that Hijikata and Ohno's Ankoku Butoh soul yearned towards through profanity, coarse, corporeal, eccentric grotesqueness, and the aesthetic of darkness. It is this ultimate reality predicated by Zen philosophy that John Cage internalized with his exploration of the profundity of the being of music. It is this transcendental nothingness and true suchness that Gao's art embraced through bridging the secular this world-ness and the other-side-beyond-ness. In a metaphoric sense, I would like to suggest these theatre artists' practice of apocalyptic, mystical experience and aesthetic-religious enlightenment is symbolized by Sudhana,[337] a practicing Buddhist meditator and true mystic whose spiritual odyssey plays a key role in the canonical Buddhist sutra of *Hua-Yen*.[338] Through performing

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Buddha-nature, which means a particular yet dew-like-gem capability of genuine enlightenment, and aims at Buddhahood.

[337] Accordingly, Sudhana plays an influential and insightful role especially in *The Hua-Yen Sutra: Scripture 34*. As mentioned in this classic, Sudhana is a disciple, a Buddhist practitioner who accomplishes the fulfillment of Enlightenment after years of theoretical realization and philosophical understanding of the principle of "Enlightenment." Nevertheless, Sudhana is thought to have been an enlightened saint who fully understands and flawlessly realizes the essential spirit of Enlightenment by the manifestations of his bodhisttava wisdom into the relational secularity and who achieves a more profound awakening by undertaking worldly experience rather than merely achieving Enlightenment in the theoretical and philosophical respects.

[338] Also known as *Great Means Expansive Buddha Flower Adornment Sutra*, the classical *Hua-Yen Sutra* is the longest extant Mahayanist Buddhist scripture. *The Hua-Yen Sutra* is concerned with a compilation of 40 volumes

enlightenment, these theatre practitioners (Artaud, Cage, Hijikata, Ohno, and Gao) convey their revelatory experiences from diversified angles and in different spheres, yet all of them are, like Sudhana, eager for and devoted to attaining enlightenment through their artistic realization. As demonstrated in an important section of *The Hua-Yen Sutra* expounding on the completion of Sudhana's spiritual pilgrimage through his paying visits to 53 great masters, a theoretically awakened Sudhana is engaged in a series of mysterious, metaphorical episodes on his spiritual pilgrimage in order to demonstrate fuller and deeper enlightenment through real practice. Each illuminating experience reveals an inspiration for Sudhana to contemplate in order to achieve genuine enlightenment. Simultaneously, through their individual theatrical practice that delivers illumination on enlightenment, Artaud, Cage, Hijikata, Ohno, and Gao also resemble the embodiments of Bodhisattvas (the Enlighteners) who help Sudhana on his Path towards enlightenment. In the latter case, Sudhana is similar to the reader and audience of their arts.

These theatre artists' quest for enlightenment that departs from the descendent, reaches the ascendent, and then ultimately returns to the descendent is also similar to the spiritual voyage that Michael Roach has undertaken and discussed in his book, *The Diamond Cutter*.[339] As a Tibetan Buddhist practitioner and a Sudhna of *The Hua-Yent Sutra* at another performing stage, Roach followed the guidance of his Ripoche master and has transformed his role as a Buddhist monk who for decades completely discarded material reality. In order to become a true mystic, the subsequent transition from the ascendent (religious loftiness) then once again back to the descendent (secularity) is paramount. Similar to Sudhna whose esoteric revelation stemmed from

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which expound on the most complete and thorough attainment of enlightenment and Buddhahood. Such truth has made *The Hua-Yen Sutra* deemed one of the most significant Mahayana Buddhist works. Volume 40 (the last volume), *The Practices and Vows of Samantabhadra Bodhisattva*, is the best-known and widely circulated portion of the entire *Hua-Yen Sutra*.

[339] See Michael Roach, *The Diamond Cutter: The Buddha on Managing Your Business and Your Life* (Amsterdam: Three Leaves, 2003).

his non-negating (and non-abiding) approach while engaging himself in the physical realm, Roach's illumination has deeply explored and rigorously re-examined the core spirit of *The Diamond Sutra* from a level of understanding enlightenment through theoretical analysis to practicing the essence of enlightenment through a fuller realization and real demonstration in conventional reality. I situate and discuss Artaud, Cage, Hijikata, Ohno, and Gao using the paths towards absolute enlightenment experienced by both Sudhna and Roach in their aesthetically religious, philosophically mysterious, physically profane, spiritually transcendental (lofty), and artistically rooted approaches.

The case studies on Artaud, Cage, Hijikata and Ohno, and Gao also attempt to mark the crosscurrents between modernism and the avant-garde, different genres of theatrical performances, and theatre and religion, especially Buddhism. I reinforce these crosscurrents by discussing varying traditions of thinking, including Western enlightenment rationalism and its oriental "other." Through the presentation of my case studies, I show how these two seemingly contradictory modes of Enlightenment have become interwoven through theatre and Buddhism. A critical and even deeper dialectic of two enlightenment ideas has been manifested in the crosstalk of theatre and religion (Buddhism) through an abandonment of the Western philosophical concept of Enlightenment for an alternative truth and a more essential Enlightenment illumination.

According to Buddhist teachings, it is not possible to penetrate throughout absolute reality of transcendent emptiness through theoretical comprehension, conceptual knowledge, philosophical assumption, or intellectual perception based on the mechanism of cognitive, logical thinking. The diversified theatrical methods exerted by Artaud, Cage, Hijikata, Ohno, and

Gao have all endeavored to emancipate the ultimate truth of the genuine theatre or essential transcendentality of performance from the confinements of abstract philosophy, dramatic representation, literary interpretation, and linear-narrative expression. Cultivated in the Western enlightenment legacy, these theatre figures pursued a higher and deeper truth by applying a counter-rationalistic Enlightenment realization as an alternative and profound dialectic comparable to ancient oriental religious teachings. It is this pursuit that I investigate. These artists' "metaphysical," religious quest and revelation through mundane theatrical practice and experience have revealed another significance.[340] Regardless of the ritualistic effect and function of worship that originally interrelated theatrical performance and religious rite, the method of performing, directly experiencing, practicing, and living fully in the "Becoming" or the "Being" of theatre (to use Artaud's ideas)[341] provides evidence of Buddhist principles. In Buddhism, the fundamental way to experience the essential state of one's "own-being" or to perceive ultimate true nature (true self) and reach the transcendent Enlightenment absoluteness is by directly meditating on tranquil abiding (total stillness and emptiness) and penetrative insight (the wisdom of unimpeded awareness and clarity). I intend to use the case studies to prove that these artists have aimed to alter the convention of theorizing and conceptualizing Enlightenment ideas by directly practicing the philosophy of Buddhist Enlightenment and performing their Enlightenment truth.

Along the same lines as the Dalai Lama's commentary on Buddhism as a non-theistic tradition, contemporary Chinese Pure Land School master Ging-Kong Shih argues that

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[340] See David E. R. George, *Buddhism as/in Performance: Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practice* (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld, 1999). This book points out the interrelations between practicing the Buddhist meditative skills and performing in theatre.

[341] Antonin Artaud, "Metaphysics and *Mise en Scene*," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, trans. Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press, 1958), 8, 36.

Buddhism, in its absolute sense, is neither philosophy nor metaphysics (or even a religion). Ging-Kong Shih's view is not uncommon and echoes many Buddhist masters, scholars, and critics in their investigations.[342] At its most basic level, the discipline of religion has been historically dominated by two systematic modes: singularism and pluralism. When brought into examination, both singularism and pluralism indicate the subject-object subordinate relations and suggest the appropriator and the appropriated as "substantial entity."[343] Contrary to the discourses of singularism and pluralism, an enlightened view of "self-emptiness"[344] is the ultimate essence in Buddhism. Within this essential truth, there exists neither subject nor object, neither the appropriator nor the appropriated. The subjective experience that illuminates the essential trueness of total emptiness is itself empty of inherent existence. The empty being of this subjective mindfulness presents the ultimate emptiness of absolute truth. Such enlightenment wisdom places the subject and the object, knower and things being known, appropriator and appropriated in union, instead of independent realities, manifested in a state of total transcendence and unanimity of "not two." *The Platform Sutra* affirms:

> The mind has nothing to do with conceptualizing thinking because its fundamental source is empty….If within and without you are not deluded then you are apart from duality. If on the outside, you are deluded you cling to form; if on the inside, you are deluded you cling to emptiness. If within form you're apart from form and within emptiness you're separated from emptiness, then within and without you're not deluded.[345]

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[342] See the Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom*. The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*. Yin-Shuen Shih, *Profound Investigations of Emptiness.*
[343] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness,* 45, 47, 278.
[344] This is a Buddhist conceptual term. I have discussed it in Chapter Two.
[345] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch,* 166.

The self-emptiness of emptiness unveiled in Buddhism as ultimate reality is the presentation of not-two and non-oneness, non-the-same and not-the-difference, non-existence and no non-existence because when an understanding of "one in all, all in one"[346] is realized, this unified wholeness still does not suggest a permanently fixed "substantial entity."[347] Therefore, it would be more justifiable to say "not-two," for "not two" reflects the true essence perturbing its manifestation.[348] In Buddhist understanding, such an essential empty nature is the ultimate mode of subsistence. What *The Platform Sutra* states--"On the outside, while within form, separate from form; on the inside while within emptiness, separate from emptiness"[349]--is an absolute state devoid of the boundaries of the dualistic. It is the true nature, the essential own-being of total emptiness as the ultimate enlightenment truth proposed by Buddhism transcends beyond the limited views of singularism or pluralism in religion and metaphysical philosophy.

Such delineation of Buddhism as not classifiable as religion and philosophy or metaphysical transcendentalism and scientific materialism[350] seems radical. In a sense, it is similar to Artaud's rebellious stance in de-constructing the traditional dramatic canon when searching for a new approach to true reality and "an intent on the luminous transparency"[351] of the total absolute, though arguably, Artaud's radically rebellious position seemed to lean more towards a spiritual phase than a political forefront. His impulse to search for a new vision, an alternate reality, originated in an urgent search for a language created only for a genuine theatre, yet ended up in the necessity of total spiritual awakening. This revelatory spiritual rebellion

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[346] Chang-Rae Lee, "The World that is Seen Through the Enlightened Beings' Eyes," in *Buddhist Philosophy and Contemporary Scientific Finding*, 63-88.
[347] Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 45, 47, 278, 576.
[348] My analysis is based on Ging-Kong Shih's thought-provoking explication. See Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006.
[349] *The Platform Sutra*, 172.
[350] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*.
[351] Edward Conze, *Buddhist Wisdom Books*, 48.

initiated Artaud's theatrical ideal—though only on the level of theorizing and discourse—in the perfection of the theatre of cruelty. The ideal of a pure and total theatre becoming materialized and perfected in an Artaudian theatre of divine cruelty seemed alien, peculiar, and solitary compared to his predecessors and to contemporary avant-gardists. As Artand noted:

> There is an *absolute* in these constructed perspectives, *a real physical absolute* which only Orientals are capable of envisioning—it is in the loftiness and thoughtful boldness of their goals that these conceptions differ from our European conceptions of theatre…in the magnificent artists of the Balinese theatre, dancers entrusted with the representation of unexplained, lofty Myth….The truth is that the Balinese theatre suggests, and in its productions enacts, themes of *pure theatre* upon which the stage of performance confers an intense equilibrium, a wholly materialized gravity.[352]

The theatre of cruelty was the notorious deconstructionist "masterpiece"[353] that showcased Artaud's fascinating yet controversial performative practice. I see Artaud's theory and method as initiating a "deconstructionist" approach is based on his proposal for undermining the master/repressive narrative and terminating metaphysical/literary representation. Artaud's performative practice was an eccentric combination of both theatrical idea and theoretical ideal and has come to be also known as total theatre, the holy (sacred) theatre, the absolute theatre, the metaphysical theatre, the apocalyptic theatre, theatre of the occult, the alchemical theatre, the ritualistic theatre, the pure theatre, and theatre of the magical.[354] The idea of the theatre of cruelty, along with any adjectives attempting to describe this notion—whether constructed by Artaud

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[352] Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theater," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 65.

[353] This is the term that Christopher Innes makes use of in describing Artaud's inaccessible theatre of cruelty. The whole Artaudian phenomenon, lasting for decades, indeed ends up in worshipping and iconizing Artaud. Therefore, the phenomenon helps to foster the Artaudian theory of cruelty and his insightful visions on a "new" theatre themselves becoming "Artaudian masterpiece." More ironically, the referent happens after Artaud's proceeding with a string of actions in subverting the precedent obsolete masterpieces.

[354] See Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*.

himself or others—has positioned the Artaudian performative theory/theoretical performance as a yearning for transcendence, spiritual, fundamental, and ultimate, and an aspiration to the indescribable and inconceivable realm "beyond."

This chapter considers whether this sublime realm of beyond-ness is, in Artaud's theatre of cruelty, a final achievement of the "authentic," the truest, the absolute, the mysterious, the religious, and above all, the Buddhist. It will delve into an investigation of Artaud's quest for an "enlightened" illumination initiated by his subversion of "the truth" as a belief system (invented in relative reality) that replaces "True Reality" (of the true absoluteness). Artaud stated: "We are watching a mental alchemy which makes a gesture of a state of mind—the dry, naked, linear gesture all our acts could have if they sought the absolute."[355] For Artaud, "the truth" may refer to the traditional Aristotelian dramatic theatre, the theological theatre, the occidental theatre that represents, or to anything having to do with conventional language, written texts and speeches, logical thinking, and reasoning—things that are paramount to Western rationalism and repressive civilization. In contrast, "True Reality" is the ideal of the oriental theatre. It is the Being of the genuine theatre perfected in the Balinese dance and the pure and absolute theatre that is supposed to be manifested in the theatre of cruelty. It is the metaphysical and hieroglyphic expression of the irrational, magical, alchemical, mythological, unconscious, and the spontaneous, sensational, direct presence of transcendental being-ness. Artaud asserted:

> Everything in this theatre is immersed in a profound intoxication which restores to us the very elements of ecstasy, and in ecstasy we discover the dry seething, the mineral friction of plants, vestiges and ruins of trees illuminated on their faces. Bestiality and every trace of animality are reduced to their spare gesture: mutinous noises of the splitting earth, the sap of trees, animal yawns. The dancers' feet…dissolve thoughts and sensations,

[355] Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theater," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 66.

> permitting them to recover their pure state….The sign language of spiritual gestures which measure, prune, fix, separate, and subdivide feelings, states of the soul, metaphysical ideas. This theatre of quintessences in which things perform a strange about-face before becoming abstractions again.[356]

In the Buddhist view, knowledge of the (systematic) truths is oriented in relative reality and mis-perceived in the phenomenal world. However, "True Reality" can only be referred to as the absolute and ultimate reality.

This chapter unpacks the multi-faceted dimensions of Antonin Artaud (1895-1948)[357] and frames out the Artaudian path towards Enlightenment. It will interrogate Artaud the man, Artaud the theatre practitioner and its most radical rebel, Artaud the Dionysian apostle and ritualistic shaman, and Artaud the ascetic. My analysis will concentrate on the peculiar Artaudian theory that concerns not only perspectives on genuine theatre and art (or life, death, and the fatality[358]), but also the presentation of a total being immersed in holiness and delirium, as well as a thorough body of "presence" that withdraws into the mysterious recess of ecstatic torment and trancelike self-annihilation and self-abnegation. For a variety of reasons such as financial insecurity, Artuad struggled with practical difficulties and therefore had few opportunities during

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[356] Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theatre," 65-66.

[357] Known as a French madman, visionary, poet, prophet, an actor in the fields of movie and theatre, a director, "playwright, and philosopher" (though arguably), a theorist, and a notorious avant-gardist and revolutionist, Artaud had been active on the European theatre stage between the 1920s and the 1940s. Throughout Artaud's whole life, he had confronted unspeakable physical torture and mental torment, most of which stemmed from his long-time suffering from psychological disease, such as schizophrenia. Out of this unbearable agony and affliction to both his mind and body, Artaud was badly addicted to drugs, like opium. For further understanding of Artaud the person, the texts of his, and the works concerning Artaud and the conceptual theatricality on theatre of the cruelty, see the suggested reading materials and secondary resources in the appendix bibliography. Artaud's legacy is, without doubt, prevailing and all-embracing worldwide. It is said that Artaud has left the impact of his Artaudian theatrical theory and practice at least on the contemporary world stage both West and East, like theatre of the Absurd, Jean Genet, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Peter Brook, Peter Weiss, the Living Theatre, Robert Wilson, Xing-Jian Gao, and so forth.

[358] Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 18.

his lifetime to carry out his theoretical idealism. This includes the flawless amalgamation of genuine theatre, true life, an authentic state of being-ness in humankind with the sacred totality, and the absoluteness of the theatre of cruelty. Nonetheless, his ideas were extremely influential and inspirational in the decades that followed. In this chapter, I will also provide more evidence comparing Artaud's theoretical practice and performative/theatrical discourse as a correspondence to a quest for Buddhist enlightenment of the ultimate truth.

Almost every facet of Artaud's own life reflected the anguish, vexation, pain, various kinds of physical torment, emotional disquiet, and psychological turmoil of his theories. I contend that we encounter in Artaud a Zen Buddhist monk in search for Enlightenment by way of penetrating the very presence and the innermost state of being in the threshold before birth and after death. This image of Artaud as the monk is a combination of Artaud as the insane man and Artaud as the insightful visionary who yearned for a spiritual attainment comparable to a holy sage. Along with these qualities, Artaud was also a child-like innocent of the purest spirit, that is, Artaud the môMo (le môMo is a French expression which is taken from Artaud's final-period poem, "Artaud le môMo," written at a time of 1945 and 1948 when he was in an asylum and later collected in the book, *Watchfiends & Rack Screams*. Because Marseille is his birthplace, Artaud's use of MôMo is Marseillaise slang meaning "fool").[359] From this multi-dimensional image of the monk Artaud, Artaud's spirit incarnated a specter and an ancient mummy who returns with undying passion in quest for transcendental absoluteness. Artaud's theoretical performativity unveils the ultimate truth state by traversing, perverting, transcending, and subverting any possibility of epistemological dualities and rigid conceptualized notions, including ideas concerning humans and their fundamental state of existence, life, theatre, death,

[359]This term that I use here appears in *Artaud: The Fiction Film: My Life and Times with Antonin Artaud and The Documentary: The True Story of Artaud the* môMo. DVD. 2005. Directed by Gérard Mordillat and Jérôme Prieur. ARTE France Développement.

normality, lunacy, the sacred, and the grotesque. He negates the representation of an authoritative Christian God as a supernatural and supreme Creator and singular existence by arguing against anything stemming from the systematic structure of rational thinking and intellectual knowledge, such as words, language, names, designs, or concepts. In his alternative French version (1931) of Matthew Lewis's novel, *The Monk* (1794), a story of sexual obsession, Artaud was able to renounce the entire structure established by the work he took as only a starting point and seal the reborn fictional substance with his own poetic truth and idiosyncratic revelations. In *The Monk*, Artaud strived for making attainable the unattainable transcendence of "ETERNAL LIFE"[360]: "I have given myself over to charlatans, osteopaths, mages, wizards, and palmists because all these things *are*, and because, for me, there is no limit, no fixed form established for appearances; and someday God—or MY MIND—will recognize his own."[361] In another even more unusual work, his life of the ancient Roman Emperor *Heliogabalus: Or, the Crowned Anarchist* (1933), which was a semi-novelized text of an emperor's biography interwoven with Artaud's self-projected portrayal, Artaud dealt with sexual overindulgence, perverted violence, self-worship and self-enchantment, fatal brutality, and esoteric occultisms in which the extremity and unimpededness of the divine cruelty that he was preoccupied with interpenetrated. In the presence of the fake Antonin, "who was cradled in sperm and buried in excrement,"[362]Artaud exulted over anarchy's uttermost accomplishments displayed in "the full-length portrait of religious frenzy at its highest pitch, of aberration and conscious madness, the image of every human contradiction, and of contradiction in the very principle of things."[363]

[360] Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 154.
[361] Antonin Artaud, quoted in Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," 154.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.

Surrealism and Artaud

When considering his outlook on theatre, art, performance, life, death, and truth, one cannot ignore the impact of the Surrealist whirlwind on Artaud, especially in the early years (around the 1920s) of his practice and career in theatre. In addition to the profound influence of the Balinese dance theatre, the archetype of Artaud's notorious theatre of cruelty was inspired by Surrealist tenets and propaganda. Artaud was ousted from the vanguard intelligentsia of the French Surrealist circle in the middle of the 1920s by its foremost figure André Breton, due to his increasing fascination with mysterious occultism, ancient alchemic oriental mysticism, and Asian religious philosophy. Despite this fact, however, Artaud was deeply involved with the Surrealist movement between the years of 1924 and 1926. In the meantime, Breton was ambitious to get involved in Communism, which in turn placed the Surrealist position in a context oriented by political and ideological agendas. The shared characteristic between Artaud's penchant and Surrealist criteria was the assertion that the unconscious is the paramount principle, a key to getting closer to the realization of the utmost truth about life, art, the cosmos, the mystery of human existence and its true being-ness. According to the Surrealist understanding, underneath the manifestation of unconsciousness, the outpouring of crystal-like truth occurs. For instance, the state of daydreaming or the overflowing of hallucinatory imagination that Artaud looks to undergo in a mysterious ritual is similar to mystical religious experiences. At its height, both the physical body and the spiritual sphere of man are entranced with ecstasy. Meanwhile, the function of consciousness, as well as the capacities of human reason and logical thinking, are extinguished and downplayed to the minimum degree. The integral dynamism oriented by the flesh and body, senses, instincts, feelings, and the unconscious is vigorous and "present," and

through these very channels one may transcend towards the other side of being-ness, permeate true essence, and relapse into primitive ferocity and power.[364]

As in the early Surrealist schema, Artaud spent his whole life seeking the "key," questing for the answer, a glimmering of pure lucidity, to unlock the issues concerning human existence, life, being, and "truth." All these grand concerns and big questions were condensed and specified in his search for an alternate reality, a new vision, a genuine language, a direct and true presentational form for a pure and total theatre. He even went further and eventually assimilated with Zen and Buddhism by "chance-like randomness" on his way towards an alternative enlightenment through theatre (as his "pedagogical tool" or "teaching"). For Artaud, the outpouring of unconsciousness, the state of dreamworld, mystical rituals and mythological ceremonies, imaginary hallucination, daydreaming, and the ecstatic state of trance, were attributed to the inaccessible realm of higher truth and ultimate reality. Artaud disputed the omnipotent playwright-dominated Western dramatic tradition as a theatre of mimesis, of words (literary texts) and linguistic expression, and as a philosophical structure of paradigms, discursive reasoning, and metaphysical articulation. Instead, he proposed to directly experience/navigate transcendentality, in order to culminate in total spiritual awakening. Artaud fought against a dominant yet outdated (in his eyes) theatre type subject to dialogues, well-made plots, characters, psychological reflection, customs, verbal meanings, and interpretations. He felt that above all, the Occidental theatre enacted on behalf of such an analytic[365] and playwright-oriented drama was targeted at pleasing, entertaining, and hypnotizing the audience instead of irritating, offending, or awakening them.

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[364] Artuad, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 16.
[365] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," in *Theatre and Its Double*, 86.

Artaud the Mad Man and His Revenge: Language as a Great Enemy

"Artaud was one of the rare figures of his generation who seriously tried to cut off his 'writing hand'"[366] and unrelentingly declared that "all writing is rubbish. The whole literary tribe is a pack of rubbish-mongers."[367] But Stanley Lai observes, "Perhaps the most provocative and influential theatre essays of the twentieth-century are products of this man [Artaud] who had spent a good part of his adult life in mental asylums."[368] Interestingly, Lai is not the only one who gives credit to Artaud's seminal theatre essays, which were engendered by "the fragility of [his] mind,"[369] instead of valuing his theatrical practices carried out in real productions. Lai's commentary encapsulates the legacy of the Artaudian theatre into extremely fascinating and esoteric but theoretically abstract ideas, out of which Artaud's alchemical aspirations were scarcely hardened into tangible facts. The apparent contradictions between Artaud's writings and his theatrical presentations and between what he thought (his ideas) and what he sensed through physical body and soul may result from his understanding that "people who try to free themselves from what is vague in order to state precisely whatever is going on in their minds are producing rubbish."[370] Therefore, he held himself as an emancipated prisoner bound to the hallucinatory absolute whose ethereal spirit yearned to "return back…but on the other side of existence."[371]

Language is the principal target, if not the only target, that Artaud was eager to oust from his theatre of cruelty. For Artaud, language is a rebellious descendant that had long revolted against or been antithetical to the purity and totality of its ceremonial origin. I contend that part

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[366] Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," 151.
[367] Antonin Artaud, quoted in Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," 151.
[368] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*. PhD diss. (Berkeley: University of California, 1983), 88.
[369] Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," in *Theatre and Its Double*, 148.
[370] Antonin Artaud, quoted in Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," 151.
[371] Ibid.

of the reason for Artuad's scorn of language is due to his chronic agonizing psychological disorder. Starting with his journey to Ireland in 1937, Artaud believed that he was haunted by a poisonous magic charm and attacked by unidentified lethal forces. As these symptoms exacerbated, his mental state deteriorated, and he was diagnosed as suffering from a complex combination of schizophrenia, hysterics, theomania, and paranoia. For most of his life, Artaud was also crippled by grave drug addictions to morphine, opium, cocaine, and heroin. Initially, the drugs had been used for the treatment of his mental disease and appeasing the emotional affliction, psychological disorder, and physical torment.[372]

It is worth noting that Artaud spent nearly all the latter part of his life in an asylum. In 1946, after nine years of internment in the Rodez asylum, Artaud was rescued by a small group of contemporary avant-gardist rebels, his faithful followers, and close members of a circle of academic intelligentsia. During the 1930s and into the 1940s, Jacques Prevel, a young poet who had been deeply illuminated by Artaud's "enlightened" vision in quest for true absolute, became a disciple and a close "kindred spirit" for this detached, isolated, soberly self-aware and self-annihilated man of the theatre. Meanwhile, Prevel also served as Artaud's drug purveyor.[373] Intriguingly, those eight to nine years he spent in mental asylums are seen as Artaud's most prolific and creative period, over the course of a life abounding with mysteries, tragedies, and a ceaseless sense of profound solitude, estrangement, and "no-thingness."

Artaud saw language, logical thinking, analytical judgment, and the state of consciousness as futile. In his insanity, these were the last things he would rely on as he indulged in searching for profane sublimity, sacred grotesqueness, and pure cruelty. Artaud immersed himself in reaching an enlightened state in order to find the truest absoluteness. In the early 1920s, Artaud

[372] *Artaud: The Fiction Film*. See also, Martin Esslin, *Antonin Artaud* (New York: Penguin Books, 1977).
[373] *Artaud: The Fiction Film*.

deciphered his irrevocable anguish over philology, especially the inadequacy, deficiency, and sterility of language while attempting to convey "the fundamentals" that related to senses, nerves, physical body, heart, spirituality, innermost essence, and utmost metaphysical reality. For example, an actor (deemed Artaud's embodiment) spewed out his agony by mere vocal expression as Artaud's specter haunted his full "presence" in the screenplay, *Eighteen Second*s. Artaud himself was the "text" writer. He (the actor-Artaud) murmured: This man [a double for himself and simultaneously the actor in *Eighteen Seconds*] lacks language. The obsolete and impotent linguistic mechanism that had been deprived of its indigenous power no longer served its purpose. He could only visualize and capture antagonistic symbols and disparate images that crossed through his innermost state beyond the manipulation of the conscious and unrelated to logic in conventional language. With this unutterable reason, he could no longer handle daily life. He was said to be especially clumsy when having a conversation or trying to communicate with others. He had difficulty in establishing a deeper connection with the surrounding world. He felt an irredeemable necessity to demolish the systematic yet dysfunctional structure of language. By denying the adequacy of customary linguistic expression, he could see through true reality, emancipate the metaphysical substance of mind, body, flesh and its translucency, and unfold the genesis of Being.[374]

Rational language is customized to providing a vital way (if not the sole way) for humans to comprehend "interpreted truth"[375] through speeches and written texts. Artaud refuted such a

[374] See Antonin Artaud and Stephen Barber, "The Extremities of the Mind: Artaud's Film Project 1924-1935," in *Artaud: The Screaming Body: Films, Drawings and Recordings* (London: Creation Books, 2005), 8-32.

[375] Note that here what I mean by "interpreted truth" is a kind of true statement existing in the phenomenal world in which people reside. Interpreted truth represents the kind of "truth" that can be recognized, interpreted, and defined, like what is meant by the conceptual terms "identity," "gender," "culture," and "history" that can be constituted and altered. Such concepts have been argued against and criticized by post-structuralist, new-historicist, and de-constructionist theorists. These ideas can only be classified into the category of "the relative truth" instead of the "absolute one"—which can only get fulfilled by an enlightened mindfulness—that Artaud, the Surrealists, and Zen practitioners have attempted to realize and attain.

systematic language and urged that it should be substituted with a materialistic, non-naturalistic, and non-organic "being-ness" of expression. Artaud prioritized an insurrection of plastic, hieroglyphic, corporeal gestures and rigorously-stylized movements for the effects of de-familiarization. The ideal of untranslatable and inexplicable "concrete language"[376] beckoned at by Artaud is a resurrection of the physicality and plastic materialization of all absolute gesticulations through the performative presentation of actors' transcendental spirituality under the state of trance. Linguistic convention is cast off from the "presence" of total theatre. Instead, all the fatal factors are brought back to the interpenetrable centerless "center." These include non-verbal effects, such as plain, anti-narrative, and non-explanatory expressiveness along with pure vocal sounds that abandon interpretive rational meanings, and sound effects, such as loud stampings, bursting utterances, piercing screams and roars as if wrenched away from the darkest recesses of the heart and the essential profundity of being. Artaud's statement presented (and made even more intangible) the presence of his absolute theatre and its *mise en scene*:

> The soul-specter can be regarded as intoxicated with its own screams, something like the Hindu *mantras*—those consonances, those mysterious accents, in which the material secrets of the soul, tracked down to their lairs, speak out in broad daylight. The belief in a fluid materiality of the soul is indispensable to the actor's craft. To know that a passion is material, that it is subject to the plastic fluctuations of material, makes accessible an empire of passions that extends out sovereignty. To know that the soul has a corporeal expression permits the actor to unite with this soul from the other side, and to rediscover its being by [geometric] analogies.[377]

[376] Antonin Artaud, "Metaphysics and *Mise en Scene*," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 37-40.
[377] Antonin Artaud, "An Affective Athleticism," in *Theatre and Its Double*, 135.

Jacques Derrida's realization affirms that "the destructive text of Western metaphysics came to appropriate Artaud's body, and through a reading of that body as text [he] (Artaud) can offer us a reading of Western culture as a producer of madness."[378] It is interesting to note the difference between Derrida's deferral of the metaphysical or metaphysics[379] and Artaud's use of the terms to point towards the kind of alchemical, absolute, and magical theatre[380] he had desired. For Derrida, Artaud was a (mad) man whose *being* and writings--through which "a poetry of the senses and physicality"[381] was poured out--suggested "the overcoming of metaphysics [and its submission to] necessity [in the form of cruelty]."[382] Derrida pointed out that, in his madness, Artaud dwelled in a peculiar dimension where "the metaphysics of language and representation work together in such contradictory ways that the mind can be destroyed by them."[383] In brief, Artaud's veritable hieroglyphic[384] world of "exposed lucidity"[385] was a kind of sphere lingering on the edge of a poetic expression of language where *metaphysics*[386] and lunacy "that were unbearably piercing"[387] co-existed and "reflected each other."[388] I argue that the rubric of metaphysics was twofold (the negative and absolute): 1) it suggested the metaphysics of ideas[389] imbricated in verbal texts and linguistic conventions and 2) it pointed towards the metaphysical theatre of ideal cruelty which "signifies rigor, implacable intention and decision, irreversible and

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[378] Ibid.
[379] Ibid., 507-508.
[380] Antonin Artaud, "Metaphysics and *Mise en Scene*," "The Alchemical Theatre," in *The Theater and Its Double*, 33-52.
[381] Ibid., 37.
[382] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 164. And Antonin Artaud, "Letters on Cruelty," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 102. Artaud's words are those placed in brackets.
[383] Allen Thiher, "Jacques Derrida's Reading of Artaud," 504.
[384] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 90.
[385] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, 242, 252.
[386] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty (First Manifesto)," 90.
[387] Ibid., 95.
[388] Allen Thiher, "Jacques Derrida's Reading of Artaud," 505.
[389] Antonin Artaud, "Metaphysics and *Mise en Scene*," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 36.

absolute determination."[390] Artaud claimed that this was designed to summon "a transcendent experience of life and its poetic state"[391] where "*metaphysics* must be made to re-enter our minds through the skin…insurrection, agitation, and unrest."[392]

Abounding with surrealistic beauty, parodies of classical romances, and provocative violence displaying extreme persecution and harassment to challenge the idea of theatre and confront his audience both physically and emotionally, *The Spurt of Blood* was one of Artaud's few relatively successful and understandable plays. It was written and got published in 1925. However, it remained unproduced until staged by Peter Brook for the Royal Shakespeare Company in 1964. Blood, shit, ordure, urine, a disjointed corpse, bodily organs, and an act of copulation were placed on stage as an intimidating exhibition.[393] They aimed to stimulate shock experience in the audience and summon lucid cruelty and sublime darkness as true reality penetrating from the realm beyond. Collective unconsciousness was evoked amidst actors and audience. Genuine voice, direct communication, and thorough devotion of a total actor who was simultaneously a complete man were initiated under the ritualistic and alchemical theatre atmosphere. The fourth-wall barricade characteristic of realistic/naturalistic theatre was blurred and removed; the spectacle of total theatre thus underwent an illuminating experience of "unified wholeness." Immersed in the space of transcendent absoluteness, bombarded by sensory experiences, performers and spectators (as the reincarnated Dionysian apostles) were obsessed with intoxication and delirium through a quasi-religious ceremony.

The Historical Avant-Garde and Artaud

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[390] Antonin Artaud, "Letters on Cruelty," in *Theatre and Its Double*, 101.
[391] Antonin Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)," in *Theatre and Its Double*, 122.
[392] Antonin Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty (First Manifesto)," in *Theatre and Its Double*, 99. See also, Antonin Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)," 122.
[393] See Artaud and Barber, "The Extremities of the Mind," 8-32.

From an avant-gardist perspective, the Artaudian theatre of the mythological and magical shared a vocabulary with the legacies of historical avant-gardist social-political-cultural-artistic movements which included Dada and Surrealism. The intent of the avant-gardist rebels was to create upheaval and turn up-side-down the extant world orders. Christopher Innes observes:

> Their aim in revolutionizing aesthetics was to prefigure social revolution; and avant garde art is still characterized by a radical political posture. Envisioning a revolutionary future, it has been equally hostile to artistic tradition….Indeed, on the surface the avant garde as a whole seems united primarily in terms of what they are against: the rejection of social institutions and established artistic conventions, or antagonism towards the public, as representative of the existing order.[394]

The avant-gardist insurgents envisaged restructuring theatrical events and demolishing customary theatrical conventions by ending the full dependency on literary interpretations and discarding written (dramatic) texts as the central basis of theatre. They also rejected art as faithful mimesis or verisimilitude which resembled a reflection of "reality" and translation of "truth." More significantly, the tenets of these revolutionary vanguards were to see theatre as a powerful weapon to re-mold life, re-construct a sense of reality, and re-interrogate the depths and multidimensionalities of human existence.

In Innes's commentary, there appeared many hallmarks in the first historical avant-gardist trend. Instead of seeking for the "overtly modern qualities, such as the 1920s on romance of technology,"[395] the avant-gardists incorporated into their artistic practices the agenda of a retrospective introspection towards the primeval state. Thus the "paradigm shift" provoked by

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[394] Christopher Innes, "Introduction: Themes and Definitions," in *Avant-Garde Theatre 1892-1992* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.
[395] Ibid., 3.

the avant-gardist movements constructed primitivism as the provider of both the "key" and "answer" to their art and philosophical outlook. These primitive agendas gestured towards an "exploration of dream states or the instinctive and subconscious levels of the psyche; the quasi-religious focus on myth and magic, which in the theatre leads to experiments with ritual and the ritualistic patterning of performance."[396] More precisely, the tendency of seeking artistic, cultural, and philosophical asylum in primitivism was divided into two parts. The first was categorized by a realization influenced by the Jungian concept of collective unconsciousness and its exploration as an outpouring of psychological archetypes which were displayed in the figures of ancient myths. The second heralded the idea that searching for "symbolic or mythopoetic thinking preceding language and discursive reason revealed fundamental aspects of reality that [were] unknowable by any other means."[397] Both aimed to "return to man's roots, whether in the psyche or prehistory"[398] and "[embrace] anti-materialism and revolutionary politics,"[399] which represented another crucial hallmark of the historical avant-garde.

In the context of historical avant-gardist movements and as examples other than Artaud, Dadaists and Surrealists were more conscious of applying the general Buddhist ideas, especially Zen, in order to reshape a "new" theatre. As an heir to the legacy of Surrealism, Artaud intentionally articulated his association with Buddhism in the following aspects. He was fascinated with Eastern religion's aspiration for total emancipation and enlightenment. He was obsessed with the independence of the human's rational faculties when consummating the state of true being, true essence, and deepest reality revealed in Buddhist teaching. His essay, "Letter to the Dalai Lama," can be seen as "his plea for this non-rational tradition to exert its influence

[396] Ibid.
[397] Ibid.
[398] Ibid.
[399] Ibid.

on the stagnating culture of the West."[400] Through the following discourse, Artaud manifested a presentational performance, achieving the enlightenment state and entering the true reality of total absoluteness:

> Teach us, O Lama, the physical levitation of matter and how we may no longer be earthbound. For you well know what transparent liberation of souls, what freedom of the Mind in the Mind we mean….O true Pope in the Mind. With the inward eye I contemplate you, O Pope on the inward summit. It is inwardly that I am like you: I, dust, idea, lip, levitation, dream, cry, renunciation of idea, suspended among all the forms and hoping for nothing but the wind.[401]

"Address to the Dalai Lama" and "Letter to the Schools of the Buddha" are two unique texts in which Artaud expressed his fascination with and quest for an introspection and retrospection to the Oriential sources from the spheres of theatre and art to the realms of life, being, and religious spirituality. Different from his more implicit and latent intentions expressed in *The Theatre and Its Double*, in these two unusual articles, Artaud directly conversed with this specific oriental religious tradition. These texts situate his association with Buddhist essential philosophy and prove that his theoretical ideas and apocalyptic redemptive practices aimed for pursuing the aesthetic and theatrical absolute similar to the Buddhist ultimate transcendentality. According to Stephen Batchelor, a translator of Artaud's writings about Buddhism, both articles were published in 1925 as a romantic reverberation with Buddhism in early twentieth-century Europe.[402] Artaud's passionate and poignant statement which started his essay "Letter to the

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[400] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 95.
[401] Antonin Artaud, *Antonin Artaud Anothology*, ed. Jack Hirschman (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1961), 65.
[402] Stephen Batchelor, 1993, http://www.stephenbatchelor.org/online%20articles/antonin%20artaud.htm, 2.

Schools of the Buddha" depicted such a romantic, peculiar, and "hopeful" reverberation with Buddhism from the West:

> You who are disincarnate, who know at what point in its canal trajectory, its insensitive coming and going, that the soul finds the absolute verb, the new speech, the interior ground; you who know how one returns to oneself in thought and how the spirit can save itself from itself; you who are interior to yourselves; you for whom the spirit is no longer on the carnal plane…what will change in the avenues of the soul? In the spasms of the heart? In the despair of the spirit?[403]

Artaud's introspective, awakening experience reflected the perspective of the broader European pursuit for deeper Enlightenment that led to the East.

The historical avant-gardist approaches echoing Buddhist philosophy are chiefly based on the shared characteristics between the two by employing radical angles and a-logical, non-linguistic, and nonsensical means in countering the over-rationalized worldview. They both shared a distrust of words, conscious mind, and analytical rational thoughts in search for truth beyond ordinary reality. The impact of Buddhist tradition may seem like Artaud's use of chance or objective randomness, known as crucial techniques and key methods of avant-gardism, but it was by no means an accident.

Artaud and the Balinese Dance Theatre: Before and After

The Balinese theatre presents an archetype on which Artaud's development of philosophy of cruelty and "authentic" theatre (in the theoretical phase) was based. The idea of

[403] Antonin Artaud, "Open Letter to the Schools of the Buddha," in *La Revolution Surrealiste*, no. 3, April 15, 1925, http://www.stephenbatchelor.org/online%20articles/antonin%20artaud.htm, 1.

Balinese dance as performing transcendental poetic absoluteness arguably derived from Artaud's free associations, intuitive reflections, fantasizing imaginations, misunderstandings, and mis-interpretations common to Euro-centric observers. These observers are struck by a sense of being-at-home-ness and seeking an indigenous rooted-ness and belonging-ness craved by "modern" men long tormented by their fragmented souls and traumatic memories of ongoing exiles. Seeking a metaphysical and mystical asylum in which to reside, the modern men eventually place their imaginary projections and displaced nostalgic desires towards exotic uncivilized otherized sources.

The Balinese dance theatre is an Oriental dramatic form which has little to do with conscious thought and rational perception that are incorporated into the daily reality of human existence bound by the visible world. On the one hand, the Balinese dance acts as an outline or a mirror-reflection[404] of Artaud's idealistic "ideas" of "cruelty." From these ideas he was able to develop the pure and total theatre in its primal form, intimately centering on an explosion of the profoundest sense of fear. Artaud claimed: "An idea of the theatre has been lost…it is certain that we need above all a theatre that *wakes us up*: nerves and heart."[405] He continued: "In the practice of cruelty there is a kind of higher determinism, to which the executioner-tormentor himself is subject and which he must be determined to endure when the time comes. Cruelty is above all lucid, a kind of rigid control and submission to necessity."[406] Artaud's absolute cruelty and its extremity resonated with the irrational, unconscious, ecstatic, fatal, and fanatic ingredients manifested in the Balinese dance. His statement also echoed the elemental uniqueness that he saw in the Balinese performance, imbued with "a primal sense of fear and

[404] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 97.
[405] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 84.
[406] Antonin Artaud, "Letters on Cruelty," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 102.

danger and ritualistic, archetypal themes,"[407] through which Bali's "primitive cultural wealth… and native tradition of animism untouched by the march of modern civilization"[408] was amplified. On the other hand, with roots in mythology, religion, and mystic cults, the Balinese dance is itself similar to a living demonstration of Artaud's crystal-clear intention in regard to "the mechanism of the liberated consciousness"[409] and "the highly esteemed spirit of man that is endlessly shifting around"[410] at work in the "invented new houses."[411]

> According to Artaud, he was intrigued by and strove for:
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> making theatre a believable reality [an alternate truth state] inflicting this kind of tangible laceration, contained in all true feeling, on the heart and senses. In the same way as our dreams react on us and reality reacts on our dreams, so we believe ourselves able to associate mental pictures with dreams, effective in so far as they are projected with the required violence….On condition it releases the magic freedom of daydreams, only recognizable when imprinted with terror and cruelty.[412]

The Balinese performance is the perfection of Artaud's idealist presence of genuine absolute theatre, whose prototype was engendered from his fragmented mental state. Susan Sontag was correct in pointing out that the stimulation Artaud received from the Balinese dance "could just as well have come from observing the theatre of a Dahomey tribe or the shamanistic ceremonies of the Patagonian Indians."[413] The Balinese dance that Artaud saw in 1931 was performed by the Peliatan gamelan troupe from Bali. At the International Colonial Exposition, several

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[407] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 114.
[408] Ibid., 113.
[409] Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theater," 216.
[410] Artaud, "Letter to the Schools of the Buddha," 2.
[411] Ibid.
[412] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 85-87.
[413] See Beryl de Zoete and Walter Spies, *Dance and Drama in Bali* (London: Faber and Faber, 1938), 166.

performance pieces that were showcased were concerned with a mélange of ancient rituals, plays selected from fabled Hindu sources, and contemporaneous innovations in the Balinese theatre.[414]

The Balinese dance tradition has a close connection with Hinduism and Buddhism. Although the origins of both religions can be traced back to India, many fundamental differences lie between Hinduism (an older religion than Buddhism) and Buddhism. For instance, Buddhists do not claim the existence of "souls" or affirm the first and ultimate cause (the supreme Creator). According to the Dalai Lama, Buddhism (which was founded by Sikyamuni the Buddha) is characterized as a non-theistic spiritual tradition. Although not created by a specific individual, Hinduism is theistic and known for its religious pluralism. Although both traditions validate the principles of karma and reincarnation, Buddhism and Hinduism have shaped their precepts through diverse theoretical foundations and thereby differ in the way that their tenets of karmic rebirth and causality have influenced individual human beings' daily existence in the physical world. As a direct heir to the Dada and Surrealist insurgency against cognizable reasoning and conventional truth, Artaud freely associated[415] the Balinese dance performance with the exact means and ends of an authentic total theatre that he had longed for. Artaud had hoped that through his pursuit of "exotic influences with a fervor,"[416] these assorted resources that originated in the rich "primitive" cultures of the East "could shed light on the profound problems of modern man."[417]

In his "Letter to the Schools of the Buddha," Artaud poignantly expressed profound problems that the modern men had been struggling with and "suffering from corruption, from the corruption of reason. Logical Europe endlessly smashes the spirit between the hammers of two

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[414] See Leonard Pronko, "Artaud and the Balinese Dream," in *Theatre East and West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967), 7-33.
[415] Stanley Lai, 96-97.
[416] Ibid., 94.
[417] Ibid.

terms….The Spirit is larger than the spirit, the metamorphoses of life are manifold…come and tear down our houses!"[418] The Balinese dance that Artaud saw at the 1931 International Colonial Exposition in Paris was obviously not his first exposure to the Oriental philosophy and theatre that had been infiltrating the entirety of Artaud's mind, which was eccentrically subject to revolts of the irrational, hallucinatory, rapturous, magical, lunatic, and unconscious. When he was an actor in the early 1920s, Artaud studied with Charles Dullin, who held workshops aimed at experimenting on and diversifying actor's training disciplines such as gymnastics, dance, and pantomime, in order to mold the actor to his full completion.[419] Dullin's fascination with certain Oriental performing techniques and actor training methods, which were highly formalistic, stylized, symbolic, and poetic, reshaped his very concept of an actor. Some examples of the particular training methods are the use of masks in classical Japanese Noh theatre and the tradition of Kabuki as well as the symbolic physical gestures (facial expressions) of Beijing opera performers. Dullin's concept in turn influenced Artaud and evoked his ideas of the theatre and actors both appealing to "the total."[420] In particular, Dullin inspired Artaud through his innovative improvisational exercises with masks, which required the de-personification, de-subjectification, and "disenchantment" of the actors and strengthened "the sacred and mystical aspects of theatre."[421] Dullin's insights about performance and his experimental exercises are the opposite of the psychological, representational, and realistic facets that predominated among his contemporaries.

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[418] Antonin Artaud, "Letter to the Schools of the Buddha," 1.
[419] Frantisek Deak, "Antonin Artaud and Charles Dullin: Artaud's Apprenticeship in the Theatre," in *Educational Theatre Journal*, 29, March, 1978, 346. What I mean by "to the actor's full completion" here, according to Dullin, it is that for example he wanted to make the actor into a well-rounded actor who possesses all necessary talents.
[420] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)," 123.
[421] Deak, "Antonin Artaud and Charles Dullin," 346, 348.

In addition to Dullin's inspiration, during the early 1920s, Artaud saw a Cambodian dance performance in Marseilles, which was given in front of a reconstruction of an idiosyncratic Cambodian temple complex of Angkor Vat, a significant religious center. The major structure of Cambodian dance is framed by emulating the movements of shadow-puppets. Through his treatise and theatrical manifesto: "The Alfred Jarry Theatre" published in the mid-1920s, Artaud sketched the fundamental philosophy and laid out the cornerstones of his revolutionary, "new" concepts of theatre. In the mid-1920s, Artaud together with Roger Vitrac and Robert Arons established the ill-fated and short-lived[422] Théâtre Alfred Jarry. From this experience, Artaud was able to put into practice "the first full expression of these ideas;"[423] it was indeed Artaud's very first chance to take a leap of faith. Artaud achieved his artistic peak through his idealist theory-practice (or concept-theatre) of the theatre of cruelty which was created five years after he saw the Balinese dance exhibition in the early 1930s. Despite the fact that, from its birth to its demise, there was only one production that had been staged within the framework of the theatre of cruelty, *The Cenci* was seen as completely espousing the core philosophy of the theatre of cruelty. More remarkable than the first and last of the theatre-of-cruelty endeavors was the publication of *The Theatre and Its Double* in 1938, which consisted of Artaud's crucial writings.

First Encounter Between Artaud and Buddhism

To frame the following discussions about Artaud, I use as a background the Buddhist guideline of "two truths" to explain what enlightenment means in the context of oriental religious ideas and to ask through this "two- truths" framework, what kind of "truth" shall be illumined via Buddhist enlightenment experience. In Chapter Two, I analyzed the Buddhist philosophy of

[422] The ill fate and short life of Théâtre Alfred Jarry basically resulted from its confrontation with financial difficulties and radical hostilities from critics.
[423] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 90.

"two truths and one reality." Such a theoretical foundation is applied here to support my major argument and the way I understand Artaud's theatre of cruelty as both a means and end for his quest for an alternative enlightenment truth. This Buddhist "two truths and one reality theory" serves as a barometer to compare the original Buddhist principle with how Artaud internalized the Buddhist idea about ultimate spiritual awakening through performing an alternative "two truths that comprise (one) reality."[424]

Despite the fact that the idiosyncratic "Artaudian" (be it his theoretical discourse, aesthetic practice, or philosophical writing) is inaccessible and inconceivable at its core, one of the important clues to Artaud's application of Buddhist enlightenment understanding is his penchant for demolishing anything that uses dichotomy and dualism to embrace the absolute. In this respect, his view very much echoed Buddhism in affirming that "two truths" are concerned with conventional reality and absolute truth as subject to (one) ultimate reality. Unlike Buddhism, which affirms the perfect compatibility of ultimate emptiness (non-dualistic essence) and its perturbing phenomena (dualistic appearances), Artaud confirmed a total denial of Christian civilization, where God is not only the rescuer but also the Creator and Creation itself. God is the Harmony, the Genesis, and the authoritative one who "writes," delivers "speeches," names and defines, and fabricates the singular truth. Therefore, Artaud considered it essential to do away with the violence of language and to demolish the hegemony of written texts and verbal speeches characteristic of the theological playwright-oriented occidental theatre, that has imprisoned the "true being" of a genuine theatre within the Aristotelian dramatic legacy. It is imperative to break with rationality to evoke the primitive, indigenous, pre-human, a-/pre-historical, a-logical, and pre-civilized, and to distill such hieroglyphic symbols (substances). As an insurgent, Artaud endeavored to reverse the totalitarian dictatorship of dogmas which was molded and interpreted

[424] The Dalai Lama, *Transcendent Wisdom,* 11-29.

by a universal value. Artaud saw that the embellished appearance of a universal value recognized as an unwavering singular truth was manipulated by a distorted ideological system. Constituted by a dualistic structure and characterized by relative reality or phenomenal truth, such a universal value and ideological system are similar to the Buddhist philosophical view of the material world. Artaud saw that "a rational attempt to reinforce…served as a violent testimony to the ultimate irrationality behind the whole of traditional Western culture"[425] and also plagued the occidental theatre.

Artaud saw that the ultimate irrationality of the rational world caused the bankruptcy of Western rationalism and the collapse of linear and progressive views of world history and human civilization that combined with rationalism trapped humankind into stagnation. He upheld the importance of approaching trance and dream states and incorporating the hallucinatory and the insane as detours that led towards the highest and truest truth. Different from Buddhism (for which illumination of the profound absolute as ultimate emptiness of emptiness is much more subtle), Artaud believed that dream state, hallucination, and madness were essential for achieving translucency by renouncing the conventional and fraudulent view of perceiving things as two independent realities.[426]

August Strindberg's preface to *A Dream Play* illustrates Artaud's self-conscious anatomy of his experimental theatrical endeavors through using a striking amalgamation of expressionism, symbolism, stream of consciousness, surrealism, techniques of anti-linear narrative, and collage. What is displayed in *A Dream Play* is an attempt to imitate an eccentric, distinctive yet indefinite form characteristic of what one would experience in a non-identifiable fluidity or dissimilarity of

[425] Stanley Lai, *Orietnal Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 72.
[426] I have explained these ideas in detail in chapter two. I will discuss the way that differentiates Artaud's theory from Buddhism in their ideas about the states of daydreaming, hallucination, and madness in the following section.

a dream state. Strindberg, who sought to exhibit "the disconnected but apparently logical form of a dream,"[427] noted:

> Anything can happen; everything is possible and probable. Time and space do not exist; on a slight groundwork of reality, imagination spins and weaves new patterns made up of memories, experiences, unfettered fancies, absurdities and improvisations. The charaters are split, double, multiply; they evaporate, crystallize, scatter and converge. But a single consciousness holds sway over them all—that of the dreamer [in Artaud's case, this dreamer was the lucid mindfulness and unimpeded awareness of Artaud].
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> For him there are…no incongruities, no scruples and no law…and since on the whole, there is more pain than pleasure in the dream, a tone of melancholy, and of compassion for all living things….Sleep, the liberator, often appears as a torturer, but when the pain is at its worst, the sufferer awakes—and is thus reconciled with reality.[428]

Strindberg's dream realm of beyond-ness offered possibilities to access a crucial facet of Artaud's clandestine and idealistic total theatre of cruelty as shown in *The Spurt of Blood* and *The Cenci*. The Artaudian mythological and metaphysical theatre yearned for an illuminating presence as a blend of purity, luminosity, spontaneity, involuntary memory, direct experience, absurdity, imaginary improvisation, and unfamiliar juxtaposition, where the multi-faceted identities of the characters were blurred, volatile, split, doubled, evaporated, condensed, fragmented, cohered, and unified. Dramatic scenarios were to be disjointed and nonsensical. Anything can happen. Everything was possible and plausible. According to the luminous transparency of the dreamer's mindset and the principle of how the unconscious manipulated the unknown realm of the metaphysical magical dream state, there emerged no rigid dimensionality.

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[427] August Strindberg, "A Dream Play," in *Six Plays of Strindberg,* trans. Elizabeth Sprigge (New York: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), 193.
[428] Ibid.

Displacement, condensation, amplification, fragmentation, imbrication, and metamorphosis substituted the binary oppositions of self/other, subject/object, and appropriator/appropriated, because anything bound by dualism was only legitimized in the domain of relational phenomena (relative truth) instead of absolute reality. This explains why Artaud considered that the truer truth came from the dream state or transcendental rapturous lunacy.

Opposing Artaud's parallel dream state is what Buddhists understand as "pure trueness," the phenomena in the material world where occurrences in the relative reality are a simile for undergoing nothing "real" (the ephemeral dream-like experiences are momentary, volatile, and impermanent). In this regard, both Buddhism and Artaud argue that the unconscious and nonsensical are key to absoluteness and genuine totality. They value "the essential true being" beyond ordinary relationality and phenomenal appearances. They also admit that the void and vastness of "being-ness" lies beyond the boundary of logical thinking launched by the conscious mind. And the ultimate truth lies beyond the reach of cognitive intelligence, conceptual knowledge, and the perception of rational thought.

Using a Buddhist perspective to analyze the dream state can be understood as an antithesis to Artaud's thesis concerning the indispensable association of true reality with dreams. According to Buddhists, the dream state is one of the crucial keys to attaining the truth. However, it would be invalid to claim that what is disclosed in the dream state is absolute reality. The realm of the truest truth can be reached only if attachments to visions exposed in the dream state are thoroughly penetrated and let go. Therefore, absolute trueness is by no means the manifestation of dreams.

Utilizing the automatism of the mind and the operation of the unconscious, especially in states of delirium, intoxication, daydreaming, or hallucinatory imagination is an alternative way

to truth. It is disassociated from the idea of learning truth through empiricism, rational consciousness, or mathematic calculation, and is named in Buddhism as "the mechanism of the sixth consciousness of human conscious mind at a subtler level."[429] That also means that this semi-illumined dream experience is not necessarily related to attaining enlightenment nor has it to do with the highest transcendental truth.

According to Huai-Jin Nan,[430] the intricacy of "mental consciousness" (also known as mind-consciousness or human consciousness in general)[431] includes at least three individual yet interrelated connections among the sixth, seventh, and eighth consciousness. The sixth consciousness is rooted in comprehension, discernment, and cognitive perception. The seventh consciousness is known as an afflicted mind or a mind that is particularly afflicted with ego whose main function is to make deep-rooted attachments. The eighth consciousness is both the preliminary and most profound manipulation of mind-consciousness in a living being (in Buddhism this term means a sentient being, like humankind). The eighth consciousness is known as the foundational consciousness (or mind-bias-of-all) and largely functions as a kind of storage. This mental storage contains memories, thoughts, beliefs, modes of customary behavior, and habits that are "seeds"[432] accumulated during infinite reincarnations. Regardless of how delicate these "seeds" are, they have been imbedded in the reservoir of the "indestructible" [433] eighth consciousness. According to experienced Zen meditative practitioners, mystics, and Buddhist

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[429] Huai-Jin Nan, *What The Diamond Sutra Predicates* (Taipei: Lao Gu Publishing, 1992), 417-421. See also W. Soothill and L. Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 473.
[430] Huai-Jin Nan earned his early fame and great reputation as a talented literary writer, a contemporary Chinese Buddhist theorist, a Taoist philosopher, a Confucian scholar and historian. More importantly, Nan is known as an experienced and insightful Zen Buddhist practitioner.
[431] According to the analysis in W. Soothill and L. Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 473. The so-called mental consciousness, *Vijnana*, the humankind mindfulness, or, (mind-) consciousness in a broader sense displays the art of distinguishing, perceiving, recognizing, thinking, discerning, understanding, comprehending, distinction, intelligence, knowledge, science, learning, capability of discrimination and differentiation, performance of criticism, and an attaining of conventional worldly wisdom, and so forth.
[432] A Buddhist conceptual term. See Huai-Jin Nan, *What The Diamond Sutra Predicates*, 439-443. See also W. Soothill and L. Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 473.
[433] Ibid.

masters, the dream state originates in the reflection of the sixth consciousness. When a human being falls asleep, the sixth consciousness continues to function and engenders the "isolated sixth consciousness"[434] that manages and interacts with external or internal stimulants. The isolated sixth consciousness also occurs when a person is in a condition of hypnosis, deep relaxation, a state of trance-like and profound stillness while practicing meditation, or while participating in a religious ceremony or a mystical rite.[435] Sleep-walking and out-of-body experiences also derive from the isolated sixth consciousness. More significantly in the case of Artaud, the isolated consciousness can be transformed into the metamorphoses of visions or illusions that are produced by mental illness, psychosis, and encephalasthenia.[436] This could explain the possible "illumined" revelations comparable to Buddhist enlightenment that Artaud experienced and envisioned as alternative facets of true reality.

In the Buddhist precept of enlightenment, luminosity of clear-light mindfulness and absolute truth state of essential emptiness are devoid of mind-consciousness and intrinsic existence, so that the subjective experience of emptiness and self-emptiness are the summit of true essence and ultimate reality. Because such absolute empty states are independent of dreams, they are not governed even by the isolated sixth consciousness and can therefore be completely transcendental.

In the following section, I analyze Artaudian theory and his methods of searching for enlightenment and the extent to which he internalized Buddhist concepts of enlightenment and

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[434] A typical Buddhist conceptual term. See Huai-Jin Nan**,** *Discourses on Zen and Taoism* (Taipei: Lao Gu Publishing, 2003). See also W. Soothill and L. Hodous, *A Dictionary of Chinese Buddhist Terms*, 473.
[435] See Huai-Jin Nan, *Discourses on Zen and Taoism* (Taipei: Lao Gu Publishing, 2003). Huai-Jin Nan, *How to Become a Buddhist Practitioner and Attain Enlightenment* (Taipei: Lao Gu Publishing, 2004). See also Huai-Jin Nan, *What the Diamond Sutra Predicates*, 417-483.
[436] Encephalasthenia is a pathology that suggests a kind of mental fatigue due to emotional stress.

absolute emptiness. Artaud's aspirations for mysterious illumination include: 1) his enlightened vision of the theatre of cruelty, and 2) the problem of theatre as the double.

Second Encounter: Artaud's Enlightened Truth: The Theatre of Cruelty as Transcendental Absolute

As Christopher Innes observes, Artaud's "Holy Theatre [which was] an aspiration to transcendence, [and] to the spiritual in its widest sense" [437] was constructed within the realm of experimental avant-gardist theatre that was anti-materialistic and revolutionary in both its forms and its spirit. The theoretical ideal and performative discourse presented throughout the theatre of cruelty integrated the concerns that prevailed at the time, such as "a reversion to original forms, the Dionysian rituals of ancient Greece, shamanistic performances, and Balinese dance-drama."[438] A yearning to return to human beings' roots (by following the Jungian concept proposing that the unconscious was a route leading towards psychic and psychological archetypes or prehistoric life sources[439]) and primitivistic existence, Artaudian theatre of cruelty claims that a metaphysical, "symbolic or mythopoetic thinking precedes language and discursive reason, [and] revealing fundamental aspects of reality that are unknownable by any other means."[440]

In his "Open Letter to the Schools of Buddha," Artaud repudiated reasoning as "the chains that bind us in a petrifying imbecility of the mind."[441] He upheld the idea that the stage has its own theatrical and poetic reality--the higher and truer truth that is distinctive from life. For Artaud, life experience in relative reality is nothing more than the double of true reality. This

[437] Innes, "Introduction: Themes and Definitions," 3.
[438] Ibid.
[439] I use the idea proposed by Christopher Innes, and I paraphrase his analysis.
[440] See Mircea Eliade, *Myths, Rites, Symbols* 2 Vols. (New York: HarperCollins, 1976), 1:88.
[441] Antonin Artaud, "Open Letters to the School of the Buddha," 1.

alternate reality "destroys conventional assumptions and simultaneously presents alternate visions of the world."[442] Artaud perceived communicative powers as hindered by the intervention of language and words and also scorned the handicap of reason and logical thinking. For a true liberation from the detention of rational consciousness, he advocated for a spiritual enlightenment linked to a new theatre vision and a new Mind of this pure theatre. He claimed that this "enlightenment in theatre" can be fulfilled only through a disclosure of the fatality of life and a relapse to the primordial life source similar to an unfolding of true nature and true essence of absolute theatre. This true nature manifested in the new yet indigenous theatrical language was in Artaud's own terminology a "concrete language."[443] Artaud promoted a provocative vision by discussing the theatre of cruelty as "created of the sense of immediacy and reality."[444] His "concrete conception of the abstract"[445] was ideally and philosophically attained by its own intense reality and the chaotic and fatal moments of an essential being-ness during a devoted performance.

Artaud pointed out the irretrievability of invented language, scorning instrumental rationality, and called for a detachment from subjective mind in the face of absolute reality. His de-emphasis of human reason was best conveyed in the 1925 "Letter to the Buddhist Schools":

> We suffer from a rottenness, from the rottenness of Reason. Logical Europe crushes the mind endlessly between the hammer blows of two extremes, she opens the mind only to close it again. But now the suffocation is at its peak, we have suffered too long under the yoke. The

[442] Innes, "Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty," 93.
[443] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 37, 38, 40, 91.
[444] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre of Cruelty (Second Manifesto)," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 123-127.
[445] Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theatre," 224.

> mind is greater than the mind, the metamorphoses of life are many. Like you, we reject progress: come, tear down our houses.[446]

Artaud's detachment from rationality and dualism originated in his intent to bombard conventional truth which in turn became materialized in his attack on the text-stricken and speech-rooted occidental theatre. Artaud's pursuit of spiritual enlightenment and sublime absoluteness was realized in the presence of the idealistic oriental theatre such as the ritualistic Balinese dance performance. His outlook on True Reality was later integrated into the transcendent manifestation in the theatre of cruelty. In many respects, the spiritual awakening that Artaud sought through the total presence of a pure theatre shared both figurative and literal meanings with the "absolute reality" and "ultimate truth" of Buddhist precepts. However, the Artaudian spiritual enlightenment remained idiosyncratic and only connected to his own illumination.

Artaud's statements about an ever-becoming alternating truth state (alternating from the realm of physical reality to hallucinatory and poetic panorama) were idiosyncratic and resulted in extremely abstracted and vague ideas for his readers and spectators. This is also the case with Artaud's quest for enlightenment and his yearning for "absolute truth" using the model of the pure, esoteric, and total theatre of cruelty. The archetype of this total being in unprecedented theatrical forms was derived from the ritualistic religious performance of Balinese dance theatre. His exposure to a trance-like state of ultimate absoluteness and metaphysical revelation was particularly ambiguous and difficult because this absolute reality was "translated" from Artaud's fragmented yet luminous mind to his theoretical writings and performative prose about the theater of cruelty. Compared to his theatrical practice of "cruelty," Artaud's philosophical dialectics are deemed successful, astounding, and inspirational. Artaudian theories, theatrical

[446] Antonin Artaud, "Letter to the Schools of the Buddha," 1.

performances, philosophical and aesthetic writings are all colored by his peculiar and intense fascinations, hallucinatory images, free revelatory associations independent of rationality, and his states of rapture, dreaming, and ecstatic lunacy. Stanley Lai explains:

> Artaud…writes in a style that seems detached from logical organizational processes. There are no theses to be found in his essays….It could be said that he rambles on, and the reader picks out leitmotifs here and there. Artaud tends to state his observations [or, illuminations], then leave the reader without a sense of their being fully developed or supported. It seems as if, in his essays, he expounds continually on the same, barely describable themes of an underlying chaos behind observable life, and how that chaos can be tapped through new theatrical means.[447]

Artaud's deep-rooted obsession with launching a subversive new vision of theatre, unpacking the essence of life, and questing for an indescribable state of being to resolve modern man's existential predicament were inaccessible for anyone other than himself. His "elusive" approaches emanated from chronic mental illnesses and physical pain and cannot be ignored in this analysis. Susan Sontag points out that Artaud's fatal plight was "the torment of a sensibility that judges itself to be irreparably estranged from thought, [and a] conviction of his chronic alienation from his own consciousness."[448] In Lai's delineation, "it was precisely this excruciating alienation that endowed Artaud with the prophetic sensibility that was to influence the course of modern experiments in [theatrical performance]."[449]

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[447] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 98.
[448] Susan Sontag, "Artaud," in *Antonin Artaud: Selected Writings* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1976), xx, xxi.
[449] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrent in Modern Western Theatre*, 89.

Artaud's theatre of cruelty left an everlasting "Zen *koan*" for directors from the 1960s onwards who were influenced by his ideas and methods. So this total theatre (koan) was even more aloof and mystical than the man himself. The fatality of the Artaudian theatre of cruelty lies in the realization that the accurate answer to this koan mystery has never been given. Therefore, the ongoing experiences of "story-telling" (instead of a fact-reliant journalistic report)[450] evoked ever-becoming "presence" (instead of representations of the iconized Artaudian masterpiece) that was independent of a dominant voice and devoid of the subjugation of interpretation and the tyranny of writing. To a great extent, one can only access a very slim part of Artaud the man, his theatrical practices and philosophical discourses. As an example, during a 1931 Balinese dance performance at the International Colonial Exposition, Artaud articulated the ideal embodiment of the true being of primitive existence and transcendental spiritual awakening in its materialization along with his prophetic visions for creating an eccentric Artaudian enlightenment.

In Artaud's revelation, absolute reality and ultimate truth cannot be attained by rationality or logical thinking but only via a retreat from the exterior of the ordinary world in order to exult in a dreamworld, and a rapturous state was achieved by the deepest recesses of the subconscious and by withdrawing into nothingness. For "beyond the unconscious, in nothingness, was truth."[451] As revealed in Artaud's theoretical performance and related artistic prose, the theater of divine cruelty was an absolute presence and Artaudian ultimate transcendence that aimed to blow up dualism and yearned for direct communication, seeing, and experience. By penetrating absolute trueness and achieving total trancendentality beyond all conceptual conventions and

[450] The ideas of storytellers and journalism stem from Walter Benjamin. The reason I integrate Benjamin's conceptual terms into Artaud's text is because, in a sense, I see the ideas of storyteller and journalism as corresponding to the ideas of presence and representation marked by Artaud.
[451] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 72-73.

verbal expressions, the very summit of existence and the final mode of subsistence emerged. For Artaud, the highest truth was transcendentality, and the true nature of the theatre of cruelty was its full presence. This sacred lucidity of the theatre of cruelty can be fulfilled thorough awakening to the fact that in essence, everything is in a state of unanimity.

Another Artaudian affinity with Buddhism is the perspective that two truths comprise one reality. The entire Buddhist theoretical system is based on such a realization because it frames its philosophical structure. In *The Theatre and Its Double,* Artaud incorporates this Buddhist precept into his approaches and states that: "If theatre is the double of life, then life is the double of the true theatre."[452] "Theatre is the double of life" refers to the mainstream conventional Occidental theatre, theological theatre, playwright-dominated and Aristotelian-derived dramatic/literary theatre, and theatre of representation that is subject to an illusory reflection of "realistic/naturalistic life." According to Artaud, this psychological theatre aimed at mimicking life has been sabotaged by the limited expressions of written texts, namely, anything that was shaped by linguistic conventions. The Aristotelian dramatic legacy has been repressive and targeted a representational interpretation of the rationalistic mindset, serving as a mouthpiece for God in the form of theatre. Both its form(s) and content(s) were mimetic representations of life and nature, as a mirror and embodiment of societal and historical "facts." All the elements in a theatrical spectacle were subordinate and seen as the duplicate and complementary of each other. Therefore, representation-stricken dramatic theatre is a domain established by the rule of relative reality. It is a sphere based on phenomenal (conventional) truth and thereby attached to dualism, relationality, and extremes. In Buddhist philosophy, anything that can be translated, doubled, and

[452] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 48-52.

explained in the phase of phenomenal truth is classified by "provisional interpretation."[453] Through mirroring and re-writing, there exists no "absoluteness." With the rule of relative reality, nothing is able to sustain the "examinations." Therefore, Artaud's "theatre is the double of life" suggests that both theatre which reflects and life which is reflected are nothing more than a fraudulent duplication in the realm of the relational, instead of ultimate and translucent.

Artaud's vision of theatrical and poetic reality as ultimate truth was similar to the Buddhist description of enlightened experience, where essential absolute is revealed. The latter part of "life is the double of a true theatre" refers to a total and sacred theatre in which the presence of *mise-en-scene* is its full materialization. According to Artaud's view (though it is questionable whether Artaud's revelation stemmed from a cultural misunderstanding and exotic imagination), this true theatre, which even disillusioned "realistic" life and made it the double, was the essential transcendence. This was already perceived in the tradition of religion-rooted and ritual-oriented oriental theatre, where the principles of logic, rationality, and interpretations were de-emphasized and gave way to the metaphysical, mythological, occultist, magical, mystical, and alchemical. Therefore, Artaud acclaimed Balinese theatre as the exhibition of gestural codes that created a hieroglyphic web of internal symbolism and spiritual connotations as performed in quasi-shamanistic ritual.[454] He elevated the extremely intense and highly formalistic dance performance as transmitting "the revelatory aspect of matter, which seemed suddenly to scatter into signs in order to teach us the metaphysical identity of the concrete and the abstract [and their spontaneous correspondences through direct encounter]."[455] In other words, in the Balinese presence, Artaud realized: "the fundamental through-line is that the theatrical

[453] A Buddhist conceptual term refers to all (that is perceived) in the material world and conventional phenomena. See the Dalai Lama, *The Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 103, 104, 105.
[454] Antonin Artaud, "On the Balinese Theatre," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 58-60.
[455] Ibid., 220.

[experience] should be a *reality*, not an illusion….This is the creation of reality, the unprecedented eruption of a world. The theatre must give us this ephemeral but real world, this world tangential to objective reality."[456]

In a substance-driven total theatre, an ideal of the metaphysical and absolute theatre and a state of total unanimity ("not two") presents things just as they are in the transcendentality. In the Buddhist idea, anything that is consummated in its ultimate state (though retaining its capacity to perform and exert a perturbation in material reality) is categorized as the "definitive interpretation."[457] Artaud presented these concepts by creating a beyond-consciousness realization of feelings, senses, nerves, heart, and spirituality through a denial of conventional reality. Artaud proclaimed, "While using its [essential] principles as subliminal support for an alternative vision: 'reality [is] seen simultaneously from recto and verso.'"[458] There is a further linkage between Artaud and Buddhism, as he searched for how to enter into the highest truth. Both Artaud and Buddhism agree that there are two truths comprising one reality. The absolute trueness is the final aim and enlightened truth. However, without making a detour via relative reality and physical phenomena, this ultimate truth remains unapproachable. Paradoxically, renunciation is an act of attachment instead of a detachment. The profound substance remains unreachable without seeing the perturbation of the sublime, that is, materialization in the phenomenal this side-ness for a compatible unfolding of the transcendental other-shore-ness. Artaud devoted the formulation of his ideas to an eccentric stage reality and recognized that "it is this false reality which is [traditional occidental dramatic/literary] theatre and it's that which it is necessary to cultivate….The false in the context of the *true*."[459] He simultaneously admitted that

[456] Antonin Artaud, "The Alfred Jarry Theatre," in *Selected Writings*, 155.
[457] The Dalia Lama, *The Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 103, 104, 105, 107.
[458] "Theatre Alfred Jarry…1929," in *OC, Vol. 2*, 34.
[459] *OC, vol. 2*, 78-79.

relative truth was false and embedded in the context of the essential trueness, while also insisting on a thorough negation of the false and "doubled" material reality. In this respect, Artaud failed to align with Buddhist ideas of "self-emptiness" (emptiness of emptiness as ultimate state) as the most profound (true) suchness. Opposing the complete renunciation asserted by Artaud, Buddhists reach the absolute through "allowance" and "acceptance" rather than denial and resistance. According to Buddhism, there exists "nothing" to be negated or renounced nor is there any intrinsic existence or independent solidity to be either confirmed or refuted in transcendental emptiness.

The fundamental agenda of Artaud's theatre of cruelty is to disturb the type of reality that was seen as an obstacle to the higher truth. His agenda is also to dismantle the (naturalistic) illusion that appeals to psychological reflections rather than to "a conviction of [theatrical/true] reality,"[460] which in its total presence "*is* the *thing*."[461] According to Artaud, deconstructing the frontier built up by "mimesis" is to "transform the world into an alternate reality"[462] and "mystical reality." Such a quasi-religious illumination and quasi-metaphysical subliminal life ritual is reachable only through bodies, senses, spirits, hallucinatory instincts, and unconscious. The exultation of all "in union" by transcending rationality, tearing apart all forms of dichotomies initiated by social discourse, is both a return to and an attainment of (subjective and objective) interpenetrable lucidity. It aims at a retrospective introspection to the pre-rational a-historical recesses and primeval "Mind" state that is fully emancipated and detached but also "in direct contact with the cruelty at the root of existence."[463] In other words, Artaud's agenda of subverting physical reality for the attainment of spiritual truth resonates with the Sixth Patriarch

[460] Innes, "Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty," 75.
[461] Ibid., 82.
[462] Ibid., 78.
[463] Ibid., 81.

(of Zen school) Hui-Neng's enlightenment: "Non-form as the substance, no-thought as the main doctrine, non-abiding as the basis."[464] In Artaud's text selected from his thoughts on Lugné-Poe's production of Maeterlinck's *Pelléas and Mélisande*, he refers to a discussion about real lighting in staging as very much "live" and "present" there. Through this Artaud arrived at the core of his concepts and expressed his ideal: "Here was truly living…; it was aware, it emitted aroma, becoming a new sort of active force and giving to his settings and… a luminosity like that in the ultimate absence of consciousness of the 'dervish.'"[465]

Third Encounter: Artaudian Divine Cruelty, Zen Koan, Hua-Tou, and Brutalizing Violences

As mentioned earlier when describing Zen Buddhism, there is a notorious and "mysterious"[466] "pedagogical tool" (or teaching)[467] called koan. Koan is usually presented as a complete story (be it a historical event or fable), which may not make sense at all. The aim of koan is to see the truth behind occurrences. If successful, a Zen practitioner may achieve spiritual awakening (although not necessarily a full enlightenment) by contemplating and "undoing" a koan, unpacking its mystery, and disclosing the "answer." In that case, the practitioner does not

[464] Cited here is one of the famous quotations preached by the Sixth Patriarch of Chinese Zen School in *The Platform of the Sixth Patriarch*, whose idea has been explained in Chapter Two. See *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth* Patriarch, 137-138.
[465] Antonin Artaud, in *Cahiers Renaud-Barrault, vol. 71*, 17.
[466] Koan in Zen Buddhism is seen as not only mysterious but also legendary, and it easily causes misunderstandings, wrong uses, and misinterpretations. These non-appropriate usages of koan may not only decorate koan in some unnecessarily mysterious, "exotic" veil, but will also very likely result in confusion and false apprehension of enlightenment experience in Zen Buddhism. In some sense, Zen has been "popularized" worldwide nowadays, thereby resulting in a great many publications to preserve Zen as a religious heritage and cultural property. The documentation and collections of a variety of volumes of Zen koans should be one of the preservative products of cultural legacy. On the one hand, due to misunderstandings of the very means and ends of employing koan in Zen school, and on the other hand, because of false apprehensions of enlightened experience and enlightenment wisdom in Buddhism, unlocking the "mysteries," "de-coding" the anecdotes, or, even worse, seeking for the "accurate" and "normal" answer for each "phoenix mystery" posted in Zen koan collections virtually by rational thinking, intellectual perception, knowledge, analytical intelligence, logical cognition, etc., rather than by practicing meditative stabilization or penetrative insight, have therefore been taken in a seriously mistaken way as a demonstration of gaining illumined wisdom and attaining Buddhist enlightenment.
[467] Both pedagogical tools and teachings are Buddhist conceptual terms. They refer to specific ways or particular means used that were passed down by the Buddha and initiated by experienced great masters in order to lead Buddhist practitioners/disciples towards enlightenment and gaining transcendent wisdom.

see the phenomenon or rely on the appearance, nor does he attach himself to the form, but sees into the substance and essence.

Another similar meditative approach is called hua-tou. Hua-tou requires contemplating a short sentence or a question until one pierces the truth and is able to transcend the limits of this sentence (form and appearance) and permeate the question (essence and substance). Enlightenment is achieved by successfully contemplating hua-tou until its very answer is unveiled. Through the journey towards unimpeded illumination, a hua-tou practitioner could break through boundaries of ordinary time and space, undermining "normal" logical thinking and conscious mind, and trace back towards the very primordial of the hua-tou, which is also the very primeval "being-ness" that lies beyond language, reasoning, or conventional verbal expressions. It is important for a koan or hua-tou practitioner to contemplate the "riddle" through continual self-questioning and deeper re-investigation towards its extremes (or liminalities) without employing intelligent analysis or critical thinking, until the moment the "answer" spontaneously emerges. The key to the true reality of enlightenment is the moment that a revelation of this essential beyond-ness that is totally empty of syntactic descriptions instantaneously occurs.

In Zen, koan is a powerful vehicle that is mostly applied at critical points for masters to evoke disciples' enlightened lucidity and mindful awareness that has been "clouded" by casting off their deep-seated attachments that get in the way of the unfolding of enlightenment wisdom. Koan is placed at the core of Zen teachings. Its form consists of an absurd puzzling case or riddle designed to smash intellectual concepts. Lai explains, "The Zen *koan* and eccentric behavior were but fresh new ways of striving toward the Buddhist goal of enlightenment, and the Zen path was fortified by a rigid, structured discipline of meditation in conjunction with the sudden spurts

of eccentricity."[468] When crossing the liminalities of extreme irrationality initiated by koan (or hua-tou), there could emerge "sudden enlightenment." Instead of occurring after a steady process, enlightenment wisdom is instantaneously fulfilled when a specific stimulating means aimed at enlightenment is effectively implemented. One of the renowned examples of sudden enlightenment in Chinese Zen history is the case of the Sixth Patriarch, Master Hui-Neng of the Tang dynasty. As an illiterate, Hui-Neng was known for gaining sudden enlightenment upon unintentionally hearing a monk recited the lines: "Those bodhisattvas who are great beings give up every kind of conception, and develop within themselves the Wish to achieve perfect and total enlightenment without staying in anything at all"[469] in *The Diamond Sutra*. Sudden enlightenment is different from gradual enlightenment. That is, an illumined state of mindfulness (in Artaud's words, a culmination of Mind with total freedom) can only be attained after a Zen practitioner carries out certain crucial meditative practices step by step. These include a merger of tranquil abiding (stillness) along with penetrative insight (direct seeing and unimpeded perceiving) for the perfection of great wisdom for years or decades. Gradual enlightenment is stressed by another lineage of Zen school (the Northern Zen) as a more "reasonable" way towards enlightenment and stays opposite to the sect inherited from the Sixth Patriarch (the Southern Zen), proposing sudden enlightenment.

The Southern Zen school, deemed direct heir to the legacy of the Sixth Patriarch, heralded sudden enlightenment as the marrow of Chinese Mahayana Buddhism. The legendary case arguably seems even more astonishing because the Sixth Patriarch was not well-educated when he accomplished spiritual enlightenment. There is even suspicion that the Sixth Patriarch was illiterate when he achieved full illumination. However, the northern heritage of Chinese Zen

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[468] Stanley Lai, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre*, 87.
[469] *The Diamond Cutter, An Exalted Sutra of the Great Way on the Perfection of Wisdom,* trans. Michael Roach, http://www.fodian.net/English/Dcutter.pdf, 27, 42.

School has claimed that a perfected enlightenment state can only be attained through gradual contemplative practices. According to this historical point of view, Zen Buddhism was initially transplanted to China from India by the monk Bodhidharma around the sixth century, and he became known as the First Patriarch of Chinese Zen School. This newly "imported" religious ethic was integrated into indigenous Chinese cultures like the Confucian and the Taoist traditions. It is argued that the authentic Taoist tradition also impacted Zen Buddhism, especially Zen concepts of detachment from words and thoughts along with distrust of logic and rationality. Influenced by Taoism, there appeared extremist Zen perspectives that proposed radical terminations of all canonical Buddhist texts and doctrinal dogmas and endorsed intimidating and brutalizing approaches towards enlightenment. For example, these particular Zen positions espoused intense irrational and nonsensical strategies as their pedagogical tools, such as scorning scriptures, scolding, striking, and destroying religious icons.

By renouncing rationality, koan is frequently attributed to totally disjointed even farcical juxtapositions and self-conflicting contradictions whose answers do not relate to the inquiry. Let us consider two examples of better-known Zen koans. The first one is the koan that deals with a description of an imaginary cow. "Where lies its birthplace?" is one of the questions. The answer is, "An octagonal millstone spinning in midair." Another example of koan initiates an ultimately irrational and a-logical realization in order to achieve absolute detachment. Instead of using linguistic explanations to un-puzzle koan, actions such as slapping the master or hitting the pupil emerge as the very answers. The master asks: "There is no existence in the three realms of past, present, and future. If this is the case, where is the mind?" Immediately upon hearing this question, the student is to slap the master in his face as a response. Surprisingly, to answer his

master's question by performing a violent act, the pupil is announced as attaining spiritual awakening by his enlightened master.[470] These types of Buddhist pedagogical tools targeted at provoking enlightenment help gain emancipation from intellectual barricades and penetrate to true reality and its essential emptiness. They are not dissimilar to the alternative means featured in Artaud's quest of enlightenment as precise yet unfixed, intuitive yet rigorous tactics. The Officer in Artaud's production of *A Dream Play*, Raymond Rouleau noted regarding his directorial approach:

> He did not prepare his production in any precise way….His direction was a kind of introspection; he seemed to listen attentively to the promptings of his subconscious. At the first rehearsal, Artaud rolled around on the stage, assumed a falsetto voice, contorted himself, howled, and fought against logic, order, and the "well-made" approach….When he felt that he had found the truth, which his interior voyage had disclosed to him, he fixed it very meticulously.[471]

To see Artaud's barely grounded and apocalyptic "redemptive" theatre of cruelty through this perspective, I also mark parallels between Artaud's theatrical methods and Zen koan. Artaudian theatre of cruelty is itself the most profound and obscure "koan" which resembles those koan mysteries in Zen. Associating Zen koan with the theatre of cruelty on a more surface level, both are riddles that bury their connotations. Both serve as not only the keys but also the (esoteric) answers themselves to enlightenment wisdom and ultimate Truth. Though provoking and harboring the ideal of the theatre of cruelty, even Artaud himself failed to manifest and transform his theoretical absoluteness into practical performances. His successors, including

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[470] Yoel Hofmann, *The Sound of One Hand* (New York: Basic, 1975), 173, 107-108, 157-158.
[471] Raymond Rouleau, "Letter on Artaud's *Dream Play* Production," in Anothony Swerling, *Strindberg's Impact in France 1920-1960* (Cambridge: Tritiny Lane Press, 1971), 175.

eminent twentieth-century Western directors and theatre artists who sought to follow in his footsteps, arguably understand what the theatre of cruelty (the most idealistic perfection of authentic theatre) really means in Artaud's mind. Arthur Adamov commented: "[Artaud's] programme is elusive and contradictory….There is something effervescent about his dramatic ideas and when one…thought one had grasped them, they vanished."[472] What Artaud left behind was an Artaudian koan quizzed by Artaud himself for his followers, audiences, readers, critics, and scholars to meditate in the hope of miraculously unfolding Artaudian poetic truth and mystical reality.

There lies another idiosyncrasy that can be seen as peculiar Artaudian theatrical truth. Artaud explained that one of the vital reasons there was a gulf between his theoretical dialectics and performative practice was that true drama exists as an undying process rather than a finished product. He emphasized that a performance can only "give us the impression of not only being unexpected but also unrepeatable."[473] Artaud explained that the glamour of mysterious illumination occurs right beneath this uncatchable fissure and in the unutterable fragmentation the extent to which was correspondent to a Buddhist view. Buddhism states that in an instantaneous "momentariness" (the threshold of "before birth and after death") when the former thought is vanished and the succeeding thought never arises in such an ungraspable between-ness, reveals the highest truth and empty essence (permanence). Buddhism points out that through such a momentariness, one can perceive empty essence, and interpenetrable eternity is comparable to the mysterious uncatchable "gulf" suggested by Artaud, which summons the absolute divine cruelty.

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[472] Cited in Eric Sellin, *The Dramatic Concepts of Antonin Artaud* (Chicago: Universiety of Chicago Press, 1968), 101.
[473] Artaud, "The Alfred Jarry Theatre," in *Selected Writings*, 156.

As mentioned earlier, in Zen, launching brutal physical violence such as striking, kicking, slapping, and nonsensical vocal utterances (e.g., screaming) are sometimes required as piercing and razor-sharp pedagogical tools for catalyzing illumination and consummating ultimate reality. To release meditators from restrictions of consciousness and intellect, Zen masters appeal to shock devices, such as suddenly hitting pupils with sticks. A practitioner, who has been devoted to meditation for a long time and is trapped in stagnation, unable to make a move between the stages of the nearly awakened and the enlightened, asks for a glass of water to ease his thirst. When the glass of water is almost passed to the practitioner, it is suddenly taken away by the master or even thrown on the floor. The practitioner is then asked: "Do you think you still need some more water?" If successful, this scenario exerts a revelatory shock effect and plays a critical role in advancing the practitioner from cloudiness to luminosity. For this practitioner, his subjective and objective attachments (e.g., grasping of an intrinsic I in self and grasping of an inherent existence in all things/dharmas) are dissolved.[474]

Another example is called "Nan-Chuan slaughters the cat." There are two groups of monks arguing for a cat to realize which group it should belong to. When Nan-Chuan returns to the temple, he witnesses the monks (his pupils) arguing about the right to possess the cat. Nan-Chuan grasps the cat and lifts it high, announcing: "Simply give me a phrase or a comment. If either side of you is proved correct, this cat would be rescued and freed from death." All monks suddenly stay silent. Nan-Chuan thus immediately puts down the cat and chops it into two parts. After a while, another disciple of Nan-Chuan, Chao-Chou, the one seen as achieving enlightenment, returns. Upon hearing the story, without saying a word, he instantly takes off his shoes, puts them on the top of his head, and leaves the temple once again. Sufficed by Chao-Chou's answer to his "test" (accompanied with a brutalizing violence) through nonsensical

[474] I have explained these fundamental Buddhist ideas in Chapter Two.

performance as presenting enlightenment, Nan-Chuan sighs: "If you could have come back just a little bit earlier, the cat would not have had to die."[475]

These odd and startling tactics utilized by Zen are not unlike what Artaud proposed. In particular, he advocated blurring the boundaries between actors and spectators through frightening and offensive effects with bizarre presentations and threatening behaviors. Consisting of subtlety, suddenness, and strangeness, cruelty, the essence of Artaud's stage works (despite the fact that such a presence was mostly manifested in his philosophical/metaphysical writings), ascends as a spontaneous and translucent outburst of primordial "existence,"[476] inducing humans' "true being."[477] In Innes's definition, "It is in fact the dynamics that are [primal and absolute]… the spectator… will be shaken and set on edge by the internal dynamism of the spectacle [in the ideal performativity of the concrete language and *mise-en-scene*]."[478] Artaud expressed his appeal to divine cruelty as the true essence of "serious" theatre that reveals absolute reality:

> We have lost the idea of theatre. Our longstanding habit of seeking diversions [characteristic of the conventional presentations and relational phenomena] has made us forget the slightest idea of serious theatre [ultimate reality] which upsets all our preconceptions, inspiring us with fiery, magnetic imagery and finally reacting on us after the manner of unforgettable soul therapy. Everything that acts is cruelty. Theatre must rebuild itself on a concept of this drastic action pushed to the limit [the absolute truth].[479]

My argument also derives from Artaud's most renowned statement, in which I find a strong

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[475] These two Zen koan examples and their explanations are extracted from Sheng-Yen Shih's book *Discourses on and Experience in Ch'an* (Taipei: Dharma Drum Corp., 1999). I translate these texts and employ them here.
[476] Innes, "Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty," 65.
[477] Ibid., 66.
[478] Ibid., 65.
[479] Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," in *The Theatre and Its Double*, 84-85.

association between the Artaudian and the Buddhist. Artaud's theatrical illumination reflects ultimate irrationality and mystical experiences presented in these Zen koans, whose inexplicable "truth state" can only be reached through summoning profound stillness, penetrative insight, direct perceiving, and transcendence: "While the bird is swimming deep in the ocean, the fish is flying high in the sky." "While eggs and stone are crashed together, it is the stone which is torn apart and the eggs remain entire." "There is this man who takes a stride on the bridge, when he faces down, it is this bridge that flows and the river stands still."[480]

There is no "accurate" answer provided for each koan; each koan exists as a living mystery and unrepeatable process. Therefore, the answer shall never be confirmed or fixed. The indefinite and unapproachable nature of koan reflects Artaud's divine cruelty, through which he insisted on the necessity of "bring[ing] back the idea of total theatre"[481] and "the whole nature into the kind of theatre we would like to evoke."[482] In absolute (theatrical) cruelty, "our sensibility has reached the point where we surely need theatre that wakes us up heart and nerves."[483] Moreover, when "[re]accustomed to the direct, violent action that theatre must have,"[484] the ultimate poetic reality "aims at the whole anatomy and an intensive mustering of objects, gestures, and signs used in a new spirit."[485] The essence of koan is to subvert conventional and nominal presentations like designations for naming and speaking[486] or verbal expressions, and to transcend the frontiers of dualism, relativity, and difference for a disclosure of "truth state." For Artaud, such a truth state is the transcendental theatrical cruelty. Artaud's revelatory philosophy of cruelty performs

[480] These are all well-known Zen koans. See Sheng Yen Shih, *Discourses on and Experiences in Ch'an* (Taipei: Dharma Drum Corp., 1999).
[481] Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," 85.
[482] Ibid.
[483] Ibid., 84.
[484] Ibid., 86.
[485] Ibid., 86-87.
[486] These are all Buddhist concepts and terms. See Elizabeth Napper, *Dependent-Arising and Emptiness*, 45, 64, 110, 326.

essential absoluteness in which "before the cataclysm occurs…real blood is needed right now to reveal this cruelty."[487] He elaborated:

> The active role given to dark poetic feeling necessitates tangible signs. Words mean little to the mind; expanded areas and objects speak out…spatial, thundering images replete with sound also speak, if we become versed in arranging a sufficient interjection of spatial areas furnished with silence and stillness....these direct active means are wholly used. Therefore, such a revolving show, unafraid of exploring the limits of our nervous sensibility…lyricism, rhythm, sound, whose nature and startling combinations are part of an unrevealed technique…will extend its visual and oral outbursts over the whole mass of spectators.[488]

Artaud affirmed that the theatre of cruelty is a plague[489] whose being-ness is simultaneously a healing tool. The dynamism and transcendence of plague, its lucidity and perpetuality, cross beyond binary oppositions of extermination and resurrection, darkness and luminosity, serenity and turmoil. Artaud stated:

> The plague takes images that are dormant, a latent disorder, and suddenly extends them into the most extreme gestures…pushes them as far as they will go: like the plague it reforges the chain between what is and what is not, between the virtuality of the possible and what already exists in materialized nature. It recovers the notion of symbols and archetypes which act like silent blows, rests, leaps of the heart, summons of the lymph, inflammatory images thrust into our abruptly wakened heads.[490]

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[487] Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," 88.
[488] Ibid., 86.
[489] Artaud, "The Theatre and the Plague," 15-32.
[490] Ibid., 27.

This holy cruelty is a cure for confronting relative reality, dichotomy, and repressive universal value systems. It also acts as a treatment for wrestling with representational theatre. Artaud re-positioned theatre in a context where natural instinct, cosmos, chaos, primitive existence, total absolute, and pure fatality are invigorated. Artaud affirmed:

> Like the plague, the theatre is a formidable call to the forces that impel the mind…to the source of its conflicts…absolutely essential task. The terrorizing apparition of Evil which in the Mysteries…was produced in its pure, truly revealed form corresponds to the dark hour…which all true theatre must recover. If the essential theatre is like the plague…it is because like the plague it is the revelation, the bringing forth, the exteriorization of a depth of latent cruelty by means of which all the perverse possibilities of the mind…are localized. Like the plague the theatre is the time of evil, the triumph of dark powers that are nourished by a power even more profound until extinction. In the theatre as in the plague there is a kind of strange sun, a light of abnormal intensity…the victim swells his individuality and the survivor becomes a grandiose and overwhelming being.[491]

The theatre of cruelty is the performative presentation of ultimate truth placed in Artaud's Zen-Buddhist-inspired illumination, searching for the profound trueness. Artaud stated,

> if theatre wants to find itself needed once more, it must present everything in…crime and madness…to center our show around…horrible crimes and superhuman self-sacrifices, demonstrating that it can draw out…living powers in what is called poetry…is something infinitely more dangerous [the essential absolute] to the mind than if the same crime were committed in life….Hence this full scale invocation of cruelty and terror, its scope testing our entire vitality, confronting us with all our potential.[492]

[491] Ibid., 30.

For Artaud, the absolute suchness is achieved by dialectics of the theatre of cruelty posturing towards "aligning art to the 'solar' and 'lunar' dualities of existence and tapping the essence of being."[493]

Artaud saw theatre as a ritualistic cult preoccupied with collective intoxication, in which both actors and audiences' physical bodies, minds, souls, and spirits are supposed to commit to the sacred altar of true being (absolute reality). In his quest for enlightened truth, Artaud viewed the theatre of cruelty as enacting a "quasi-mystical therapeutic aim"[494] for both actors (to invoke their total self-devotion) and spectators (to evoke their full engagement of the senses, flesh, and spirit) "in which the physical and the spiritual worlds are assumed to interpenetrate."[495] The theatre of cruelty is identified with shock experiences in order to produce metaphysical revelation and spiritual awakening, which "supposedly transfigured [all involved in the theatrical space and its total presence] so that they rose up New Men."[496] These New Men are thoroughly liberated and thereby can "reach [their] potential as total men, no longer split by the Western body/soul dichotomy."[497] Artaud affirmed: the "division between analytical theatre and a world of movement seems stupid….One cannot separate body and mind, nor the senses from the intellect, particularly in a field where the unendingly repeated jading of our organs calls for sudden shocks to revive our understanding [Enlightenment]."[498] In Artaud's alchemical exorcism, theatre not only endeavors to blow up the constraints of suppressive civilization that are "seen as

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[492] Artaud, "The Theatre and cruelty," 85-86.
[493] Innes, "Antonin Artaud and the Theatre of Cruelty," 61.
[494] Innes, "The Politics of Primitivism," 16.
[495] Ibid.
[496] Ibid.
[497] Innes, "Antonin Artaud and The Theatre of Cruelty," 60.
[498] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," 86.

too sophisticated, rational, materialistic, technological, or repressively Christian,"[499] but also resurrects the fatality and transcendentality of spiritual and poetic truth.

Artaud claimed in his "Address to the Dalai Lama":

> O Grand Lama…grace us with your illuminations in a language our contaminated European minds can understand, and if need be, transform our Mind, create for us a mind turned entirely toward those perfect summits where the Human Mind no longer suffers. Make us a Mind without habits, a mind truly frozen in the Mind, or a Mind with pure habits, your habits, if they can help us toward freedom.[500]

This manifesto links his metaphysical pursuits and the key concepts heralded by Buddhism. Due to his integrating Buddhist teachings into his quest for enlightened state, it is possible to associate Artaud's remarks about "Mind" with the empty mindfulness in Buddhism that refers to a mind that penetrates into the true absolute. Zen teachings also foster the doctrine preached by the Sixth Patriarch: non-form as the principle, no-thought as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis. The essence of this pure empty Mind and absolute illuminated experiences is quite possibly the total liberation and vastness of true reality that Artaud yearned for. As heralded by Artaud's ideas, the enlightened experience of nothingness, as condensed in the presentation of non-form, no-thought, and non-abiding, can be reached through the trance state consummated in the climax of the Balinese Dance. The oppressed dynamics of darkness, suppressed mystical chaotic fatality, and primordial fear are evoked and emancipated through the sacred rituals that exorcise the brutality of repressive civilization. Innes observes that, as an anthology or a "confused metaphor," Artaud was very much inclined to connect his theatre of cruelty

[499] Innes, "The Politics of Primitivism," 16.
[500] Antonin Artaud, *Antonin Artaud Anthology*, 64-5.

experience to the metaphoric "plague," the dynamics of lucid darkness that was deeply imbedded in the heart of the primitive existence. If provoked, a true spiritual freedom can be induced, thereby "causing all social forms to disintegrate."[501] The theatre of cruelty takes the Balinese theatre as its theoretical prototype and idealistic materialization. The total presence evoked in Balinese dance performance was seen by Artaud as a vehicle to experience the metaphysical state of illumined truth that revealed the fundamental source of this empty being-ness.

Artaud aimed to evoke a pure presence of a total man and true self subject to the essential being-ness, and even a "New Man," whose state of "Mind" is fully illumined through the metaphysical theatre of cruelty and its true absolute. The total theatre of cruelty directly appeals to the ultimate and revelations of pre-Human Beings, Creation, Becoming, and Chaos. Instead of emphasizing subjects such as man, society, nature, history, or object and adhering to the legacy of Aristotelian and totalitarian author-governed theological theatre, Artaud's ritualistic holy theatre places the absolute (ideas) of pre-logic, pre-historic, pre-human, pre-language, de-textualization, anti-representational expressiveness, and anti-intellectual preconception at the center. Ideally, for Artaud, the holy theatre presents *mise-en-scene* with the visual and plastic materialization of true speeches and physicalization of absolute gestures, where the spectatorship in the theatrical rite is preoccupied with profound intoxication and collective irrational ecstasy. Cruelty, whose true being is crystallized only within the context of genuine theatre, means rigor, submission, determinism, affirmation, necessity, lucidity, and sacredness on the verge of the irretrievable. Inspired by and aligning with oriental thoughts, Artaud's temperament and agenda, as well as his philosophy of cruelty, colored with Buddhist illumination, unpacked the "mystery" of absolute truth.

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[501] Antonin Artaud, "The Theater and the Plague," 15.

Artaud's revelations that "We are Becoming theatre" and "Life is Becoming theatre"[502] affirm his distrust of relative reality, which is the criterion of naturalistic realism, and his abandonment of conventional truth that does not provide "ways out." Artaud's enlightened statements that "We are Becoming theatre and Life is Becoming theatre" are based on his infamous declaration: "If theatre is the double of life, then life is the double of true theatre." These statements point out the paradoxes of artificial theatre and truer life and highlight the relationships between deceptive view of life and pure authenticity of absolute theatre, as well as conventional truth and ultimate reality. The embodiment of artificial theatre (such as the occidental dramatic theatre norms that target mimetic expression and explanatory reflection) and falsified perception of life bound by physical phenomena are observable, translatable, and representational. On the contrary, the ultimate truth presents the transparency of truer life/reality and the pure lucidity of absolute theatre (such as the oriental theatrical traditions that originate in mystical rituals, yearning for religious revelations and spiritual transcendence). The realizations of "We are Becoming theatre; life is Becoming theatre" mark Artaud's understanding about total transcendentality. Men (we) and theatre, life and theatre are no longer seen as independent existences (realities) but rather as an interpenetration and interconnectedness, as true reality itself. The difference between relative truth and absolute truth is blurred and placed in union as trasncendental suchness. Essence and appearance, substance and form, true being-ness and its functional perturbations (capacity of performance)[503] are no longer conflicting individual realities. The incongruities of the conventional and ultimate, relative and essential, men and life, as well as life and theatre are nullified. Artaud's metaphorizing theatre as a plague that not only

[502] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and Culture," 7-14.
[503] Note that these terms and ideas that derive from Buddhism in depicting enlightenment state and true reality are explained in detail in chapter two.

infected but was also never cured can be understood as a manifestation of enlightenment and absolute trueness.

In addition, the metaphor of theatrical "plague" as the absolute may suggest the reconciliation and perfected compatibility of the contradictory forces of creation and destruction, origination and termination through enlightenment. Artaud asserted:

> that is why all the great Myths are dark, so that one cannot imagine, save in an atmosphere of carnage, torture, and bloodshed, all the magnificent Fables which recount to the multitudes…the first carnage of essences that appeared in creation. The theatre, like the plague, is in the image of this carnage and this essential separation. It releases conflicts, disengages powers, liberates possibilities….The theatre like the plague is a crisis which is resolved by death or cure. And the plague is a superior disease because it is a total crisis after which nothing remains except death or an extreme purification. Similar the theatre is a disease because it is the supreme equilibrium which cannot be achieved without destruction. It invites the mind to share a delirium which exalts its energies; and we can see, to conclude, that from the human point of view, the action of theatre, like that of plague, is beneficial, for, impelling men to see themselves as they are.[504]

For Artaud, the ultimate truth is the Plague as an absolute manifestation of theatre. He in particular understood the theatrical plague as the absolute expression from three aspects. First, a genuine poetic/theatrical presentation (carrying with it all spiritual and apocalyptic bearings) is a delirium much like the fatality of the plague. It is also contagious and a sublime being of the absolute. Theatre, plague, and (Buddhist) absolute realization all tremendously affect the people involved. Like those infected by the plague, their minds explode with authenticity, origin, irrationality, and extremity; an absolute theatre possesses the same dynamism as plague—one

[504] Antonin Artaud, "The Theater and the Plague," 31.

that transforms a human's conscious mind into a transcendental horizon, welcoming extreme experiences, new sensations, and lucid illuminations, and divulges the body's forgotten memories/truths and hidden realities. Second, the revelation of divine cruelty imbedded in, and indispensable to every human soul is a channel that leads towards true liberation and to the realm of beyond-ness. The theatrical plague's permanent cure only happens through irrevocable and necessary sufferings and devastation. Third, a rebellious theatre action in its essence is as lethal and as beneficial as the transcendental dark powers of the plague, for a real rebirth and enlightenment occur only if humans are awakened from the collective hypnotic state. They therefore directly confront, experience, and perceive their most profound being, true self, and deepest nature by destroying stifling conventional tediousness, tearing apart fraudulent views, and casting off their masks (doubled faces).[505]

I use the symbolic Hindu-Buddhist divine images--Lord Shiva (destroyer and transformer) and the feminine deity, Shakti (creator and preservor), who is Shiva's bride and simultaneously his another form of being--in Tantric painting to illustrate how this metaphysical poetic "plague" culminates in a transcendental enlightened state through devastation. The themes and imageries exhibited in a mystic Tantric painting regarding a manifold deity's absolute presence and principal Tantric philosophy implicate a subtle reconciliation of metamorphosis and completion, different states of beings bound by the revolving cycles of samsara reincarnation and the tranquility of nirvana, along with grotesqueness and sublimity, dark power and lucid transcendentality, secular and esoteric, as well as masculine and feminine, cosmic energy and empty essence. The divine quintessence of sublime emptiness suggests unending performances or perturbations in the physical realm similar to the manifestations of this poetic "plague" whose sacred substance unfolds in the Artaudian theatre of Being, creation, death, (re)birth, and

[505] Antonin Artaud, "Theatre and the Plague," 15-32.

cessation (nothingness). Thus, this mysterious divine presentation of profound suchness: "not two and not one" promises a transcendent emancipation from the eternal cycles of birth, death, and reincarnation. Human beings are allowed to access total liberation from the inconsistencies of the conscious mind, reasoning, psyche, sense, flesh and body, heart, spirit, and Empty Mind. Artaud expressed the idea that the empty sublimity of cruelty manifested in the essential form of plague is "where things in outside nature appear as temptations just as they would in a Saint's mind. Theatre must rediscover its true signification in this spectacle of a temptation, where life stands to lose everything [death and destruction] and the mind to gain everything [rebirth and creation]."[506]

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that dating back to the early 1920s, Artaud looked to ancient oriental ritualistic traditions and mystic cults and relied on Eastern philosophies and religious mysticism as both the origin and terminal (keys and ends) when questing for truth. In particular, his alternative enlightenment experiences, the methods he employed for reaching an alternate reality, and what he illuminated as the essential and ultimate consistently resonated with Buddhism and Zen. Artaud's statement, "I am not in the world,"[507] explained his inappropriate madness and "an essential and fugitive collapse of the soul"[508] which had deprived him of his (sense of) identifiable self. However, it was also because of his madness that Artaud's self had transformed into the Being-ness of a total alienation of the forms of existences (called madness). In effect, this traumatized sense of losing the individual self, loss of subjectivity, and continual

[506] Antonin Artaud, "The Theatre and Cruelty," 87.
[507] Antonin Artaud, quoted in Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," 150.
[508] Ibid., 149.

inhabition of a threshold in which all "foreboded [Artaud's] most tragic self-renunciation"[509] turned out to "empower" him to align his Being-ness (rather than him*self*) with the enlightened luminosity and allow for "full contact with the presence of the divine."[510] In a sense, Artaud's madness became what he had longed for: "the plastic and physical materialization"[511] of verbal expressions, imbued with all "the profound poetic bearing"[512] whose "only value was in its excruciating, magical relation to reality and danger."[513] Artaud's insane writings and his mad body that were first excluded from the paradise of Western metaphysical representation now returned to intervene, rebel, and execute "renewed exorcisms."[514] It ended up an alienation of alienation (that is, madness performed as the alienation of alienation). "True self", therefore, was reborn through the presence of improper deformity of self through madness, with its fatality and purity.[515]

Artaud's ideas also echoed the spirit of Zen affirmed by *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, which is known for refusing to "take its stance in words and written texts," discarding discursive thoughts, and "purports to be a method that involves no-method." Likewise, Zen stands "apart from doctrinal formulations, and aspires to point directly and uncompromisingly to the original nature of [this total awareness of] the mind."[516] Nevertheless, at its core, Buddhism endorses an uplifting transformation from the state of conscious to the unconscious and more importantly, without remaining attached to the unconscious. That is, a Buddhist transcendental state suggests a transition from the unconscious or profound trance to the level of the conscious

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[509] Maurice Saillet, "In Memoriam: Antonin Artaud," 150.
[510] Allen Thiher, "Jacques Derrida's Reading of Artaud," 506.
[511] Antonin Artaud, "Oriental and Occidental Theater," in *Theatre and Its Double*, 69-70.
[512] Antonin Artaud, "The Theater of Cruelty (First Manifesto)," 92.
[513] Ibid., 89.
[514] Ibid.
[515] Antonin Artaud, "Metaphysics and the *Mise en Scene*," 36, 39.
[516] These best-known descriptions to define the core of Zen are taken from Sheng-Yen Shih and Dan Stevenson, *Hoofprint of the Ox*: *Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as taught by a Modern Chinese Master*, ix.

or everyday existence again, while ultimately detached from it. Artaud was unable to recognize the necessary alteration from the unconscious or the supermundane back to the conscious or this-worldliness, as a Buddhist transcendence signifies. The importance of returning to the phenomenal from the esoteric therefore marks one of the fundamental differences between Artaud's concept of enlightenment and the Buddhist practice, regardless of their many similarities.

In Buddhism, enlightened experience is very individual and intimate rather than something that emerges en masse. The attainment of enlightenment is by all means unexpected, unpredictable, and spontaneous, for any interference that aims to deliberately create or anticipate enlightened luminosity not only proves impossible but also is an attachment instead of non-abiding or detachment. The big breakthrough of spiritual awakening only occurs once in a practitioner's lifetime under the circumstance of naturalness and unintentionality. Therefore, there exists neither any performance that can incessantly repeat enlightenment, nor does any performer can guarantee to perform enlightenment time after time after time or even tend to schedule and summon particular enlightened moments during a performance. For a performer (and a meditator), enlightenment is diametrically not stageable or manageable. For example, for Butoh dancers, they may unlikely be illumined by the same revelation, simultaneously achieve enlightenment in the same piece, or are expected to get enlightened at certain points; so does each individual audience member. Any expectations for mass enlightenment or attempts to transform either the performers or a whole audience at one and the same time are invalid, thereby differing markedly from oriental/Buddhist practices. In other words, enlightenment of the audience might be less likely to happen in the theatre spectable, when they see the performance. Different from Buddhist enlightenment, Artaud's impulse to impose on groups his somewhat

own and intuitive Buddhist path towards enlightenment made his theatre turn out to be a design for forcibly invoking the exact enlightenment of the audience at specific spots through, for example, the display of (and over-emphasis on) overwhelming fear, dark power, brutality, and ferocity on stage. The modification by Artaud that was used to coercively compel the illuminating experience to dawn on his audience was un-Buddhist even against genuine Buddhism.

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John Cage's Enlightenment: Musicality as the Essential Interpenetration of Sound in Echoing Emptiness

John Cage (1912-1992) was an avant-gardist composer, writer, painter, and, unquestionably, man of the theatre whose work continues to have an immense impact on modern and postmodern visual arts, dance, music, and theatre. Cage was best-known for his use of the "prepared piano" and found sound, and for his eccentric appetite for all kinds of "noises" absorbed and refracted by total "silences" to expose the essential being of true sound. Cage was also obsessed with the concepts of "chance operation," improvisation, and "indeterminate music." He insisted on letting art manifest its full presence as an evocation of nature's real operation. His work positions him at a historical intersection of a paradigm shift in music and serves as an epochal landmark highlighted by the legacy of Antonin Artaud. Artaud's impact on Cage's philosophical practice of music was based on the former's theorization of a genuine and total theatre, as well as the inspiration Artaud drew from the Oriental arts, best proclaimed in his idealistic illumination of the theatre of cruelty. Cage's performances reinforce Artaud's belief in the power of theatricality to extinguish the dichotomies between art and institutions and between disciplinary margins and conventional standards. Through their theory and practice, both Artaud and Cage also reaffirm the necessity of eliminating separations among art, nature, and the praxis of life.[517] Through Cage's avant-gardist, defiant, and soulful work, the decisive definition,

[517] Merce Cunningham is one of John Cage's most significant collaborators in formulating the cross-discplinary "theatrical" pieces and presenting performances. Cunningham is an avant-gardist, or modern dancer who had a very intimate collaboration with John Cage for more than fifty years since they first met at Cornish School during the 1930s. To a great extent, Cunningham has created the same artistic approach in the field of modern dance as Cage had done in music. For instance, Cunningham relies on chance methods as a tool for practical use—which is rather

traditional standardization, and systematic knowledge of what "music" meant was erased. Cage's experimental methodologies were an expression of his innovative visions about modern man's perception of his inner and outer state of being and his physical and spiritual connection with the world and with others.

Cage was greatly influenced by Zen Buddhism and ancient oriental philosophy. Though it remains questionable whether he was a practicing Buddhist, Cage was a more obvious example of a theatre artist incorporating religious/Buddhist inspiration into his art work than Artaud or Hijikata, or even Ohno, Hijikata's collaborator, who claimed to be Christian. Gao's deep-seated Zen-inspired artistry and practice was best exemplified in his experimental epic Zen opera, *Snow in August*, which premiered in Taiwan in 2002. Yet it is noteworthy that like Cage, Gao admits his deep obsession with Zen philosophy yet hesitates to declare himself a Buddhist. Instead, Gao claims that the way he looks to Zen has scarcely anything to do with Zen as a traditional and doctrinal religion. It is apparent that Cage consciously incorporated the essential Zen principles as vital components and raw materials throughout his art works, writings, philosophical approaches, and performative actions. His deliberate use of chance operations in compositional techniques and his understanding of indeterminacy as the kernel of his music-presence are both examples of fundamental Zen spirits at work. Cage was also inspired by the ancient Chinese book of wisdom, *I-Ching* or *The Book of Changes*, which stresses notions of achieving the highest unification of nature, men, and invisible, supernatural power. This includes the harmonious reconciliation and accordance between the symbolic *yin* (life force of the moon and

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different from Cage's employment of chance methods as a religious intent--for his experimental dance. Cunningham uses the techniques of improvisation in his choreography; he affirms the dissociation of the rigid territories between dance and music, time and space, and above all, Cunningham insists on letting the very presence, the spirit of dance itself be distilled and poured out with its full presentation instead of merely expressing, interpreting, and supporting the "verbal texts." The collaborative works that Cunningham and Cage had accomplished can be seen as going against the grain of the high-modernist tradition inherited from Martha Graham.

the feminine) and *yang* (life force of the sun and the masculine), as well as the subjective I (the mental consciousness) and the transcendental I (the unconscious, mindful luminosity). And these concepts culminate in the realization of randomness, interrelatedness, and changeability as ultimate reality of the cosmos and the human condition in the phenomenal terrain. In other words, the *I-Ching* is a combination of Taoist philosophy and Confucian wisdom predicated on the principles of how to approach the supreme "truth" and suggest the operations of the innermost hidden laws of the esoteric world. Cage abandoned "making choices" through a limited and standardized conscious mind bound by "relational reality" or "conventional truth."[518] Significantly, Cage also confessed that the only choices he persisted in making were to keep asking questions, which were indeed a koan inspiration. He stopped counting on the personal desires or subjective penchants of the individual artist and relied instead on chance operations, coin tossing, and purposeless playfulness to "determine" and construct the crucial factors of his art. Through these open, unfamiliar, and unpredictable possibilities and the operation of an utmost natural law, Cage allowed the very life of his artistry to be fully present at an awakening moment, thus accomplishing a Zen-like illumination. All of this resulted in Cage's "serious" and somewhat "high-brow" art work that required an intense awareness, profound spiritual transformation, and total devotion.

Cage's apparent enthusiasm for Zen practice stemmed from the influence of Daisetz T. Suzuki starting in the 1950s, when Cage attended the intensive Zen serial lecture classes given by Suzuki at Columbia University. D. T. Suzuki was a renowned Japanese Buddhist scholar and an influential modern *Soto* Zen master, one of the first to introduce Western culture to the philosophy of Zen Buddhism as an "accessible" theoretical base and methodical system.

[518] These ideas have been explained in detail in chapter two. The state that is contrary to relational reality or conventional truth is absolute reality or ultimate truth. This is an esoteric realm and the substance of all beings in which there lies nothing but essential emptiness that a spiritually awakened mindfulness is able to realize (enter).

Suzuki's influence can be seen in Cage's work through the use of multifarious presentations of sheer "silences" (along with incarnations of absolute "noises" to achieve perfect and total compatibility) as the essential "sounds" in his words, music, and philosophy. This was very much in line with Zen philosophy, especially the unveiling of the "truth state" as ultimate emptiness and the understanding that Zen Enlightenment is based on "no-thought as the main doctrine, non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis."[519] Furthermore, Cage's fascination with silences dialectically coexisting with noises was not alien to the consummation of the state of emptiness and nothingness--the very essence of Zen Enlightenment. According to Cage, there existed no place in the world that was wholly silent, even an anechoic chamber. He believed that nothingness was not an arbitrary voidness or a nihilistic negation. Cage understood the conceptualizing of an idea or translating of knowledge not as the total, empty absoluteness or direct experience of the sublimity through a deep spiritual awakening. For Zen, the absolute state of emptiness was nothing to do with conceptualization, idea, intellect, or knowledge. Furthermore, for Cage, clinging to the "concept" of "sole silence" or the "concept" of "sole noise" was an act of abiding dualism. The conceptualization, categorization, and differentiation that a subjective conscious mind has been accustomed to gets in the way of these state-of-beings' unfolding their true essence that is of no difference.

Cage's most famous and controversial theatrical piece, *4'33''* (1959), reveals his peculiar realization of the manifestation of natural trueness in the form of silence as the sound of essential emptiness that performs (perturbs). *4'33''* was presented in this way: a pianist approached the piano, placed on the theatrical stage. Although this pianist settled himself on the seat, he did not start hitting a single key nor did he play the piano. John Cage, the pianist, did nothing except

[519] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch: the Text of the Tun-Huang Manuscript*, trans. Philip B. Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), 137-138.

open and close the keyboard cover unpredictably three times within that time scale (four minutes and thirty three seconds). He used a stopwatch to count the time. The entire theatre space was left in a sheer empty vacuum with silences permeating; the audience was stunned. Framed by the structure of objective chances (the primary and only attempt designed by the composer/pianist on purpose), *4'33''* was composed entirely of silences and total nothingness. Nonetheless, through the presence of utter silences in *4'33''*, Cage experimented with his philosophy that "music is a continuous presence in the environment, only listening is intermittent."[520] To use the Buddhist idea to access Cage's musical philosophy, music is substance or essential emptiness; the varieties of "listening" experiences are conventional appearances or relational phenomena. Through a total compatibility of music (essence) and incorporation of listening (perturbation or function indivisible to the essence), ultimate reality (or transcendental suchness) emerges. When asked what art illustrates, Cage responds: "Art [silence and sound] is everywhere; it's only seeing [the subtle momentariness of listening, experiencing, contemplating, involving, accepting, and letting go of] which stops [and accomplishes] now and then."[521] The absolute translucency of sounds of silence or silent sounds transmitted through *4'33''* was just as profound as the being-ness of true sounds was to Cage. Cage presented in his "complexly composed asyntactical text"[522] through mesostic variations that seek for "nonintentionality"[523] and noted: "rEmembering a Day i visited you—seems noW as I write that the weather theN was warm—i recall nothing we saiD, nothing wE did; eveN so (perhaps Because of that) that visits staYs."[524] Chance operations, the focal

[520] Constance Lewallen, "Cage and the Structure of Chance," in *Writings Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, eds. Daivd W. Bernstein and Christopher Hatch (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 234.
[521] Robin White, "John Cage: An Interview by Robin White," in *View 1, no. 1*., April, 1978, 6.
[522] Jackson Mac Low, "Cage's Writings up to the Late 1980s," in *Writings through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*," 228.
[523] Ibid., 225-227.
[524] John Cage, *M: Writings '67-'72* (Boston: Marion Boyars, 1976), 94. What I cite from Cage here was excerpted from his first try of mesostic writings with an aim to celebrate the poet and dance critic, Edwin Denby's birthday. I consider Cage's delicate description of doing and not doing (nothing), involuntary memories and realistic truths, as

point, which were employed and manifested in *4'33''*, lay in a realization that what the audience would hear or be challenged with when listening to *4'33''* was deliberately directed by *chance*, rather than what they would have expected when appreciating any "music piece" in a traditional sense. Nothing the audience heard was connected to the composer's written composition, manipulation, or interpretation under his subjective mind and professional discipline: "We Don't know whAt we'll haVe when we fInish Doing whaT we're doing bUt we know every Detail Of pRocess we're involveD in A way to leaVe no traces nothIng in between herDed ox."[525]

From his philosophy of silence displayed in *4'33''* and *Indeterminacy*, Cage put into practice the ultimate enlightened state of truth presented in *The Diamond Sutra*: There comes nothing, there goes nothing, and nothing exactly happens[526] as the final subsistence of the Tathagata consummate state.[527] The same theme of unfolding "true suchness" (or the "poetic truth" of the profound "as such") recurs in Cage's *Indeterminacy*. In its structure and essence, Cage's *Indeterminacy* was a "formalized,"[528] poetic "ambiguity"[529] and de-familiarization "by reason of its allowing musical elements to be introduced into the worlds of words."[530] The recording of *Indeterminacy* (1959), with "no definite beginning and no definite end,"[531] was a great expression of its performer's idiosyncratic "esthetic of the scrupulous absence of hierarchy."[532] *Indeterminacy* was composed of John Cage sitting in an acoustic space and

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well as the interpenetration of the "now" moment and the absolute can illustrate what Cage longed for conveying/presenting through *4'33''*.

[525] John Cage, "Introduction," in *Themes and Variations* (Barrytown, N. Y.: Station Hill Press, 1982), 12.

[526] I paraphrase the contemporary Chinese Buddhist master Yin-Shuen Shih's well-known saying which was based on his insight of *The Diamond Sutra*. The original text goes like this: "The one we call 'One Gone Thus' neither goes anywhere nor comes from anywhere." See Michael Roach, *The Diamond Cutter: An Exalted Sutra of the Greater way on the Perfection of Wisdom*, 81, http://www.fodian.net/world/dcutter.pdf.

[527] I have explained this idea in detail in particular in the last sections of chapter two.

[528] John Cage, "Preface to Indeterminacy," in *John Cage Writer: Selected Texts*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000), 76.

[529] Ibid.

[530] Ibid.

[531] Richard Kostelanetz, "John Cage's Indeterminacy Then And Now: 1992 Introduction." Album note.

[532] Ibid.

narrating ninety "unplanned"[533] yet reflective stories in a continuity recalled from his memories or collected from a great diversity of books, with whose subjects he had been fascinated for decades. Each anecdote was condensed to a single minute regardless of the lengths of stories. Once again, Cage's recitations of Zen koans or those disjointed, "involuntary"[534] flashes originating in his "enlightened spontaneity"[535] of life/aesthetic experiences were attributed to "illustrations of Cage's Zen Buddhist devotion to his esthetics of *accepting* [the beingness and vastness of] all sounds."[536] Such unrehearsed compositional randomness and "the flat, uninflected structure of superficially disconnected"[537] interconnectedness resulted in Cage reading all ninety anecdotes in varying speeds so that the contents (or Cage's words) were unclearly perceived, vaguely heard, and became a backdrop as the essential being of sound, that is, noise, emerged.

In another room (beyond Cage's hearing range yet simultaneously accompanying Cage's narrations), David Tudor played miscellaneous pieces alternating between "aleatory pianistic non-accompaniment"[538] based in the materials from *The Concert for Piano and Orchestra*[539] and electronic music. He spun together "fragmentary and non-sequential"[540] noise elements (as a manifestation of pure sound) from several radios and tracks from Cage's *Fontana Mix*,[541] in order to express the ideas of "formlessness, purposelessness, emptiness, and chaos"[542] in

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[533] Ibid., 78.
[534] Marcel Proust, *Swann's Way*, trans. C. K. Scott Montcrieff (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 9, 31.
[535] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence: John Cage: A Life* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1992), 117.
[536] Richard Kostelanetz, "John Cage's Indeterminacy Then and Now: 1992 Introduction." I place the phrase, *accepting* in italic as an emphasis of Cage's core music-philosophy.
[537] Richard Kostelanetz, "John Cage's Indeterminacy Then and Now: 1992 Introduction."
[538] John Cage, "Preface to Indeterminacy," 75.
[539] John Cage, "Indeterminacy," in *Silence* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 260.
[540] Peter Yates, "Two Albums by John Cage," in *Writings about John Cage*, ed. Richard Kostelanetz (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996), 94.
[541] John Cage, "Indeterminacy," 260.
[542] Ibid., 78.

"synchronicity."[543] When asked what his aims were for *4'33''* and *Indeterminacy* in particular, Cage responded that he (representative of humans) was not "going to a goal, [but instead] living in process, and that process is eternal."[544] Cage's "unintentional" endeavor to put altogether those ninety stories with the indeterminate compositional music through chance operations for the flow of emancipatory sound-essence and its true expression was "designed to minimize habit"[545] and to "suggest that…stories, incidental sounds from the environment, and, by extension, beings, *are* related, and that this complexity is more evident when it is not over-simplified by *an idea*…in *one person's mind*."[546]

4'33'' and *Indeterminacy* were manifestations of the essential being and lucid unimpededness of absolute sounds themselves through a performance of perfectly compatible noises and silences within the structure of chance operation. To use the Buddhist idea in analyzing Cage's use of chance operations as the crux of his art, I argue that Cage internalized this essential emptiness as the only principle. Regardless of its character as non-organic, a-logical, nonsensical, purposeless, unintentional, transitory, and random, the structure of chance operation is in itself the function and appearance of the very nature of emptiness. By employing the scheme of chance throughout his music and art work, Cage was directly engaged with the playfulness of absolute (emptiness). Though Cage announced his intent to incorporate Zen koans to shape the meat of *Indeterminacy*, *4'33''* was a more overt expression of a "typical" Zen

[543] A famous conceptual term proposed by C. G. Jung to explain the mysterious experiences of the collective sub-/unconsciousness, or the dynamic of the universal one mind is manifested/realized in the form of "synchronicity." Although he self-consciously shunned the Western psychoanalytical/psychotherapeutic methods when he gravitated more and more toward Zen Buddhism and other oriental thinking systems, Cage was indeed influenced in his early stages by C. G. Jung's theory; therefore, synchronicity, explicitly or implicitly, appeared in his works.
[544] John Cage, "Indeterminacy," 78.
[545] Richard Kostelanetz, "John Cage's Indeterminacy Then And Now: 1992 Introdution."
[546] John Cage, "Indeterminacy," 78.

koan[547] that Cage would leave for his audience to contemplate. In the same way that koan works for Buddhist practitioners as a peculiar approach for attaining fuller spiritual awakening, Cage's *4'33''* and *Indeterminacy*, oriented by Zen koan, marked the possibility of sudden Enlightenment through the music forefront of "this side-ness" that yearned towards the mysterious "other shore." More specifically, if the "other shore" refers to the true being of music in its "calmness,"[548] "uniqueness,"[549] eternity, and transcendence, then approaching such sheer, natural beauty through "this side-ness" suggests the presence of absolute sounds through the outflow of noise and silence. This showcased one of Cage's most provocative ideas and musical illuminations: "non-dualism," out of which he formulated what Constance Lewallen noted: "Music cannot be separated from all other sounds."[550] Cage's practice of "presence" in *4'33''* transcended the artificial boundaries of "two extremes"[551] and an "attachement" to the "concept" of harmonious, unified oneness, thereby "unintentionally" attaining the state of total absolute. After Cage's undertaking in the anechoic chamber that was usually called his Harvard experience in 1951,[552] Eric De Visscher points out that "Cage bluntly affirms that silence is made

[547] Koan, one of the major methods of Zen meditation among others, is the fundamental teaching in Soto lineage of Zen. Most of the time, koan (no matter whether it is invented via imagination or based upon historical reality) starts from rendering a moral tale or simply depicting episodes happening in their ordinary daily lives between Buddhist masters and the pupils, especially under the specific circumstances of the pupils' consulting the "mystery" of Zen Enlightenment with their masters. The chief aim of each koan is to wake up the Buddhist practitioners to the fulfillment of total spiritual illumination. To this end, the condensed storytelling in each koan almost always ends up in an irrational, odd, and sometimes quite shocking and scary consequence. Initially when Zen was transplanted into the West during the 1950s, which is exactly Cage's heyday, anthologies of such collections of bizarre koan seemed very astounding and stimulating to Western minds, which are more prone to rely on the capacity of reason and logical thinking.

[548] Constance Lewallen, "Cage and the Structure of Chance," in *Writings Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, 234.

[549] Cage related his realization of "uniqueness" (be it "the uniqueness of musical events" or the uniqueness in Zen awakened state of everyday life) as "extremely close" to the state of "being here and now." John Cage, quoted in David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 111, 187.

[550] Constance Lewallen, "Cage and the Structure of Chance," 234.

[551] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 120, 155. According to Nagarjuna and the Dalai Lama, these two extremes suggest the extreme of absolutism, eternalism, or the extreme of real existence, as well as the extreme of nihilism, agonisticism, or the extreme of non-existence.

[552] See Eric De Visscher, "'There's no such a thing as silence': John Cage's Poetics of Silence," in *Writings about John Cage*, 125. Cage himself reads the story--his Harvard experience was undertaken in a closed, soundproof room;

up of all the sounds that exist in permanence (life) [or, the absolute] and which surround us (place) [the relativity]. A silent work like 4'33''…constitutes an opening of music to the whole world of sounds, to the non-musical or even non-human environment."[553]

In addition to Zen Buddhism, Taoism and the philosophy of *I-Ching* also influenced Cage's methods. All three traditions have shared characteristics and have played leading roles on Cage's quest for religious Enlightenment through musical revelation, though the uses of these philosophical traditions vary in relevance and use in Cage's artistry. For example, when experimenting with and formulating his peculiar structure of chance, Cage threw coins while seeking advice from the oracle of *I-Ching*. A variety of 64 hexagrams[554] displayed in *I-Ching* as Cage's "synthesis"[555] not only provided the basis for his compositional applications and improvisational practices, but also "gave [the operation of] chance the spiritual context for which Cage was searching."[556] In particular, Cage blended both his revelations of the transcendental Oneness (unified wholeness) upheld in Taoism and the ultimate emptiness affirmed in Zen Buddhism to formulate his religiously-motivated way of seeing, hearing, realizing, and *being*.

Cage's "Experiences" of "Not Two:" Silence, Noise, and Sound

As I described in Chapter Two, according to Buddhist philosophy, the state of "not two (and not one)" marks the ultimate reality in which there exists total transcendence and complete unanimity as the true absolute. In such a state, all beings are in union instead of being

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however, in a sheer silence, there is a compatibility of total sounds for he clearly heard his blood circulation and nervous system echo--as one piece of the ninety-stories "collage" displayed in *Indeterminacy*.

[553] Eric De Visscher, "'There's no such a thing as silence…': John Cage's Poetics of Silence,"125.

[554] *I-Ching* is concerned with illustrations and explanations of hexagrams. Each hexagram possesses a correspondent number and specific name. Using yarrow stalks or tossing coins have been two basic principles to determine the hexagrams and their varieties. The essential way to consult the oracles of *I-Ching* is to form a question followed by prescribed steps to conceive the hexagram as an answer confirmed by *I-Ching* to the inquiry.

[555] Austin Clarkson, "The Intent of the Musical Moment: Cage and Transpersonal," in *Writings Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, 87.

[556] Ibid., 86.

independent realities. Cage's idea of "non-dualism"[557] (expressed in Buddhist terms as: "not two") and his aspiration for the in-union state is derived from his realization of interconnectedness and empty nothingness. Therefore, the principle "all in one and one in all" (or more precisely, "not two and not one") can be seen in the practice of unimpededness and interpenetration in Cage's experimental music/art/living/being, in order to "override the most extreme conceptual distinctions"[558] and transmit the necessity for de-classification and de-categorization without discrimination. Cage stated that "classification…ceases when it is no[t] possible to establish oppositions."[559] The aesthetic of "staying without abiding"[560] in expressing no-thought, non-form, non-attached, and non-judgmental empty luminosity and clear-light mindfulness allowed Cage to envisage things as absolute being, integral essence, and pure naturalness, as he noted that "for once anything happens it authentically *is*."[561] Cage internalized Suzuki's guideline into his performance of music-being or sound-essence: "Spiritual insight is attainable only by transcending the dualism of being and non-being,"[562] and blended this oriental philosophy with Henry David Thoreau's motto: "Yes and no are lies. A true answer will not aim to establish anything, but rather to set all well afloat."[563] David Revill noted that in his musical practice of interpenetration which "overrides the most extreme conceptual distinctions,"[564] Cage realized that "nothingness [emptiness] or negation…has parity with, if not priority over, being,"[565] since "no one loses nothing because nothing is securely possessed."[566] Cage's *4'33''*

[557] John Cage, *M*, xiii.
[558] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 112.
[559] John Cage, *M*, 10.
[560] A Buddhist term. It is often used to express the realization of "non-attachment (and no non-attachment)." See Ging-Kong Shih, *Serial Lectures on The Diamond Sutra*, DVD documentation, 1996. Taipei: The Corporate Body of the Buddha Educational Foundation, 2006.
[561] John Cage, *Silence*, 134.
[562] Daisetz T. Suzuki, *Essays in Buddhism, Third Series* (London: Luzac, 1934), 128.
[563] Henry David Thoreau, quoted in John Cage, *M*, 3.
[564] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 112.
[565] Ibid.

was a good demonstration of enacted voidness abounding with the meaning of meaninglessness of sheer silence.

Cage noted his long fascination with noise. In particular, after he studied Zen Buddhism and began to understand noise as the being, life, and beauty, and as the de-subjectification and de-centralization of what is called "harmony" in traditional Western music.[567] In this philosophy or the structure of harmony, "noise" (a representative of dissonance and disharmony) must yield and be subordinated so that its "presence" is erased. Stemming from his realization of noises (or vice versa), Cage was fascinated with silence. Through the perfect compatibility of silence and noise, Cage was able to perceive the substance and transcendentality of true sounds. That is to say, in Cage's profoundly philosophical musical work, he saw that absolute noises and essential silences were not possible to separate; not to mention he would have agreed with the deceptive view to which human reason had been accustomed, that noise and silence were two independent realities and irreconcilable contradictions.[568] Noise and silence can be seen as fundamentals permeating the multiplicity of Cage's interdisciplinary works. His deep realization of the total compatibility of noise and silence was an alternative presentation of genuine "harmony" and brought out Cage's crucial philosophical ideas which included "enlightenment spontaneity,"[569]

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[566] John Cage, *A Year from Monday: New Lectures and Writings* (Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1967), 108.

[567] According to the definition given by Schoenberg, the skill in harmony was the prerequisite of a composer, for musical harmony functioned not only as coloristic chord-building but it also expressed the foremost and chief structural resource of a musical work. Despite the fact that Cage studied music with Schoenberg, they indeed had diversified viewpoints in regard to for example the traditional musical skills of harmony. See David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 47-55.

[568] In Buddhist or Zen philosophy (by which Cage was deeply influenced), when things are seen as two independent realities, it means that each independent reality is deemed as possessing its own inherent existence or unitary solidity. However, such a theory is by no means validated via Zen Buddhist perspective. I have analyzed this idea in detail in Chapter Two.

[569] See David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 117. The term, enlightened spontaneity, is what Revill uses to describe Cage's Zen-inspired artistic works and the kind of most thorough and rigorous training and preparation behind them, which brought about Cage's demonstration of spontaneousand and "sudden enlightenment" in his essential musical presentation.

"interpenetration," and "unimpededness."[570] Cage's revelations not only won him a "peculiarly curious serenity,"[571] as Peter Yates recalled from his personal encounters with Cage, but also permeated his art works, music, and writings as displaying the compatible perfection of noise and silence and the presentation of "profound suchness." Yates describes Cage's daring experiment in *Indeterminacy* and the startling effect it had left as "these at first hearing unassimilated and seemingly unassimilable noises were allowed to come between the speaker and listener like sounds of traffic through an open window."[572] It is this "unimpeded luminosity"[573] expressed in *Indeterminacy* that pierced from "this side-ness" to "the other shore" (with no habitual apprehension or definite distinction between the two). Yates's analysis underscores Cage's explanation of his new aspect of form explored in the instrumental music as "a comparable visual experience…[like] seeing someone across the street, and then not being able to see him because a truck passes between."[574] Cage's indeterminate sound-essence was translucent, elusive, and ultimate.

Cage's structuring of his performances around an integration of noise and silence is comparable to the unfolding of the state of natural trueness and profound suchness of "not two" and all "in union" in Buddhism. Here lies another way to look at the demonstration of Cage's noise and silence in a perfect compatibility of "non-artificial" performance of art/living/being in union instead of as separate realities. If sound acts out everything and is a way for humans to reach true reality in the presence of (true) music, so does noise and silence. In his evolutionary,

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[570] See David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 111, 316. According to Revill, interpenetration and unimpededness were not only the heart of Zen philosophy but also two fundamental revelations that Cage had learned from Suzuki's theory and had put into practice for decades throughout his diversified art works. See D. T. Suzuki, *Essays in Buddhism.*

[571] Peter Yates, "Two Albums by John Cage," in *Writings about John Cage*, 97.

[572] Ibid., 98-99.

[573] See David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 111. Unimpeded luminosity was another expression of unimpededness and interpenetration that was fundamental in Suzuki's Zen philosophy and had been employed by Cage into his idiosyncratic musical approaches.

[574] John Cage, quoted in Peter Yates, "Two Albums by John Cage," 99.

ever-changing experimentation central to long-lasting "inclination towards silence,"[575] Cage delved into a new openness or enlightened view of silence (indispensable to sounds) through the realization that "there was no *such* a thing as silence,"[576] and by composing a number of combinations within a time sequence that was annotated as "a piece of uninterrupted silence…[that structured] the standard lengths of 'canned' music….The ending will approach imperceptibility."[577] Cage manifested the principle "not two and not one" (or, all in one and one in all) and broke down the barrier between artist and audience, stage and off-stage, inner and outer, self and other, center and margin, as well as appropriator and appropriated. Convention affirmed this barrier to be "efficient" and required communication between the subject and the object in order to meet a satisfactory destination through sufficient form, technique, and content. Cage proved that this invisible yet uncrossable barrier that had existed as a universal concern for artists working in diverse genres was not at all "real existence." Instead, he affirmed that efficient communication between artist and spectators could be achieved if it allowed for a new, deeper enlightenment of music as "an activity of sounds in which the artist found a way to let the sounds *be* themselves."[578] This enlightened awareness of music as the transcendent pureness of sound expressing itself directly through full dynamic performance was comparable to a spiritual illumination that Cage was geared towards.

Cage also noted that it was by directly letting the sound essence and its empty suchness manifest in the full presence, that the true function of (true) music (rather than effective

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[575] Eric De Visscher, "'There's No Such a Thing as Silence…': John Cage's Poetics of Silence," 117.
[576] According to Eric De Visscher, in his work "45' for a Speaker," Cage was able to draw one of his best-known conclusions: "There was no such a thing as silence." This revelation of Cage was also based on his famous "Harvard experience" that totally transformed his idea of silence and noise, sound and being, phenomenon and substance, (forms) things and no-things (nothingness).
[577] John Cage, "A Composer's Confession," 29.
[578] George J. Leonard, *Into the Light of Things: The Art of the Commonplace from Wordsworth to John Cage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 147. Cage's quotation that I cite here was his interview with G. J. Leonard and put into the latter's book.

communication or interpretive expression) could be summoned in which the artist and audience were able to reach a state of transcendental one-minded-ness. For at such a moment, both the artist and the audience are able to open up themselves for other possibilities of experiencing, seeing, and hearing by allowing this "[undermining] of the making of value judgments"[579] emerge and disengaging from the manipulation of dualisms, such as "likes and dislikes,"[580] "familiar and unfamiliar."[581] Intriguingly, Cage proposed that letting sound realize its true essence should simultaneously result in every individual's subjective mind being fully present in the performance of music-sound. It is such an attainment of the natural state of true beingness that transforms the individual's subjective mind into a state of emancipated, selfless, absolute Mind, and (empty) no-mindedness.

In Cage's understanding of Buddhism, placing the being of sound in the center was an exhibition of "an interpenetration of unlimited centers."[582] According to Cage, in an ultimate display of noise, one should hear nothing but sheer silence. Likewise, in an absolute silence, one could hear the vast beingness of sound itself which is the transcendentality of noise.[583] The desire for an expression of absolute reality framed the basis of Cage's philosophy in both *Indeterminacy* and *4'33.''* Noise was the presentational performance of silence in its utter translucency, and silence was the essential lucidity of the being of sound. Therefore, no matter whether through noise or silence, one could look to the presence and beauty of "interior

[579] Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 44.
[580] John Cage, recorded in Cole Gagne and Tracy Caras, "An Interview with John Cage [1975]," in *New York Arts Journal* 1, no. 1, May, 1976.
[581] John Cage, quoted in David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 186.
[582] Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 44. Cage's understanding of placing "sounds" in the musical center was deeply connected to the fundamental spiritual (Zen Buddhist) principle. In the demonstration of naturalness and transcendence of true sounds, there exists a state of total unanimity thereby "unlimited centers."
[583] Cage's ideas about the unimpededness of unlimited centers were displayed in his musical illumination of "inside silence as noise and inside noise as silence" where true absolute of sound emerged without attachment to noise/silence or to the ultimate sound itself.

immobility."[584] This luminous interior immobility was demonstrated in Cage's musical performance as neither interrupting nor destroying the amplification or empty nature (true substance) of silence that already existed. If during the performance, members of the audience coughed spontaneously, the sublimity of silence included and reconciled such coughs. Cage thought that the unintentional coughs performed by the audience to be essentially beautiful and indispensable. These coughs were in the being of sound itself. The total transcendence of sound was expressed in noise and silence incorporating each other in a perfect way instead of contradicting each other or transforming one into its opposite. As Cage emphasized, "all the sounds interpenetrated; nothing obstructed anything else."[585]

Silence, sound, noise, and essential emptiness were crucial to the true nature and ultimate being of Cage's music. Altogether, they presented Cage's alternative way of seeing, hearing, being, and living through the performance of music. Cage reconciled with nothingness by using Zen philosophy to dissolve illusory differences (fabricated by consciousness through the mechanism of perception, cognition, and conceptualization) between art and life. Using this premise, Cage integrated the unexpectedness and randomness of traffic (stemming from his "illumination" of noise) as a performance in which there existed the being of sound-essence. Noise, or traffic itself, acted out the "real" sound of sound (and life) and was empty of any specific interpretations or communicable and innate meaning. Cage notoriously put it: "I have *no-thing* to say and I am saying it and that is poetry as I need it."[586] These noise elements (as the absolute luminosity of sound or the essential sound in nothingness) "exist[ed] solely for their own sake unrelated to anything else…a single *sound* [could hardly be given] *any* meaning."[587]

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[584] Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 50.
[585] Ibid., 134.
[586] John Cage, quoted in David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 122.
[587] Ibid.

The compatible translucency of noise and silence in performing the sublime perfection of essential sound carried out interpenetrative nothingness. In other words, noise and silence were the perfect manifestation of performing emptiness.[588]

The Influence of D.T. Suzuki's Zen Buddhist Philosophy and Cage's Enlightenment: Chance and Indeterminacy

For Cage, the foremost *raison d' etre* of art and music was the enjoyment of life. Cage proclaimed: "Art and our involvement in it will…introduce us to the very life we are living….What are the arts for except to bring about the enjoyment of life?"[589] The chief goal of religion in general is also to make attainable the utmost enjoyment of spiritual life. In Buddhism, the highest enjoyment of life comes from the total abandonment of the revolving cycles of *samsara* (reincarnation) for an achievement of the state of nirvana, the pursuit of true liberation and genuine happiness. Cage's yearning for the enjoyment of life through spiritual awakening allowed for the mythological and essential facets of art to align themselves with a religious practice. His close association of art with spiritual aspiration or religious quest did not stop there. Cage linked art, spiritual illumination, mystical experience, and mysterious religion through an indispensable and ongoing connection. There is a well-known series of ten illustrations used in Zen Buddhism that depict the truth state disclosed through this philosophical tradition. These illustrations are composed of the Ox-herding images and were passed down by a Chinese Zen master during the Sung Dynasty[590] for common instruction and to exemplify the different stages

[588] Instead of understanding noise and silence as contradictory from the perspective of "relative reality" (or conventional truth), for Cage, the unimpededness of sound-substance was similar to the "here-and-now" presence of true absolute in the sphere of ultimate reality. Cage's musical concept of "here and now" was influenced by Suzuki's Zen methods. See Suzuki, *Essays in Buddhism, Third Series*.
[589] John Cage, *A Year from Monday*, 42.
[590] The Sung Dynasty was approximately equivalent to the period of time between the middle of the tenth century and the late thirteenth century.

of meditative practices in the path towards Enlightenment. In brief, the ox symbolizes the essence of Mind (no-mindedness), true being, true self, or true nature of emptiness. The ox-herder suggests the subjective mental consciousness that seeks to unveil this ultimate profundity. When asked about his realization of Zen, instead of marking his interpretations through verbal texts, Cage used the koan-like ten ox-herding pictures as an example of a direct expression of "truth." The very last stage in the ten ox-herding pictures depicts a big, fat man, with a satisfied smile on his face, returning to the countryside bearing gifts. This man is supposed to be a fully enlightened being. After his attainment of great wisdom, seeing into the state of true suchness and absolute emptiness, he returns to the ordinary sphere instead of dwelling in his accomplishment of the ascendent, esoteric nothingness. Returning to the realm of conventional phenomena or mundane world abounding with appearances, circumstances, and activities is an even more complete consummation, a thorough achievement of non-abiding (non-attainment) and no non-abiding (no non-attainment).[591]

Cage's music resembled the final attainment of Zen enlightenment state; in other words, his art was a return to the material world. The final aim of Cage's art as a return to the world was exemplified in his music (in particular related to his use of noise) in which he valued and integrated found objects that were both profoundly worldly and spiritual.[592] He was fascinated with the commonplace or ordinary, which was inseparable from the presence of noise, demonstrated not only by existing musical instruments (e.g., his use of the prepared pianos[593])

[591] The Dalai Lama, *Essence of The Heart Sutra*, 60, 126, 157-158.
[592] Cage's inclination of using found objects was exemplified for example in his presentation of LaMonte Young's *Poem* at the 1992 Theatre. In this production, Cage made use of a telephone book (an everyday material) to engender the basic framework and guidelines for the proceeding of a performance. His approach in this instance "intentionally" included the ordinary objects that could make continued sounds in a "non-intentional" way such as the sounds "naturally" produced by radios that crackled, chairs, benches, brooms, and tables that were moved around the floor, along with sounds made by a set-off fire extinguisher, as well as students' screams.
[593] The use of the prepared piano means placing objects (or incorporating another existential being/sounds) in the piano for an aim of accidentally distilling and collecting at least two different (musical) sounds from "a single

but also found in everyday objects (found objects). In art, the use of found objects suggests that an artist attempts to incorporate materials that are not primarily designed for an artistic purpose but instead have already existed for other uses and meanings. Based on the criterion of "non-intentionality," Cage employed natural found objects (whose mystical aspect is a manifestation of "truer" and "purer" essence opposed to those specifically designed instruments only for the use of an autonomous art) into his experimental music-being or sound-essence and involved unconventional percussive factors in his composition. In so doing, he was able to transform reality and alternated from the musical/poetic, ascendent, and transcendental truth to the natural, ordinary, and decendent reality. As he affirmed: "Art has continually had the function of awakening people to the life around them."[594]

Cage's use of these images to illuminate his practice further exemplified the enduring interconnectednesses of (his) art, life, spiritual awakening, and religious pursuit. And this tenth ox-herding picture affirms the total compatibility of appearance and essence, form (manifestation) and substance, and functional perturbation (performance) and absolute emptiness, through the presentation of true suchness. The tenth ox-herding image also marks a consummation of enlightenment wisdom and true state that could describe Cage's "unintentional" attempt to merge his aesthetically "elitist,"[595] avant-gardist, and dialectical gesture and his aloof musical, religious enlightened state with his experience of conventional life. Cage employed oriental philosophy and Buddhism with the perspective that Zen philosophical performance had exerted on him "an

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preparation," to use Cage's own words. For example, Cage wrote *Bacchanale, for Prepared Piano*, as a piano experimentation (in the form of symphonic music) that involved with a tiny bolt, a screw with nuts, and some fibrous weather-stripping. Cage later commented on the co-existence of these musical sounds that were produced as: "one was resonant and open and the other was quiet and muted." See John Cage, *Empty Words* (Middletown, CT: Weslyan University Press, 1979), 8.

[594] John Cage, *A Year From Monday*, 113-114.

[595] Richard Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 214.

insistence on an utterly realistic approach and one that ends in humor."[596] The presentation of Cage's "humor" through his art works as an echo of the sublime enjoyment of life may stem not only from the inspiration of Zen, but also from the vision of Dadaism. Richard Kostelanetz considers that in spite of the fact that Cage's performance bears a Dada spirit,[597] it turns out to be not at all a Dadaist performance, but rather, a Dada form with a Zen essence, as Cage himself admitted that "neither Dada nor Zen are fixed tangibles...[therefore,] they invigorate."[598]

In this section, I will examine the recurring Zen Buddhist philosophical themes that penetrated Cage's theory and practice for decades. I will also argue that religious elements were integrated into Cage's aesthetic and transformed into a kind of Zen-Presence functioning in/throughout his musical performance. Irrationality, no-mindedness, the state of nirvana are all examples of Zen elements that have been internalized into Cage's music-philosophy and embedded in *4'33''* and *Indeterminacy*. Their aim was to do away with the barricade of the ego-identity, carrying out a total extinction of individual existence and subjective/objective self, and a "blow out of what is seen as an impediment to Enlightenment,"[599] out of which humankind's experience was set free and could "flow through."[600] The philosophy of letting no-mindedness guide was set forth by the "Mind" (with the capital M) as the presentation of empty clarity and unimpeded awareness. It created and unified humans instead of justifying the supremacy of

[596] Ibid., 13.
[597] Since Dada has ever claimed that the Dadaist movement has been radically influenced by Zen philosophy, Dadaists never denied their use of the core theory of Zen to shape their agenda. Therefore it makes sense that many critics and scholars would like to see the very "spirits" and elements of Dada and Zen "in synchronicity" —be it the form of Dada in transmitting the substance of Zen or vice versa—transformed into Cage's own works. Stanley Sheng-Chuan Lai's dissertation, *Oriental Crosscurrents in Modern Western Theatre* (1983), has mapped the interrelations between Dada and Zen. Also, it may be reasonable to relate Dada's inspirations to Cage's music attempts because Cage once said that he was very impressed by a lecture given by Nancy Wilson Ross at Cornish School in Seattle in 1937 which was entitled "Zen Buddhism and Dada." See John Cage, "Preface to Indeterminacy."
[598] John Cage, "Preface to Indeterminacy," 79.
[599] Kostelanetz, *Conversing with Cage*, 14.
[600] Ibid., 14, 284.

conscious, smaller minds that subjugated the flows of multiple dimensions of experience. The criteria of no-mindedness that Cage learned from Zen were transformed into his own work as "a spirit of acceptance"[601] rather than "a spirit of control." Cage's use of chance operations represented an attempt to conduct "a collection of possibilities"[602] in a performance geared towards a "spirit of acceptance" in "a sense of at-one-ness with whatever."[603] Relying on chance operations (or the structure of chance) to orient his music, Cage's experimentation merged music with life and was fully rooted in the principles of irrationality, no-mindedness, and a spirit of acceptance of the "natural" unfolding of true reality. Cage explained the co-presence of sound/noise and silence like this: "all the somethings in the world begin to sense their at-one-ness when something happens that reminds them of nothing."[604] Cage's unintentional musical enlightenment was to "let each thing [sound/noise] *be what it is*…[for] each something is a celebration of the nothing [silence] that supports it." "And that something—generating nothing--that is obtained is that each something *is* really *what it is.*"[605]

Cage looked to the Zen philosophy of "directly pointing at reality" and "emphasizing spontaneous, unmediated experience" to create his music-being with a "natural" presence that "unintentionally" pointed to the "ordinary" and ultimate reality. In a sense, I will argue that the same criterion can be used to describe Gao's theatre. Incorporating Zen theory in his approach, Cage valued experience more than concepts. He believed experience to be related to the outflow of the Mind, essential and empty Mindfulness, and the no-mindedness out of which human reason is nullified and the unconscious mind acts out spontaneously. Experience is a straightforward response through the senses, nerves, and higher spiritual awareness that come

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[601] Ibid., 17.
[602] Ibid., 10.
[603] John Cage, "Lecture on Something," in *Silence*, 130.
[604] Ibid., 133.
[605] Ibid., 139, 144. My emphases.

about from practicing square-legged-sitting meditation and deep breathing in Zen as well as the outpouring of the hallucinatory (daydreaming) dream state.

Contrary to direct experience, it was "concept" that Cage considered a challenge. The conceptual is subject to the relative domain inside the rigidity of relational ideas such as time and space. Conceptualization is also the product of cognitive perception and human intelligence, and is bound by the "normal, rational thinking" of subjective consciousness. Unlike the other figures in my case studies, Cage rarely declared a blatant yearning for True Reality or a quest for the absolute and essential being of humankind existence. This was quite opposed to Artaud's overtly passionate and mystical agenda: "Transform[ing] our Spirit, make for us a spirit entirely turned towards those perfect summits where the Spirit of Man no longer suffers! Make for us a Spirit without habits, a spirit truly frozen in the Spirit, or a Spirit with purer habit—indeed your own, if they truly serve for freedom."[606] Instead, Cage's idiosyncratic way of looking at ultimate reality and the absolute were derived from such Zen-inspired methods as Suzuki's "interpenetration and unimpededness," which explored the multi-dimensional phases of experience. Realizing that "Zen was an immanent approach,"[607] Cage especially valued direct encounters via the detours of the unconscious, the divine or the mythical, and the irrational rather than "conceptualized" or classified human experience. He saw the latter as "logical minimizations,"[608] "habitual intellectualization,"[609] or customary "appreciative intelligence"[610] and thereby subject to rational faculties. Cage expressed his leanings through his ongoing explorations of silent works (such as *4'33''*). He stated that "there is no real essential difference between a noisy silence, and a quiet

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[606] See Antonin Artaud, "Address to the Dalai Lama" (*Adresse au Dalai-Lama*), in *La Revolution Surrealiste*, No. 3, April 15, 1925, trans. Stephen Batchelor, http://www.stephenbatchelor.org/online%20articles/antonin%20artaud.htm.
[607] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 115.
[608] John Cage in conversation with Daniel Charles, *For the Birds* (London: Marion Boyars, 1981), 81.
[609] John Cage, "Defense of Satie," 117.
[610] Peter Yate, "Two Albums by John Cage," 95.

silence. The thing that runs through from the quietness to the noise is the state of nonintention."[611] An unintentional composition of the experiential irrationality and silent-noise with "ambient unintended actions,"[612] movements, and activities of "doing nothing, or rather of that doing without doing"[613] seeks for the compositional sounds to be "appropriate to silence… [without] disturbing that 'zero state.'"[614] Therefore, an absence of attempted, precise, determinate composition "becomes a composing of sounds within a universe predicated upon the sounds themselves rather than upon the mind which can envisage their coming into being."[615]

According to David Revill, Cage's understanding that "the ego faces the world of relativity through the sense perceptions and confronts the absolute through dreams and the unconscious"[616] permeated his aesthetic theory and his practice of "poetic truth." Emancipated flows of truer experience through direct encounters of senses, nerves, and the unconsciousness (such as Cage's deliberate tendency to master the "mesostic style"[617] to structure and at the same time to de-construct his prose writings) gave birth to enlightened spontaneity resembling an evocation of spiritual or religious revelation. For Cage, multi-dimensional experiences were the ascendence of "true reality." This allied him with a southern branch of Chinese Zen Buddhism of the Tang Dynasty that endorsed the possibility of sudden enlightenment rather than gradual and progressive illumination through continual meditation. For Cage, sudden illumination happened

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[611] John Cage's interview given in 1966 to the BBC was quoted as saying in Eric De Visscher, "'There's no such a thing as silence…': John Cage's Poetics of Silence," 128.
[612] John Cage, "Eric Satie," 80.
[613] Eric De Visscher, "'There's no such a thing as silence…," 128.
[614] Ibid., 128-129.
[615] John Cage, "Eric Satie," 80.
[616] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 114.
[617] Mesostic style was one of Cage's idiosyncratic explorations. He especially employed such a peculiar style which consisted of his graphic skills and increased enthusiasm in the orientation of chance operations in "texts" such as his artistic prose and philosophical writings. For example, when sketching a birthday note in prose, among the words and throughout the lines, Cage would underscore those letters that were composed of a specific name of the one to whom he was about to send a birthday note. He would continuously write in many occasional pieces, then he started to spread the words over lines and situated those letters that were underscored and capitalized under one another, formulating a vertical structure like a spine that spelled out the implicated name or word. Cage's mesostic-style prose was then completed in an acrostic form. See David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 234-236.

when the clear-light and empty mindfulness was receptive to the fluxes of realities-experiences (similar to the experiences of shocks and collisions characteristic of modern art, or taking uncanny strolls in the metropolis as in Walter Benjamin's *flâneur*). A most banal event can then turn out to be an entrance into absolute serenity (such as what Cage had experienced when he used psilocybin mushrooms), as reflected in the Buddha's smile: "Keeping one's mind on the emptiness, on the space, one can see anything can *be* in it, *is*, as a matter of fact, *in it*."[618]

Daisetz T. Suzuki's approach to Japanese Zen (Buddhist) teachings exerted a startling effect on Cage. He even noted: "I didn't study Zen with just anybody; I studied with Suzuki."[619] Cage's "enlightenment" under Suzuki's Zen philosophical instruction happened after he regularly attended Suzuki's classes and lectures in the early 1950s when Suzuki was a professor of religion at Columbia University. It is necessary to situate Suzuki's Zen approach at the forefront because the heart of Cage's music transcendentality was based on his teachings. Known as "the leading interpreter of Zen for the Western reader"[620] through his writings and translations that appeared in English beginning in 1898, the bilingual philosopher and religious teacher introduced and transplanted Zen Buddhism to the West through the lens of his specifically Japanese Zen. Despite suspicion of him as "neither a monk nor a practicing Zen master [but one whose] position was rather that of a lay theologian,"[621] with a "humanitarian aim"[622] to "assuage the restlessness and relieve the spiritual void of modern life,"[623] Suzuki aimed his Zen method at

[618] John Cage, "45' for a Speaker," 176. I mark certain terms in italic, once again, in order to associate them with Buddhist ideas that are discussed in chapter two.
[619] R. Fleming and William Duckworth, "John Cage at Seventy-Five," in special issue of *Bucknell Review*, 32, no. 2 (Lewisberg: Bucknell Unversity Press, 1989): 27.
[620] Austin Clarkson, "The Intent of The Musical Moment," 87.
[621] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 107.
[622] Ibid.
[623] Ibid., 108.

"ordinary people [throughout] Japan, Europe and America"[624] by "relat[ing] Zen to Western thinking and religion."[625] Suzuki "repeatedly cast his arguments in the form of a comparison and contrast between Zen and Christian mysticism,"[626] by associating "the noetic quality"[627] of religious revelation or mystical experience with the Zen *satori* enlightenment state. Suzuki was known for his spiritual pragmatism in defining Zen (Cage's method was influenced by Suzuki in a sense that it asserted Zen's pragmatic use and daily basis) when stressing the facets of "its simplicity, its directness, its pragmatic tendency, and its close connection with everyday life."[628] His less esoteric and elusive but more accessible Zen may account for the wide acceptance of his writings and teachings in Western culture and his influence on Cage in particular. As an example, through Suzuki's explanation of Zen *satori* state, one can locate how Cage (as an heir) internalized the core of the former's theory into his practice for musical enlightenment:

> *Satori* may be defined as an intuitive looking into the nature of things in contradistinction to the analytical or logical understanding of it. Practically, it means the unfolding of a new world hitherto unperceived in the confusion of a dualistically-trained mind…with *satori* our entire surroundings are viewed from quite an unexpected angle of perception…the world for those who have gained a *satori* is no more the old world as it used to be; even with all its flowing streams and burning fires…all its opposites and contradictions are united and harmonized….This is a mystery and a miracle, but according to the Zen masters such is being performed every day. Satori can thus be had only through our once personally experiencing it.[629]

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[624] Ibid., 107.
[625] Ibid.
[626] Austin Clarkson, "The Intent of the Musical Moment," 87.
[627] Ibid.
[628] Daisetz T. Suzuki, *The Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, ed. Bernard Phillips (London: Rider, 1963), 8.
[629] Ibid., 154.

In *Indeterminacy*, by a koan (recalled from his memory, or imaginary, unconscious recess) Cage illustrated the illumination of "true reality" (demonstrated by Suzuki) in a natural and unintended way through an enlightened mindfulness. And the moment when such illuminated view was presented by Suzuki, in turn gave birth to Cage's peculiar *satori* experience when the speaker (Cage) transmitted this koan within koan to his listener and audience through the non-organic accompaniment of disconnected instrumental pieces (the presence of noise) in order to disintegrate intellectual preconception and evoke *satori*:

> An Indian lady invited me to dinner and said Dr. Suzuki would be there. He was. Before dinner I mentioned Gertrude Stein. Suzuki had never heard of her. I described aspects of her work, which he said sounded very interesting….After dinner the talk turned to metaphysical problems, and there were many questions, for the hostess was a follower of a certain Indian yogi and her guests were more or less equally divided between allegiance to Indian thought and to Japanese thought. About eleven o'clock we were out on the street walking along, and an American lady said, "How is it, Dr. Suzuki? We spend the evening asking you questions and nothing is decided." Dr. Suzuki smiled and said, "That's why I love philosophy: no one wins."[630]

During the 1950s and 1960s, the crosscurrents of East and West in the realms of psychoanalysis and religion were dealing with issues of spirituality, mystical revelation, and mythological (unconscious) mind. These currents were recorded in the works of William James, C. G. Jung, and D. T. Suzuki. As an example, C. G. Jung's interests in Suzuki's writings extolled the latter's theory as unveiling "a true goldmine for the needs of the Western [minds]."[631] However, in his book, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, Suzuki explored in depth and examined the

[630] John Cage, "Indeterminacy," in *Silence*, 40.
[631] *C. G. Jung Letters*, eds. Gerhard Adler and Aniela Jaffe (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 1:128.

variations between Zen's idea of one Mind (-fulness) and the Western psychoanalytical idea of the unconscious.[632] Going beyond the theories of James and Jung, Suzuki argued against Jung's notion of "the psychoanalytical unconscious as a concrete entity"[633] being scarcely able to "go deep enough to include Zen No-Mind-ness."[634]

Implicated in Cage's use of koan in his indeterminate music-experience was the technically radical and theoretically uncanny "call for dangerous, sudden listening."[635] Cage's thirst for spiritual-aesthetic enlightenment lay in his compositional application of the structure of chance as "his belief that a piece of music [-being] should be like a work of Nature."[636] Cage's priorities may have been deeply inspired by Suzuki's notion of *satori* (the state of Enlightenment) as "the central fact of Zen,"[637] which could be approached through "meditating on a koan [as] a guide."[638] Suzuki believed that by de-coding koan, one could expose the dynamics of Zen Buddhist "quietism"[639] counteracting "intellectual analysis."[640] He explained that:

> the worst enemy of Zen experience…is the intellect, which consists and insists in discriminating subject from object. The discriminating intellect must be cut short if Zen consciousness [no-mindedness] is to unfold itself, and the *koan* is constructed eminently to serve this end. On examination we at once notice that there is no room in the *koan* to insert an intellectual interpretation….For a *koan* is not a logical proposition but the expression of a certain mental state [an awakened profundity of *satori*] resulting from the

[632] I have touched upon this issue in chapter three when discussing Artaud's gravitating towards imaginary hallucination, daydreaming experiences, and the repressive unconsciousness as the unfolding of the alternate true reality. I have emphasized the delicate difference between Artaud's "enlightenment" and ultimate emptiness as the transcendent state in Buddhism.
[633] Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind* (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1972), 144. See more elaborations on this subject in chapter two.
[634] Ibid. See more elaborations on this issue in chapter two.
[635] Austin Clarkson, "The Intent of the Musical Moment," 91.
[636] Ibid.
[637] Ibid., 89.
[638] Ibid.
[639] Suzuki, *Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, 293.
[640] Austin Clarkson, "The Intent of the Musical Moment," 89.

Zen discipline.[641]

Before being inspired by Suzuki's methods, Cage was already fascinated with certain strains of oriental thoughts. He recalled that "it was after 1945, between 1946 and 1947, I suppose, that I began to become seriously interested in the Orient. After studying Oriental thought as a whole, I took Suzuki's course for three years, up until [the 1950s]."[642] In addition to his search for deeper consultation from the spiritual guidebook, *I-Ching*, whose oracles were not his highest priority (though he used the sixty-four numerical hexagrams as the mechanism of his chance operations), Cage was also led to "the Indian theory of *rasa*[643] as a source for a representational aesthetic."[644] These unfortunately failed to fulfill Cage's artistic desires. Cage gravitated towards Zen during those years of "disturbances"[645] with his personal, social, and artistic yearnings unmet and resolutions unsought in "the dominant, orthodox, authoritative Western traditions—medicine, education, religion."[646] Cage realized that Zen Buddhism was the one among the systems of ancient oriental philosophy whose crux not only provided an "answer" to his aesthetic pursuit, but also distinctively fit his personal temperament. He once noted: "You have Oriental thought, you have mythology."[647] However, in addition to arguing that Zen Buddhism exerted a great influence on Cage, I assume that before Cage became enlightened, he clearly had a "contemplative sensitivity and susceptibility to Eastern thought"[648] and had already

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[641] Suzuki, *Essentials of Zen Buddhism*, 293.
[642] John Cage, *For the Birds*, 94.
[643] *Rasa* is an Indian performing art resembles in a sense the dramatic effect emphasized by the traditional Aristotelian Western drama, such as sympathy, catharsis, and psychological reflection of the characters. The gestures and facial expressions which aim at a mimesis of nature or realistic life are paramount to the dramatic theory of Indian *rasa* for evoking emotional responses (identifications) in the audience inspired by the performer.
[644] Austin Clarkson, "The Intent of The Musical Moment," 87.
[645] Jonathan D. Katz, "John Cage's Queer Silence; or, How To Avoid Making Matters Worse," in *Writings Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, 44.
[646] Ibid., 45.
[647] John Cage in an interview with Paul Cummings, 37. I quote Cage's words in Johnathan D. Katz, "John Cage's Queer Silence; or, How to Avoid Making Matters Worse," 45.
[648] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 109.

cultivated his eccentric "temperamental inclinations."[649] He seemed to have always harbored the kind of self-reflexive apocalyptic illumination that eventually guided him towards an encounter with Zen philosophy that offered "an existential placement."[650] Jonathan D. Katz points out that the Zen-provoked summoning to enlightened awareness of the present (or momentariness) "coupled with its transparency to doctrinal or dogmatic claims, led Cage out of the swamp of his problems and toward a new relationship with his 'disturbances' [which indeed was his homosexuality]."[651] Cage named this revelatory, new mindfulness as "nobility," through which he undertook the kind of holy alchemy which metamorphosed his anguish and turmoil into illuminated detachment. To use his words: it was an "enlightenment" that "to be 'noble' is to be detached, at every instant, from the fact of [two extremes or binary dualities, like] loving and hating. Many Zen stories illustrate that nobility."[652] Due to their own predilections, Cage's coming to Zen Buddhism is comparable to what leads Artaud to encounter his idealistic, alchemical, total theatre based in Oriental mystical religious experiences manifested in Balinese dance theatre after long-time quests.

As David Revill asserts, it is not possible to neglect Cage's engagement with Zen Buddhism which was simultaneous with the transplantation of Buddhism (in general) to the West as initiated by Suzuki's Japanese Zen methods in the 1950s. Noticing such a "coincidence" suggests "interesting questions concerning the mechanism and ramifications of [the potentiality of] social change [in mentality] through the meeting of cultures."[653] The cross-currents defined a moment of change from forward-thinking to retrospection, where the rootlessness and vacuum of modern mentality was nostalgic for the being at-home-ness of the "spiritual." Suzuki's concepts

[649] Ibid., 110.
[650] Ibid.
[651] Jonathan D. Katz, "John Cage's Queer Silence," 46.
[652] John Cage, *For the Birds*, 201.
[653] Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 124.

of Zen illumination ultimately influenced Cage in two radical ways: 1) through the messages and revelations that Cage conveyed throughout his own works and 2) through the adoption of Zen theoretical elements as raw materials for his art-philosophy.

In Cage's collected conversations compiled by Richard Kostelanetz, he noted that particular Oriental notions expounding on "creation, destruction, preservation, quiescence, and the understanding of the seasons"[654] were his focus when making music/art and pushed forward his fascination with nature. The issue of nature, in its broader sense, including the nature of human mind following the outflow of its inner and outer experiences and opening up to a grand dimensionality (e.g., irrationality) with more acceptance and less control (e.g., rationality), was a vital constituent in the composition and performance of Cage's works. He especially emphasized the interrelation between the operation of nature, the function of art, and the way that human beings learn from the essential presentation of nature. Cage noted the importance of provoking the (true) nature of the mind's operation by undoing the convention of dichotomous dualism that an egoistic, conscious, logical mind was customized to. In so doing, the subjective rational mind gave way to the flow of the irrational and unconscious Big Mind (or the state of transcendent no-mindedness) by summoning the true self or the empty own-being. When describing *Indeterminacy*, Cage stated that:

> Schoenberg said, "in order to write music, you must have a feeling for harmony." I explained to him that I had no feeling for harmony. He then said that I would always encounter an obstacle, that it would be as though I came to a wall through which I could not pass. I said, "In that case I will devote my life to beating my head against that wall."[655]

[654] Kostelanetz , *Conversation with Cage*, 17.
[655] John Cage, "Indeterminay," 261.

Cage resisted conceptualizing or conventionalizing the idea of harmony in a rational way by defamiliarizing the so-called harmony (not only musical harmony but harmony in almost every aspect), so that its contradiction invalidated the "existence" of duality, relativity, and dichotomous extremities. Eric De Visscher synthesizes both Cage's "Lecture and Something" and "Lecture on Nothing" and concludes that:

> silence can be considered as nothing, but this nothing must be understood in the oriental and mainly Zen Buddhist sense: beyond the opposition of Nothing and Something, it is their necessary interpenetration, as well as their constant change of state….Each element contains one part of the opposing element, so that silence may contain sounds, as much as sound must include silence. Each Nothing is a Something and each Something is a Nothing.[656]

Cage realized that calling upon the true nature of empty wholeness in its thorough presence was similar to the attainment of a Buddhist Enlightenment experience.

Cage always claimed that his approach to music, religion, and spirituality (more precisely, for Cage, his artistry was indeed a display of music-religion-spirituality) was different from that of a typical Buddhist meditator by admitting his lack of commitment to taking on any sitting-still meditation or deep breathing technique. Instead of being taught as a Buddhist theorist and practitioner under the traditional and doctrinal system, Cage admitted that the way he learned Buddhist philosophy and gained his Zen enlightened realization was based only on Suzuki's lectures and classes, along with his study of various theoretical writings about Zen (in particular the mysterious beauty of Zen koans). Through his artistic expressions that were based on (religious) enlightened experiences and his peculiar inquiry-answer "performances" that were shaped in the form of Zen koan (e.g., *Indeterminacy* and *4'33''*), Cage may like to provoke

[656] Eric De Visscher, "'There's no such a thing as silence…'," 121.

"sudden illumination" in his audience. Cage could be seen as a real Zen practitioner and a true mystic with no doubt, simply based on the fact that he "intentionally" employed those Zen philosophical elements in his distinctive practice of making "unintentional" music.

Similar to Butoh founders Tatsumi Hijikata and Kazuo Ohno, whose pursuit in their dance of the spiritual essence may not "consciously" and directly derive from the Zen-oriented agenda or the beliefs of Buddhism, Cage, Hijikata, and Ohno all attempted to uphold and cultivate the kind of profound attainment in Buddhism that was preached by the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng of the Chinese Zen school: an achievement of "no-thought as the main doctrine; non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis."[657] Cage's notorious experimentation in *4'33''* delicately performed the very essence of empty nature and the playfulness of ultimate reality: "no-thought, non-form, non-I, no-self, and non-abiding." In *Indeterminacy*, recalling his experience taking classes and practicing Zen with Suzuki, Cage noted his mysterious illuminations: "Three lectures I remember in particular. While he was giving them I couldn't for the life of me figure out what he was saying. It was a week or so later, while I was walking in the woods looking for mushrooms, that it all dawned on me."[658] The enlightened luminosity would penetrate only on the condition of no-thought, no-self, non-abiding, and a detachment of form. When Cage was immersed in nature, collecting mushrooms, he reached his most unintended, aware, contemplative, and insightful state. Cage adhered to "no-thought" as the main doctrine for expressing the importance for the artist of "non-intentionality" when making or being music/art. As Cage stated, "[interpenetrative] nullity is a present condition. Every something is an echo of nothing. And nowhere is where we are."[659] This statement was inspired by Suzuki's explanation

[657] *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, 137-138.
[658] John Cage, "Indeterminacy," 262.
[659] Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 112.

that "spiritual insight is attainable only by transcending the dualism of being and non-being."[660] Cage did not accept the idea of "form" as a conceptual term and instead saw form as manifested in the realization of "experience" in order to shape "through form the essence, through appearance the substance." In so doing, Cage's presentation of "form" was ever-becoming and ever-changing. Like Hijikata and Onho's emphasis on carrying out no-technique as the technique and no-form as the form when performing Ankoku Butoh, Cage's most unintentional musical method led towards the most "ordinary" culmination. However, Cage cultivated the principle of a total detachment of forms and techniques along with the highest discipline and the most rigorous musical skills, and they were brought together through precise tactics. The methods of indeterminacy and chance operations in composing the silence pieces and the improvisational happenings in music, like those using the prepared piano, came about through the rigorously disciplined use of no-technique and non-form**.**

The principle delivered by the Chinese Zen sixth patriarch: non-abiding as the basis, is an understanding of the Buddhist creed: non-I or no-self, which is a total extinction of the inherent existence in subjective and objective phenomena shaped the philosophy of "personal identitylessness and phenomenal/impersonal identitylessness."[661] Cage's own "transpersonal"[662] approach was put out as early as the 1940s. Cage came up with his revelation of "impersonalism" in music[663] when he said that to him, music opened up the possibilities for "self-alteration"[664] rather than self-expression typical of the traditional Western music.[665] Cage proposed that the very "function" or "ends" of true music as for self-alteration was realized

[660] Suzuki, *Essays in Buddhism, Third Series*, 128.
[661] The Buddhist conceptual terms. I have explained these ideas in chapter two.
[662] Austin Clarkson, "The Intent of the Musical Moment," 62-112.
[663] Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 89, 118, 150.
[664] John Cage, *Silence*, 90, 189.
[665] Ibid., 189, 269.

through his enlightenment. Cage's "self-alteration" was similar to what was proposed by Artaud as the very "ends" of his total, holy theatre as for the use of magical "presence"[666] and absolute Being[667]:

> [To] teach us [humans] the material levitation of the body and how we may no longer be held by the ground!...[To] know full well…to what transparent liberation of the soul, to what freedom of the Spirit in the Spirit, that we refer…at the summit of interiority…self, impulse, idea, lip, levitation, dream, cry, renunciation of ideas, suspended between all forms and hoping for no more than the wind.[668]

For Cage, the crux of music was self-alteration, and it exposed the fact he was an heir to Artaud, for both methods point to the weariness and paralysis of self-expression in the form of communication, representation, psychological reflection, and textual interpretation emphasized by the conventional, analytic, mimetic theatre. As Jonathan D. Katz observes, "[Cage] was coming to the conclusion that communication in art, the hallmark of an expressive musicality, was not possible."[669] His criteria for making music in order to achieve self-alteration, a change of mind, and the presentation of transpersonal selflessness reverberated with shaping Zen into the performance of awakened, detached nobility. As Katz analyzes the situation, Cage's music-philosophy appealed to the transcendentality, "widely taken to lie at the core of his aesthetic, Zen detachment is…invoked as an originary moment in the development of [avant-gardism] in the arts: an instantiation of a nonexpressive authorial voice, an early indication of the death of the author."[670] Through such self-transformation, music allows for a multiplicity of experiences, most of which are concerned with the mystical, the irrational, and the unconscious, and Cage

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[666] Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 8, 18, 27, 39, 73, 75.
[667] Artaud, *The Theatre and Its Double*, 7, 8, 147, 152, 157.
[668] Artaud, "Address to the Dalai Lama."
[669] Jonathan D. Katz, "John Cage's Queer Silence," 45.
[670] Ibid., 46.

once again put into practice the Zen principle of non-I or no-self. When the artist makes his music with this empty mindful essence, it boosts the conscious minds among the individual subjects in the performing space as they dissolve, disappear, detach, and come into union under the transcendental being of no-mindedness. In such a non-abiding, selfless, and center-less reality, all that is encompassed in this "interconnectedness" (to use one of Cage's favorite ideas) is placed at the center of the Universe.

Cage's engagement with Zen Buddhism brought to fruition his aesthetic endeavors by his devotion to "exclusively disciplined, ascetic, austere, quiescent, and transcendental"[671] practices and realizations. His music was above all, a spiritual pursuit for a true emancipation and a quasi-religious Enlightenment. The period of the late 1940s marked the most chaotic stage in Cage's life. In part, it was because his marriage ended in divorce; in part, and more significantly, his music/art yearned for a way out of the conventional. However, as Kostelanetz analyzes the situation, this period of turbulence also marked a fresh discovery and a new lead for Cage. He was starting his obsession with Oriental philosophy. In particular, his study of Zen Buddhism foreshadowed the tremendous impact that this spiritual tradition exerted on his life and altered his ways of making music.

When asked if he intended to use music as a medium to change his audience, especially when employing and internalizing Zen essence, Cage admitted that he considered music a means of changing the mind. Through the lens of Zen, music was not the vehicle but the presentation of true being and ultimate reality. In the decade of the post-World War II, change, in a deeper and fundamental sense, reflected the ethics and mentality of that time and was very much anticipated in every social sector in the West. It was an age of disquiet, angst, and flooded with popular

[671] David Revill, *The Roaring Silence*, 7-9.

outrage. The 1940s marked as a transition that stood at the crossroads of the aftermath triggered by a severe economic depression of the 1930s and the emergence of a remarkable economic boom of the 1950s. The tumult of the 1940s was chiefly concerned with three significant world events. The immensity and extensiveness of the Second World War occurred in the first half of the 1940s and resulted in grave doubts about a world that had (directly or indirectly) engendered massive massacres and committed genocide like the Nazi extermination camps at Auschwitz initiated by a Fascist totalitarian regime with its cancellation of civil liberties as an approach to dictatorship. The post-war aftermath also brought forth the horrors of destructive weapons like the threat of an atomic holocaust. The Second World War was followed by the rise of Communism in Eastern Europe and China, as well as the start of the Cold War era in the second half of the decade, which once again shaped the world into a great divide due to ideological differences and political unrest.[672] Cage positioned himself as a political and ethical anarchist and aesthetically as an avant-gardist concerned with the ways that true art could transform society. However, due to his religious study, Cage realized that such revolution and social change would happen only once his (or other artists') own mind(s) and their projection/perception of the world was completely transformed.

Adopting the essential spirit of Zen to create chance operations embroiled Cage in misunderstandings and controversies, when he was criticized for nihilistically giving up and adopting an "anything-does" method through his music-philosophy. As a way to incorporate non-intervention and contingency, Cage also integrated the theory and skills displayed in *I-Ching* and the arrangement of the Tarot deck as tools and materials to structure and exhibit his random operations. As Peter Yates comments regarding *Indeterminacy*, the music of "a continuous

[672] Rennay Craats, *History of the 1940's* (New York: Weigl Publishers Inc., 2001). See also Nicholas Yapp, *The 1940s: Decades of the 20th Century* (London: Konemann, 1998).

presence in the environment,"[673] in which, through "intermittent listening,"[674] one would recognize that in Cage's lucid, indeterminate sound illumination, "there is no [accomplished] composition but only a continual spontaneous composing."[675] Despite Cage's having noted that the essence of non-intervention and contingency (the meat of his music making and musical being) were provoked by *I-Ching* and Tarot, I argue that Cage's methods stemmed from the teachings of Zen, such as koan and other "pedagogical tools." Cage's use of Zen-inspired non-intervention and contingency was further emphasized in the performance of radical, a-logical, and absurd actions for shock experience through a total detachment aimed at profound illumination or "sudden enlightenment." Cage described his childhood-memory in *Indeterminacy* concerning his earliest, very unexpected, sudden and awakened experience prompted by a man in a store, whose unintentionally insulting and brutal act (similar to the ones performed by Zen master for evoking the possibility of his disciple's enlightenment) emancipated Cage from his attachment to an egoistic and conscious self via physical affliction (and psychological tormenting). The accidentally spilled syrup turned out to soothe Cage's thirst and his feeling of unbearable hotness; it also detached young Cage from a wanting for a root beer.

> Once when I was a child….It was such a hot day that, when I got out of the streetcar, the tar on the pavement stuck to my feet (I was barefoot)….I found it so hot that I had to run to keep from blistering my feet. I went into a five and dime to get a root beer. When I came to the counter…and asked for some, a man standing on the counter high above me and said, "Wait. I'm putting in the syrup and it'll be a few minutes." As he was

[673] Constance Lewallen, "Cage and the Structure of Chance," in *Writings Through John Cage's Music, Poetry, and Art*, 234.
[674] According to Lewallen, the idea of "only listening is intermittent" was paramount to Cage's music, as Cage expressed in an interview that art (nothingness) was everywhere, it is only seeing (the phenomenal occurrence subject to conventional truth) that stopped now and then. See Constance Lewallen, "Cage and the Structure of Chance," 234.
[675] Peter Yates, "Two Albums by John Cage," 96.

putting in the last can, he missed and spilled the sticky syrup all over me. To make me feel better, he offered a free root beer. I said, "No, thank you."[676]

Instead of making choices that fixed things rather than let them go and relying on taking control rather than opening up to acceptance, Cage stated that in his agenda of the indeterminate and chance music, he preferred a new way of exploration by asking a multiplicity of questions. Cage's approach to acceptance and his aspiration to open the possibility for the disclosure of the substance, in order to let answers spontaneously unfold and be completely present, was comparable to Zen koan. Both koan and chance operations account for setting free the answers from a closed system, which Cage named as a "closing-in-on-itself aspect of the egoistic self."[677] Interestingly, Cage offered this story as an example in *Indeterminacy* with regard to how freedom had been defined by a knowledge of freedom and the projection of invented thought on the image of flying birds. He narrated this story: "Artists talk a lot about freedom. So, recalling the expression 'free as a bird,' Morton Feldman went to a park one day and spent some time watching our feathered friends. When he came back, he said, 'You know? They're not free: they're fighting over bits of food.'[678] The answers were set free and ascended spontaneously, so that the illusion of concepts disappeared and dissolved through bodily senses and multi-dimensional experiences. The answers themselves were thus a flux that was ever-becoming and was able to present itself directly.

It was the Zen criterion of changeability and the performance of no-concept as "an endless plurality [and flowing] of the centers"[679] that Cage absorbed into and then transmitted through his chance operations. The ephemeral and sublime beauty expressed in the structure of

[676] John Cage, "Indeterminacy," 263.
[677] Ibid., 55
[678] Ibid., 265.
[679] Ibid., 56.

indeterminate happenings could be related to the state of interpenetration and unimpededness in Cage's musical agenda, which reflected the Zen Buddhist crux of true reality as absolute emptiness. Cage presented his core philosophy of interpenetration and unimpededness by way of this Buddhist precept: a total compatibility of empty essence and the perturbation of relational origination (interdependence), or in other words, the transcendental unanimity (not two and not one). He claimed that his approach to the own-being of music (which was "non-intentional" and "start[ed] from an empty mind"[680]) explained how the philosophy of "not two" manifested as an attainment of the unimpeded interpenetration. In the openness and voidness of flexibility, acceptance, purposelessness, changeability, and unconsciousness, Cage used chance operations and unpredictable formless mesostic-essence transparency to achieve centerless suchness, selfless "zero-eternity,"[681] translucent tranquility, and profound transcendentality:

that makes It possible

to pay atteNtion

to Daily work or play

as bEing

noT

what wE think it is

but ouR goal

all that's needed is a fraMe

a change of mental attItude

amplificatioN

wAiting for a bus

[680] Ibid., 67.
[681] David Revill, *The Roaring Silience*, 112.

we’re present at a Concert

suddenlY we stand on a work of art the pavement[682]

[682] John Cage, *Composition in Retrospect* (New York: Exact Change, 1993), 140. This is Cage’s mesostic style in prose.

5

Hijikata and Ohno's Essential Dance of Utter Darkness: A *Samsara*-Bound Body-Soul Performing Transcendental Metamorphoses in Quest for the Empty Absolute

Preface

In this chapter, my investigation of the post-war Japanese modern dance genre, Butoh, will primarily concentrate on the fundamental stylistic criteria and religious philosophy-embedded aesthetics. Ankoku Butoh, an archetypal and unusual form of expression of the "dance of darkness" was created in the 1960s by two prominent Butoh founders, Hijikata Tatsumi (1928-1986) and Ohno Kazuo (1906-). Compared to his artistic partner, who died of liver cancer at age fifty seven, Kazuo Ohno's Butoh performance has spanned more than four decades, and therefore he is revered as one of the oldest performers (if not the oldest) on contemporaneous Japanese stage. His first Butoh performance was a 1960 solo dance *Divinariane* in the first recital of T. Hijikata's *Dance Experience* at Dai-ichi Seimei Hall[683] in Tokyo, and when he was ninety seven in 2003, he even emerged in a dance duet *An Important Person* with his son Yoshito Ohno in Kiryu city of Gunma prefecture. There was a period of time in the 1970s that Ohno determined to tentatively retire from public performance; thus, between 1969 and 1977, he gave only three performances for screening, including *Portrait of Mr. O, Mandala of Mr. O*, and *Mr. O's Book of the Dead*. Starting from the early 1980s to 2003 marked as his most prolific period, during which Ohno has achieved the zenith of his Butoh art. Also, beginning in 1980, Ohno started to launch his dance tours around the world, and his overseas appearance came to the attention of the worldwide audience after his performance of *Admiring La Argentina* at

[683] It is the type of performing space, whose auditorium can accommodate 700-750 people and is chiefly designed for the uses of musical concerts, theatre performances, films, and forums.

Nancy International Theatre Festival in France. Between 1980 and 1999,[684] most of Ohno's dances principally took place via these ways, that is, he basically gave performances via overseas dance tours and through many international avant-garde theatre/dance festivals held in different countries. Ohno's most frequently-performed dances include *Admiring La Argentina* (choreographed by T. Hijikata and premiered at Dai-ichi Seimei Hall in Tokyo in 1977), *My Mother* (choreographed by Hijikata and premiered at Dai-ichi Seimei Hall in Tokyo in 1981), *The Dead Sea* (directed by Hijikata, co-performed with his son Yoshito, and premiered at Asahi Hall in Tokyo in 1985), *Water Lilies* (inspired by Claude Monet's painting and a duo dance with Yoshito premiered in Germany and was performed as a tribute to Hijikata in 1987 at the Butoh Dance Festival at Ginza Saison Theatre in Tokyo), and *Flowers-Birds-Wind-Moon* (co-directed and co-performed with Yoshito with its premiere at Theater Ponchielli in Cremona of Italy in 1990). Being performed more than one time per year after their debuts (e.g., In 1986, *Admiring La Argentina* had been performed eleven times on diverse occasions during Ohno's international dance tours to Europe and United States), *Admiring La Argentina*, *My Mother*, *The Dead Sea*, *Water Lilies*, and *Flowers-Birds-Wind-Moon* are deemed both Ohno and Butoh's masterworks.[685]

Butoh is aesthetically meant to evoke an internal and esoteric landscape where the mysterious recesses of the performers' higher spirituality are projected out through their bodily presence. It remains problematic to examine Japanese theatre and arts without paying attention to the deep-rooted religious tradition (including Zen Buddhist philosophy), regardless of how

[684] From 2000 onwards, Ohno chiefly focuses on leading/teaching regular Butoh workshops and giving lectures. He principally presents his dance pieces and performance demonstrations in own Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio (also known as the Kamihoshikawa studio), which was established in 1961 and locates in Yokohama. It is a place, in which all of Ohno's Butoh works are created, developed, and rehearsed.

[685] The above information is taken from Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within*, trans. John Barrett (Middletown: Wesleyan Univesrity Press, 2004), 309-323.

enthusiastic vanguards of these genres have endeavored to distinguish themselves from their cultural origins. Hijikata situated the distinctiveness of Butoh by proclaiming: "I am very aware that my butoh originates somewhere totally different from the performing arts related to religion—Buddhism, Shintoism or whatever—I was born from the mud."[686] Intriguingly, this paradoxical ambivalence is intertwined in the form due to an idiosyncrasy of Japanese culture. The anti-traditional, unorthodox Butoh genre grapples with the conflicts between tradition and the modern, domestic and foreign, Orient and Occident, national (self-) identity and globalization. It also confronts the incongruities among mystical religions (e.g., Shintoism, Shamanism, Buddhism, and Zen), technological civilization, and materialism. In particular, when Japanese culture in a whirlwind modernization aped Occidental civilization, this Westernized Japanese Frankenstein resisted yet was manipulated by the intervening hands of modernization, out of which there rose a deep nostalgia. At a time when the ethos of modernity exerted an irrevocable impact on the land of Japan (both positively and negatively), it also nudged this Oriental culture with profound tradition on a reflexive and self-awakening quest for Japanese modernism in the socio-political and cultural climate, whose aesthetic offshoot became avant-gardism. Simultaneously, the phenomenon of searching for the authenticity of "self" began to be attributed to self-consciously critical and "enlightened" artists in the circles of theatre, literature, cinema, and arts intelligentsia in which the search boosted the creation of Butoh.

In the following section, I will explore how those ghosts from the past, possessed spirits, mysterious beatitude, and sublimity (in the metamorphic grotesqueness of death and corpse) reenact their essential being and become exorcised by the shamanistic Butoh dancers through corporeal torment and bodily martyrdom in a trancelike rapture. This chapter examines the

[686] Tatsumi Hijikata, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness* (Tokyo: Shufunotomo Co., 1988), 71.

methods of this ritualistic modern art genre, which, not unlike Noh, aims at summoning an apocalyptic revelation about Enlightenment transcendence through an alternative path.

The Historical Context of Japanese Westernization

The Meiji Restoration, which began in 1868, initiated and influenced experimentation in twentieth-century Japanese theatre. At the time, Japan was forced to open its trade markets (as well as its society and culture) to the Western world. In a situation very similar to that of the Chinese at the turn of the century, the Japanese looked to the West and to the path of modernization and Westernization. At the time Noh was greatly affected by the Meiji Restoration, because it lost its most powerful financial support from the Samurai class. Iwakura, a cultural ambassador and statesman, strongly insisted that Noh should be preserved and remain intact as a classic form. Iwakura, who had studied in Europe, argued that Noh should be enhanced as an indigenous national artistic form (national identity) whose traditional classical status could come to resemble that of Opera in Europe. European scholar Ernest Fenollosa was also dedicated to learning and preserving Noh and even transplanting it to the Occidental world. Fenollosa reinforced the importance of preserving Noh as Japan's most precious tradition and as a source of their ethnic pride and sense of superiority. Kabuki's fate was however very different from that of Noh. Due to its popular origins and its basis in the ordinary people and mercantile class, the government of the Meiji period transformed Kabuki into something resembling nineteenth-century Western realistic theatre. According to both David G. Goodman and James R. Brandon,[687] during the period 1868-1928, all the gods and ghosts (these gods and ghosts symbolized obsolete traditional performance forms as well as the dominant themes such as the

[687] David G. Goodman, "Introduction," *in Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s: The Return of the Gods* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1988), 3-32. See also James R. Brandon, "Japan," in *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 143-179.

supernatural, mythological, religious, and superstitious in Noh and Kabuki) were ousted from the Japanese stage. And Japan began to Westernize and modernize its theatre and tradition. Under such a swift bombardment of the traditional performing stage, interestingly, Noh was characterized as sacred theatre primarily concerned with a contact with the divine during its performance; on the contrary, Kabuki was known as profane theatre. Brandon describes Kabuki as exposure to the devil (evil), so that all religious and ritualistic elements as well as gods and ghosts should be expelled from the modernized Japanese performing stage for the satisfaction, taste, and requirement of contemporary Western audiences. Therefore, during the Meiji Restoration, both Noh and Kabuki were deliberately transformed into politically correct and aesthetically homogeneous and "purified" theatrical forms.

The Westernization of Kabuki was developed in a form called Shimpa that borrows techniques and sensationalism from the Western theatre, in order to reform and decorate the Kabuki stage. Shingeki is an imitation of the Western realistic drama but differently from Shimpa, in that it involves serious research and study of Western literature, drama (its history and structure), and theatrical productions. Shingeki emerged from Waseda University and Keio University, both well known Japanese universities whose first leading figures were Tsoubouchi and Osanai. Tsoubouchi studied Western drama and introduced and translated a great number of Shakespeare's works. Conversely, for Osanai, all Western theatre before Henrik Ibsen was in the category of Japanese Noh and Kabuki, and he found the so-called "classics" to be outmoded. Osanai was particularly interested in Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov's works, especially the radical viewpoints of Ibsen's social-criticism (social-problem) plays. Osanai later became the leading figure at the Tsukiji Little Theatre (founded in 1924), a most important place during the Shingeki movement. Tsukiji Little Theatre had built with modern and technological equipment

including stage machinery, proscenium arch stage, and lighting system based on the model of the most up-to-date Western mainstream theatres. Osanai (who was greatly influenced by Stanislavsky and Max Reinhardt's theatrical practices) used Tsukiji Little Theatre to launch a Japanese experimentation with Stanislavsky's production techniques from the Moscow Art Theatre. Tsukiji Little Theatre explored a diversity of modern Western theatrical experiments, including Realism, Impressionism, Symbolism, and Expressionism.

1960s was a turning point to contextualize Japan politically, culturally, and artistically, during which Japan confronted radical upheaval and student unrest—due to the failed Mutual Security Treaty between the United States and Japan. It was in the year 1960 that the Japanese government--supported by the majority of the conservatives (also known as the former "nationalists") and fiercely opposed by the leftists (also known as the former "traitors")—agreed with the renewal of the U.S.-Japan Mutual Security Treaty, which allowed U.S. military bases on Japanese land. As a result, the entire nation was shattered and nearly torn apart by radical upheavals and student unrest, including debates, strikes, and demonstrations occurring in every division of society over the dispute of the treaty. The years of American occupation had re-written the history of Japan in the way that it "had brought dramatic changes in Japanese political and social values, among them imposed democracy, a new constitution, new civil law, and fast urbanization" in the following decades.[688] With its roots grown in the turmoil of the 1960s under the rubric of failure, the initial form of Butoh, in effect, never structured itself around a politically dominated agenda. The American-Japanese relationship during 1960s was an ambivalence and a love-hate complex in which it imbricated "a confusing, challenging, and conflicting issue."[689] Japanese fervent desire of remaining equal to its enemy-friend, even "role

[688] Jean Viala, Butoh: *Shades of Darkness*, ed. Nourit Masson-Sekine (Tokyo: Shufunotomo col, Let., 1988), 10.
[689] Ibid., 10-11.

model,"[690] on their way towards "modernization" (Westernization, or more precisely, "Americanization"[691]) derived from the traumatized feeling of inferiority and loss of "identity" when confronted with the imported American culture. For the Japanese, the loss of national "identity" in turn became a search for the identity of culture, identity of ethnicity, identity of gender, identity of body, and identity of no-idenity, that is, an identity of *something* even more "authentic," essential, universal, and primordial which was imprinted in every single human being. This kind of yeaning for an "enlightened" revelation concerning, for example, "identity," is what had been experimented on and expressed through a variety of "revolutionary" artistic movements since the 1960s (late 1950s).

A Post-Shingeki movement emerged from a leftist student organization also known as the "Underground Little Theatre Movement." The most frantic and active period of this movement was between 1960 and 1985, and it targeted the orthodox conventions and paradigmatic values of Shingeki based in Western realistic theatrical form. The most preeminent figures of this period were Terayama Shuji, Suzuki Tadashi, and Hijikata Tatsumi (one of the Ankoku Butoh pioneers). During this time, those Japanese gods and ghosts, ancient souls and spirits who had gone into exile were once again called upon and empowered to return to the performing stage. Nonetheless, according to David Goodman,[692] this was not a religious catharsis/exorcism of demons and specters or a sacred return of gods and divinities, but rather a kind of evocation and emancipation of the ever-haunting profane Japanese ghosts and spirits. Goodman believes that the intent of these political, cultural, literary, and artistic activists in the Underground Little Theatre Movement was to first acknowledge, then exorcise, liberate, and negate these ghosts and buried darkness characterized as the otherized and estranged "Self" that was hidden under the deceptive

[690] Ibid., 11.
[691] Ibid.
[692] David G. Goodman, *Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s: The Return of the Gods.*

and superficial beauty and harmony, standardization and order, rationality and reason. In the highly stylistic, experimental, and idiosyncratic theatre of Terayama Shuji, he attempts to break the rigid barriers of (realistic and societal) reality, surreality (fictionality), and theatrical reality (poetic truth), as he harasses and confronts the audience, as well as challenges them with the extreme physical, mental, and spiritual possibilities and experiences of his actors. He seeks to reach a higher and truer reality beyond the conventional realm through the exploration of the most scandalous taboos, crimes, cruelties, brutalities, and perversions. Much like Artaud, by holding hands with coarse ugliness, the suppressed, the forbidden, and death, Terayama attains a strange and serene beauty and an absolute in-between-ness (the liminal stage between purity and darkness, birth and death).

During this period, the theatre artists closely associated with the Underground Little Theatre Movement experienced a nostalgia and a yearning for authenticity such as roots, identity, belonging, and primeval existence without a return to the historical past or an embrace of tradition, but through the negation of secular and societal reality, conventional orthodoxy, and universal value systems. Ohno once depicted what the Butoh actor attempts to touch on or convey through their dance: "From time to time an unknown being appears and disappears casting a light like salt….The dancer's costume is to wear the entire universe."[693] The Japanese confronted a highly ambivalent paradox of their national truths, identities, historical pasts, and themselves. All these symptoms characteristic of the underground avant-garde theatres peaked through the expression of Butoh as the dance of darkness, chaos, deformity, forgetting, and memorializing—a peculiar combination of the extremities of pain and ecstasy, death images, corpses, warped and tormented bodies, odd makeup and costumes, actors positioned in bizarre gestures, and mysterious spiritual ascensions (enlightenment). These grotesque aesthetics of

[693] Kazuo Ohno, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 46.

distortion, decadence, and demise in Butoh were inspired by ruins, terminations, and accumulated dead bodies in the aftermath of traumatic catastrophe in the Hiroshima and Nagasaki atomic bombings during the Second World War. According to Ohno Kazuo and Hijikata Tatsumi, death and ghosts are reincarnated and reenacted by a Butoh dancing body undergoing an extremely painful and irretrievable oppression, metamorphoses, and a transition towards final emancipation, thereby attaining trancelike enlightened revelation and unfolding the true being and spiritual essence. Through these movements, Butoh dancers are reconnected to and merged with ancient religious traditions, shamanistic rituals, mystical experiences, mysterious cults, as well as metaphysical philosophies shared by most Oriental aesthetic discourses—that of the esoteric beauty and transcendental absolute.[694]

What is (Ankoku) Butoh? Characteristics, Nature, and Aesthetic-Religious Essence

Susan Klein remarked[695] that the term Ankoku Butoh was adopted to identify with the original Butoh philosophy and the prototypical aesthetic forms pioneered by its founders and leading figures, Hijikata Tatsumi and Ohno Kazuo. The use of the conceptual term Ankoku Butoh differentiates Hijikata and Ohno's performances from those of Hijikata's legacies, the so-called second and third generations, which later bloomed into diverse branches[696] and Butoh groups. The second and third generations of Butoh consistently acknowledged the impact of Hijikata and Ohno (especially the former), although the aims and principles of the choreography

[694] My analysis in the section of *The Historical Context of Japanese Westernization* are taken from David G. Goodman, "Introduction," *in Japanese Drama and Culture in the 1960s: The Return of the Gods* (Armonk, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 1988), 3-32. See also James R. Brandon, "Japan," in *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 143-179. Benito Ortolani, *The Japanese Theatre: From Shamanistic Ritual to Contemporary Pluralism* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1995).
[695] Susan B. Klein, *Ankoku Buto: The Premodern and Postmodern Influecnes on the Dance of Utter Darkness* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University, 1998), 2.
[696] Like, Dai Raku Da Kan, Sankai Juku, Hoppo Butoh-ha, Muteki-sha, and Byakko-Sha, which throve in the early 1970s, are amongst those which are better-known worldwide.

in later Butoh were, to a certain degree, inconsistent with those of Ankoku Butoh. For the purpose of this discussion, I use the idea Ankoku Butoh to refer to specific conceptual meanings in the avant-garde dance movement led by Hijikata and the term Butoh to signify the intact spectrum of Butoh under the influence of Ankoku Butoh in general. More significantly, the term Butoh is positioned within the context of philosophical ideas and aesthetics practices found in Hijikata and Ohno's dancing "essence."

Ohno and Hijikata conjured up the heart of Ankoku Butoh with the presence of "twosomes"[697] and "offered [the audience] man's truth in all its grandeur and derision."[698] These twosomes in Ankoku Butoh (Ohno's "masterpiece," *Admiring La Argentina*, was the best example) included the presence of life and death, love and estrangement, youth and old age, rootedness and detachment, suppression and rebellion, sublime profanity and grotesque beauty, femininity and masculinity, luminosity and darkness, negation of the individual self (subjective, conscious mind) and rebirth of the absolute self (infinite, unconscious mindfulness), ephemerality and eternity, in order to achieve the transcendental "non-dualistic" ("not two") illuminated state. As Jean Viala's description of Ohno's *The Marriage of Earth and Sky* (also known as *The Creation of the Universe*) disclosed: "This marriage of opposites, which was also found in the image of the androgyne or transvestite, constituted one of the most fundamental tenets of Ohno's work: it made possible the escape from a surface reality in order to attain the essence of life."[699] Developed from the idea of the "twosome," Butoh exemplifies the philosophies of paradoxes, of the marginal outcasts and cultural/social outlaws that are primarily

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[697] I use this conceptual term inspired by Kazuo Ohno's perspective. See Kazuo Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 94-97.
[698] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 27. Note that throughout the entire chapter five, all of my analyses of Kazuo Ohno's Butoh performances such as those sets excerpted from his best-known masterworks: *Admiring La Argentina*, *My Mother*, *The Dead Sea*, *Ozen*, etc. are all taken from *Kazuo Ohno: Beauty and Strength*. DVD. 2000. Directed by Kazuo Ohno Dance Studio. Japan: NHK Software. In addition, I also make use of the important secondary resources illustrating on all the above-mentioned performance examples presented in for instance Jean Viala's book *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*.
[699] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 34.

personified on the Butoh stage, and of the agitation and restlessness stirred up under the severe confrontation of *ura* (intimate, hidden facets or taboos) and *omote* (public, front phases).[700]

"Butoh,"[701] the notorious Japanese avant-gardist product, is a non-form or anti-form of dance that makes use of eccentric aesthetic presentation. The performers have bald heads (although this was not characteristic of the original Ankoku Butoh form under Hijikata and Ohno and only became identifiable after the 1970s with the second and third generations), they are painted entirely in white and perform violent brutalities, physical tortures, and cruel perversions. These provocative Butoh fundamentals are similar to those found in collective mysterious rituals, secret religious ceremonies, and mystic cults. According to Jean Viala, it is believed that by presening human's existential being in the "banality, ugliness, and grotesqueness,"[702] a Butoh dancer is able to "bare his soul."[703] Inquiries into the essence of Butoh, the substance of the dance, and more precisely, the primordial state of universal human existence and the presentation of true being and transcendent reality manifested in a kind of genuine dance called Butoh were delved into with a deep profundity when Ohno and Hijikata's collaborations shaped Ankoku Butoh as the archetype of the dance of darkness in the late 1950s.

These ideas and Butoh endeavors are similar to Zen's intentional questions about human existences. These are also echoed in Artaud's poignant agony as he attempted to solve his dismays stemming from the predicament of life, death, living, and being through the total

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[700] My discussion here is inspired by Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei's point. See Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, "Freaks, Fags, Foreigners, and Females," in *Japanese Theatre and the International Stage*, eds. Stanca Scholz-Cionca and Samuel L. Leiter (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 273.

[701] The unique dancing form of Butoh was created by Kazuo Ohno and Tatsumi Hijikata during the post-war Japan of the 1950s. This Butoh lineage was inherited, further developed, and even treated innovatively by a number of disparate sects, based on their specific way of understanding the art of Butoh and the diverse methods and aesthetic techniques that had been employed to put the essential spirit of Butoh into practice. Akaji Maro's Dai Raku Da Kan of the 1970s, Amagatsu Ushio's Sankai Juku of the 1970s, together with Isamu Ohsuka's Byakko-Sha of the 1980s have gained a worldwide reputation and exerted a tremendous impact on both the West, especially European countries, and the East, such as Taiwan. Nonetheless, in this dissertation, my principal attention will be concentrated on the first-generation type of Ankoku-Butoh-ha, established by prodigious dancers Hijikata and Ohno.

[702] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 17.

[703] Ibid.

presence of absolute theatre. Ohno stated that for him, "dance is at all times an issue of life and death."[704] These Butoh inquiries, left unanswered (and not answerable) and open-ended, may simply correspond to Butoh's essential spirit and the Zen Buddhist creed, which endorses the philosophy of non-permanently-fixed, non-abiding, and "an ultimate emptiness of inherent existence"[705] (or "emptiness of emptiness"[706]) as the true absolute of conventional phenomena.

The awakening from the calamity of World War II gave birth to the creation of Butoh, an innovative dancing form that expresses the dynamics of Japanese physicality and spirituality, art and religion, and the material and mystical, and intertwines them with the complexities of Japanese patriotic nationalism, as well as patriarchal glorification and defeat, crash, and devastation. The peculiarity of Butoh stands between Westernized modernization, liberalization, and the "de-Westernized" preservation of the inherited Japanese "soul." It elucidates the unlimited outward expansion and evolutionary completion and maintenance of an intact wholeness oriented by the collective state of mind and self-consciousness of a humiliated race. Hijikata and Ohno recognized and re-evaluated the distinctively reclusive, timid, and repressed nature of their bodies, or, in a broader sense, the collective body and mentality of all Japanese, and therefore simultaneously reshaped the world's outlook on Japan and regained their ethno-esteem and national identity by re-discovering the identities of essential "self" and absolute body-spirit through Butoh's illuminating reality.

Their collaboration is best described by Jean Viala, who states that "If Kazuo Ohno is the soul of Butoh, then Tatsumi Hijikata is the architect of Butoh."[707] Kazuo Ohno met Tatsumi

[704]Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 47.
[705] Elizabeth Napper, *Depedent-Arising and Emptiness*, 28-29.
[706] Ibid., 47.
[707] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 62.

Hijikata in the mid-1950s when they both appeared in Mitsuko Ando's performance, *Crow*.[708] Despite the fact that both Hijikata and Ohno are deemed Butoh creators, Susan Klein notes in her book, *Ankoku Buto: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness*, that the debut of Hijikata's controversial 1959 production, *Forbidden Colors* marks the birth of this peculiar grotesque form of Butoh. Other sources name Hijikata's choreography for Ohno in their 1960 initial collaborative Butoh work *Divinariane*, a solo dance inspired by Divine, the hero-heroine of Jean Genet's novel *Our Lady of the Flowers* as the beginning of their "intense working partnership that lasted the best part of a decade."[709] Although they were both Butoh performers, Hijikata regularly and primarily directed, staged, and choreographed for Ohno, who mostly danced.[710]

Butoh was inspired by the solo dance typically found in classical and contemporary Western dance performances that were structured around the ideas of individualism and the expression of genius and uniqueness of an independent human being. The impact of modern Western dance on Butoh should not be too surprising, for both Ohno and Hijikata had undertaken "Western experiences." Before their insurgent experimentation towards a radical change in the ways of perceiving and sensing the dynamisms and interrelations of life forms, existential experiences, dance, death, and the true essence of being-ness, both Ohno and Hijikata were exposed to Western forms. Ohno was at one time an heir to modern dance. He had formally trained in rigid technical skills when he studied German modern expressionist dance under the guidance of Misako Miya and Takaya Eguchi.[711]

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[708] Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 132.
[709] Ibid., 134. According to Yoshito Ohno, the collaboration of Hijikata and Ohno had one time ended in the very last year of the 1960s.
[710] Ibid., 134-138.
[711] Ibid., 47.

Similar to the provocative yet idealist aesthetics of Artaud's metaphysical theatre, Butoh is inspired by the legacy of Surrealism and other European historical avant-garde trends. It stresses the unconscious and irrationality in performance and aims at the attainments of trance state, lucidity, and transcendental unimpeded awareness. Ohno used to tell his students: "My art is dangerous. To succeed, one must first reach the very depth of the human soul, and then, express it."[712] For a Butoh dancer, the kernel of "being existent" or "being present" is answered by/in and performed through the body, instead of using the dancer's body as a mere representation or vehicle of psychological reflection, interpretation, imitation, and communication. The being-ness of a Butoh dancer's body presents a true facet of Japanese people and the entire nation's state of being as traumatized, deformed, and collapsed after its defeat in World War II. Hijikata notes that "through dance, we must depict the human posture in crisis." [713] This greatly contrasts with the Western aesthetic ideal of perfect symmetry and a golden ratio/golden rectangle that has a "tendency of surging upward as though resisting gravity,"[714] inherited from the philosophical tradition and artistic legacy of the Renaissance. Likewise, instead of a flamboyant outward display and self-conscious expression of self-pertained innate strength, the distorted body in the dance of darkness represses everything, including the mind, heart, intellect, reason, feelings, senses, and emotions. Butoh is based on an irretrievable and "beginningless" repression. That foundation is discussed in Ohno's thoughts on creating his 1980 *Ozen* (*The Table*), a symbolic semi-autobiographical presentation and "a mirror of important life events [consisting of] birth, marriage… and memories [starting from] the life of the fetus."[715] Ohno expressed the view that "I think everybody has a table that was made for him

[712] Kazuo Ohno, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 55.
[713] Tatsumi Hijikata, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 82.
[714] Ibid., 41.
[715] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 38.

before he was born."[716] The incorporation and repression of such an innate "table" (the place resembles the original home yet an inescapable imprisonment) is even more convincing through Ohno's performance in *Ozen*, which was centered on a traditional little wooden table that the Japanese use on important ceremonial occasions. Ohno's performing space was condensed in a little table; he carried with him, attached to, and played with this tangible table, which also became part of his dancing body and organ and ended up his essential substance.

The space also allows for the Butoh dancer's body movement to downsize towards only one *tatami*.[717] According to the Japanese philosophy, the more intimate and restricted the space, the more the body crouches into the extremity of its shape/position in order to make attainable the soulful depth, to invoke the authenticities of being deeply rooted in the ground, reconnected to the land and soil, and to call upon remembering the body-essence's identification with its primordial origin. The Butoh dancer's physical state scrunches and nestles into an extremely unnatural and excruciating shape, in order to distill spirituality into its purest luminosity and transcendental altitude. Hijikata created the following creed in order to access an essential state of Butoh and its absolute reality: "When I begin to wish I were crippled—even though I am perfectly healthy—or rather that I would have been better off crippled, that is the first step towards Butoh."[718] The metaphysical theme permeating Ankoku Butoh and the ultimate extremity of spiritual transcendentality that it yearned for can be seen even more obviously in both Hijikata and Ohno's deeper realization of the dead body as the essence and absolute reality of Butoh. As Hijikata said: "To make gestures of the dead, to die again, to make the dead

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[716] Kazuo Ohno, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 39-40.
[717] Tatami refers to the traditional type of flooring used in Japan. Accordingly, the size of a *tatami* varies; it differs from diverse regions in domestic Japan. For example, in the region around Kyoto, a *tatami* basically measures approximately 191 centimeters by 95.5 centimeters; however, in the Tokyo area, an average *tatami* measures 176 centimeters by 88 centimeters. See http://www.tatamiart.com/lifestyle.html.
[718] Tatsumi Hijitaka, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 75.

reenacted once more their deaths in their entirety—these are what I want to experience within me. A person who has died once can die over and over again within me."[719] For Ohno and his Butoh performance, the most important thing was to let the soul and spiritual transcendence breathe life and its true being-ness into the flesh: "What could be the life of that which is dead? It is the impossibility [and unapproachablity] which we must create."[720]

Why is it less practical to present the fluidities of sensibility or "fluctuations of energy,"[721] and to expose the inner worlds of mind, heart, as well as "the body's inner senses,"[722] especially in the state of the unconscious and irrational, through dance? How can one revive and promise purely physical postures and the total presence of body by eliminating language and dismantling logical thinking as the basis and core of theatrical performance? These questions remain paramount to Butoh as a reverberation with Hijikata's statement: "My mother used to say, 'Run with the heart of the blind.'"[723] Regardless of its form and content, Butoh is a drastic revolution whose intention is to completely de-Westernize, de-modernize, and deprive dance of the impact of canonical Western dance techniques, thereby demolishing the philosophy of aesthetic/art that began with the Renaissance Humanist tradition. The "dance of darkness" seeks the primeval and total presence of the body[724] and the transcendental being of the spirit-essence that belongs not only to the "authentic" Japanese but also to a "universal" truthfulness that moves beyond the geographic-historical boundaries and differences of culture, race, gender,

[719] Hijikata, 1985, quoted in *Butoh: Dance of the Dark Soul*, eds. Mark Holborn and Ethan Hoffman (New York: Aperture, 1987).
[720] Kazuo Ohno, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 55.
[721] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 17.
[722] Ibid.
[723] Tatsumi Hijikata, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 69.
[724] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 17.

politics or any ideological significance.[725] Butoh integrates pre-logic, pre-historic, and pre-civilized ritualistic holiness into its dance essence, in which it reflects "a world of romantic, mythic purity before birth, nationality, ethnicity, or gender."[726] According to Muo-Lin Wang's analysis,[727] painting performers all in white refers to the negation of physical body in the terrestrial phase and concentrates on the exposure of the state of pure mind and heart by targeting the experience of its higher spiritual revelation. The bald head symbolizes a detachment from secular territory towards a primordial and essential state of being similar to the state of an embryo (fetus) yearning to be re-absorbed into the womb. Remaining neutral, non-identifiable and deprived of the characteristics between male and female, young and old, and historical-geographical differences like time and space, nationality and ethnicity is a radicalization of the rigid gender classification, family heritage, cultural hierarchy, social status, and self-identity in Japanese patriarchal society.

Further still, sexual perversion (travesty in gender) and femininity is paramount to Hijikata and Ohno's Ankoku Butoh as manifested by Ohno's astounding feminine stage presence. When dancing as a female presence, Ohno often deciphered the women who played a determining role in his life. La Argentina and Ohno's own mother were two pertinent examples who embody the vigor and vividness of life, glamorous beauty, and supreme love. When asked why he preferred to wear female garments on stage in performances such as *Admiring La Argentina*, *My Mother*, *Rose-Colored Dance: A la Maison de Civecawa* (an earlier work of Ohno in co-performance with Hijikata), Ohno states that: "My intention…has never been to become a

[725] Without doubt, emerging as an artistic vanguard, the development of Butoh at the time of 1950s was itself a radical socio-historical-political-cultural movement, containing a certain ideological significance and spirit of revolutionary aesthetics.
[726] Carol Fisher Sorgenfrei, "Freaks, Fags, Foreigners, and Females: Cultural Outlaws in the Plays of Terayama Shuji," in *Japanese Theatre and the International Stage*, 273.
[727] I paraphrase partially Muo-Lin Wang's essay. See Muo-Lin Wang, The *Metropolitan City, Theatrical Performance, and the Body* (Taipei: Dao Hsiang Publishing, 1992), 24.

female impersonator, or to transform myself into a woman. Rather, I want to trace my life back to its most distant origins. More so than anything else, I long to return to where I've come from."[728] Through a less conscious and "an instinctive response to a yearning to rejoin his mother,"[729] Ohno's nostalgia triggers a quest for reconnecting with the prehistoric, prelinguistic, and a-logical source and returning towards "life in the womb"[730]—both the wombs of his maternal heritage and the womb of ultimate emptiness. In this way, Ohno's yearning and quest resemble the deepest essence of (Zen) Buddhism, unfolding true essence, true nature, and true self before giving birth and after death.[731] Echoing the Buddhist precept of samsara reincarnation and the creed of Zen in search for the essential true self, Ohno exposes his experiences of having "encountered all of the spirits alive inside of him,"[732]and claims that

> before birth, there is *no such thing*….Bodies long forgotten, the bodies of those long gone astray in memory are still living inside of me. By wearing female clothing…[I] can shed the role in [my] troubled everyday existence and can discard the social conventions inhibiting [me]…and thereby fulfill the deeply held longing to *return to where* [I]…*originally came from*....The body, through dance, is able to come into contact with its *true nature*.[733]

Ohno's separation from his mother at a young age becomes not only "a constant source of pain but also the driving force behind this spiritual journey back to his roots….Ohno's dance embodies both the joy and anguish of a newborn bady separated from its prenatal

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[728] Kazuo Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 76.
[729] Ibid., 79.
[730] Ibid.
[731] Sheng-Yen Shih and Dan Stevenson, "Chan and 'Emptiness': Chan and the Classical Buddhist Path," in *Hoofprint of the Ox: Principles of the Chan Buddhist Path as Taught by a Modern Chinese Master* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 18-31.
[732] Kazuo Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 81.
[733] Ibid., 79-80. My italics.

environment."[734] This explains the recurring themes of life, death, *being*, and absolute love penetrated throughout Ohno's Butoh voyage. His performance incessantly alternated around "two fundamental facts of life: death—the severance of biological links with his mother—and birth, the beginning of an autonomous existence."[735]

According to Hijikata's agonizing statement: "I keep one of my sisters alive in my body when I am absorbed in creating a Butoh piece, she tears off the darkness in my body and eats more than is necessary of it—when she stands up in my body I sit down impulsively."[736] Hijikata's deeply buried internal impulse demonstrates the necessity of creating Butoh's deformed shapes, which emphasize the area below the knees that is deeply rooted in and connected to the ground, land, soil, and origins. Hijikata's self-anatomy also explains staged "femininity" (the essential integration with his lost and imagined sister) as derived from his intimate, personal, traumatic experiences (past) that are restrained, repressed, forbidden, hidden, enveloped with the darkest, demonic, and animal side under the veneer of reasoning.[737] Staged femininity presents those that are at one time buried as remote memories but are later invoked and exploded from an involuntary unconsciousness and dynamism of extreme irrationality. Hijikata's *Rebellion of the Body* (also known as *Revolt of the Flesh*) deals with these individual experiences and unsettled physical/regional identity as a native of the alienated, marginal, prohibited, and superstition-laden Tohoku province in remote northern Japan.[738] Femininity (in essence and outward appearances) is deliberately emphasized in Hijikata and in particular Ohno's Ankoku Butoh as re-merging with and becoming the source of oneness that begins in individual, nostalgic pilgrimages and ends in metaphysical, transcendental, and spiritual quests.

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[734] Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 76.
[735] Ibid.
[736] Hijikata, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 73.
[737] Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 138-141. See also Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 60-92.
[738] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 60-92.

As an example, Ohno's *My Mother* is a display of "the heart of Butoh and a purely spiritual performance about the very source and essence of his dance"[739] which is "stripped of the descriptive images"[740] (compared to another Ohno work, *Admiring La Argentina*). When asked what his inspiration was to create *My Mother*, or more precisely, Butoh, Ohno claims:

> I don't believe that the body can transform itself, unless it undergoes the fundamental changes of life and death. Therefore, when I try to prove my own existence it is impossible not to follow the thread of my memories until I reach my mother's womb: for it is there that my life began. So I try to carry in my body all the weight and mystery of life; and I believe dance is born of this experience.[741]

In addition to Hijikata and Ohno's personal contexts, performing femininity is also a rebellion against the tradition of the masculinity-dominated mainstream Japanese values. By highlighting femininity in Ankoku Butoh, especially because the feminine facet has been subordinate and suppressed in Japanese society, Ohno unravels and evokes the indispensability of both female and male energies. He expresses the presence of the masculine (*yang*, or solar) and feminine (*yin*, or lunar) as a most harmonious primordial state where "both the feminine and masculine aspects of the universe…[imprinted in all beings] irrespective of gender."[742] As mentioned earlier, the core of Butoh is a manifestation of the "twosome" (twofold) in order to reach the transcendental absolute. For example, through dancing Butoh and revealing the essence of profound darkness and sexual perversity that humans "all carry within,"[743] Hijikata and Ohno display "the erotic as well as the ascetic dimension of the body"[744] by employing "androgeny"[745]

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[739] Ibid., 41.
[740] Ibid.
[741] Kazuo Ohno, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 41.
[742] Ibid., 79.
[743] Ibid., 17.
[744] Ibid.
[745] Ibid.

in their stage presentation. In addition to exemplifying social turmoil by presenting the mix of sexes, identities, and acts in the androgenic images, Hijikata and Ohno's androgeny simultaneously suggests empty suchness, the state of "not two and not one" but a transcendental sublimity. When comparing the warped bodily distortion in Japanese Butoh and the balanced and perfected beautifulness of physical gestures in the legacy of Western dance such as classical ballet, then Butoh stands for hilarious insanity, chaotic playfulness, trance-like co-existence of extreme physical torment and spiritual delirium, out of which the bipolar distinction between pain and rapture, suffering and joy is bombarded, as in the Dionysian carnival, which is opposite to an Apollonian apotheosis.

The Spiritual Coherences and Aesthetic Interrelations of Butoh, Religious Ethics, and Social Mentality as Characterized by Japanese Culture

In order to dissect the similarities and differences between Butoh's form and content and domestic Japanese culture, it is necessary to understand the intricacies and interrelations of Japanese aesthetics and the influence of religion. Japanese aesthetics have long been interwoven with religious perspectives as well as metaphysical, mystical, and mysterious experiences. This specific Japanese spirituality (a mixture of self-conscious aesthetic awareness and religious philosophy) has been incorporated into artistic practices and expressed through the exploration of the subject and in the presentation of various forms.

The Japanese mindset (or the historical context of its spirit) is required to understand both the universality and the particularity of Butoh. A perpetual Japanese spirituality is strengthened and harbored in the dialectics of the Butoh dance. For example, an emphasis of the lower part of the physical body reinstates an indispensable identification with unspoiled nature and

reconnection to the land in Japanese (Oriental) tradition. The center of the dancing position is transformed from an uplifted posture with the dancer standing up high and tall and moving in a linear flow, into a low crouch with a bent back and turned torso that becomes an introverted and regressive form that is also distorted, odd, and grotesque. This fundamental posture adheres to Japanese spirituality by stressing the virtues of introspection, remaining low-key and hidden, and by claiming the beauty of murky profundity and the dynamics of ambiguous obscurity.[746] However, the essential revolution and alteration of Butoh is realized as a heterogeneous other, a self-isolated alien and marginalized outsider conflicting with the mainstream/traditional value systems in order to achieve a real "restoration." The subversive gestures of Butoh aim at a return to an "authentic" Japanese collective unconsciousness and a primordial archetype of Japan, especially the cultural roots, bodily language, and spiritual state that substantiates a genuine and complete Japanese experience.[747] Yet this Japanese "authenticity" simultaneously summons a transcendental ideal that belongs to all humankind, a sensory experience presented through Butoh's physical manifestation and spiritual attainment. This latter point remains particular and unique to Butoh and is quite distinctive from its socio-cultural and aesthetic legacy. I attempt to unveil how Butoh's quest for enlightened illumination places it in a between-ness that stems from localization and modernization, tradition and Westernization, but remains independent of the bonds and boundaries imposed by these conceptual dichotomies.

The impact of religion, mysticism, and metaphysical philosophy not only penetrates Japanese aesthetics and artistic expressions, it also shapes Japanese spiritual characteristics.

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[746] Hiroshi Minaml, *Nihonjin Ron (A Comprehensive Discourse on Japanese History, Society, National Identity, Culture, Religion, Philosophy, Arts, Aesthetics, and People: From the Meiji Restoration to the Modern Time)* (Taipei: New Century Publishing, 2003), 340-342.
[747] Ibid., 353-355.

According to Japanese scholar and historian Hiroshi Minaml's book *Nihonjin Ron*, one of the shared characteristics and the core of Japanese mentaility, aesthetics, and spiritual pursuit is cleanness (lucidity), which is inherited from Shintoism. Cleanness suggests quietness, pure clarity, tranquility, simplicity, and subdued refinement, similar to other idiosyncratic Japanese aesthetics and also central to the ethics of Japanese Zen culture and the tradition of the tea ceremony. It is worth noting that the basis of Japanese aesthetics resonates with Zen Buddhist philosophy and has prompted a variety of artistic expressions which all center on quietness, tranquility, simplicity, and subdued refinement. The essential quietness, tranquility, simplicity, and subdued refinement in the seemingly ordinary, low-key manifestations place them at risk of first being ignored. However, it is such an infinite profundity entrenched inside that is conspicuous,[748] and it is the philosophical substance of "beyond description," profundity, and ambiguous murkiness that distinguishes Japanese aesthetics, mentality, and spiritual pursuit. This perpetual elusiveness (profound murkiness) is innate even in an experimental insurgent form such as Butoh, which aims to transmit this murky profundity.

Most art genres and their practices are influenced by Japanese spiritual beliefs, which are concerned with Shintoism, Zen, and Mahayanist Buddhism. As Minaml observes,[749] transcience (impermanence), expressed through many artistic practices in the form of fleeting and sublime beauty, primarily originated in Buddhist teachings. Seeing the ephemerality characteristic of conventional phenomena as an artistically sublime beauty and ultimate truth marks the impact of religious mysticism on Japanese aesthetics; this Buddhist philosophy later intertwines with Zen, and a state of empty nothingness (*wu*) emerges. Another feature inspired by fundamental Buddhist thought that is intentionally employed in Japanese aesthetic awareness is "direct

[748] The analyses in these paragraphs are taken from Hiroshi Minaml, *Nihonjin Ron*, 340. It is my paraphrase and reinterpretation according to Minaml's discussions.
[749] Hiroshi Minaml, *Nihonjin Ron*, 342-343.

seeing." It suggests the ability to perform the direct perception of absolute trueness through penetrative insight. According to *Nihonjin Ron*, both Zen and Buddhism play vital roles in Japanese arts—in particular, the idea of performing "direct seeing" by penetrative insight. [750] The essence of direct seeing is a direct perceiving of the inexplicable blissful pure land, much like that the supreme and unattainable state nirvana. Instead of pursuing the perfection of forms and being limited by the phenomenal reality, Japanese aesthetics employs direct seeing in order to penetrate the realms of beyond-ness. According to Minaml's analysis, Japanese art aims to achieve the unreachable realm, and instead of expressing it, the philosophy of concealing and veiling is the channel to attain the inconceivable, much like the areas left blank in calligraphic painting.[751] This is an expression of empty nothingness and profound murkiness in another form.

Beauty is presented in Japanese aesthetics as cleanness (lucidity), infinite profundity, and an aspiration for absolute purity and nothingness. In Minaml's analysis, there is also an emergence of "negative aesthetics" or aesthetics of total negation[752] in modern Japan. For example, beauty is seldom related to rationality or masculinity. Instead, according to the principle of negative aesthetics or a total denial, the essence of beauty lies in an emancipatory realm, the sphere that is empty of cyclic reincarnations such as birth (life) and death, creation and destruction, origination and cessation. This realization of essential beauty brings forth Japanese aesthetics that prefers the ascendent and transcendental to the descendent and secular.[753] The ideal of beauty in Japanese arts is aloof and concordant with the realizations of impermanence and nothingness in ordinary everyday existence and the unapproachable absolute. Moreover, this

[750] Ibid., 369-371.
[751] Ibid., 337-347, 365-371.
[752] Ibid., 319.
[753] Ibid., 343, 367-371,

ideal of beauty derives from an abolition of the physical body and material reality and above all, an intolerance of ugliness contaminated by the profane.

Compared to the idea of nothingness (emptiness) originating in Mahayanist Buddhism and Zen and transplanted to Japanese soil, the revelation of nothingness in Japanese aesthetics has actually been realized in a more nihilistic way. Minaml notes, the notion of "lingering spirits"[754] is paramount to Japanese culture. It suggests the idea of specter or human being's soul that is free of limitations and also lingering in a between-ness of this side-ness and the other-shore-ness, here and there (yet not here or there), and dwelling in the liminal states of death and rebirth.[755] There are two overlapping senses of consciousness in Japanese mentality: one that is a self-consciousness, restrained and repressed, and another that is liberated, with unbounded self-consciousness. It is termed as "a self-consciousness split and fragmented in twain and thereby emerging a soul (a lingering spirit) that exists in a between-ness."[756]

A crucial part of Japanese culture is reflected in a mélange of multiple religions. However, Japan's religious origins are concerned with shamanistic ritual and the ceremony of ancestor worship, so that theatre such as Butoh is a manifestation of hilarious delirium and a trance state consummated at the culmination of the mystical cults. Introduced from China to medieval Japan, Buddhism and Zen[757] have played influential roles in Japanese mentality, cultural customs, aesthetic discourses, and metaphysical spiritual pursuits and have been mixed with Japan's indigenous Shintoism as a facet of its eccentric local culture. Therefore so-called "pure" Buddhism is scarcely recognizable in Japan. Japanese religious thought has been deeply

[754] Ibid., 365.
[755] The idea is mentioned by Hiroshi Minaml, *Nihonjin Ron*, 363.
[756] Ibid., 365.
[757] Buddhism is imported from India through China in the sixth century, and Zen is directly transplanted to Japan from China in the thirteenth century.

influenced by Buddhist tenets of impermanence and nothingness and the philosophy of the transcendent "other-shore-ness" or "other-side-ness."[758] This idea resonates with negative aesthetics (or aesthetics of a total negation) and a fragmented soul lingering in a between-ness. The Japanese peculiar vision of the other-shore-ness concentrates on the following tenets: 1) The other shore is totally opposite to this-side-ness or the secular phenomena; yet, in essence, there exists no difference between heaven and earth or nirvana and inferno. 2) Different from the traditional Buddhist precepts, the idea of the Japanese other shore-ness substantiates "soul" and affirms the posthumous soul as an intrinsic existence, independent of physical body and its imprisonment, and thereby subject to becoming transcendence. 3) If chained to the revolving karmic cycles, the posthumous soul inhabiting the other-shore-ness re-descends to an earthly realm through rebirth (reincarnation).[759] All these three aspects of the other-shore-ness were exemplified in almost all of Ohno's performances.

Minaml comments on an eccentric profound murkiness and elusive gloominess[760] characteristic of Japanese aesthetics as deriving from the dialectics of impermanence and nothingness and a yearning for transcendental absoluteness in a paradoxical intricacy of religious revelation and artistic expression,[761] thereby valuing death (and the liminal state) as a passageway towards serene beauty, essential tranquility, pure lucidity, and ultimate sublimity.[762] Butoh inherits all of these intricacies and realizations and demonstrates the idiosyncracies through an illuminating spiritual dance.

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[758] Hiroshi Minaml, *Nihonjen Ron*, 343.
[759] Ibid., 362-374.
[760] Ibid., 369-370.
[761] Accordingly, the dialectics of a sense of impermanence and a yearning for beauty lies in a realization that impermanence makes us likely to discard ordinary reality; however, a yearning for beauty makes us likely to embrace the glamorous beauty of material phenomena. The paradox of religion and art lies in the fact that religion, advocating a sense of impermanence, persuades us to let go of physical reality; however, art aims at grasping beauty and enjoying life. Namely, through art, it is clinging to the eternal through the transitory that matters.
[762] Death has been connected with notions or images like lightness, lucidity, pure cleanness, and sublime consummation; this is chiefly seen as due to the prevalence of Pure-Land Buddhist teachings.

Attainment of the True Ultimate: Completing Cyclic Reincarnation, (Sacred) Metamorphosis, (Enlightened) Transformation, Termination of Linguistic Expression, Total Extinction of Self, Becoming Oneness and Embracing the Transcendental Absolute

Beginning in the late 1950s, critics, scholars, and even Butoh dancers themselves have been haunted by an eagerness to ponder the meaning and essence of "real and authentic Butoh."[763] They have grappled with ambivalence under the understanding that Butoh, although recognized as the only one that is prescribed, and crystallized as Ankoku Butoh by Hijikata Tatsumi,[764] in essence, did not create fixed and definite patterns, so the quest for Butoh's essential spirit as an act of "defining or un-defining Butoh" remains a question.[765] Nonetheless, there are indeed identifiable styles and recognizable elements that can be attributed to the Butoh prototype stemming from Hijikata's Ankoku Butoh, the dance of darkness. Overall, Butoh, which is imbued with a Dionysian carnivalesque, consists of "standardized slow movements, a white-painted body and shaved head, contorted limbs and grimaces, a lower gravity center, rolled-back eyes, violence, [marginality and those outside a standardized social structure] and a dark, disquieting eroticism."[766] The goal of Butoh is to "systematically and formally short-circuit an older type of social and historical interpretation which it perpetually holds out and withdraws,"[767] by means of "a stress on grotesque imagery and the use of metamorphosis."[768]

This chapter divulges the destination in Hijikata and Ohno's concepts and aesthetic practices in "original" Ankoku Butoh as a seeking for an enlightenment state similar to the

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[763] Maria Pia D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," in *Japanese Theatre and the International Stage*, eds. Stanca Scholz-Cionca and Samuel L. Leiter (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 330.
[764] See Masaki Iwana, "Il Buto non esiste e non ha mai esistito in nessun luogo," in Maria Pia D'Orazi, ed., *Buto La Nuova Danza Giapponese* (Roma: Editori Associati, 1997), 208-209.
[765] Ibid., 208-209.
[766] Maria Pia D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 330.
[767] Here I cite Jameson's words in pointing out his observation of the kind of postmodern resistance to critical interpretation. See Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism, or The Cultural Logic of Capitalism," in *New Left Review* 146 (July-August, 1974): 69.
[768] Susan Klein, *Ankoku Buto: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness*, 23.

Buddhist revelation of emptiness. In Ohno's illumination, dancing Butoh is a "revelation of the shape of the invisible soul"[769] that requires surpassing physical obstacles for an exposure of "a deep, intimate essence."[770] So what is the internal landscape and deep and intimate essence that is transmitted through the invisible soul in the "spiritual" other shore-ness created by Hijikata and Ohno's "physical" performance from this side-ness?

In Hijikata and Ohno's dance, the essence and culmination of their performance is the attainment of ultimate reality by letting the state of the true absolute (the invisible other realms) unfold similarly to Buddhist enlightened transcendence. For example, Ohno describes his performance in *Room* as: "I was neither man nor woman *before birth*."[771] In *The Marriage of Heaven and Earth*, Ohno, in a neutral and nearly nude body painted all white, is non-identifiable with age and gender and deprived of language, convention, history. He displays a symbolic dance that portrays and transmits the authenticity of life and the primeval existence of humankind as a universal being.[772] In the set *Finale* of his best-known *Admiring La Argentina*, Ohno dresses like a youthful girl and stands straight, as if his body and soul are on the verge of soaring up towards a limitless height while his head slightly leans forward and down and his eyes remain concentrated yet vacant as he stares at a spot in an empty space, mystical sphere, or remote primordial origin with no end. And in this powerful moment abounding with serene tranquility and mysterious beauty, he conveys the creation of heaven and earth,[773] as corresponding to the first sequence *The Marriage of Earth and Sky* and indicating the beginning of another cycle of samsara reincarnation. The core of Ankoku Butoh's philosophical practices

[769] Maria Pia D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 335. This is D'Orazi's analysis of Kazuo Ohno's aesthetic discourse.
[770] Ibid., 336. I use D'Orazi's words and realization to express Kazuo Ohno's aesthetic manifestation throughout Ankoku Butoh.
[771] Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World: From Without and Within*, 80.
[772] Ibid., 161.
[773] Ibid., 165.

and aesthetic dialectics is fundamentally structured around the principles of (sacred) metamorphosis, (enlightened) transformation, revolving karmic reincarnation, transmigration, termination of linguistic expressions and conventional phenomena. Moreover, by killing the individual self (or total extinction of human subjective consciousness and rational thinking) and penetrating liminalities (liminal states) that encompass diverse realms and permeate the betweenness of this side-ness and transcendentality, the Butoh dancer merges with the true absolute and achieves oneness with the ultimate emptiness of Zen state.

The tenets of Butoh re-examine and problematize conceptual thoughts and philosophical perceptions of theatre, dance, and the performing arts and echo Artaud's negation of dualism, centralism and a denial of universal value systems along with Zen Buddhist's distrust of mental consciousness, rational thinking, and language. Butoh aims for an instantaneous, non-expressive total presence of the spontaneous, essential state of flowing and integral mind-body-soul-spirit connection. Arguably, both the content and "form" of Butoh are artistic rebellions and socio-political and ideological revolutions, especially in the course of its development in the 1960s and 1970s. Butoh is deeply allied with the criteria of Minimalism (a Western avant-garde trend popularized in visual art, music, and design in the late 1960s and 1970s) and the spirit of simplicity and "voidness" in Zen Buddhism. The Butoh stage set in Ohno's *Daily Bread* is an example. Ohno's performance is particularly breathtaking when displayed in a performative "empty" spectacle where in a minimum of means, including "a costume consisting of nothing more than a pair of black trunks, utter silence as a musical backdrop, and a bare stage for a prop,"[774] he subtly and mysteriously incorporates into his dancing being "the invisible realm beneath his feet."[775]

[774] Ibid., 43.
[775] Ibid.

In the "primal Butoh,"[776] dancers' application of white makeup is the hallmark of Butoh which does release the perfomer from the representation and interpretation of a specific character and instead "offers the scope to transform himself with greater freedom."[777] White is the color of non-color that allows a Butoh dancer "to remove and erase all traces of superficial, natural expression. Whitening oneself from head to toe is what facilitates this deconstruction and can be viewed as an act of neutralizing and converting the body into a blank canvas. [Therefore, instead of] painting something onto the body…it rather is erasing…our private history."[778] An act of erasing exemplifies the principle "staying without abiding" or non-abiding emphasized by *The Diamond Sutra*. As Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno describe, "this process of self-obliteration…helps [Butoh performers] to transform our sense of body."[779] The visual effect of performing the total negation of the physical body emphasizes the sheer nudity, neutrality, no-identity, and luminous translucency of the physical body that is painted all white. By concentrating on a disclosure of the deep profundity of mind-spirit and the interpenetration of soul, being painted white symbolizes the transcendence of the coarse body, in touch with the spiritual purity and divine sacredness. The shaved head (though it was not common in Hijikata and Ohno's performances) suggests the fervor of nostalgic return—in particular a desired retreat to the primeval existence of a living being. It is like a discarded secular reality, a pilgrimage from the descendent to the ascendent, or as Muo-Lin Wang notes, a relapse to the fetal status in mother's womb.[780]

Compared to the relatively flamboyant costume design and astounding spectacle in the later developments (Dairakuda-kan's performances are examples), in the original form, Butoh

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[776] Ibid., 65.
[777] Ibid.
[778] Ibid.
[779] Ibid.
[780] Muo-Lin Wang raises this concept in his analysis of Butoh in his 1984 article, "Spirit of the Surrealist and Disorder: Irrationality in Japanese Butoh." I take reference from his use of the concept here.

dancers present themselves with a nearly naked body covered only with astonishing white makeup from head to toe (Sankai-juku is an heir to this kind of sublime simplicity). The white makeup designed to display simplicity, profound voidness, and empty nothingness is embedded with a deep Zen meaning. The Zen belief is that to access the realm of absolute beyondness, which is the Zen world of ultimate reality, literally and figuratively, "one must be utterly naked, without a thread of silk on one's body."[781] In effect, this marks the necessity that in order to penetrate into the essence of Zen and glimpse at Zen enlightened "truth state," "one's mind must be utterly naked, without a single thought, attachment, or reservation. It may not hold on to or retain anything, even its form."[782] As mentioned in chapter two, a transcendence to the other shore-ness or an achievement of enlightenment to see into the empty trueness is the very "goal" of Buddhist ethics, which presents an arrival without departing and an attainment without an intentional attempt to attain. Sheng-Yen Shih explains, "This complete nakedness of mind [at work] is comparable to the state of the practitioner who is on the brink of explosion [of wisdom]."[783] It also means that one's mind must be utterly naked, without a single thought or attachment; it must retain nothing, thereby perceiving "non-I" (no-self) as the essential own being and the very summit of existence, carrying out "no-thought as the main doctrine, non-form as the substance, and non-abiding as the basis," and realizing "no-mindedness" as the ultimate empty mindfulness in illuminating absolute reality. Buried inside an obvious religious inclination, therefore the nude body, white makeup, and bald head that are unique characteristics in Butoh suggest a strong association with Buddhism, Zen philosophy, and idiosyncratic Japanese aesthetics.

[781] Sheng-Yen Shih and Dan Stevenson, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 131.
[782] Ibid., 133.
[783] Ibid., 133.

Maria Pia D'Orazi deciphers the dance of utter darkness in the "original" Butoh as "only recogniz[able] as a philosophical concept of the body."[784] Being deemed "philosophical" can in part be due to the aim of Butoh, which is to pursue an uncanny transcendence and a quintessential religious achievement through the physical body's penetration of profound, mystical darkness. Although they never nullify the connection to the innermost, natural, invisible, metaphysical, and spiritual in Butoh, neither Hijikata (a freethinker[785], skeptic, and atheist) nor Ohno (specifically known as a faithful Christian and a believer in God[786]) admits to the self-aware absorption of doctrinal religious thinking in Butoh. Resonating with Artaud, whose theatre of cruelty aims for uncovering the absoluteness of primordial expressiveness and inaccessibility of humankind's authentic existence, Hijikata initiates the creation of Butoh, an essential dance, by affirming "the dance body is reduced to the state of natural substance."[787] The presence of the dancing body, as D'Orazi notes, "can only expose the images coming from its subconscious and from the memory of its flesh….In other words, dancing means let the body recover its natural state."[788] Butoh appeals to the fundamental--that is, life. D'Orazi further recognizes, the spirit of Butoh evokes something deep within both the performers and spectators "which might be unclear or incomprehensible in appearance, [but] should be original."[789]

Butoh appeals to unusual experiences, which are not unlike an encounter with enlightenment grandeur in Buddhism. Ohno's performances in *Admiring La Argentina* and *The Dead Sea* yearn for a trance-like enlightened transcendence. Ohno's hands are exceptionally big, with those ten fingers long and slim, and his gestures are noticeable and astonishing as they

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[784] D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 331.
[785] Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 137.
[786] Ibid., 134-137.
[787] This is D'Orazi's analysis of Hijikata and his Butoh art. See Maria D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 331.
[788] D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 331.
[789] Ibid., 332.

symbolically present the depth of shaking hands with transcendentality. According to his son Yoshito, a Butoh dancer should be appreciative of owning big hands, for it is both unusual and important. I see Ohno's Butoh through the distinctive performance of his hands as three-fold and as an expression of the absolute through the particularized and detailed. First, Ohno always performs with the tips of the thumbs and index fingers slightly touching each other and makes them "dance" on their own. In so doing, his hands naturally (Ohno by no means tends to mimicking or shaping his hands in certain forms; his hands just *are*) seem like a flower, a butterfly, or a set of wings on stage that are about to soar to other realms. Second, Butoh is against linguistic convention and directly presents the total presence, so in a sense, Ohno's oversized hands act as organs extended from his body and "dance," using the peculiar "language" of the body and the esoteric. The hand-organs murmur, express, and converse with the metaphysical oneness to which they originally belong. It also seems like Ohno's hands are the little pumping hearts of the mysterious other shore. Third, Ohno's performance (the way that both his thumbs and index finger tips delicately touch together) makes the hands dance as if holding an invisible string that connects this side-ness with the other shore, thereby being able to merge with the transcendence in "the cult of hands." Ohno's facial expression (head leaning upward and over towards the right and his mouth open) also conveys that the performer is in a delirious trance. Also, for example, dancing Butoh allows for the living presence of the essential body-spirit to transform into a primeval state "preceding any action's consciousness."[790] It suggests looking deeper, and introspecting towards where "basic answers [exist] beyond conventional behaviors,"[791] and engaging in "a world of darkness that our modern age has lost,

[790] Ibid., 333.
[791] Ibid.

where the gap between words and things disappears and where existence unfolds before us."[792] Living and being a total presence in the performance means that a dancing body is "able to reduce to a minimum the distance between impulse and reaction, to act without intellectual preconception."[793] To use D'Orazi's idea, the essence of Butoh is a living body and a true being in motion—moving, falling, stamping, twisting, crawling, standing still—that is "shaped by life itself."[794] These "primitive forms of life"[795] are chaotic, mystical, sacred, and fatal and hold an inside "cosmic significance"[796] similar to Artaud's claims in his quest for the divine lucid cruelty. The Butoh body belongs to a human creature that presents itself as "a sort of substance reveal[ing] itself."[797] This body-essence, which acts as a "repository of memory," in Hijikata's words, lets the theatrical space exist "as a natural element, without any manifest expression, showing only its memory, which is also a universal memory."[798] Is this the universal memory that Hijikata yearns to summon and attain as an enlightened illumination of emptiness?

Both Hijikata and Ohno famously refer to a dancing body in Butoh as a dead body. This "philosophical" dead corpse can be achieved while the ultimate transformation from human creature to essential being-ness is consummated along with purging and total emancipation completed during Butoh's climaxes. In part, a dead body means a sheer negation of intentional expressions and human intelligence, while a dead body also dances in utter darkness and shakes hands with the absolute and the perpetual, transcending the doom of deterioration and impermanence. Therefore, Butoh's dead body relates to "negative aesthetics" or an "affirmative negation" (inherited from an idiosyncratic Japanese aesthetics) and also is similar to those

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[792] Eguchi Osamu, "Hoppo Buto-ha 'Shiken'" (My View of Hoppo Buto-ha), in *Butoki*, no. 2, 1980, 9.
[793] D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 333.
[794] Ibid., 334.
[795] Susan Klein, *Ankoku Buto: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness*, 15.
[796] Ibid., 15.
[797] D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 334.
[798] Ibid.

employed in the Buddhist discourse (like Nagarjuna's dialectic peculiarity of eight negations or eight noes in discussing absolute emptiness). Butoh's dead body starts with a cancellation of subjectivity and individual conscious mind and a complete self-denial that espouses the criteria of perverting, deforming, and tormenting the body "in order to keep the self in a constant state of fragmentation."[799] It aims for an "assertion of bodily existence as a matter in and of itself in the attempt to restore a body's natural state,"[800] thereby achieving a genuine resurrection. The sublime beatitude of the dead body in Butoh, "whose flesh becomes bright and transparent,"[801] is revealed through a pure profanity and grotesqueness. Through the dead body's presence in Butoh the primal, a-historical, pre-logic, and pre-linguistic expressiveness is revived and the unexplainable esoteric state of the Butoh body fulfilled.

In his performance in *The Dream of the Fetus*, one of the three tableaux (the other two tableaux were: *The Dream of the Mother* and *The Testament*) that consisted of the first sequence of *My Mother*, the audience faced an empty stage, which was immersed in pure golden light. As if arising from a remote distance, there suddenly emerged an unclear reverberating sound, such as a fetus might experience in its mother's womb. Ohno stood on the stage, embodying a fetus in the womb.[802] His torso was wrapped in white clothing, symbolizing the state of innocence and pureness as an infant, yet it paradoxically made Ohno's appearance resembled a mummy. In his right hand, Ohno held a white paper-made water lily. The presence of the flower in Ankoku Butoh was a twosome, described above; so was the image of mother. On the one hand, the image of mother linked one's (Ohno's) filial emotions to his biological mother; on the other hand, through a longing for encountering and reconnecting with "mother," it suggested the human's

[799] Susan Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 26.
[800] D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 341.
[801] Ibid., 334.
[802] See Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 42-43.

profoundest desire of becoming one with the true self, true nature, and true essence. Certainly, the flower was a token of supreme love that Ohno's own mother had left behind and the sacred love that Ohno bore for his mother (through "remembering" things past). In the meanwhile, this Buddha's lotus symbolized the yearning of the fetus of a humang being (Ohno) for emancipating himself from the revolving cycles of samsara reincarnation and achieving (or returning to) the transcendent state of nirvana, in which true liberation and utmost bliss was promised.

Along with the Butoh dead body (intriguingly revitalized from its utmost decline), the peculiar body-soul/spirit bond in Butoh moves towards a continuum of samsara reincarnation that is also inspired by Buddhist thought. The samsara-bound Butoh body haunts and invigorates in concord with the philosophical perception of the uncanny "other-shore-ness." The idea of the other shore-ness deeply integrated into Japanese aesthetics is chiefly influenced by Buddhism and transformed into being a part of the Japanese collective unconsciousness. Hijikata treats the innate and original status of the human's physical existence as a repository of memory, particularly stored with the subconscious, universal memories. Therefore, embodiment (incarnation), transformation, "metamorphosis" (to use Butoh's conceptual term), transmigration, obsession, and dis-enchantment (exorcism) are paramount to both the "metaphysics" and dance "techniques" of Butoh. This is due in part to the dramatic components in the legacy of classical Noh and in part to Hijikata and Ohno's individual intimate experiences. In particular, the traumatic experiences and ominous desires that are prohibited, oppressed, hidden, and buried recur as haunted spirits and dynamics of darkness, yearning for liberation, purification, and sublimity. The primeval state of being in Hijikata's Butoh soul and dead body that dances is a reincarnation and embodiment of his dear elder sister, who was sold to a house of prostitution in Hijikata's youth. The transcendent being in Ohno's Butoh essence and dead body that dances

belongs to his irreplaceable history, event, journey, encounter, fascination, and memory that "[catches] a glimpse of everything [within, which] time has carved on it."[803] It is worth noting that an idiosyncratic "metamorphosis" in Butoh is based on the revelation of the dead body and also associated with religious ideas of reincarnation and transmigration.

Butoh's metaphysical metamorphosis (transformation) that links to the idea of exiting from this worldly side-ness and merging with the transcendental "other shore-ness" in order to attain enlightenment and access ultimate reality allies itself with Buddhist philosophy. The mystical Butoh metamorphosis takes its position as performing "the act of becoming" by presenting on stage dancers embodying living creatures (human beings or strange insects and animals) that are "in possession" under the deepest trance state similar to the ancient shamanistic rituals or the mysterious occult. In this respect, the dancing dead body performing a metamorphosis means "the transformation of one's body and spirit into the body of another animal or person."[804] These "transformations" carry explicit connotations of reincarnation, transmigration, liberation, salvation, and purification. In addition, because Hijikata's Butoh has negative imagery, quirkiness, and grotesque figures like disease, aging, death, ghosts, blindness, disability, and insanity coming together with deepest fears, repressed eroticism, ominous desires, and dark energies, the use of metamorphosis is not only dynamic and irresistible but also compulsory and fatal. For example, in the haunted spirit of Hijikata's sister, the deformed figures and fetuses are reborn and living on within him (Hijikata) through perpetual transformations in the essential being of his dancing dead body. This aesthetics/technique is also found in Ohno's *My Mother* and *Admiring La Argentina*, as an old woman, a prostitute

[803]D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 334.
[804] Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 38.

from the rural past, and a person on the verge of death are revived through unending metamorphoses in the absolute being of his dancing dead body.

Based on Butoh's philosophical idea and aesthetic practice of thorough "transformations," Hijikata and Ohno question and position Butoh's destination or final goal not only through the performers and spectators but in all human creatures. For Hijikata, the true essence of Butoh is to take advantage of no technique as technique, no form as form, and no expression as expression in order to change a human being into a "thing."[805] The "thing" suggests transforming a human being into *something* other than only a human being for the true spirit to act on it and the true essence of life energy to be invoked through it. Performing transformation can therefore be associated with a passageway towards transcendence, and with completeness as moving from the rational orderliness towards the constrained irrationality, from progressive civilization towards authentic primal phase, from appearance towards the sublime, from the profane towards the lofty, from secular towards sacred, and from physical towards absolute. In addition, performing metamorphosis in Butoh creates the "nostalgic yearnings" to regress into the profundity of "other worlds." According to the Butoh cosmology based on Hijikata's peculiar illumination of time and space, it is the juxtaposition of multiple dimensional existences that are eternally paralleled, overlapped, cyclic, condensed, unlimited, and spiral.[806] This realization is the complete opposite of linear progression and predictable continuation found in the canonical writings of history. The unconscious phase, untouched reality, and the transcendent other shore that remain esoteric in the "other worlds" are also in Hijikata's revelation as they connote remoteness, the buried past, childhood memories,

[805] The concept of Tatsumi Hijikata is a synthesis provided by two dance critics' analyses of Hijikata's aesthetics and the principle of Ankoku Butoh. See Keisuke Iwabuchi, "The Paradigm of Buto," in *Ankoku Buto: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness*, 73-77. See also, in the same volume, 79-88, Nario Goda, "On Ankoku Buto."
[806] Ibid.

marginality, forbidden truths, and the beginingless former lives that reoccur accompanied with outcasts, spirits, ghosts, demons, death, and dark forces.

With an aim at (re-)connection with the other realms, Butoh performers purposely place focus on the lower part of the physical body and shifting their gravity to concentrate on the place "below the knees"[807] in order to get closer to/be re-rooted in "the universe 'down there' as some sort of 'horizontal place,' the 'ground.'"[808] As an essential dance into the profoundest inward recess and self-aware retrospection towards the unconscious core that "awakens,"[809] it is vital for Butoh performers to establish "a perceptible link between their inherent physicality and their metaphysical outlook on life."[810] In Butoh, the (physical and formal) appearance reveals the essence of conventional phenomena and unravels the mystical and metaphysical realized in every single bit and piece of the Butoh dancing body-substance (such as the hands). The Butoh body is "more than an expressive tool; [it] guided [the performer] toward *something*."[811] In other words, every part of this Butoh dancing body "transforms [itself] into the ears of those [mysterious, dead] spirits living in [the performer]."[812] When asked about the set *Ghost Dances* that he presented in *The Dead Sea*, Ohno explained that dancing *Ghost Dances* "were like the wandering footsteps of the dead in search of love."[813] For Ohno, the spirits of the dead, or the true essence of Butoh, are found in an unrelenting quest for the absolute and a yearning for the ultimate reality of supreme love: "Steps of the dead carrying love, bewilderment of the dead searching for love."[814]

In another example of Ohno's dancing in *Admiring La Argentina*, the audience saw a ghostly aging being rise up slowly and with enormous difficulty. She clumsily made her way

[807] Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 41.
[808] Ibid., 43.
[809] Ibid., 46.
[810] Ibid.
[811] Ibid., 61.
[812] Ibid.
[813] Ibid.
[814] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 54.

towards the center stage. Covered with heavy make-up and concealing her face underneath lace, the presence of Ohno-the-fleeting-beauty was dreadfully attached to the illusive strand of life. This onetime glamorous creature (Ohno) made a turnaround, as if to throw a final glimpse upon her past, followed by her stumbling onto the stage, silently ascending towards death and dissolving into the substance—that oneness--where she was born. Birth (resurrection) was an amazing successor of Death. It was a transmigration, a thorough completion of metamorphosis, which initiated another cycle of karmic reincarnation. Upon death, the aging lady recalled her childhood memories and ended up transforming into a youthful girl, as if this being herself was by this moment "an avatar of La Argentina,"[815] (Ohno's personification of a 1920s gorgeous Spanish dancer) who was able to throw herself into life and its playfulness, jubilation, and eternity.[816]

As a remarkable demonstration, in his outdoor performance, *A Crane Descending the Stairs* (in which Ohno performs the crane), Ohno notes that "underneath us—beneath the surface of the everyday lives--lies a lateral space."[817] Literally and figuratively, "taking the leap into unfamiliar territory"[818] and "longing to discover the body's hidden truths"[819] are essential to enter into the sublime profundity of the Butoh world. Remaining open to merge with the spontaneity of the "impromptu" and naturally incorporating into his performance playful "happenings" are idiosyncratic "(non) techniques" of Ohno's Butoh. In a documentary film, *O Kind God!* directed by Gianni Di Capua, which films Kazuo and his son Yoshito, Kazuo Ohno demonstrates his Butoh philosophy—impromptu and playful happenings--in his serial performances consisting of *Dancing on the Mattress*, *Dancing in the Kitchen*, *Dancing inside the*

[815] Ibid., 34.
[816] My analysis is taken from Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 28-33.
[817] Kazuo Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 46.
[818] Ibid., 63.
[819] Ibid., 65.

Car, *Dancing on Stage*, and once again *Dancing in the Kitchen* that are all based on this principle. The film title, *O Kind God!* carries a strong religious bearing, no matter whether it is the Christian or Buddhist (as I argue in this chapter), for through a manifestation in Butoh, it leads towards the same poetic reality and ends in unfolding the same truthfulness. In this film, one clearly sees that Ohno, wearing no makeup and dressed in daily attire, is preoccupied with something in the beyondness and that his close link with the other realms is manifested through ordinary, banal everyday existence.[820] Through his dance, where the unfolding of the "spiritual presence"[821] is always placed at the center, Ohno's predilection for "falling earthward when longing to defy gravitational pull"[822] and his welcoming of "stepping into the great unknown with his sense of abandon…[which] enable him to thrust deeper into himself"[823] are Zen-oriented. Here lies a genuine dialectical dynamic, for it is a posture of acceptance, non-intentionality, non-abiding, and doing "nothing" instead of a confrontation and resistance that can lead a dancing body to reach utmost sublimity. There are also a multiplicity of inner and outer dimensions of primordial, authentic "existences" in Ohno's Butoh dancing body and his performing gestures, whose aim is to literally and figuratively point to the multifarious expansions and extensions of everyday time and space that humankind inhabit. For example, Ohno's Butoh dancing body-substance displays multiple layers of primordial and authentic existential beings through the facial expression of the mouth and eyes as well as his voice, gazes, hands, torso, legs, and back. Likewise, Ohno's performing gestures, which convey the authenticity of other realms, include falling, standing, fluidity, femininity, masculinity, and rapport. He especially emphasizes the kinds of rapports in perfect harmony with natural surroundings and becoming ultimately one

[820] *O Kind God!* DVD. 2002. Directed by Gianni Di Capua. Japan: Canta Ltd.
[821] Kazuo Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 47.
[822] Ibid., 41.
[823] Ibid., 62-63.

with the animated creatures (such as animals and insects) and objects of immobility (such as a wall, table, and forms of lifelessness), as well as avatars, ghostly specters, spirits, and demonic beings. For example, in *Venice, September* 1999,[824] a film he presents in black and white, Ohno's Butoh footsteps are traced from the balcony of a building facing the sea to a mysterious façade inside of a cathedral and then from a square back to the sea. His performance (also wearing no makeup and dressed in daily attire) is a rapport with the natural and the environments in an alien country (Italy), and his dance aims to merge with divine surroundings like the sky, sea, land, air, and unknown architecture. In doing so, Ohno is able to identify with the higher reality and dissolves into metaphysical oneness.

The key of Ankoku Butoh was direct seeing, experiencing, and penetrating into the other realms, which were deeper, truer, purer, unconventional, irrational, sacred, primeval, and absolute. From these performing bodies and positions on stage, the philosophy, which encompasses transformation, metamorphosis, reincarnation, transmigration, and self-annihilation, is completely achieved and fully displayed. Such a core Butoh philosophy regarding "enlightened transformation" (or sublime metamorphosis) is structured around penetrating into the liminalities among diverse realms, permeating the betweenness of this side-ness and transcendentality, and re-embracing with the true absolute in the essential emptiness. Performing "fallings" on stage that were completely impromptu[825] and spontaneous were crucial to Ohno's Butoh, which enabled him to delicately and esoterically "incorporate the floor space [and other spaces that were made attainable from the extensions out of this platform of floor] into his performance."[826] Falling acted as "an integral part of Kazuo's gestural vocabulary,"[827] as "an

[824] *Venice, September 1999*. DVD. 2002. Directed by Gianni Di Capua. Japan: Canta Ltd.
[825] Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 41.
[826] Ibid., 44.
[827] Ibid., 41.

indissoluble bond beckons him to the dimension that unfolds below the knees."[828] For Ohno, the floor was no longer an impenetrable barrier with a substantial entity (or separate existence), but instead, it acted as a threshold of a continuum, an ascension, and a transcendence to the other spheres of his Butoh. The floor acted as an unimpeded translucency; thereby, falling on it, Ohno "embarked on a limitless free fall, continuing to tumble further and further into the depths of the universe."[829] For example, at the climax of *Divinariane*, which was the opening sequence of *Admiring La Argentina*, Ohno lay down on the stage with his head facing the floor.[830] This symbolized his entry into the trance state of death, and he was able to shake hands with the dead and ghosts, as in the emphatic motto of Butoh, predicated on a dance into utter darkness.

Under the presence of his Butoh essence, Ohno was emancipated from horizontal and vertical territories and penetrated throughout the liminalities of two realms, upward and downward, below and above, profane and spiritual, life and death, grotesque and sublime, coarse and beautiful, phenomenon and substance, transitory and immortal, human and inhuman, "visible and invisible, and the now and the hereafter."[831] His son Yoshito recalled, "as the scene concludes, darkness envelops this prostrate figure symbolically taking leave of this world."[832] In another sequence of *Admiring La Argentina*, *Daily Bread*, Ohno fell again at the climax; this time, he "suddenly collapses to the ground as though he were falling from one realm into another."[833] The falling body itself "delineated [and then transcended] the boundaries of our mortal existence."[834] Thereby, through "falling into another world,"[835] Ohno was able to make transitions freely in the liminalities (in-the-betweenness) of diversified spheres, which were also

[828] Ibid.
[829] Ibid., 45.
[830] Ibid., 41.
[831] Ibid., 43.
[832] Ibid., 41.
[833] Ibid.
[834] Ibid., 43.
[835] Ibid., 45.

vital to performing Butoh, and successfully transformed from this-side-ness of "his ordinary, everyday world to another limitless dimension"[836] of the transcendental other-shore. There lay in another dimension of Ohno's falling and enlightened transformation (sublime metamorphosis) on stage and in relative reality (the world of conventional truth). As a Butoh performer, Ohno's dancing body was led to an attainment of ultimate essence in the realm of poetic truth through metamorphosis and killing of the ordinary self and subjective mind. However, the significance of falling in Ohno's Butoh also lay in a realization that he

> uncannily drew the public into his private universe, to see his inner world that was rendered perceptible…into an emotional vortex…into the unfolding of something [concerning] the truth [whose] very nature is invisible, thereby open[ing] [the spectators] up to their own inner lives…and offered the audience a fleeting glimpse of another world, a world we did not normally come in contact with.[837]

In Butoh, performing a metamorphosis or transformation on both levels of physical display and mental, spiritual presentation, and permeating in and out of the realms of life and death are key transitional processes and platforms. Butoh dancers' terrifying performances of metamorphosis and transformation are similar to killing of the self, an annihilation of individual subjectivity, abandoning the convention of conscious reason, and being released from samsara revolving cycles of reincarnation. Eventually, metamorphoses and transformations in Butoh performance aim at becoming "oneness" and embracing the transcendental absolute, the interpenetrative luminous state of subjective and objective emptiness. On account of this realization, I describe performing Butoh metamorphosis and transformation as the enlightened, sublime, and essential one. Yoshito Ohno and Tatsuhiko Shibusawa remarked that another

[836] Ibid., 41.
[837] Ibid., 41-43, 52.

distinctive (even frightening) characteristic of Ohno's performance was the way he transformed himself into a total "inanimate object,"[838] like being absorbed into another state of being, which indeed left his audience a "disturbing impression and a truly fearful experience."[839] Literally and figuratively, Ohno performed the ultimate killing of self (personal and impersonal identitylessness in Buddhism) through metamorphosing his subjective, identifiable self and conscious mind into other states of an animal, a ghostly spirit, an insect, or a demon. By "standing" in serene stillness (which was another significant posture for Ohno, as it was the soulful presence of a Butoh dancing essence), attaching and clinging his full body onto some solid surfaces such as a wall, a door, or a typical Japanese ceremonial table,[840] with his eyes "staring vacantly into thin air"[841] as if possessing the ability of piercing into the unknown realms, Ohno became metamorphosed into the realm of being "utterly dehumanized,"[842] as though he transformed and integrated into a sublime stone-like "lifeless form."[843]

Ohno's performing the essential "standing" and becoming lifeless postures were linked with his performing the essential "falling." These poses and movements acted as each other's dialectical continuity. The essential philosophy of Butoh, dancing with the dead, was the unifying thread that tied all of these performance elements together. As Yoshito Ohno noted, "Kazuo Ohno's body came within close reach of becoming pure matter; his gaze acquired the look seen in a dead person's eyes"[844] which "completely erased all his individual and human characteristics, and thereby banished all traces of his personal psychology….Watching someone turned into something not even remotely related to one's everyday image of that person, could

[838] Kazuo Ohno and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 59.
[839] Ibid.
[840] Ibid., 47-59.
[841] Ibid., 60.
[842] Ibid., 59.
[843] Ibid.
[844] Ibid.

provoke quite disconcerting effect."[845] By grave metamorphosis of both his material, physical appearances and mental, spiritual presence and by becoming incorporated into "an inorganic formless mass,"[846] Ohno launched a sacred occult and mystical revelation. In Butoh, the ultimate empty being of life and death and essential vastness aimed at evoking the audience's collective unconscious experiences by frightening the spectators through a radical change of their perceptions.

The sublime luminosity of life and death is a predominant leitmotif in the opening sequences of *Admiring La Argentina*, where Ohno presented Genet's prostitute's final moments in her fleeting beauty: "While death is often seen as being the ultimate rupturing force in the continuity of mortal existence, it simultaneously unearths a more profound continuity of existence."[847] Ohno re-appeared on the stage which symbolized the undying being of Ohno-prostitute, who was free of alternating from this side-ness towards the other reality. In awe and serenity, Ohno's prostitute was now prepared to bid farewell to this lifetime, only for a reincarnation and a return later; he/she was about to metamorphose and transform into another young girl (who inherited the essence from the dead beauty) and suggest a sublime awakening. When Ohno silently rose to his feet in that exact spot where, in the preceding scene, he had collapsed and died as a prostitute, the audience was astonished by a totally different and "enlightened" being that had been resurrected, descended, and became one with the transcendentality in front of their eyes. What appeared to be even more striking in this scene of rebirth and permanence was that the audience was able to witness the being of Ohno-prostitute reborn as a young girl. Paradoxically, Ohno wore odd "telltale signs of old age"[848] on his face in

[845] Ibid.
[846] Ibid.
[847] Ibid., 76.
[848] Ibid., 78.

his youthful portraits (especially the facial expression of his mouth, gaze, and a latent intricate smile). In so doing, Ohno intended to mark his realization that this side of the deranged world was subject to the principle of causation, such as the revolving karmic cycles of rebirth and death in Buddhist philosophy are.[849]

As Japanese dance critic Nario Goda remarks in explanation of any movement of Butoh, the dancing body is in and of this body itself which is unmotivated by a specific objective: "Butoh attempts to affirm the dance which lies **within** the body—the body is, in itself, contemplated as a small universe—and its structure and performance are thus revitalized."[850] To a certain extent, for the Butoh dancer, the physical body and the Butoh dance itself, are both vehicles, methodologies, and forms used to practice, seek, experience, and demonstrate his/her ultimate and sublime selves that are not unlike the use of "pedagogical tools" in Buddhism. Jean Viala explains, "dancing [Butoh] means 'being' in the cosmos, as well as containing the cosmos within oneself."[851] The idea of a "small universe" derived from Chinese Taoist philosophy. In brief, the human physical body is seen as an interior smaller universe that precisely resembles the external cosmos. The individual being and the universal being are not separate realities but one. Everything that exists in the universe is exactly reflected and exists in the human physical body from its compositional constituents, appearance, structure, function and traits to each part and very essence. For example, the four elements of earth, water, fire, and wind are categorized as fundamental compositional constituents with particular characteristics in both the small universe of the human body and the cosmic universe. Earth symbolizes bone, water is blood, fire represents temperature, and wind is breath in the human body. The so-called absolute reality and

[849] Ibid., 76-79.
[850] Nario Goda, "On Ankoku Buto," 86.
[851] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 17.

higher truth in the universe can be reached in its full presence through the "small universe" of the human body. Therefore, one pursuit of the truest reality is simply a self-introspection. An outward pilgrimage to the transcendental is actually an internal spiritual self-quest. As Sheng-Yen Shih remarks: "You arrive without departing."[852]

Performing Butoh parallels the quest for enlightenment and the process of experiencing and transforming towards illumination in Buddhism. Both Hijikata and Ohno would agree with the similarity between Butoh and Buddhism, for they emphasize that through "great and all-consuming doubt"[853] and "the explosion of awakening,"[854] the "answer" to "the essential" unfolds. This resembles the aim of directly seeing into true reality by meditating on Zen hua-tou. When Butoh was initially founded, Hijikata talked about an aspiration in his "beginner's mind" for the enlightenment "truth." He developed the criterion for Butoh dancers which upheld "through their dance performance revealed *existence*, that is, the body's *true state*, which lies in dance. By this means dance was transformed and deepened until it reached the level of a personal philosophy of life or an *epistemology*."[855] These engendered "profound doubts"[856] and critical, deeper questions concerning life and absolute existence free of philosophical assumptions initiated by Hijikata in the process of "getting enlightened"[857] resemble the use of Zen hua-tou. In Zen, this "great matter of birth and death"[858] is grave, and it has been frequently

[852] Sheng-Yen Shih and Dan Stevenson, "Developing Insight or Wisdom: The Four Stations of Mindfulness," in *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 104.
[853] Sheng-Yen Shih and Dan Stevenson, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 129-130. It means that through persistently practicing on hua-tou in questioning the unexplanatory "puzzles" regarding the issues of life, death, and the true state of being of humankind with full commitment and condensation for enlightenment, the practitioner will encounter a profound and intensely concentrated sense of doubt that is generated in the course of continual practice and contemplation.
[854] Ibid., 133.
[855] This is Susan Klein's analysis of Hijikata's Butoh art. See Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 79. My italics.
[856] Sheng-Yen Shih, "The Use of Huatou," in *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 128.
[857] Ibid., 129.
[858] Ibid., 128.

questioned by asking: "All things are reducible to one, but what is the one reducible to?"[859]; "What was my original face, or my true nature before I was born?"[860]; or "Who am I? And, who is it that is practicing?"[861] Questing for the answer to these profound questions as a Zen practitioner or experiencing "a glimpse into the original reality and one's true nature of mind that is there before all words and discriminations arise"[862] corresponds with Hijikata's yearning for "reaching the level of a personal philosophy of life or an epistemology."[863]

According to Hijikata and Ohno, Butoh is created for the purpose of seeking "answers" to the key issues concerning the essential, natural, primordial, and ultimate. The performance is similar to launching a religious voyage and experiencing spiritual enlightenment in the final explosion of profound awakening by transcending the extremity of bodily torment and physical reality through perpetual transformations (transcendent metamorphoses). The answers to these deeper issues regarding birth, death, life, being, and essence are never conveniently provided nor are the answers "ready" in advance. A Butoh dancer may less likely be "illumined" by the same thing (and so does the audience); therefore, the experience of becoming enlightened is itself very individual, intimate, "alive," and requires a full commitment by all involved.

In Zen, the great doubt suggests a long-lasting inner uneasiness and a deep tension. After committing oneself to Zen meditative practices and deep concentration for a long time, the rising of great doubt reminds one that "there is *something missing* or unclear in our lives that we must discover….There is *something essential* that we need to know—that we *must* know—but that we don't know."[864] This grand doubt (free of skepticism) is engendered when contemplating Zen

[859] Ibid., 127.
[860] Ibid., 129.
[861] Ibid., 127.
[862] Ibid., 132.
[863] This is Susan Klein's analysis of Hijikata's Butoh art. See Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 79.
[864] Sheng-Yen Shih, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 128.

hua-tou or koan. There exists no distraction or easy explanation, rational analysis or logical preconception that can soothe it. Sheng-Yen Shih explains: "Great doubt is a state of all-consuming questioning that, at its deepest, is irresistible and relentless, admitting no solution other than one that totally gets to the bottom of the matter to ultimately solve the great matter of birth and death."[865] For Zen meditators, the grand doubt occurs through the urgency of finding an answer to these grave matters concerning birth and death, and is comparable to the processes of Butoh practitioners such as Hijikata, Ohno, and their successors. The Butoh dancing body is itself a presentation of the mysterious beauty of koan, a shocking awakening from contemplating hua-tou, and a culmination of enlightened state. Likewise, because the profound questions regarding the truth of human existence must be unpacked, living out Butoh is a process towards illuminated lucidity. Each Butoh performance is like acting out a "living hua-tou"[866] or unwrapping a mystic koan for the final explosion of absolute enlightenment.

Ohno created his koan-like Butoh exhibition through performing two tableaux in *My Mother*: *The Dream of the Mother* and *The Testament*. In personifying serene beauty in *The Dream of the Mother*, Ohno put on an old kimono, placed a flower (this time the flower was red instead of white) in his hair; he then turned out to be the Mother. In the dream of the mother's dream, the Mother Ohno dreamt of becoming Ophelia, carried away by the river. Instead of drifting downstream with the current, Ophelia-Mother-Ohno "went upstream to the source…and rose toward the light."[867] This sequence of Ohno's version of *In Search of Lost Time* was similar to a mysterious Zen koan, looking for the alternate truth and absolute state. The subsequent tableau, *The Testament*, was even more abstract, irrational, esoteric, and highly koan-like. For

[865] Ibid.
[866] That is, making hua-tou a living issue. See Sheng-Yen Shih, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 130. I have explained the terms of Zen hua-tou and koan and their specific uses in Chapter Three.
[867] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 44.

example, with no intention of mimetic expression or interpretation, the audience saw Ohno's dancing body on stage go through various forms of metamorphoses and transformations outwardly, internally, spiritually, and metaphysically. "Sometimes, Ohno's entire action consisted of only listening. Sometimes, he repeated a gesture with the obstinacy of an insect. Or he struggled like a blind man in a forest of vines. It was a fleeting world where forms never took root."[868] These were the koans that Ohno intentionally (or unconsciously) left vague and unanswered for his audience to contemplate. It is not possible for one to approach the true reality of Butoh via cognizable (conventional) reasoning. On her deathbed, it was said that "Ohno's mother had whispered to him in her delirium: 'A flounder is swimming within me.'"[869] The revival of this fish (the soul-essence of his mother, engraved on his dancing dead body), thus became Ohno's tenet of reliving through Butoh. He covered his full body in a large white sheet of cloth which symbolized that Ohno was carrying on his shoulders and holding in his arms his mother. Much to the audience's surprise, it was once again presented in the form of mystical koans the incarnate being-ness of Ohno-Mother giving birth to his own mother (a resurrection), just as what she did in her previous life (giving birth to Ohno), for "life had come full circle. Man had created woman as woman had created man."[870] The sequence came to an end when Ohno was able to evoke all humans in a retrospect on humanity (the historical review of humanity) through his dancing substance.

Eguchi Osamu, in his article on Butoh, points out that "Butoh is like poetry in that it, in its very essence, resists the substitutive function in which words are used to express some **thing**…in Buto it is the body—the movement encloses **within itself the extreme point** which it must seek,

[868] Ibid.
[869] Ibid.
[870] Ibid.

while, at the same time, by twisting, jostling, and touching it opens up a symbolic space."[871] Resonating with Ohno's illumination that "each performance… has been the occasion for thinking about our existence,"[872] Butoh dancers resemble Zen practitioners in their use of a samsara-bound body to search for revelatory experience that contemplates the "answer" to essence. The Enlightenment state is attained through the Butoh dead body's manifestation of sublime metamorphoses and corresponds with "settling deeply [the body-mind connection] into a quiescent state of *Samadhi*."[873] The state of the transcendental *samadhi* suggests placing the deep concentration on meditative stillness (tranquil abiding) with the luminous penetrative insight recognized as fundamental to Buddhist criteria (in order to get enlightenment). The ideas of contemplative stillness or tranquil abiding (*samatha*) and direct perceiving or penetrative luminosity (*vipasyana*) demonstrate: 1) the similarities between Butoh dancers and Buddist meditation practitioners and the shared methods they espouse for experiencing spiritual awakening and 2) the kind of spiritual pursuit for absolute transcendence that they both aspire to as evidence of parallels between Buddhism (Zen) and Butoh performance.

The Butoh dancer, consciously or unconsciously, intends to seek, to utilize, and then internalize the principles and techniques of Buddhist/Zen meditation in order to invoke enlightenment wisdom. Samatha or Samadhi refers to meditation (tranquility) and vipasyana refers to contemplation (wisdom), though for an achievement of transcendent illumination, neither should be separate nor absent. Samatha means practicing and achieving the state of meditative stillness, tranquil abiding, and silent serenity, or illuminating silence. Vipasyana

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[871] Eguchi Osamu, "My View of Hoppo Buto-ha," in *Ankoku Buto: The Premodern and Postmodern Influences on the Dance of Utter Darkness*, 89-90.
[872] This is D'Orazi's analysis of Butoh through the lens of Kazuo Ohno's dancing style and "techniques." See D'Orazi, "Body of Light: The Way of the *Buto* Performer," 336. See also Richard Schechner, "Kazuo Ohno Doesn't Commute," in *The Drama Review* 30 (summer 1986): 163.
[873] Sheng-Yen Shih, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 133.

suggests an accomplishment of penetrative insight, clarity, unimpeded awareness, and silent illumination. The indispensability of samatha and vipasyana are designed to unintentionally make attainable the state of religious deepest trance when performing deep concentration through profound tranquility, luminosity, and direct perceiving. Vipasyana exists when the supreme ecstasy, on the condition of pround meditative stillness (samatha), is embraced and simultaneously and spontaneously co-exists with illuminating translucency and direct seeing. When samatha and vipasyana act together, enlightened experiences (spiritual awakening) along with the ultimate truth of emptiness unfold.

An eccentric hallmark of Ohno's Butoh was his carrying a flower while dancing intoxicated. The transcendental presence of flowers, in the form of "the ideal mode of existence,"[874] played a key role in Ohno's aesthetic discourse. On the one hand, the blossoming flowery (*hana*) state in performance, like that of the classical Noh, suggests consummating the final climax in a performance and attaining total spiritual awakening. Such a climactic *hana* illuminating state, similar to what Ohno emphasized "entering university,"[875] was the pinnacle of his performance. Entering university suggests returning to and becoming one with the universal vastness and its true being-ness. His self-reflexive and self-reflective life-story, *Ozen,*[876] which was accompanied with an achievement of absolute *satori,* the Zen Enlightenment state at its climax, was an example. On the other hand, to relate "flower" to his own Butoh demonstration, Ohno's persistence in both his physical and spiritual presence had to be perpetually "flowerlike."[877] That is, the blossomy flower, by instinct, audaciously and unconstrainedly opening itself out on reaching upward from the earth, was imprinted, integrated, extended out,

[874] Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 89.
[875] Ibid.
[876] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 38-39.
[877] Kazuo and Yoshito Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 89.

and became one with Ohno. For Ohno, in addition to embodying the *satori* Zen enlightenment, the flower resembled both the crucial part of his Butoh dancing body and the very essence of Butoh.

Another meaning that lies in the presentation of flower reflected what Ohno suggested as the total compatibility of essential emptiness and phenomenal occurrences, the manifestation of a human being and the substance of his true self. In *The Dead Sea*, painted and wearing clothing in all white (less identifiable as feminine in this scene), Ohno clasped a whole white paper flower in his right hand. Ohno has chosen to whiten the flower symbolically, along with his body, as identifying with the presence of pure whiteness in *The Dead Sea*. Choosing white-colored flowers in his dance is also explained by Ohno's consistent particular fascination with the Buddha's sacred lotus, with its low key character and simplicity, and its nature of serene calmness and translucent purity.[878] In this case, the white paper flower expresses itself as a "natural extension to the hand, and in so doing, it becomes a point of contact with the outside world"[879] from the innate and inside world of the Butoh dancing presence, approaching towards the invisible and other realms in beyond-ness. On other occasions, by creating such an intimate relationship with the flower both materially and metaphysically and physically and spiritually, Ohno also saw this flower act as an intact part of the Butoh body's nervous system, which functioned "much in the same way as an insect's antennae do: constantly palpitating the air. [In this way, the flower] functioned independently, as though it were an external eye detached from the trunk of the body and existed both as an autonomous entity and as a sensory organ."[880] In Ankoku Butoh, "the necessity of becoming a flower"[881] or returning to the flower-like

[878] Ibid., 91.
[879] Ibid., 89.
[880] Ibid.
[881] Ibid., 91.

transcendental ultimate place, emphasized its importance in two ways: 1) It marked the philosophical practices of metamorphosis, transformation, reincarnation, "assimilation of and rapport with other forms of lives and realms of beings,"[882] and becoming one with the empty absoluteness in Butoh. 2) The presence of the transcendent flower state also reminded Butoh dancers to "strip ourselves of *everything*—habits, techniques, vanity, and mechanical replication of routine daily existence."[883]

Subjective identity-less-ness is central to Buddhist philosophy.[884] In particular, to invalidate the identification with an individual self and subjective I is crucial, in order to approach transcendental illumination and take a glimpse of the absolute trueness. Pre-language, the non-intellectual, renunciation of subjectivity and anti-individuality, as well as freedom from ideologies are leading characteristics of Butoh,[885] the extent to which Butoh and Buddhism and Zen share a common ground. Butoh pioneers created "no-techniques" or "anti-techniques" as the perpetual techniques[886] by refusing to ally with any "-isms" such as symbolism, formalism, and others, and rejecting any highly-stylized body language whose expressive intentions are manipulated by rationality and mental consciousness. A number of no-techniques as basic techniques, such as "metamorphosis," are placed as hallmarks for the disappearance of subjectivity, therefore "challeng[ing] the modern myth of the individual"[887] and liberating men

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[882] Ibid.
[883] Ibid.
[884] I have explained this concept which frames the basis of Buddhist theory in Chapter Two. A Buddhist conceptual term. It also means personal selflessness. According to the Buddhist precept, which upholds an idea that all worldly phenomena retain an empty nature, that is, all phenomena are empty of intrinsic existence or inherent solidity, there are two types of selflessness or identitylessness, which include personal/subjective selflessness and impersonal/objective selflessness. See the Dalai Lama, *The Essence of The Heart Sutra: the Dalai Lama's Heart of Wisdom Teachings* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2005), 99-100.
[885] Susan Klein, "The Buto Aesthetic and a Selection of Techniques," in *Ankoku Buto*, 25-54.
[886] Ibid.
[887] Ibid., 32.

from a conviction of themselves as a self-centered unity that belongs to "a self-sufficient field and closed realm in its own right…condemned to a prison-cell without egress."[888] This is similar to the Zen creeds of non-I (no-self), non-form, no-thought, and non-abiding and the Buddhist precepts of subjective/objective identity-less-ness and empty nature as the essential absolute.

The philosophical insight and aesthetic practice of Butoh aims to reach the enlightened illumination of non-I and undermine the unified subject in an individual being, similar to the dialectics of "negative affirmation" (double negation) used in Buddhist methodology. In addition to the use of unending metamorphoses, which mark the fragility and wane of "the 'sane' apprehension of onself as possessor of a definite, stable, and socially recognized identity [being] continually threatened by the 'surrealistic'…dreams and fantasies,"[889] acting "ritualized violence with its overtones of primitive sacrifice"[890] through a complete devotion of the dancer's individual self and subjective I in Butoh's shamanistic rite is a crucial component of the performance. The exhibitions of the occult and primal violences displayed in Hijikata's *Forbidden Colors* (1959) and *Revolt of the Flesh* (1968) confirm the negative aesthetics of non-I (a total denial of subjective self, rational thought, or individual I) that resembles subjective identity-less-ness in Buddhism. Susan Klein elaborates, "Since our sense of individuality is only a fragile delusion that could be exploded at any time, it is vital that we immediately begin to explore the possibility of our own inner fragmentation."[891] In other words, the "true self" of non-I (no-self) whose essential being is absolute emptiness is embraced only when "the *body* that has been robbed"[892] is substantiated. This understanding echoes dance critic Goda's idea that "only

[888] Jameson, "Postmodernism," 64.
[889] Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, *The Social Construction of Reality* (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), 98.
[890] Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 33.
[891] Ibid.
[892] This notion is raised by Japanese dance critic, Miyabi Ichikawa. See Miyabi Ichikawa, "A Preface to Buto," in *Ankoku Buto*, 71.

by throwing off the body and transcending suffering can true dance be created, and that Butoh begins with the abandonment of self."[893]

Performing metaphysical metamorphosis with the dancing dead body in Butoh is also closely associated with the philosophy of non-I and the cancellation of a cohesive individual subject. The metamorphosis in Butoh exists in the liminal thresholds of multi-faceted realties on and off stage and between this side-ness and the transcendental other shore-ness. The dynamisms of liminality and metamorphosis are depicted as the blurred "identities" of Butoh dancers: "[They] were gods and sacrificial victims, sacred and polluted, visitors from a greater world and at the same time bearers of the sins of the community."[894] The completion of spiritual esoteric metamorphoses on the theatrical stage results in the Butoh dancer's slaughter of self, dissolution of subjectivity, and anti-individuality.

As in Buddhism, Butoh makes use of a continual metamorphosis in order to invalidate the false belief in an identifiable intrinsic existence, subject to each alienated modern individual, as metamorphosis replaces the fragmented self. Ohno consistently affirms that it was necessary and significant for Butoh dancers to "expand our physical awareness beyond the limits of our deeply ingrained human sensibility."[895] To be precise, the transcendental metamorphosis in Butoh affirms a de-subjectified non-I and no-self as the abolsute. This Butoh presence, as Susan Klein observes, leads towards "the ultimate goal of reintegrating man into the universe."[896] Through the negation of self and de-subjectification, as well as a quest for pre-language, the non-intellectual, and anti-individuality, the Butoh dancer enters into a Buddhist enlightenment state of deep meditative stillness and unimpeded luminosity. Dance critic Toru Haga echoes by saying:

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[893] Nario Goda, "On Ankoku Buto," 85.
[894] Masao Yamaguchi, "Kinship, Theatricality, and Marginal Reality in Japan," in *Text and Context*, ed. Ravindra K. Jain (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1977), 173.
[895] Kazuo Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World*, 87.
[896] Ibid., 38.

when the Butoh dancer enters into the profundity of luminosity and no-mindedness in the mysterious occult height, the body releases "discharges of an intense energy that should pierce at once and suddenly illumine the darkness of humans' confused mind."[897] The inherent self and the subjective experience are nothing more than the essential empty nature that leads to "the moment in Zen when the very foundations of selfhood are shattered, and the analytic walls of interpretation collapse, allowing for an intuitive interpenetration into the world's true reality."[898]

For example, beginning in the late 1960s the *beshimi kata* can seen as emblematic of highly developed and trendy Butoh that accesses an enlightened transcendence through "transformation." Beshimi kata is a typical Butoh posture and dancing skill which becomes a demonstration of the kind of questionable "formalism" popularized in the later development of Butoh. Performing the transformation from the conscious and mundane to the unconscious and irrational supermundane in beshimi kata is equivalent to entering a frenzied and trance-like delirium. Beshimi kata is characteristic of Hijikata's Butoh, because as one of the twosome pair, Hijikata's performance highlights darkness, grotesqueness, ugliness, and riot. On the other hand, beshimi kata is gently modified in Ohno's performance, which displays brightness, soulfulness, beauty, and spirituality. In the beshimi kata, the Butoh dancer's physical corpse shrinks inwardly, making his body as tiny as a ball and folding itself as tensely as possible. The cramped body of the Butoh dancer presents a beshimi kata trance state by crawling on the ground, twisting, and convulsing. Their eyes roll up to show the whites or bulge and cross. The tongue spews out. The mouth opens into an exaggerative grimace. And the face is thus deformed and warped to its sheer extremity. These postures yearn for a relapsing towards the "original face" in touch with "natural

[897] Toru Haga, "The Japansese Point of View," in *Avant-Garde Art in Japan* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1962), unpaginated.
[898] Ibid.

trueness"[899] through grotesque mystical metamorphoses. The beshimi kata crosses beyond the conventional, ordinary, and phenomenal, and penetrates into the utter, unfathomable, and sublime. In presenting beshimi kata, verbal explanations and conventional designations (social discourses) that endorse universal values are smashed and facial expressions connected to an individual subject and self-identity are blown up. Excruciating physical torment to its total extremity is compulsory and similar to attaining the ultimate state of samatha (the deepest meditative stillness and serene stabilization) and vipasyana (luminous interpenetrative lucidity) as the transcendental spiritual awakeing is reached and "the body that has been robbed" is restored. When a Butoh dancer distorts the full body to its extreme in metamorphosis and transformation, the dancer accomplishes "a sense of spiritual unity and tranquility, a sensation of having no thoughts similar to [experiencing the true vastness of being] through Zen meditation."[900] The "true self" is reincarnated in this "post-transmigrational" Butoh dancing being, who becomes other than merely a human being in the ordinary everyday existence. This reborn true Butoh dancing being is thus an essence, dead body, dark soul, and profound absoluteness, glowing with a "kind of release and salvation."[901]

When performing beshimi kata, culminating in the trance state through perpetual mysterious transformations also means spasming and distorting the body. By releasing the body from the mechanism of brain and conscious mind, the dance disentangles the total presence of the transcendental being through and within the physical body from the intellectual knowledge and rational faculty that are confirmed by "the institutional rubbish of modernity"[902] and "work

[899] Both "original face" and "natural trueness" are typical to the Buddhist conceptual terms. See Sheng-Yen Shih, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 129.
[900] Keisuke Iwabuchi, "The Paradigm of Buto," in *Ankoku Buto*, 77.
[901] Ibid.
[902] Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 51.

their wills through the mind of the dancer."[903] By recoiling into the "utter darkness" of Butoh "essence" and utmost deformity devoid of perceptions and intelligence, the dancer (the dancing being) is "able to fuse back into a feeling of spiritual unity and tranquility with [the true reality of] nature and with its [true self]."[904] On the verge of ultimate sacred transformation (metamorphosis), the Butoh dancer appears to be enthralled with intoxication, when "a world of innocence, stillness--fluent energy of eternity"[905] is revisited. As my discussion in this chapter attempts to mark the links between the essence of Ankoku Butoh and religious revelation, especially the Buddhist thoughts about "enlightenment" and true reality, Susan Klein also points out the impact that Japanese traditional culture (Buddhist philosophy) has exerted on Butoh. For example, the use of beshimi kata and other metamorphosis-oriented impromptu techniques characteristic of Butoh's "anti-technique" and fundamental expressions of "no-expression" can be understood as inspired by Zen Buddhism, for these anti-expressions and no-techniques all aim for "bringing the body into mystical union with nature [empty nothingness]."[906]

In the presentation of *ganimata*, another distinctive Butoh posture of "bowlegged crouch" originated in Hijikata's 1972 production *27 Nights for 4 Seasons*, the core (of ganimata) is realized when "the weight is hung on the outer sides of two legs. When one 'floats' the inside of the legs upwards, the knees will turn out of their own accord, and the entire frame of the body sinks down."[907] As Butoh performer Takiko Iwabuchi clarifies, dancing ganimata, the bowlegged crouch, is a performance of "crouching down, with arms hugging knees to make [the Butoh dancers] themselves as small as possible."[908] On the Butoh stage, both ganimata and beshimi

[903] Ibid.
[904] Ibid.
[905] *Niwa* (The Garden), program notes. I cite it from Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 67.
[906] Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 67.
[907] Nario Goda, "On Ankoku Buto," 87.
[908] Keisuke Iwabuchi, "The Paradigm of Buto," 76.

kata are paramount "transitional" skills for a demonstration of what I call sacred metaphysical metamorphosis (or sublime transformation) in Butoh. They share the same philosophy in emphasizing the religious mysticism-oriented Japanese aesthetics as a total denial of subjective, individual, conscious self. Lowering the body's axis of gravity in ganimata is "a compression of the self's center, perhaps a reversion to the seed, egg, embryo, chrysalis, cocoon."[909] In addition to the dissolution of individualistic self when regressing towards the primal essence, this reversion also suggests "a metaphor for the renunciation [of the conventional world and phenomenal reality] and invasion of the earth's surface."[910] Moreover, the bodily posture and act of squashing and warping the self's center in order to lower (and surrender to) the axis of gravity is mixed with the metamorphosis-based upward and downward postures. When the dancer stands on his tiptoes, it is like he is hanging up by invisible ropes and is about to merge with the transcendental other realms; otherwise, the dancer by contrast lowers his full body deep down onto the ground and is about to reembrace the other worlds beneath the floor and be identified with his essential origin. Embedded in the core of Butoh is an evident religious (Buddhist) connotation, therefore, the rising and falling bodies can suggest "an escape to heaven or an infiltration of hell."[911]

As accentuated unrelentingly by Hijikata and Ohno, through a reversion inwards to primordial existence and a restoration of the pure natural status that is innate and instantaneous, the essence of the Butoh soul which pursues through quasi-Buddhist (Zen) "unintentional attainment" is able to unfold absolute reality and consummate ultimate truneness. As the dance climaxes into a mystical cult of absolute metamorphosis (like what is completed in the performances of beshima kata and ganimata), the Butoh spectacle abounds with "communal bliss

[909] Ibid.
[910] Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 76.
[911] Ibid.

that illustrate[s] the ecstatic joy to be had when one loses one's sense of individualistic [identity] in the great cosmic unconsciousness [the ultimate state of emptiness]."[912] As art historian Haga states, it is "the bottomless and formless, or rather, pre-formed I"[913] that presents the essential being and the highest truth in and of Butoh.

Ankoku Butoh's philosophy, which includes killing of the self, a dead body performing as the dancing essence, and the dead man's reincarnation (as ascended souls or mysterious spirits' return from the unknown), presented these concepts as one uniting thread instead of three different ideas with which to underscore the aesthetic form of Butoh. If expressing femininity on stage made Ohno's essential dancing body crystallize into a presence of ultimate emptiness, then portraying masculinity on stage made his Butoh soul manifest in the Buddhist samsara reincarnation. When Ohno danced (and dressed) as a man with his deliberate choice of formal mourning attire,[914] as if this dancing man was attending on his own funeral, the sequences were underlined by his appearing on stage and being tracked and haunted by a shadow. What the audience saw was the shadow of death and darkness looming in the background as Ohno was absorbed into and merged with the encompassing darkness.[915] According to Yoshito Ohno's description as an audience member: "The public was confronted with a specter of sorts, a mind and bodiless presence personified by this mysterious shadow rising delicately from out of nowhere."[916] What was even more horrifying was a realization that this "dancing shadow"[917] indeed stayed with this man all the time as his company. For Ohno, if performing femininity

[912] Ibid., 59.
[913] Toru Haga, "The Japanese Point of View," unpaginated.
[914] Kazuo Ohno, *Kazuo Ohno's World,* 83.
[915] Ibid., 83-84.
[916] Ibid., 83.
[917] Ibid.

suggested memory (remembering), emancipation, life, sublime beauty, blissful serenity, transcendence, and eternity, portraying masculinity on stage suggested forgetting, suffering, death, grief, ghostly spirits, decadence, and impermanence. Unlike what he did when performing women on stage (e.g., *My Mother, Admiring La Argentina*), Ohno had no intention to embody his father or any other corresponding male figures in his realistic life (e.g., *The Dead Sea*). According to an observation by his son Yoshito Ohno, who was also a Butoh performer, Ohno, by voicing his anguish, "this utterly alien being,"[918] instead expressed his masculinity on stage in the form of "someone else."[919] In Ohno's own words, he personified "the lingering souls of the sperm who didn't survive the fight for survival….Those dead spirits denied themselves the chance of birth so that a single human life could evolve in the womb."[920] That is, through performing masculinity in Butoh, Ohno summoned:

> the spirits of those inside of him whose lives were cut short or haven't made it to this world. For Ohno, human beings were born as a result of death [of themselves in other forms of lives] or the death of others. In donning the outward tokens of sorrow, Ohno embodied the unquenchable yearning for life [of the shadowy death and ghostly spirits], and rendered incarnate their grief.[921]

In a scene of *The Marriage of Earth and Sky*, the bare stage was infused with sheer silence. Dressed in a mourning gown with his face painted ghostly white, the "masculine" Ohno was twofold. He was a real man of flesh-and-blood whose "dead body" was simultaneously obsessed with a specter. Ohno presented in front of the audience no more flashy stage images,

[918] Ibid., 85.
[919] Ibid.
[920] Ibid.
[921] Ibid., 83.

but rather he traced out "the hard reality of everyday life."[922] His gestures were straightforward and the forms were basic. He walked, kneeled down; the emptiness of his eye gaze was frozen somewhere in the dark vacuum; he stood up straight with his arms extended and reached out towards the sky. Evoked by a human being's confronting "the vicissitudes of life, its joys, pains, anxieties, and fears"[923] on stage, the metaphor of unverisal human existence was reflected. Death was creeping along the theatrical space "between [Ohno's] hammering footsteps."[924]

According to Susan Klein, the essential darkness in Ankoku Butoh which endorses the other realms of unconsciousness and irrationality "can be seen as [requisite] towards enlightenment, that is, the necessary 'fall of self' into darkness that proceeds the light of mystical oneness with nature."[925] Klein's analysis reverberates with Haga, who delineates the delicate interrelation between true self (true essence) and total darkness in Butoh through Zen Buddhist perspective. As Haga understands, this dance of utter darkness is the essence of a pure dark soul transformed into a transcendental being of the dead body that dances:

> At the end of the arduous and assiduous path of negation…the very foundation of self will be shattered…disclosing within us an abyss in which will be diffused, pure, and innocent, the light that is Buddha. Such is the crucial experience of the fall of the self…which led…beyond illuminations and ecstasies to the "dark night of the soul" and to "the sonorous solitude."[926]

[922] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 34-35.
[923] Ibid., 34.
[924] Ibid.
[925] Klein, *Ankoku Buto*, 67.
[926] Toru Haga, "The Japanese Point of View," unpaginated.

Though I use examples from dance critics about how a Butoh performer is seen,[927] I also contend that Butoh dancers, explicitly or implicitly, recognize themselves as Buddhist practitioners or enlightenment pursuers in search for transcendental spiritual awakening. They see themselves as true mystics and are identified their dancing body-soul-spirit-essence with the ultimate truth similar to Buddhist illumination:

> As a figure advancing inexorably toward *enlightenment*, exorcising the ghosts of interpretations, those demons who blind us to *the true reality*, while it simultaneously causes the collapse of that scaffolding of concepts which clutter up our meager intellect, in order *to restore us*, as it were, *to ourselves, to our original selves*.[928]

This realization corresponds with dance scholar Miyabi Ichikawa recalling what, on a casual occasion, Hijikata humorously (yet very thoughtfully) described: "Butoh is created from the finale."[929] The finale of Butoh is twosome; it signifies that through dance, the Butoh quest for the primordial/essential and ultimate/transcendent, particular/unique and universal/existential, as well as chaotic murkiness and pure luminosity. Beginning with the phase of pre-birth or pre-historic and ending up a culmination of enlightenment, the "finale" suggests Butoh's aim for total emancipation, spiritual revelation, and transcendental sublimation through the completion of metamorphoses and transformations—both aesthetically and metaphysically--similar to the religious mystic cults and the Buddhist final attainment/enlightenment.

Butoh dancers' quest for the state of absolute transcendentality and essential emptiness is exemplified in Ohno's *The Dead Sea*. *The Dead Sea* was another of Ohno's extraordinary soul-

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[927] The example that has been used here is Haga Toru's observation of the last section of the performance in *The Garden* production.
[928] Toru Haga, "The Japanese Point of View," unpaginated. My italics.
[929] Miyabi Ichikawa, "A Preface to Buto," in *Ankoku Buto*, 70.

searchings, which was created right after his travel to Israel in the early 1980s and reflected his self-reflexive and even more profound contemplation of life/birth, death, living, and being. Sheer whiteness is the dominant theme of *The Dead Sea*, and the dance is presented in a spectacle permeated by utter whiteness (interestingly, considering that Butoh is known for the dance of utter "darkness"), including the whiteness of light and a stage that is clothed with a huge white blanket. In the first set, *Invitation*, Ohno, who dresses in a white robe and cloak, appears on the stage in very slow motion, as if he is starting to launch a sacred voyage on the earth. With a lucid vision, Ohno continues to stroll across the stage and explore such a perfected immeasurable world (symbolizing in pure whiteness). His gestures are very slow but tense and dynamic. The presence of Ohno's complete whiteness imbricates and becomes one with the Butoh spectacle's total whiteness; both of them are as white as salt[930]/soul and as white as a ghost. Through the pure absolute whiteness, Ohno strives for reaching and transmitting the transcendentality of oneness that includes the universe and human beings, fetus and mother, revolving cycles of karmic reincarnation and ultimate emptiness, as if he is enthralled with serenity and final nirvana. The theme of empty suchness is also conveyed in the final set, *The Ghost and the Viennese Waltz*, where Ohno reverses to dress in all black and dance wildly as if he is in a deep intoxication and is emancipated. The final sequence climaxes into Ohno's dancing being and his "dead body" reincarnated and metamorphosed in the forms of a child, puppet, joyful being, and melancholic spirit. [931]

Ohno's brief statement expresses thoroughly the spirit, essence, philosophy, and aesthetics of Ankoku Butoh through a manifestation of the ultimate dancing body: "I feel

[930] "Salt" is Ohno's own description when referring to his performance in this scene of *The Dead Sea*.
[931] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 45-54.

crushed and want to cry, want to play, want to die, want to live."[932] In the second act of *Everyday Life/The Marriage of Earth and Sky*, through a self-reflexive solo, which was deemed almost like "an archeology of Ohno's art,"[933] Ohno presented in such an essential momentariness in the theatrical space "a game played with La Argentina."[934] In particular, when the audience heard La Argentina murmur: "Come Ohno, dance with me,"[935] it was as if "they" were both merged with the other realm of true absolute and became the transcendental oneness. The being of Ohno was alternating from life and death; he even went beyond and outside of time and space in everyday human existence. As Viala notes, "Ohno's dance led us through a veritable battle with space."[936] It was only the joyfulness of the game perpetualized and the unimpeded lucidity and infinity of the instantaneous moment made to last: "[Ohno] smiled. He laughed. It was the moment when dreams came true, when fantasies became reality. We [audience] were guests [witnesses and participants] at a great celebration of reconciliation with the universe, an enormous outburst of enthusiasm and love."[937]

[932] Kazuo Ohno, quoted in Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 37.
[933] Jean Viala, *Butoh: Shades of Darkness*, 34.
[934] Ibid.
[935] Ibid.
[936] Ibid.
[937] Ibid.

6

Gao's Quest for *The Other Shore* and an Enlightenment via a Detour of *Soul Mountain*: Ultimate Emptiness, Original Self, and Absolute Reality

Preface

This chapter is an interrogation of Xingjian Gao's (1940-) search for a secular path towards a transcendent Zen Enlightenment. Gao is one of the most renowned writers of the post-Mao era and has been residing in France since the 1980s. He is a pioneering Chinese playwright, novelist, painter, and essayist and arguably an avant-gardist. In Gao's own words, he is a "man yearning for a genuine total theatre."[938] Gao consistently stresses the great impact of Artaud on his work. Both Artaud and Gao employ the term "total theatre" to explain their perspectives on theatre and art, as well as their philosophies towards life and death. Moreover, they both look to the possibility of a transcendental Enlightenment experience and an alternative truth state (higher reality) through Buddhist philosophy, thus counteracting orthodox rationalism. However, their theoretical approaches and theatrical practices are rather disparate in many respects. When Artaud relapsed into a mystical unapproachability through his theoretical practice in the theatre of cruelty, Gao's aesthetic discourse is a return to the phenomenal world. For example, *Soul Mountain* unfolds itself in a manifestation of the mysterious absoluteness whose transcendentality can only be reached in this side-ness of the *Other Shore*.

A key thread in Gao's novels, plays, and even his paintings is that of main characters (or the multi-faceted embodiments of the author himself) launching pilgrimages toward (spiritual)

[938] Xingjian Gao, *No-Ideology* (or *Withou-isms*) (Taipei: Lien-Ging Publishing, 2002). See also Xingjian Gao, "My Outlook on Theatre," "Preliminary Investigations of the Techniques of Modern Theatre," in *A Quest for Modern Theatre*, ed. Yi-Chung Chu (Beijing: The Chinese Drama Publication, 1988), 42-51, 8-21.

awakening via detours from the physical to the esoteric, then back to the ordinary. These dramatic characters move from outward pursuit to introspection. Gao also strives to create a fundamental and all-embracing theatre, that is, a "total theatre." He uses theatrical elements distilled from miscellaneous materials that include Eastern and Western, traditional and modern, ancient and avant-garde resources in order to develop an experimental and secularized modern Zen theatre.

Although religious and metaphysical themes, especially those concerning Zen Buddhism, recur incessantly in most of Gao's works, in his search for an alternative illumination and a Zen Enlightenment, Gao's methodology distinguishes itself from the Artaudian theatre of cruelty or total/sacred theatre. Unlike Artaud, Gao does not intend to claim his aesthetic consciousness and theatrical practices as metaphysical, alchemical, occult, or magical. His theatre also differs from Ankoku Butoh, which attains the state of mysterious rapture through the presence of "dead body" in the dance of utter darkness and the culmination of collective unconsciousness, whereby performers resemble shamans or monks entranced with self-annihilation and transmigration. Gao's awakening is intentionally achieved through artistic/literary techniques specified in words, lines, speeches, and texts that provide an idiosyncratic sur-linguistic and trans-expressional form of expression. In other words, Gao's counteraction against systemized verbal convention requires the re-invention and transfiguration of existing linguistic expression. He takes his own spiritual pilgrimage with a sober, isolated mind and alienated, cold eyes.

The Historical Context of Modernization on the Chinese Mainland

The development of drama, theatre, and literature in twentieth-century China has been closely linked to the nation's political situation. This is in part due to the severe political

predicament that China confronted along with its marginalized role on the international stage. China faced the intervention of severe governmental censorship, especially after the 1940s, and nationalism became the main theme of most artistic activities. Drama, theatre, and the other arts were turned into a mouthpiece for social, political, cultural, and ideological reform and used as weapons for the (Communist) party-oriented government's political agitation and propaganda.

After the frustration over the Opium War and the defeat by Japan in the Sino-Japan War at the turn of the twentieth century, China was left with obsolete Confucian pedagogies and conventional values and familial traditions, all of which brought forth societal deterioration, economic degeneration, and political and military weakness. China saw the West as strong, progressive, and prosperous and began to view Westernization and modernization as the primary way (even a panacea) to call forth and re-create Chinese national dignity in the world community. In this regard, Japan acted as a role model for China because at the time, the triumph of Japan in the Sino-Japan War was attributed to its successful reformation, modernization, and Westernization during the second half of the Meiji period in the nineteenth century. The Chinese government began to send students, scholars, and intellectuals to Europe, North America, and Japan with the hope that they would learn the most useful and powerful "Western Canons" and bring back that knowledge to their mother country. A number of students were sent to Japan, and the very first so-called "new civilized drama" (also known as "modern spoken or dialogue drama") debuted on the Tokyo stage performed by Chinese international students. In 1907, they performed *Camille* and *The Black Girl's Cry to Heaven* (an adaptation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*), which were both based on the nineteenth-century trend of dramatic realism that bloomed in the West.

Between 1915 and 1919 a “New Culture Movement” (also known as “New Intellectual Movement”) was launched in China. Its leading figures and most ardent advocates were Hu Shi, Chen Du-Xiu, and Fu Si-Nian. They were all American-educated scholars who aimed to transplant the new and youthful blood and vigor of the West in order to rejuvenate a weary, superseded, and senile Chinese society. Hu Shi claimed that Chinese tradition, customs, and conventions were unhealthy, backward, and regressive and that Western thoughts were healthy, progressive, respectable, and full of promise for a better future. Hu Shi and his colleagues believed in the power and influence of literature, art, and drama and deemed them vehicles for social and national reforms. Hu was best-known as an advocate for a standardized vernacular that was intelligible for most people in Chinese society instead of the classical language, which was not colloquial and only accessible to intellectuals. Chen Du-Xiu, another leading figure of the New Culture Movement, introduced Henrik Ibsen’s plays and translated and published them in the *New Youth* journal. Ibsen’s social conscience, insightful subtlety, and humanitarian sympathy for exploring contemporary social problems, familial darkness, and complicated human relationships elicited the high praise of Chinese intellectuals. In addition to Ibsen’s plays, Chinese scholars (in order to boost reforms in Chinese society) deliberately created a selective collection of modern Western drama that included Bernard Shaw, Oscar Wilde, and Eugene O’Neill (to name just a few), due to their sharp critiques and challenging perspectives. Between the 1910s and the 1930s, Western paradigms were used by Chinese intellectuals for creative stimulus and to kindle social change. Modernized and Westernized projects were given a higher value than traditional cultural legacies and domestic artistic/literary developments.

Another form of “theatrical experimentation” cannot be neglected when discussing modern Chinese drama. During Mao Ze-Dong’s regime since 1949 (when the Nationalist government

was defeated and withdrew to Taiwan followed by the domination of Mao's Communist Party and the establishment of People's Republic of China) until his death in 1976, theatre was deemed a weapon of class struggle, violence and revolution, and of political agit-prop. During the devastating "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" of 1966 to 1976 instigated by Mao and managed by the Communist dictatorship, there was no respect for domestic traditions and cultural assets. Worse still, under Mao's political oppression and the cultural tyranny and persecution of the "Gang of Four," any attempt to promote creativity was impeded, except for that with a purposeful political service. No possibility for "artistic innovation" was allowed. Theatre therefore served as an ideological mouthpiece for the authoritarian leadership to propagandize, in the hope of satisfying all the needs and sentiments of the masses, workers, soldiers, and peasants. The main purpose of theatre under the direct intervention by the Communist Party was to be a faithful reflection of the Party Line and a sign of obedience.

Mao's cultural policies were highly prescriptive and restrictive and became an extension of his infamous 1942 "Talks at the Yan'an Forum on Literature and Art."[939] An ideologically correct and "legitimized" dramatic form was a combination of modern spoken drama and sung drama, as an assimilation of traditional Chinese Beijing opera and modern Western realistic drama. It was a combination of song, chorus, dance, and speech and was easy to stage. Theatre as an appropriate medium that aimed at politically-correct dramatic representations involved "realistic" and somewhat complicated stage scenery, as well as costumes and stage manners also deemed "realistic" but that were actually formalistic, rigid, exaggerated, and oddly sentimental (for example, the chanting of "our venerable and dear Chairman Mao" was indispensable for every play). The permissible issues were Chinese patriotism, peasant rebellion and heroism, equality between the sexes, the political prominence of women, and the overwhelming victory of

[939] Stuart R. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

the proletariat. Anything that reflected the hierarchical values of feudalism, the oppression of rich and poor or that could be seen as critical of the Communist despotism was banned. In 1962, in an attempt to gain back political power, Mao desperately stirred up the Chinese people to "not forget class struggle." Between 1963 and 1964, in the name of succumbing to Mao's Communist Party Line, Jiang Qing, Mao's wife and a one-time theatre performer, held on suspicion of "unhealthy" and "ghostly" plays during a festival to reshape Beijing Opera with contemporary themes. Almost all of the traditional Beijing operas were accused of being ghostly, unhealthy, and obsolete. They were prohibited and disappeared from the Chinese stage for almost thirteen years. Jiang Qing and her Gang of Four, who were all literary persons and intellectuals, were later sentenced or executed for their extreme persecutions of Chinese intellectuals, playwrights, scholars, and scientists during the Cultural Revolution.[940]

When Mao first took control of political power in the early 1950s, he promised to lead the Chinese people in the way of modernization. He announced his cultural agenda as: "Let a hundred flowers bloom and let a hundred schools of thoughts contend."[941] Comparing Mao's statement to his actual deeds during the ten-year Cultural Revolution reveals quite a discrepancy. During this period, the dominant theatrical genre was "revolutionary model drama." In addition to requiring contemporary themes, the so-called "model" suggested portraying certain characterizations and dramatizing stereotypes. For example, the hero/heroine was always faultlessly good and the villain irreversibly vicious. Mao's ubiquitous suspicion and his distrust of intellectuals and professionals (most of whom had bourgeois backgrounds) made him privilege amateur actors to perform the model drama. These actors were loyal members of the

[940] See Stuart R. Schram, *The Thought of Mao Tse-Tung*. Jonathan D. Spence, *The Search for Modern China*.
[941] Ibid. See also James R. Brandon, *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993) and Wendi Chen, *The Reception of George Bernard Shaw in China, 1918-1996*, Diss. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1999.

little Red Guard/Army, who relentlessly advocated Chairman Mao's agendas of continuing peasant revolutions and class conflicts. The model drama was comprised of "collectivism" that was supposed to check and supervise individual opinion. The plays fortified the politics and policies of the Party line in order to reflect the societal reality (although ironically all "tragedies" were forbidden) and to respond and answer to specific Party issues. In addition, these plays had to pass rigorous party censorship. It is worth noting that there was another dramatic genre deemed "appropriate" by the Communist dictatorship, which was the newly-scripted drama based on historical themes. These newly-scripted plays did not necessarily have to be historically accurate and often referred to a mythological theme or to a remote dynastic past (Tian Hian's adaptation of *The White Snake* exemplified this trend). Though they claimed to be historical, most of the plays could not contain an "allegorical attack" or any satirical reflection or criticism of the dominant political hierarchy.

In 1976, the catastrophic conditions of the Cultural Revolution ended with Mao's death and the collapse of the Gang of Four. In terms of the leaderships of Hua Guo-Feng (a transitional leader, who ruled the country temporarily after the death of Mao) and Deng Xiao-Ping as the successive authorities, which promised to focus chiefly on the "economic modernization of China" and open China to the international community, a relatively more flexible cultural and censorship policy was established. Therefore, a saying went like this: in post-Mao China, a diversity of "flowers" (to transform and modify from Mao's artistic propaganda) was allowed to bloom. Playwrights were eager to absorb trends from the most modern and experimental international theatres, aside from that of Russian Socialist Realism and the Stanislavsky system. They learned from modernism, avant-garde experiments, and even postmodernism. Chinese playwrights' individualism, artistic creativity, aesthetic professionalism, and eagerness to explore

multifarious theatrical expressions started to draw attention and become valued. There was more room to disclose the negative and dark sides of the social and governmental systems, and forbidden issues such as audacious love and sexual eroticism became selectively permitted.[942] As an example, in Gao's play *Fleeing* or *Escape* (1992), which presents a sarcastic and bitter caricature of the incident of the massive massacre in Beijing's Tiananmen Square of June 4th, 1989 conducted by the Chinese Communist regime to suppress student protests, the character Young Girl falls in love and has sex with the character Middle-Aged Man (arguably a self-representation of Gao) in their first encounter at midnight, when they both seek asylum (and escape from the riotous agitation in the city square) in discarded urban debris. Although Gao's *Fleeing* (and all of his works after the emergence of this play) was banned on the Chinese Mainland, and therefore made its debut in Sweden, the dramatic themes (like sexual eroticism) that are dealt with in this play are not uncommon among contemporary Chinese theatrical avant-garde experiments.

Xingjian Gao, now an "exiled" writer in France, is one of the best-known radical and defiant Chinese playwrights in the post-Mao era. Gao's artistry is very much influenced by both Western modernist and avant-gardist figures, such as James Joyce, Marcel Proust, Bertolt Brecht, Antonin Artaud, Jean Genet, and Jean Cocteau. He is classified as a leading figure who pioneered the Chinese avant-garde in the 1980s. In effect, Gao's plays are solidly grounded in Chinese theatrical legacies, not only Beijing Opera, but also various types of regional theatres. Gao's aesthetic practices, which act as a mélange of highbrow and lowbrow, also integrate elements excerpted from religious scriptures, ancient Chinese myths, mystical rituals, vernacular

[942] Part of my analysis in the above section is taken from Brandon, *The Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*. And Spence, *The Search for Modern China*. See also Michelle L. Dibello, *The Other Shore: The Search for a 'Spiritual home' in Contemporary Chinese Drama (Post Cultural Revolution)*. Diss. Stanford: Stanford University, 1996. And Chen, *The Reception of George Bernard Shaw in China, 1918-1996*.

culture, folklore, ballads, anecdotes, allegories, and narrative forms of storytelling. Gao is especially fascinated with experimenting with forms, techniques, and language. Taking advantage of Chinese linguistic structure and verbal convention, Gao creates an idiosyncratic peculiarity of expression, that is, a "stream of language" (or a flow of language), which is comparable to a "stream of consciousness," in order to explore and unfold the immeasurable potentials of "forms" in language.[943] Through such an eccentric stream of language, Gao addresses the spoken and indescribable, the explicable/expressible and unutterable, and the unlimited possibilities and intricacies of human expressions.

Zen Buddhist influence on Xingjian Gao and his works is marked in three respects: 1) his outlook on philosophical discourses and aesthetic practices in theatre, which is implicitly and unconsciously inspired by Zen, 2) his "enlightenment" and re-interpretation of Zen Buddhism via theatrical theories and performances, as well as his self-conscious adoption of Zen Buddhism, in order to transform his theatre into a secularized/profane modern (transcendental) Zen theatre, and 3) the elements and themes of Zen that are employed in and presented throughout his works, including his novel *Soul Mountain* (published in Chinese in 1990) and his plays *The Other Shore* (published in Chinese in 1986 and debuted in Taiwan in 1990) and *Snow in August* (published in Chinese in 2000 and debuted in Taiwan in 2002). Overall, *Soul Mountain* displays Gao's fleeing (and isolating himself) from contemporary Chinese social reality and marching beyond the unknown, out of which the readers are able to witness and trace the trajectory of a spiritual pilgrimage, mysterious, self-reflective soul-searching, and of contemplation launched by the author as a retreat into a poetic transcendental true state. Explained in an afterthought concerning

[943] See Xingjian Gao, *No-Ideology* (*Without-isms*) (Taipei: Lien-Ging Publisher, 2002). See also Xingjian Gao, *The Case for Literature*, trans. Mabel Lee (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).

his preliminary motive for writing *Soul Mountain*, Gao argues that for him, the completion of *Soul Mountain* symbolically and realistically terminates his homesickness, that is, a personal reminiscence of and psychological/emotional identification with Mother China.[944] On his mystical voyage in *Soul Mountain,* a nostalgic return also ensues to a primal state of human existence and spiritual reality/realization. Under Gao's guidance towards a poetic transcendental true state in *Soul Mountain*, which is subject to a-historical explorations, both the characters and readers are thus emancipated from the social truth by the profusion of imageries of sensory perceptions[945] and infiltration of fictionality, surreality, and higher absoluteness.

The Other Shore and *Snow in August* intentionally incorporate Zen Buddhism in general as both thematic ideas and essential ingredients to create a particular kind of "Zen state"[946] characteristic of Gao's theatre. The title of the play, *The Other Shore*, is borrowed from Buddhist terminology. The notion of the Other Shore in Buddhism refers to the following: 1) the realm of the ascendent (supermundane) opposed to the descendent (mundane); 2) a transcendence from the relative, phenomenal reality of the secular "this side-ness" to the absolute true reality of the other side-ness; 3) an attainment of an enlightenment state; 4) the completion of the final state of nirvana where there exists nothing but total liberation, bliss, serene tranquility, and permanence and 5) the consummation of the ultimate state of Tathagata, the One Gone Thus. These ideas concerning the transcendental and the other shore-ness I have discussed in detail in preceding chapters.

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[944] See the discussion of Gao's ideas and works in Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre: Gao Xingjian and the Chinese Theatre Experimentalism* (Taipei: Er Ya Publishing, 1999).
[945] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, translated by Mabel Lee (New York: HarperCollins, 2000), 315.
[946] This term is invented by Gao based on his realization of Zen Buddhism and is expressed throughout his novels and plays. If not specifically illustrated, the references of Zen state in this chapter all point to Gao's particular invention of the theatrical term/notion and his aesthetical/transcendental aspiration. See Xingjian Gao, quoted in Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre: Gao Xingjian and the Chinese Theatre Experimentalism*.

Gao admits that it is especially difficult to jump into a simple or arbitrary conclusion about *The Other Shore*; part of the reason is because of his tendency to avoid encapsulating any of his works in a cocoon.[947] According to his own comments, throughout *The Other Shore*, Gao seeks a trans-expressional expression of an indefinite and unnamable abstraction that is subject to the fluctuations, fluidities, and ever-changing process of psychological feelings and direct interpenetration through instinctive sensibility. By arguing against the classification and misinterpretation of *The Other Shore* as a play that is designed for metaphysical dialectics or philosophical discourse, Gao "strives for transparency in the Chinese language that prizes spirituality and instinct [and originates in a culture] developed from Daoist nature-based philosophy, Confucian ethics, Buddhist mind-nature and the Chan [Zen] sect's use of language to reject language"[948] rather than the philosophical abstraction of "reasoning and logic, coupled with Western Protestantism's precision and scientific approach."[949] Gao's analysis of his play echoes with the comments of a Chinese literary/art critic, Yi-Hung Zhao, about *The Other Shore.* Zhao states that in *The Other Shore*, Gao exposes not only his predilection for but also the necessity of "transcendence" through an establishment of aesthetic conditions and a metaphorical, poetic exhibition of the state of the unconscious.[950] In this play, Gao deals with a process of transformation or transcendence from physical reality to the mysterious other shore and then returns back to this side-ness of the ordinary, everyday state of being. Arranging a return to this shore-ness is remarkable, though it is echoed in Zen Buddhism that the complete achievement of genuine illumined mindfulness can be manifested by departing from the descendent, attaining the ascendent, and then coming again back to the descendent. For example, after gaining an

[947] Xingjian Gao, *The Case for Literature*, 155.
[948] Ibid., 113-14.
[949] Ibid., 114.
[950] Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre: Gao Xingjian and the Chinese Theatre Experimentalism* , 64.

"enlightened" view of a necessary alienation from the individual self and subjective identity, which causes the insurmountable impasse of human existence, the Man (the main character) in *The Other Shore* chooses to encounter death without fear. He therefore is able to untie the limit and threat of death itself and the imprisonment of this side-ness in general. Diverging from Nietzsche's claim of the individualistic self as a superman, Gao's recognition of the elusiveness, ungraspability, and unlocatability of one's identity/subjectivity and the necessity of one's perpetual alienation from his own self allies itself more with Franz Kafka's character Gregor Samsa in his existential, tragicomic masterwork, *The Metamorphosis*. It depicts a young man, the financial head of an entire household, who awakes one morning, startled to find himself inexplicably transformed into an objectified "other" overnight whose human soul resides in the body of a gigantic insect until the day of his accidental yet ominously predictable death. The death of Gregor-insect is accidental, because the poor insect is stricken badly by an apple, which is mistakenly thrown by his father in his direction as a warning. And his death is somehow ominously predictable, for it is initially indicated by Gregor's transformation from a human being to the objectified and otherized, which is not unlike an irretrievable rejection and alienation of his own self. Gao's revelation of the elusiveness (ungraspability) of an individual self and unlocatability of subjective identity corresponds with the necessity of "killing the self" in Ankoku Butoh, as well as the Zen Buddhist total renunciation of any intrinsic existence (or inherent entity) in phenomena when denoting ultimate emptiness as the true state.

The killing of the self (subjective identity), coupled with the expulsion of the self, permeates most of Gao's works. As an example, Gao sketches in chapter 52 of *Soul Mountain*:

> It is only by getting rid of *you* that *I* can get rid of *myself*. However having invoked you, it is impossible to get rid of you. I've thought of an idea. What would happen if you and I

> were to change places? In other words I would be your image and you instead would be the concrete form of me—this would be an interesting game. If you listen carefully to me from my position I would then become the concrete expression of your desires.[951]

Moreover, Gao's lengthy novel, *Soul Mountain* is deemed a soul-searching, semi-autobiographical reflection, whose motivation was engendered in 1984 after a journey that he describes as an escape from death's prey (Gao at that time suffered from a lung cancer misdiagnosis) to the haven of spiritual/religious enlightenment. The entire novel is composed of eighty one chapters without specific thematic titles or dramatic plots in the conventional sense. According to Gao's literary philosophy, the aim of *Soul Mountain* is rather to display a "stream of language," "stream of (un)consciousness," and stream of surreality of humans and their transcendental selves. Gao intends to use the structural framework of *Soul Mountain*, a division of the novel into eighty one not necessarily consistent chapters, to revitalize a traditional Chinese novelistic genre (episodic novel) and travel note (like *The Travels of Lao Ts'an*), which used to prevail in popular culture in the Ching Dynasty. On the other hand, these eighty one chapters of *Soul Mountain* can be seen as symbolizing the eighty one obstacles, difficulties, and trials for those who yearn for heaven or the Western Pureland in Buddhism. Despite the fact that the eighty one chapters are dominated by the four seemingly individual characters, which are all deprived of names but instead called the "I," "You," "He," and "She" narrators, the novel is structured around their experiences and journeys that take place not only in external terrains but also in internal and surrealistic landscapes such as memories, imaginations, dreams, hallucinations, and mystical experiences. On their journeys, both the narrators I and You have run into a number of mysterious figures, who belong to the fairy world or ghost world and possess witchcraft and supernatural powers, such as the character Yi Singer appearing in chapter

[951] Xingjiang Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 314. My italics.

21, a Shaman and Elf *Zhuhuapo*, who is an extreme beauty appearing in chapter 13, a fat middle-aged woman as the Spirit Medium appearing in chapter 14, a horrifying carved wooden mask of an animal head with human face appearing in chapter 24, a group of Old People singing ballad: "At the Drumbeat of the Five Watches" (a love song) in chapter 22, as well as a Taoist Priest and a Buddhist Monk in chapter 47.[952] Any attempt to precisely distinguish one narrative perspective from the other or to classify these narrators as four different individualities or independent existences is doomed to fail. As the journeys (the dramatic plots) expand and proceed along in manifold realities, the personal identities of I, You, He, and She and the relationships among them are entangled and blurred and become even more obscure.

It took Gao seven years to write *Soul Mountain*. His spiritual voyage towards transcendental enlightenment was matched at the same time by a real expedition in Southwestern China. He explored the edge of the Yangtze River, a haven for alternative, non-civilized (yet subordinate) culture and the heterodoxy of *Chu*, which contains unspoiled nature, wilderness, untouched landscapes and customs, witchcrafts and sorceries, rituals, mystic cults, vernacular cultures, ballads, fables, legends, and folklore in their pure, authentic forms. These are all places where the original, prohibited, and the mysterious had been preserved and nourished. As described in chapter 2 of *Soul Mountain*, whose storytelling perspective is shifted from You to I: "It is in the Qiang region halfway up Qionglai Mountain, in the border areas of the Qinghai-Tibetan highlands and the Sichuan basin, that I witness a vestige of early human civilization—the worship of fire…the bringer of civilization, has been worshipped by the early ancestors of human beings everywhere. It is sacred."[953] His journey towards the ultimate, primeval, and the "authentic" was launched in 1983, when Gao was misdiagnosed with lung cancer in a medical

[952] See Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*. See also Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*, 111.
[953] Xingjian Gao, *Soul* Mountain, 10.

examination. Due to his mistaking the imminence of death, Gao went into a self-imposed exile for six months by recessing into the far-flung and primitive regions of South-West mountainous China in order to gain access to a mysterious culture and the unknown. For Gao, going into banishment in isolated, "alien" recesses is not unlike the symbolic and physical extinction of the self. As the narrator I (arguably an embodiment of Gao) explains in chapter 2: "I had just gone through a crisis…on top of that, a doctor wrongly diagnosed me with lung cancer. Death was playing a joke on me but now that I've escaped the demon wall….Life for me again has a wonderful freshness. I should have…returned to nature to look for this authentic life."[954] Ultimately, his wandering voyage ended up a self-reflective and introspective contemplation along with an apocalyptic, redemptive pilgrimage to "higher" illumination. His spiritual awakening as well as quest for the absolute truth through the slaughter of the egoistic self, the fall of individualistic identity, and detachment of subjective consciousness, calls forth the completion of a profound "enlightenment." As in chapter 2, Gao argues by the presentational and Zen-like expression of linguistic fluidity through the narrators:

> Reality can't be verified and doesn't need to be, that can be left for the 'reality-of-life' experts to debate. What is important is life. Reality is simply that I am sitting by the fire in this room which is black with grime and smoke and that I see the light of the fire dancing in his eyes. Reality is myself, reality is only the perception of this instant and it can't be related to another person. All that needs to be said is that outside, a mist is enclosing the green-blue mountain in a haze and your heart is reverberating with the rushing water of a swift-flowing stream.[955]

[954] Ibid., 11-2.
[955] Ibid., 15.

In the novel *Soul Mountain,* which is a collage of diverse literary genres containing fiction, poetry, essay, history, semi-autobiography, travel note, allegory, legend, and critique, Gao internalizes his revelation about Zen Buddhism and further develops his quest for a kind of absolute "Zen state" in this work. *Soul Mountain,* as Tzai-Fu Liu comments, is a "search" and an "expedition" and a novel of "withdrawal," "exile," and "escape."[956] In other words, it is a manifestation of a withdrawal and completion, escape and quest, banishment and attainment, renunciation and liberation, introspection and transcendence, ultimate reality and fictionality in both this side-ness and the other shore. For Gao, *Soul Mountain* is the search for a spiritual awakening and enlightenment, fuller wisdom and total liberation, and the truer transcendence/reality. Also, *Soul Mountain* is an expedition into the original face, true nature, and transcendent self as well as the Zen state of absolute emptiness. For Gao, the pursuit of a total spiritual freedom is implanted in the dual quests of the twofold narrators "I" and "You" for the unknown "*Ling Yian*," the mystical Soul Rock in the mundane and supermundane realities. The narrator I is arguably an autobiographical reflection of the author Gao and the narrator You can be seen as a symbolic or spiritual self of Gao who somehow retains a more sober and isolated position. Throughout a quest beyond this side-ness towards the transcendent other shore and a relapse into a nostalgic introspection, primitive and authentic states, along with subordinate and marginal cultures, the narrators cross over the boundaries of physical truth and reach the unconscious surrealistic truth. The soul voyage that the narrators seek for this Soul Mountain is a quest for the profound suchness of life and natural truthfulness of the essential self. Gao's works therefore center on Zen Buddhism as a retreat into the subtle and profound recesses of the human soul and an alteration from the banality of life to absolute reality and true suchness of human existence.

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[956] Tzai-Fu Liu, *A Collection of Treatises on Gao Xingjian* (Taipei: Lien-Ging Publisher, 2004), 164-170.

The themes, if there are any, infiltrated throughout the text *Soul Mountain,* are "flee" and "escape" interlaced with a "quest," that is carried out by an unnamable, unidentifiable, indefinable yet interpenetrative higher I and bigger (un)consciousness.[957] Out of the colossal, inexplicable presence of the higher I and bigger (un)consciousness, multi-faceted narrators (narrative perspectives) merge with the voice of Gao, which is not unlike a manifestation of the unnamable, indefinable I of absolute transcendence. For example, the major manifold narrative perspectives of I, You, He, and She can all be seen as multiplied from the fully "present" narrative personification of Gao, his interpenetrative narrative awareness, and the transcendent oneness of the allegorical, poetic truth in *Soul Mountain*. The narrative personifications He and She can also be understood as proliferated by the former narrators I and You. In other words, the emergence of plural subjective identities and multi-dimensional "minor narratives" derives from the cancellation of the (author's) dominant self and invalidation of an omnipotent view and "grand narrative." The four elemental narrative points of view, I, You, He, She act as sometimes parallel, sometimes disjointed, sometimes contradictory, and they ultimately interweave and dissolve into each other in the fictional, higher (sur)reality. As displayed in chapter 2: "While *you* search for the route to Lingshan [Soul Mountain], *I* wander along the Yangtze River looking for this sort of reality."[958] Also as an example, initiated by commenting on a painting (a snow scene scroll) of Gong Xian, a seventeenth-century Chinese landscape painter (here lies an intriguing association between Gong Xian and Gao Xingjian, who is also a painter), Gao describes in chapter 70 an esoteric, koan-like yet sober self-anatomy or a cold and isolated self-reflexive criticism, in which the narrators I, You, and He are all melted into an ungraspable one.

[957] My analysis is taken from Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*. Tzai-Fu Liu, *A Collection of Treatises on Gao Xingjian*, 121-146, 211-214.
[958] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 11. My italics.

Here the narrator He is not only an indication of the painter Gong Xian but also the narrator He of *Soul Mountain* and even the novelist Gao.

> *He* was not a recluse, nor did he turn to religion, he was neither Buddhist nor Daoist. He supported himself with a half *mu* vegetable plot and by teaching. He did not think of thrushes as vulgar nor did he despise the vulgar. His painting transcends language…painting itself was an expression of feelings in his heart. Would *you* and *I* be capable of this? He achieved it, as in this snow-swept landscape. Can you verify that this painting is authentic? Surely that's not important? If you think it is then it is. What if I think it isn't? Then it isn't. In other words, you and I think we have seen his work. Then it is his work.[959]

Gao challenges the extremity of linguistic convention and verbal expression, confronting human rationality, and is able to gain fuller liberation from a continuing shift of narrative perspectives as well as play with a deviation from the conventional realm to absolute reality. A continuing shift of narrative perspectives means that it is not possible to distinguish an estranged observer from the protagonist or secondary/minor characters in Gao's works, for most of his characters simultaneously retain more than two "indistinct" identities. As in chapter 67, the narrator I is obsessed with the vague singing of an old boatman--whose chanting is like the weeping and the groans of a tormented soul with unrealized desires--and says: "He is clearly absorbed in his memories and is using all sorts of phrases to give them linguistic expression. The words don't necessarily have specific meanings but transmit direct [intuitive] perceptions to arouse sexual feelings which flow into the song, it seems both like wailing and lamenting."[960] The boundary of fictional, surreal, and realistic dimensions is blurred and becomes profound,

[959] Ibid., 446. My italics.
[960] Ibid., 434.

intricate, and subtle, and the frontier of phenomenal and truer realities is elusive. A quest by means of escape means fleeing from the physical and realistic in quest for the spiritual and supermundane and an escape from an individual self/identity and subjective consciousness in quest for the absolute self and luminous (un)consciousness and transcendental no-mindedness. A retreat into and attainment of such an imaginary, unrealistic *Soul Mountain* (a representation of absolute nothingness), whose legendary (non)existence is to manifest the Buddhist philosophy of essential emptiness, means a quest for spiritual illumination and ultimate truth that also requires a total detachment from conventional, material reality and discards subjective, physical attachments. Gao's enlightened revelation is therefore realized through a "total release of the unconscious"[961] and "a return to the true being, true essence of life and human existence."[962]

Gao's recurring idea of a higher (un)consciousness and all-inclusive transcendent self is presented by his multifarious personifications on stage. Accordingly, this transcendental self and the vastness of its true being unfolded in the presence of Gao's "Zen state" is meant to remain perpetually "absent," if analyzed through binary oppositions. That is, this ultimate self (of no-self) is "no longer an observable one from the perspective of the subjective self or its other. Neither is it a signified or referable one from the perspective of the subjective self or its other."[963] As an example, Gao's play *Between Life and Death* (published in Chinese in 1991 and debuted in France in 1992), in which the elusive narrative perspective is simultaneously derived from the chief narrator She (the character Woman) and from an unnamable, interpenetrative yet detached *something* else and beyond (for example, advised by the playwright, there should be a female dancer playing the imagination of the Woman).[964] Therefore, it is clear that in some parts of the

[961] Muo Gi and Shiu Chen, *Still It is Gao Xingjian* (Taipei: Du Tse Wen Hua Publication, 2003), 131.
[962] Ibid., 131.
[963] Ibid., 161-62.
[964] Xingjian Gao, *Between Life and Death*, in *The Other Shore*, 45.

play, there is a necessity for the narrator to mention herself as “She” (or “her”). Likewise, the performers “He” and “She” signify fragmented, split, and proliferated embodiments of both the doers and narrators. At the same time, the signified performers are *something* other than mere personifications of doers or narrators on stage. In short, throughout Gao’s plays and within his theatrical spectacles, there exists a transcendental penetrative insight and a fuller, luminous awareness that simultaneously keeps itself estranged, translucent, and aloof, which is similar to the “presence” of “true being” and a subtle and empty mindfulness.

Gao invents a theatrical term and theoretical concept: “three layers in/of actors” or “three dimensionalities of theatre” (“three dimensional theatricality”). He attributes this intricate idea, peculiar to the multifarious narrative perspectives like the interfusion of the I, You, He, and She characteristic of Gao’s novels and the elusiveness of performing personifications in his plays, to the “three layers in/of actors” or “three dimensionalities of theatre.”[965] They refer to the performer on stage, the character in the fictional reality, and the “neutral self” (the Zen state of no-mindedness) of the performer outside of the theatrical space and beyond the conventional reality, who is able to permeate the liminal between-ness of two different realities and to “see” and experience things through unimpeded transcendence. The inspiration for the idea, three-dimensional theatricality, stems from the performing technique of traditional Beijing Opera. Adding a more “religious” suggestion in his text to explain these notions, such as “three layers in/of an actor” and an interfusion of manifold tones I, You, He, and She as multifarious narrative perspectives, Gao once analyzed these ideas in terms of ancient Chinese Taoist cosmology. Accordingly, the existence of one, whose true being is essential emptiness, produces two, and because of the emergence of two, three is derived. All things are reducible to the one, yet due to

[965] My elaboration of the notions “three layers in/of actor” or “three dimensionalities of theatre” is taken from Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*, 52-62.

the empty nature of this one unified wholeness (to name it "oneness" is just linguistic convention), there is no intrinsic existence or solid oneness. So that through the promise of a total compatibility of ultimate emptiness and phenomenal arising in corporeal reality, all things flourish.

The intricacies of this higher (un)consciousness and interpenetrative transcendent self interplay amongst the signified and the absent ones, the identifiable and indefinable ones and can be realized as a mysterious Zen koan that the character Woman leaves behind on stage in the conclusion of *Between Life and Death*. The following quotations excerpted from the play is an example. The peculiar sur-linguistic expression or trans-linguistic presence created by Gao and displayed in his novels and plays, out of which comes the higher poetic truth and mystic transcendence for which that Gao yearns, is also manifested in the conclusion of *Between Life and Death*. During the final quintessential Zen koan-like conclusion, the character Woman is seen left alone on an empty stage delivering a monologue composed of a great many unanswered inquiries. This stage image is simultaneously juxtaposed against a string of soundless motions including an Old Man acting in semi-pantomime by slowly strolling to center stage, lowering his head and carefully walking around a rock. The mime character Old Man can be seen as symbolizing an old Buddhist monk or Zen practitioner in quest for enlightenment. Interestingly, suggested by the playwright, he is played by a clown, who also personifies the characters Man and Ghost and has an affair with the Woman.[966] The Old Man stops in front of the rock, leaning on his walking stick, taking off his hat, catching the falling snowflake in front of him, and finally wobbles along past the rock and exits. It is noteworthy that the Old Man is not a speaker or a listener but a full presence of *some being* that is far beyond and no longer classifiable as the

[966] See Xingjian Gao, *Between Life and Death*, 45.

speakable, imaginable, explicable, and/or reachable. He exists both in and beyond theatrical reality.

> Woman: Is this a story? A romance? A farce? A fable? A joke….An essay not good enough to be a poem….It's not a song, because it has meaning but no spirit, it resembles a riddle, but it has no answer.
>
> Woman: Is this about him, about you, about me, about her who is that girl, about her but not her, not about you, not about me, and not about you or all of you, just as what you all see is not her, not me, and not you, it's merely the self, but the me you all see is not me, not her, it's only that so-called self looking at her, looking at me, what more can you or I say?
>
> Woman: What is the self? Besides these words, these empty, hollow words about nothing, what else is left?[967]

From the line "it's merely the self," it is intriguing to mark a connection between the essence of this (true) self and the presence of the Old Man that is comparable to the appearance of Samuel Beckett's Godot. While the Old Man exits, the Woman moves her lips and takes a deep breath as if preparing to sing and chant; nevertheless, she no longer says a word. Here the stage image bears twofold connotations: 1) the Woman may become more spiritually awakened and gain enlightenment; she is able to transcend the limitation of language and the boundary of secular reality; 2) or the confrontation of a human creature's existential predicament may turn more fatal. The Woman may be left completely alone and dumped in an even deeper, irredemptive darkness, since her Godot, the Old Man, although finally ascending, yet is gone, along with all her initiated and unanswered inquiries.

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[967] Xingjian Gao, *The Other Shore*, 78.

Gao aspires to higher unconsciousness and the transcendental I that are devoid of subjective identification or individual identity and negates an inherent existence. On the one hand, this posture affirms the presence of manifold layers of performing embodiments and undertakes an ever-becoming, infinite penetration in and out of multi-dimensional theatricality through an indefinable and neutral self who resides among and beyond between-ness. On the other hand, according to critic Yi-Hung Zhao, Gao yearns for the peculiar sur-expressive and trans-linguistic Zen state of being through the transformation of unenlightened to enlightened, illusionary to illumined, and conventional/corporeal to absolute suchness. He understands his theatricalism as obsessed with Buddhist philosophy and Zen aesthetics that are similar to a search for a kind of total theatre.[968] This concept compares the Buddhist statement of innate and immediate true nature and ultimate reality with Gao's quest for the essential being of his theatre. The true being of a genuine, transcendental and total theatre is thus an attainment of spiritual enlightenment (religious truth) via a detour of theatrical enlightenment (poetic truth).

Gao's *Snow in August* (published in Chinese in 2000 and debuted in Taiwan in 2002) is chiefly based on the legendary life and teachings of the Sixth Patriarch Hui-Neng of the Chinese Zen lineage in the Tang Dynasty. The entire performance of *Snow in August* can be seen as marking a completion and final attainment of Hui-Neng's enlightenment and his spiritual pilgrimage questing for the "path." Hui-Neng is especially known as the precursor of the Southern sect of the Chinese Zen School in upholding "sudden enlightenment." This play develops from the demonstration of Hui-Neng's illumination experience as the illiterate into a thorough yet "instantaneous" "enlightened" revelation. Gao in particular centers on Hui-Neng's commitment to pass down the heritage and "paradigmatic" doctrines of Zen along with the essence of Dharma after becoming the Sixth Patriarch. Through Hui-Neng's teachings and

[968] Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*, 184-86.

pedagogies, the laymen, Buddhist practitioners, monks and nuns, disciples, and even the antagonists who chased Hui-Neng and planned to murder him for stealing the "highest secret" of the Dharma, are without exception all helped to "get enlightened" and realize the truest truth. The play's absurd title, *Snow in August*, reminds the audience that Gao leaves behind a Zen koan for contemplation. The very core of Gao's theatre, literary works, and even paintings are preoccupied with a profound "Zen state" that aims for deep investigation or meditation.

Gao's understanding and reinterpretation of Zen Buddhism and his deliberate absorption of Zen Buddhist ideas are transformed into an interpenetrative, illumined "Zen state" characteristic of his theatre. For Gao, Zen Buddhism has been internalized into Chinese (religious) consciousness and marks how a person raised in an Oriental culture sees the self and perceives the external world differently from those who lack this experience. So it is paramount to include Zen Buddhism when addressing the differences between the Western and Eastern cultures and their divergent modes of thinking. Gao created "Zen state" as a specific (theatrical) term to interpret his understanding of Zen. When asked what it means to enter into "Zen state," Gao defines it as an achievement of this esoteric (theatrical/literary) Zen state which is similar to an attainment of (religious) enlightenment. According to Gao, a spiritual illumination of a Zen state is reached when one is independent of religious dogma and doctrinal dictatorship. To elaborate how to access his idiosyncratic theatrical Zen state, Gao explains that when one's physical body stays extremely relaxed, one's spiritual phase conversely remains highly concentrated, intuitive, and luminous. This is similar to practicing deep concentration on tranquil abiding (meditative stillness) and penetrative insight, along with letting complete silence and

illumination[969] unintentionally come forward. Therefore, the profound explosion of Zen wisdom is an awesome and piercing state for the creation of art works. Though arguably a skeptic and atheist, Gao admits that his quest for a spiritual (if not "religious") illumination and theatrical transcendence is conveyed and accomplished in plays such as *The Other Shore.* In theatre, Gao emphasizes that the Zen state can be "expressed" and manifested by applying the "techniques" of language. Language as a convoluted detour (if not an adequate medium) for higher apocalyptic revelation is thus "presented" as something inexplicable that transcends conventional verbal expression. In other words, to approach and unfold the "Zen state," for Gao, is not unlike creating a primal or transcendental expressiveness of language, which is what he calls sur-linguistic or trans-expressional expression.[970] This is exactly what we see in *The Other Shore*, a highly stylized, mystical, and ritualistic play with heavy religious bearings which is obsessed with and permeated by this kind of enlightened "Zen state." A part of the play is presented by the character Zen Master chanting the text *The Diamond Sutra*, which is accompanied by the character Man sitting cross-legged and still on a futon, as if under the state of meditative stabilization. As in *The Other Shore*, a play whose "time cannot be defined or stated precisely and the location [is expanded from] the real world to the nonexistent other shore,"[971] the character An Actor Playing with Ropes claims to begin with the play:

> Here's a rope. Let's play a game, but we've got to be serious, as if we're children playing

[969] A combination of performing simultaneous compatibility of both silence and illumination when reaching meditative stillness and penetrative insight was advocated by the contemporary Chinese/Taiwan Zen master, Sheng-Yen Shih. Sheng-Yen Shih's Zen method is base on the orthodox perspectives of the two leading Zen lineages in China, Linji and Caodong Schools which have become popularized since the Ming Dynasty. Sheng-Yen Shih was an heir to both sects. Sheng-Yen Shih distilled the essential spirits and blended the techniques and theories of Linji and Caodong Zen, in order to create an idiosyncratic Zen methodology: silence and illumination, or silent illumination. Similar to practicing the traditional Buddhist sitting meditation predicated on deep concentration on tranquil abiding and penetrative insight and reach the truth of emptiness, in Linji and Caodong Zen, callin upon silent illumination and/or illuminating silence is seen as directly perceiving one's own being, true nature, and true self, that is, the profound suchness of "the way things are."

[970] See Xingjian Gao, *Snow in August*. See also Xingjian Gao, *Withoutism*s.

[971] A stage direction given by Gao. See Xingjian Gao, *The Other Shore*.

> their game….I want you to take hold of this end of the rope…this way a relationship is established between us. Before that you were you and I was I, but with this rope between us we're tied to each other and it becomes you and I.…Or we can establish an even more complex relationship…if you revolve around me, I'll be the center of your orbit, and you'll become my satellite…I can rotate on my own, thinking that all of you are revolving around me. Are you revolving or am I the one who's revolving? I could be revolving around you or you could be revolving around me….Perhaps we're both turning at the same time, or maybe we're both revolving around people, or maybe those people are revolving around us both or maybe all of us are revolving around God—maybe there isn't God after all, maybe there's only a universe rotating by itself like a millstone—now we're touching on philosophy. Never mind, we'll leave philosophy to the philosophers, let's just continue to play our game…the possibilities are endless.[972]

In the monologue of An Actor Playing with Ropes, both the you and the I that he mentions suggest empty signifiers, coupled with indistinct signifieds. When he says—"I can rotate on my own, thinking that all of you are revolving around me. Are you revolving or am I the one who's revolving? I could be revolving around you or you could be revolving around me….Perhaps we're both turning at the same time, or maybe we're both revolving around people, or maybe those people are revolving around us both"—it is similar to the linguistic expression that looks towards a sur-linguistic poetic transcendence by means of an interfusion and unlocatability of manifold tones I, You, He, and She displayed in *Soul Mountain*.

Also as an example in *The Other Shore*, Gao's yearning for a theatrical and religious Zen state is performed by the character Man, who steps out from amidst the characters Crowd and converses with the character Woman. The Woman represents ultimate truth and an enlightened

[972] Ibid., 3-4.

Bodhisattva, who emerges in darkness and drifts among those who lose/forget the ability to become enlightened after crossing the river and driven upon the shore; she awakens them up and empowers human creatures with language and intelligence.

Man: Who are you?

Woman: I'm one of you.

Man: Where are we now?

Woman: The Other shore, which we wanted to reach but couldn't.

Man: Are you the same person who drowned while we were crossing the river? (*Woman shakes her head*.) Are you her soul? (*Woman still shakes her head*.) Have you been hiding in our thoughts, do you appear only when we think of you? Or are you something like a kind of consciousness? Did you guide us to the other shore so that we wouldn't get lost?[973]

Gao's inspiration for and persistence in a trans-expressional expression of a Zen state is also manifested in the performance by the characters Actors through riotous, playful inquiry-answer and unquiet, doubtful dialogue-rebuttal:

Actors: (*One after another*) Yes, to the other shore! To the other shore! The Other shore! The water in the river is so clear!....How nice!....Why are we going to the other shore? I really don't understand….The other shore is the other shore, you'll never reach it. But you still want to go, to see what it's like over there. I can't see anything. No oasis, and no light. In total darkness. It's like this…No, I can't make it. We haven't been there before. We must get there. But why? To make a long-time wish come true, the other shore, the other shore. No, I can't make it….None of us can. Can't go back at all.[974]

[973] Ibid., 8-10.
[974] Ibid., 7-8.

Gao makes use of his highly-advanced linguistic skills and the precision of his linguistic expression to transcend the inherent restriction of the signifier-signified barrier in language and attain the Zen state of non-signified, non-interpretative "being-ness" along with ordinary yet original reality. He also mentions the influence of the Buddhist scripture, *The Diamond Sutra*, and notes the contradictions between "what is answered is by no means what is asked and what is indicated is by no means what it truly refers to" as the heart of *The Diamond Sutra*, which corresponds to the farcical, a-logical, and the absurd in Zen. For example, during the conclusion of *Snow in August*, the ridiculous, nonsensical carnivalesque gesticulation that Gao presents on stage conveys the essence of irrationality of Zen and *The Diamond Sutra* that is empty of philosophical abstraction and metaphysical assumption/representation.[975]

Echoing the principle of *The Diamond Sutra*, Gao's play, *Dialogue and Rebuttal* (published in Chinese in 1992 and debuted in Vienna in 1992), is also an example of the above-mentioned illustration of "negative affirmation" (or simultaneity of contradictions) as a Buddhist methodological peculiarity when discussing absolute truth: "That which is called… is not…; therefore, this is why it is called."[976] It offers a glimpse at what enlightenment and emptiness may suggest, since the very essence of what is answered is not what is asked and what is expressed is not what is signified. The final scene of *Dialogue and Rebuttal* especially abounds with a Zen-inspired atmosphere of mystery, absurdity, meaninglessness, and the non-expression of true expression:

Man: That door behind that door there is nothing.

Woman: And no memories…. And no fantasies…. And no dreams either.

[975] The example is presented and explained in the later section of this chapter (from page 307 to 311).
[976] Please see a detailed explanation in chapter two. I have displayed a great deal of dialectical technique that Buddhist philosophy has been used to discourse emptiness and deal with the inexpressive and the inconceivable. See Edward Conze, *The Diamond Sutra*, in *Buddhist Wisdom Books* (New York: Harper and Row, 1958).

Man: Absolutely, absolutely!

Girl: (*with certainty*) Can't say.

Man: Why can't you say it?

Girl: (*almost whispering*) Can't say!

(*Man is speechless. Monk enters. Sound of running water. Monk hastens forward, kneels on one knee, bends down and clasps his hands as if to cup the water. He dips his little finger in the water to wash his ears. After cleaning both ears, he rises and listens respectfully. His mouth opens slowly and reveals a Buddha-like smile*).[977]

When the character Man states "that door behind that door there is nothing," it is obvious that Gao makes use of the boundary of a stage door as the demarcation between the conventional and absolute, physical and transcendental. Entering the realm behind the stage door signifies attaining enlightenment state or reaching the other shore, where there unfolds truest reality as empty nothingness.

Gao's reinterpretation and integration of Zen Buddhist tradition sets his "theatricality" (or theatricalism, to use his own term) apart, and it is lofty through the search for a spiritual-awakening experience and an alternative higher and truer truth, which is different from other theatre artists who are more inclined to corporeal reality. Instead, his "Zen state" consistently and blatantly appeals to the essential, ultimate, transcendental, and mysterious yearning for both theatrical and religious enlightenment as redemptive dialectics. It does not mean that Gao's theatre is a sacred theatre; on the contrary, he deals with things that are mundane, coarse, and profane in his plays and novels. For Gao, his "Zen state" carries a strong tendency towards the

[977] Xinjian Gao, *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, in *The Other Shore*, trans. Gilbert C. G. Fong (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1999), 130.

anarchistic and the carnivalesque, thereby positioning his theatre as even more profane than the grotesquely-rooted Ankoku Butoh. This anarchic, exhilarating carnivalesque is exhibited for example in the conclusion of his Zen play, *Snow in August.* In the following sections, I will analyze why I believe Gao's "Zen state," which aims for a linguistic/theatrical/spiritual transcendence, contains an embedded rebellious spirit of the anarchic and carnivalesque. I will also explain why I see most of Gao's Zen Buddhist-based works as more "profane" than "sacred."

As the play *Snow in August* nears its end and the climax of "attaining enlightenment," Gao stages the completion of final nirvana and the passage into the utmost serenity of the Sixth Patriarch through the delirious juxtaposition of the multitude of living creatures, including monks, nuns, and laymen in the secular world. The nun, Boundless Treasure, who is doomed to a tragic end confronted by most of the female characters in Gao's plays, eventually becomes insane. Despite physically going into the ascendent and supermundane, Boundless Treasure never succeeds at detaching herself from the descendent and corporeal reality, thereby failing to get enlightened. By seeing Hui-Neng as nothing but a male, it is obvious that Boundless Treasure is unable to detach herself from thoughts/attachments/vexations, and therefore she has been terribly troubled with the inappropriateness of the appearance of Hui-Neng as a "male" woodcutter in front of a nun and afflicted by the conversation that they once had with each other. Gao's arrangement of female roles in his works remains controversial. Feminist critics may problematize Gao's somewhat arbitrary, masculine-dominated, and stereotypical perspective of women and their "fates." Conveyed through the narrative perspectives of You and She in chapter 9 of *Soul Mountain*, Gao writes:

You need to search for happiness and she needs to search for suffering….People used to

> die at this spot [known to the villagers as Grieving Ghost Cliff] all the time, you say, and they were very often children and women….Those forced into taking their own lives are always women—defenceless young female students…young women who had been maltreated by husbands. Many pretty young girls have also suicided….Do I have an aura of bad luck? She asks. You just make it hard for yourself, you have a masochistic streak. You're deliberately teasing her. Hardly, living is such agony! You then hear her screaming again.[978]

This time the narrator She represents a young and attractive woman that the narrator You meets on the spiritual journey and attempts to seduce; on the other occasions like in chapter 13, through the hallucination, dream, and imagination of the narrator You, the narrator She is transformed into or mixed with the shaman *Zhuhuapo,* who has an ethereal beauty and is infamous for seducing men. In *The Other Shore, Snow in August, Soul Mountain, One Man's Bible* (Gao's better-known novel, published in Chinese in 1998), *Between Life and Death, Hades* (debuted in Hong Kong in 1988), and *Dialogue and Rebuttal,* the female characters, with few exceptions, share a common destiny and traumatic memories. Most of them have undergone sexual assault, rape, or severely heartbroken from unrequited love in their youth, which result in negative effects in their ambivalent, complex, and irreconcilable relationships with men. The tragic-heroine-like personifications are often degraded and depicted as sarcastic, bitter, and hysterical, and it seems that they are desperate for a tragic ruin and an unredemptive end. These female embodiments can be compared to the Buddhist idea (which is, as I believe, mixed with ancient local Chinese superstition that prevailed amidst popular culture for centuries) positing that "women are doomed to suffer from both mental tortures and physical torments for five hundred lives."[979]

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[978] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain,* 54, 57.
[979] Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre,* 153.

Women's innate "original sins" are depicted as irreversible and unpurified ones just like the sins attributed to the Wife of Chuang Tze in Gao's *Hades.*[980] In this play where Gao severely ridicules both the Chinese sage and his wife, the Wife of Chuang Tze, though arguably not purely innocent, is accused of being treacherous to her newly dead husband by skillfully seducing and flirting with a younger, good-looking man in front of her husband's coffin while still dressed in a mourning gown. Being revealed later in the play, the gallant is just her "dead" husband in disguise, whose strategy of pretending death tests the fidelity of his wife. *Hades* ends with the Wife of Chuang Tze committing suicide, due to the unbearable humiliation of realizing that the young man she courted is her husband. Nearing the end of the play, the gallant pretends to suffer from severe heartache that only human brain can cure. Upon hearing this, the Wife of Chuang Tze chops off the coffin, intends to take out her dead husband's brain, and is shocked by finding the coffin is empty. The double "sins" make the Wife's ghostly spirit held prisoner and tormented in the inferno without hope of reaching nirvana or ascending to heaven; she is doomed to be a specter for endless revolving cycles of karma, whose despairing soul continues lingering and suffering. As a crucial stage image appearing in many of his plays, in the concluding scene of *Hades*, Gao lets the grieving ghost of the Wife take out her colon and cleanse it in the inferno, thereby leaving on the stage a lot of tangled, long red ropes.

Throughout Gao's works, there almost always exist women who shave their heads and retreat from mundane reality into the supermundane realm, while still failing to disconnect subjective and objective attachments or to discard the vexations and afflictions of the secular world. Several symbolic images recur, including that of a nun cutting open her abdomen, taking her colon out and cleansing it. The metaphoric gesture and ritualistic action of a female figure's taking out the colon for purification and purgation is transformed into the evocative image and

[980] Ibid., 156.

highly stylized performance of the masses playing with a red rope on stage (e.g., *The Other Shore*) as a game that appeals to evoking collective (un)consciousness, a consciousness of going into either an even deeper sleep state or enlightenment. Ultimately, Gao posits that humans will eventually awaken from a realization that both the colon and the (invisible) rope are indispensable to their life, being, and everyday existence. Despite such a realization suggesting that imprisonment (illness/conventional) is deep-seated, the possibility of redemption (cure/absolute) exists nowhere other than imprisonment. Reverberating with each other in Gao's aesthetic presentations, the colon and the red rope both indicate physical reality, and the metaphors that suggest the confinement of cyclic karmic reincarnations and the law of dependent-arising (interdependence or causality). Because the colon needs to be cleansed and the rope needs to be disentangled, even the systematic standardization and social convention that encircle humans mean that there is no way out for humans continuing to confront and yearn. That is to say, by purifying the colon and untangling of the red rope, there is still the possibility, no matter how slim, to pass over to the other shore of illuminated transcendence. Just like the red rope in *The Other Shore* that the character An Actor Playing with Ropes initially uses to "play" and communicate with others, which later becomes a river, an indistinct collective (un)consciousness arises out of the ritualistic theatrical performances of playing with the rope and crossing the river, and the deeds of washing off the colon and untying the rope suggest a passage and transition towards emancipation and spiritual transcendence. Nonetheless, the river in *The Other Shore* appears to allow the character Actors to cross over to other side-ness. Instead of attaining the transcendental other shore, the Actors actually get lost, forget and are forgotten, and become totally paralyzed upon the shore of the other side, where language, expression, and relationship are no longer valid or verified.[981] Along similar lines, provided with no promise of a

[981] Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*, 137. This idea is taken from Zhao and I elaborate it further.

higher revelation by abandoning corporeal reality, Gao's female roles are deemed "subordinates" in their vain endeavors to pursue spiritual awakening. No matter how hard these women try "attaining enlightenment," all efforts to dispose of materiality, to destroy subjective attachment to the self and objective attachment to the dharma/phenomena,[982] and to eliminate revolving cycles of karmic reincarnations are proved hopeless.

In the concluding Act III, Scene iii of *Snow in August*, which is entitled: "In which Pandemonium Reigns in the Hall of Worship," Gao presents ridiculous, nonsensical carnivalesque gesticulation in the form of total theatre (inspired by Artaud's idea yet manifested in an idiosyncratic secularized modern Zen theatre), which is comprised of traditional Beijing opera and Brecht's epic theatre. Gao also shapes this final scene into esoteric koans. The scene is structured aroud the hilarious performance of the secondary characters, including Singsong Girl (a singer of a Chinese house of prostitution), Writer, a number of Zen masters like This Master, That Master, One Master, Another Master, Nice Master, Right Master, Wrong Master, Quiet Master, and Crazy Master, along with Chorus and Laymen A and B.[983] These Laymen are presented on stage as the exhilarated mob. Their names, spoken lines, and ways of acting are very symbolic, absurd, and Zen-like:

This Master: How to become a Buddha?

That Master: This one, that one.

This Master: What do you mean "this one, that one?"

That Master: It's not this one, and it's not that one.

This Master: Ho! [shouting]

[982] I have discussed these Buddhist conceptual terms and ideas in Chapter Two.
[983] Xingjian Gao, *Snow in August* (Taipei: Council for Cultural Affairs, Executive Yuan, 2002), 105-07.

That Master: Ha! [yelling back]

One Master: Where in the world is Buddha? Speak!

Another Master: Your reverence, under your feet! (*One Master looks at his feet*.)

Another Master: It's flying!

Quiet Master: Quick, tell me, what is Buddha? (*Nice Master strikes once with his staff. Turns and smile*.)

Nice Master: Whatever gets hit is not.

Quiet Master: Then why are you still hitting things with it?

(*Nice Master is silent. Quiet Master clasps his palms. Right Master and Wrong Master come forward. The latter is holding a bowl in his hands*.)[984]

Gao arranges all these Zen masters in pairs like This and That, Right and Wrong, One and Another, Quiet and Nice, as an indication of dualism in conventional sphere. The way Gao uses them to turn upside down the religious doctrines or transcend binary oppositions and reach the state of total unanimity (not two and not one) is interestingly performed by for example undoing/blurring the definitions of One and Another. That is, does the world of the Buddha exist in the sphere of One-ness (hinted by Another Master revealing to One Master that the world of the Buddha is under the latter's feet) or Another Realm (the other shore)? Can One and Another, ordinary and absolute, this side-ness and other world, profane and transcendent co-exist? Moreover, Gao lets the Quiet Master make noises and lets the Nice Master remain silent and act violently. He also undermines the difference between Right and Wrong by letting the "Wrong" Master hold a bowl that symbolizes the image of the traditional Buddhist monk and a token of uncritically succumbing/clinging to paradigmatic dogma as unnecessary, even "wrong." By means of the symbolism of the Wrong Master, Gao also purports to reverse a typical impression

[984] Ibid., 105-07.

concerning those who are deemed enlightened pursuers or enlightened practitioners leave on people. Gao criticizes a (mis)understanding or "formalism," that is, if enlightened illumination is only guaranteed to happen to the traditional Buddhist monk, who stands still amidst the crowd, holds a bowl in his hands, and chants sutras--a part of whose routine commitment composes a scence with which people in Oriental cultures and Buddhist traditions are not unfamiliar—such a stereotype portrayed in the way that an enlightened practitioner is supposed to act can be totally "wrong."

> Right Master: Does a dog have Buddha nature?
>
> Wrong Master: Water is in the bowl, clouds are in the sky. (*Wrong Master pours water on Right Master's head*.)
>
> Right Master: Why are you doing this?
>
> Wrong Master: No reason.[985]

The character This Zen Master is good at chopping bricks. The name, "This," bears a symbolic meaning of "as such" or true suchness and suggests that even once the ultimate reality of Zen is achieved, it is nothing other than what one has gone through in everyday existence and physical reality. What makes the secular and absolute realms different is the state of mind (clarity and unimpeded awareness). When an enlightened one sees the absolute truth, it is not magical or mysterious but rather just as ordinary as chopping bricks in our daily life. The traditional Buddhist Zen masters are good at giving the disciples appropriate and provocative pedagogical tools to help them experience enlightened luminosity, even if the approaches are radical and odd, like scolding, striking, kicking, and insulting.[986] Both "This" Master and "Wrong" Master (indicated by his pouring water on Right Master's head for no reason, when the

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[985] Ibid., 107.

[986] In regard to these eccentric yet effective Zen pedagogical tools that are used to help pupils get spiritual awakening and realize "truth" is explained clearly in Chapter Three.

latter questions whether or not a dog has Buddha nature) symbolize the fact that the powerful confrontational pedagogical tools that evoke enlightenment are never fixed, and the principles of Zen are never rigid or dead. Therefore, no matter how irrational or ridiculous it seems, any stimulating tactic is accepted for enlightened masters to call upon unenlightened pupils' deeper realization. The character Right Master is able to spew out fire from his mouth, as if an acrobat performs in circus. Through the lens of unenlightened meditators, "Right" Master's symbolic name posits an inquiry about whether or not Zen transcendence and enlightenment wisdom seem inexplicable and unapproachable. The answer is "Yes" (Right). The character Crazy Master sees himself as erotic, is addicted to worldly pleasures, and enjoys being surrounded by prostitutes and beautiful singers. In its essence, Zen sees no boundaries, dualities, contradictions or prohibitions. In true suchness, there exists no two individual realities but the true being of all in union. Thus, the seemingly most lunatic one (like the portrait of Crazy Master) can demonstrate a profound enlightened mindfulness.

The character Singsong Girl (Prostitute) sings the lyrics: "Unless you were a woman, otherwise, even a Zen master who was deemed 'enlightened' would be unable to provide a satisfying 'answer' to my inquiries (to offer solutions to my attachments, vexations, and afflictions),"[987] and keeps strolling to the center of stage. Compared to the Nun Boundless Treasure--though physically going into the supermundane--who remains emotionally attached to the material world, the embodiment of the Prostitute is a relatively sober, bright, aloof, and alienated character. I thus reasonably assume that at the end of the play, Gao indicates the higher likelihood of her self-enlightenment. As the Prostitute's chanting, which consists of a number of (Zen) koans, goes:

August snow, what a strange sight. The *Cao* Mountain, quiet and serene, a shadow

[987] Xingjian Gao, *Snow in August*.

> cavorts with the clean, crisp wind. Look at the green grassland, seek out your thoughts; on snowy mountain tops, there is meaning for us to know. Even insensate stones think of moving, and try to send us a message. The way of heaven, they say it's enlightenment, it's only a mass of nothingness. Dhya-na![988]

According to Zen philosophy and the dramatic plot of Gao's *Snow in August*, sometimes this kind of self-enlightenment happens to those who are deemed less-educated, lower-ranked, and marginal in the walks of society. The characters Hui-Neng, who turns into the Sixth Patriarch, and the Prostitute are examples. The character Writer (arguably a personification, even parody of Gao), who is the only cold-eyed observer in this play and is more self-conscious than the Prostitute, asks for permission from the Sixth Patriarch to endow him with a circle of light (a glimmer of wisdom), implying that the Writer dreams of a shortcut to enlightenment with no effort on his part. The play ends with the Cat screaming in the main (front) hall of the monastery while the rear hall is in flames. And the entire spectacle abounds with the carnivalesque, hilarious and messy turbulence. At the moment when a Monk announces that the Sixth Patriarch passes into the permanence of nirvana, the top of the forest is suddenly covered with pure and serene whiteness. It looks as if it really is snowing in August. The play concludes with the claim of the character Big Master: "Go! Go! Go! The Hall of Worship has become a mad playhouse. When people are gone the place will become empty. Go away and make your own living!"[989] Accompanied by the commentary (or song) of the Prostitute (Singsong Girl) chanting: "Dhya-na!"[990] (meaning meditation on absolute emptiness), this scene is presented in the manner of Gao's own enlightenment, which corresponds with the heritage of the Sixth Patriarch's preaching. The theatrical strategies used in *Snow in August* demonstrate Gao's talent at

[988] Ibid., 105.
[989] Ibid.
[990] Ibid.

manipulating his untranslatable, non-interpretative poetic language and his highly stylized and trans-expressional performative expression. *Snow in August* is also a manifestation of the compatibility and juxtaposition of the transcendental, supermundane reality and frantic, blasphemous mundane reality along with religious themes and theatrical presence.

Like *Snow in August*, *The Other Shore* is characterized as containing a heavy religious bearing and a strong tendency to pursue a kind of quasi-religious transcendence (enlightenment). *The Other Shore* is usually classified as the very first play of Gao that places at the center the religious revelatory redemption and Buddhist influence.[991] Though Gao acknowledges the tremendous influence of Zen, he never blatantly claims that he self-consciously incorporates Buddhist teachings or Zen precepts into his plays. Although both are religion-based plays, *The Other Shore* was written at least ten years before *Snow in August.* Interestingly, despite his reluctance to include Buddhist or Zen inspirations, through the embodiments of his characters in *The Other Shore*, "Gao's pursuit of quasi-religious transcendence is obvious, compelling, and earnest. His agony and disdain of the filthiness and profanity of the secular world is unconcealed."[992] Seen from a less-enlightened mental consciousness and Zen beginner's perspective, eager for a total abandonment of the material for the transcendental, Gao's characters in *The Other Shore* abide at the level of "mountains [as] no longer mountains, rivers no longer rivers,"[993] according to the famous Zen saying. Such a state occurs after training in and practicing Zen; it is the between-ness of pre-enlightenment and nearing towards enlightenment. Compared to those who never deeply engage in Zen meditative practices and perceive things in the way "mountains are mountains and rivers are rivers,"[994] this liminal state marks an

[991] Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*. See also Tzai-Fu Liu, *A Collection of Treatises on Gao Xingjian*.
[992] Shiu Chen and Muo Chi, *I Si Gao Xingjian (Still It is Gao Xingjian)*, 174. My paraphrase.
[993] Sheng-Yen Shih, *Hoofprint of the Ox*, 219.
[994] Ibid.

advancement but not yet a completion or groundbreaking explosion of spiritual illumination. Ten years later, Gao presents in *Snow in August* the ascendent and descendent, transcendental and profane as "not-two-and-not-one" flawless state of true suchness. By accepting "things just as they are"[995] as a manifestation of ultimate emptiness and truest reality and the so-called "original face" as nothing other than the ordinary everyday existence, Gao no longer sees a necessity to terminate the profane for the transcendent (which is the basic tone of *The Other Shore*) in *Snow in August*. Therefore, he is considered to attain a more advanced enlightenment about both the "poetic/theatrical truth" and "religious truth" through *Snow in August*.

Intriguingly, nothing concerning the essential, ultimate, absolute, and sacred has ever been overtly declared as the goal for pursuit in Gao's works. Gao's way of dealing with the tremendous influence of Zen is latent and subtle; that is to say, the Zen elements underlined and revealed through his works are profound yet convoluted. Presumably, the "absence" of an intention to disclose the essential and ultimate is in accordance with Gao's rejection of any "isms," paradigms, doctrines, or dogmas, in order to be set free from the interventions of politics and ideology and the mechanisms of systematic structures including philosophy, metaphysics, religion, and religious faith. In Gao's book of literary discourse and aesthetic/artistic criticism, *No-Ideology* or *Without-isms* (1995), it is evident that heralding a politically and ethically "anarchistic" position along with incorporating a long-lasting "skeptic" and "atheist" standpoint have not only shaped the principle of his writings and the major framework of his arts but also been carried out in every aspect of his life. For example, it is worth noting that Gao never claims himself as a Buddhist nor does he aim to advocate canonical Buddhist tenets or doctrines.[996]

[995] These philosophical notions have been used to depict what exactly the ultimate truth of essential emptiness means in Buddhist enlightenment idea. They are explained respectively in detail in Chapter Two.
[996] See Tzai-Fu Liu, *A Collection of Treatises on Gao Xingjian*.

Taking into account the agonizing personal experiences[997] that seem to fundamentally change Gao's outlook on "truth," perhaps instead of seeking ultimate reality, the ideality of Gao's transcendent "Zen state" and spiritual illumination which is emphasized in and expressed through all his works is rather a yearning for genuine, thorough "liberation."[998] As Gao describes through the narrator He when defending for his novel and arguing against a critic in chapter 72 of *Soul Mountain,* in a correspondence with the leitmotif of *Withoutisms*:

> He hastens to say you sir have stuck such labels on him. However, the fiction he writes is simply because he can't bear the loneliness, he writes to amuse himself. He didn't expect to fall into the quagmire of the literary world and at present he is trying to pull himself out….He says he actually has no ideology but does have a small amount of nihilism in him, however nihilism isn't the equivalent of absolute nothingness. It's just in the look where you is the reflection of I and he is the back of you, the shadow of a shadow. Although there's no face it still counts as a pronoun [obviously a clarification of his "Zen state"].[999]

Also as an example, Gao illustrates his no-isms in a bitter and aloof tone through the narrator I of chapter 75:

> The train moved off and a barrage of stones hailed down along with a cacophony of swearing, smashing and screaming. This is probably what people see on the way down to

[997] There are at least two excruciating traumatic personal experiences that not only influenced Gao's perspective of life but also drastically changed his outlook on theatre and literature. One of them is the holocaust of the ten-year Chinese Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1976, during which Gao had endured unbearable physical and mental tortures. Gao's other agony is his experience of exile in the physical world, which causes his unending isolation and self-imposed banishment in the psychological and spiritual realms. Due to not obeying the agenda of the Party line or transforming his theatre into a political propagandistic weapon, many of Gao's plays were assessed as the polluted, poisonous, and dangerous by the Communist censorship. He thus had been sent to the forced labor camps in the Communist countries, in order to "learn" with the peasantry. Eventually, Gao was ousted by the Chinese Communist government, impelled to go into exile and sought political asylum in France in 1989 when the incident of Tienanmen Square massacre happened. In 1997, Gao claimed his willingness to give up the Chinese citizenship.

[998] See Xingjian Gao, *Withoutisms*. See also Xingjian Gao, *The Case for Literature*.

[999] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 153-54.

> hell while still believing they are suffering from their faith….I'm just fighting to survive, no, I'm not fighting for anything, I'm just protecting myself…and I am still seduced by the human world, I still haven't lived enough.[1000]

In explaining the true meanings of his "Zen state," Gao embraces an experimental avant-gardist position and a radical, anti-modern and counter-rationalist awareness. As critic Yi-Hung Zhao points out, it is meaningful to situate Gao's unusual experimental "Zen-thematic" plays within the historical background of traditional Chinese culture as well as the Chinese avant-garde theatrical experimentation in the early 1980s. Gao strives for innovation in theatre (e.g., inventing the ideas and techniques of three-dimensional theatricality, three layers in/of actors, sur-linguistic, trans-expressional expression through a flow of language, and transcendental Zen state), by exploring a possibility of theatre via detours of the "religious" and spiritual.[1001] To a certain extent, Gao allies with Artaud's rebellious position in pursuit of theatricalism, life, primeval human existence, reality, being, and their true essence as the dramatic themes and purposes of theatre. He sees himself as an heir to Artaud's theatricality in his ambition for total theatre. The kind of "alternating realities" that both Artaud and Gao are fascinated with are presented on Gao's stage as a mélange of discordant and disjointed dramatic structures as well as manifold, illogical, anti-linear, non-interpretive, and incomplete dramatic "plots."

Gao recognizes his "Zen state" as more of an "aesthetic experience" than a "religious sentiment"[1002] in order to eliminate the interference of "religion" and "mysticism" as an ideology, politics, dogma, moral preaching, and prohibition. When clarifying his "Zen state," Gao never

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[1000] Ibid., 476-77.
[1001] My analysis here is inspired by the ideas of Yi-Hung Chao, *Xingjian Gao and Chinese Experimental Theatre*.
[1002] See *A Study of Gao Xingjian's Theatre and Dramaturgy*, ed. Kuo-Jung Hsu (Beijing: The Chinese Drama Publication, 1989). See also Xingjian Gao, "My Outlook on Theatre," "Preliminary Investigations of the Techniques of Modern Theatre," in *A Quest for Modern Theatre*, ed. Yi-Chung Chu (Beijing: The Chinese Drama Publication, 1988), 42-51, 8-21.

denies the inspiration of Zen, especially the Southern sect of "sudden enlightenment," a heritage of the Sixth Patriarch. Nevertheless, Gao's "Zen state" is not connected to traditional "Buddhism," which, according to Gao, represents an orthodox "religion."[1003] In Gao's understanding, Zen appeals to translucent wisdom and spontaneous irrationality instead of reasoning. The Eastern tradition proposes that a man can use it to see himself, realize his mind, and seek a delicate balance and inseparable connection between his inner, spiritual self and an outer, material reality. Practicing Zen is equal to summoning an illumination that is a total emancipation that leads a man beyond his individual self and subjective consciousness. Therefore, for Gao, practicing Zen means crossing beyond rational consciousness, linguistic expression, and the dialectics of discursive logic to achieve transcendence. As Gao exposes the process in *Snow in August*, the mysterious koan-like conversation is initiated between Heng-Ren, the Fifth Patriarch, and Hui-Neng when the former gives the latter an examination and tests the extent of his enlightenment. The following quotations are the examples. These lines unfold the ultimate Buddhist principle that explains the dependence on phenomena and attachment to forms and appearances as a confirmation of inherent existence and proves it to be fraudulent. The text also discloses Gao's realization of the paradoxical dynamism of being and emptiness, existence and true nature, functional perturbation and essential substance, as well as the ordinary and absolute.

> Hengren: You've come from the outside, what see you outside
> the door?
> Huineng: A world of myriad phenomena, the sun, the moon, mountains and
> rivers, wandering clouds and flowing water….In this world, there

[1003] See Xingjian Gao, *Withoutisms*. See also *A Quest for Modern Theatre*, ed. Yi-Chung Chu (Beijing: The Chinese Drama Publication, 1988).

are dogs, carriages, and high officials and their lackeys. They keep coming and going…and men and women infatuated with love, their loves turned upside down. It's now late at night, all is quiet, only the cries of a newborn baby are heard.

Hengren: What do you see inside the door?

Huineng: The master and I.

Hengren: What am I?

Huineng: A *ksana*, a thought in the mind [ksana means a thought in the mind].

Hengren: Where can one find it?

Huineng: From one thought to another, it's everywhere.

Hengren: Nothing is attached. So what is there to think about?

Huineng**:** Nothing.[1004]

The essence of an untouchable "Zen state" can also be found at the conclusion of *Soul Mountain*, in which Gao uses the entire chapter 81 to transmit his enlightenment and reveal the Zen state. The novel concludes with the sudden enlightenment awakened in the narrator I when he sees the transcendental and sublime through the eyes of a little frog. The symbolism that Gao uses suggests the following famous Buddhist legend: When the Buddha picked the bud of a flower, his pupil Mahakasyapa smiled in expression of Zen's essence (or an answer to the truth of enlightenment) as a direct penetration into the empty nature.[1005] This Buddhist legend also refers to the absolute truth through the impossibility of manipulated linguistic expressions and the reach of rational intelligence and mental consciousness. Through a glimpse of absolute

[1004] Xingjian Gao, *Snow in August*, 97.
[1005] I have illustrated this example in chapter two.

reality reflected in the frog's eyes, the original and transcendent unfold as a total union with the phenomenal and ordinary. The perpetual, necessary "absence" of this unknown and surreal Soul Mountain or Soul Rock in mundane reality is in itself the explosion of enlightenment, luminosity, along with a profound presence of essential emptiness and absolute reality in the process of searching for it. The legendary and imaginary existence of Soul Mountain suggests the possibility of approaching ultimate reality. The vain endeavor of questing for Soul Mountain, however, means the being (true nature or substance) of all dharmas in corporeal reality is emptiness and nothingness. Ultimately, the Soul Mountain is in full presence and the two major narrators I and You and their spiritual pilgrimages towards it are consummated at the moment when the I narrator successfully realizes the highest truth in the frog's eyes. Within the instant momentariness, he is directly in touch with the true self, true nature, and transcendental I (the self of no-self). Therefore, presented as the ultimate enlightenment truth and innate Buddha nature[1006] that all living beings possess when they realize their original face and embrace essential absoluteness, Tzai-Fu Liu claims, "Soul Mountain is not found outside but only inside of one's own illuminated mindfulness [no-mindedness]. Although seeking Soul Mountain in the material world is doomed to failure, the presence of Soul Mountain is everywhere."[1007]

Gao expands on notions such as the "Zen state" and the absent and interpenetrative, transcendent I through his anti-formalistic, non-representational ink painting techniques that illustrate a transcendental, redemptive spiritual illumination. He frequently paints in only black and white, out of which there emerge elusive mysterious lights. The black color suggests gloom, anguish, and traumatic experiences as part of the embedded racial consciousness and buried collective memories. The white color symbolizes hope, purity, sublimity, and translucent

[1006] The notion of the Buddha nature is explained in Chapter Two.
[1007] Tzai-Fu Liu, *A Collections of Treatises on Gao Xingjian,* 124.

emptiness. The dialectical dynamics of black and white along with the compatibility of darkness and lucidity are similar to the aesthetics of Ankoku Butoh manifested in Hijikata's presentation of darkness and Ohno's presentation of lucidity. In the between-ness of black and white and the threshold of darkness and pure lucidity, elusive mysterious lights infiltrate a spiritual profundity and suggest an occurrence of hope, an achievement of enlightenment, and a transcendence of subjective/objective emptiness. Therefore, throughout the symbolic world of ink painting, clarity and unimpeded awareness are exposed. According to Gao, the presence of lucidity in his painting comes from his continual self-reflective and self-aware introspection. In Gao's interpretation, the occurrence of translucency means transcending an attachment to one's subjective self and negating individualistic consciousness by simply using a set of "isolated cold eyes."[1008] Gao's negative aesthetics as a unifying thread that weaves together his works is also seen in chapter 65 of *Soul Mountain* through the self-anatomy of the narrator I:

> My soul in the darkness is spying on me, this multitude of eyes is simply me scrutinizing myself. I always have the feeling of being spied upon which makes me feel uneasy all over, in fact this is only my fear of myself. When I return to the mountain path, fine rain is falling. The stone slabs are all wet, I no longer look and just blindly charge down.[1009]

Beginning in the mid-1980s, Gao began to claim a search for spiritual enlightenment and a "Zen state" throughout his works. The critic Yi-Hung Zhao divides Gao's plays into three distinctive time periods. They are composed of the first-period "Explorative/Socially-Committed plays," such as *Bus Stop*, *Wild Man*, and *Fleeing* (*Escape*); the second-period "Mythological/Ritual works" like the novel *Soul Mountain* and the play *Hades*, along with the

[1008] My analysis in this section is taken from Tzai-Fu Liu, *A Collection of Treatises on Gao Xingjian*. This term is invented by Gao. His later claim of a quest for "cold literature" as an ideality for a writer is derived from his use of a pair of isolated cold eyes. See Xingjian Gao, *Withoutisms*. See also Xingjian Gao, *The Case for Literature*, trans. Mabel Lee (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007).
[1009] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 417.

third-period "Zen/*Xieyi* (symbolic) plays," which include *The Other Shore*, *Between Life and Death, Dialogue and Rebuttal,* and *Snow in August*.[1010] Zhao creates a specific term, symbolic modern Zen theatre (plays),[1011] to categorize the works (mostly plays but also novels) that Gao wrote in his so-called "third period." This "third period" of "symbolic modern Zen theatre (plays)" lasts from 1986, when the manuscript of Gao's *The Other Shore* was completed, until 1997, when *Snow in August* was finished. Despite the fact that *Soul Moutain* is characterized by Zhao into the category of the mythological and ritual, I see it as in the between-ness of the ritualistic play and symbolic Zen play. According to Zhao, the ideas that permeate these third-period plays are the most elusive, esoteric, and abstract, coupled with more mature and perfected forms of theatrical expressions and techniques.[1012] The symbolic modern Zen plays are primarily based on subject matter concerning Buddhism and Zen and dramatize experiences of spiritual transcendence and quasi-religious pursuits. Dialogues among the characters Man, Shadow, and Person A in *The Other Shore* echo Gao's yearning for spiritual transcendence, higher theatrical reality, and quasi-religious pursuit that are manifested in *Soul Mountain*, *Snow in August*, and most of his third-period symbolic modern Zen plays.

Man: Who is the person speaking to me?

Shadow: It is your shadow, your thoughts spoken out loud.

Man: You're always following me.

Shadow: When you have lost yourself.

Man: You'll come and remind me and double my trouble?

Shadow: *What are you looking for so desperately*?

Man: Now that you've reminded me! *I've definitely lost something, can you tell me*

[1010] Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*, 20.
[1011] Ibid., 27.
[1012] Ibid., 180-236.

where to look for it?

Shadow: (sarcastically.) *You probably do not know what you are looking for*?

Man: It appears to be…isn't everyone looking for it?

(*The Crowd enter. They form a circle and bend down to look for something in the circle, like children at play*).

Shadow: It would not hurt to ask them what you are looking for. (*Takes the chance to leave and disappear*.)

Man: Excuse me, can you tell me what you're looking for?

Person A: *A needle, they say you can lead a camel through the eye of this needle*.[1013]

The Shadow represents the true self, absolute essence, and a manifestation of emptiness and the other shore (ultimate reality). Though unapproachable, it never separates from the Man/humans (this worldliness). "A needle, they say you can lead a camel through the eye of this needle" is an illogical, absurd, and koan-like expression of the inexplicable true state, in order to make us "unthink" but meditate and direct experience. It is interesting to note that the above camel-needle's eye mystery is also a biblical reference deriving from Matthew 19:24, Mark 10:25, and Luke 18-25 that notes a rich man will get into heaven on the basis of his wealth as easily as a camel will go through the eye of a needle.

In addition to novels and plays mentioned earlier, in *Between Life and Death, Dialogue and Rebuttal, Hades, Nocturnal Wanderer,* and *The Story of the Classic of Seas and Mountains,* Gao also integrates the influence of Buddhist thought and essential elements of Zen. For example, he frequently employs unavoidable sufferings, attachments, and vexations that all sentient beings in the samsara are doomed to undergo, all of which are characteristic of the Buddhist "Four

[1013] Xingjian Gao, *The Other Shore*, 31-2. My italics, aside from those of the stage direction given by the playwright in parentheses.

Noble Truths."[1014] Overall, the audience/reader can expect that in the middle of one of Gao's plays, the characters experience (even struggle with) deterioration, abandonment, detachment, death, and stillness similar to the third facet of "cessation" in the Buddhist "Four Noble Truths" that are used as solutions to sufferings, attachments, and afflictions that the characters confront at the beginning of the play. Therefore, by the end of the play, total emancipation and redemptive spiritual revelation becomes necessary. For example, a deeper awakening is manifested in the concluding scene of *The Other Shore* as a carnivelesque exhibition of returning back to the world/this side-ness.

> Man: Who are you?
>
> Shadow: Your heart.
>
> (*As the Crowd watch the drooping, blind, and deaf heart slouching past them, Shadow quietly drags Man away. The Crowd slowly follow behind the heart which is extremely old and actually invisible. All exit.*)
>
> Actors: We set off before dawn. The morning dew was thick, and in the dark we heard the cows breathing while they were chewing grass on a small hill nearby. In the distance, the river bend was enveloped in a shade of deep blue light brighter than the sky.
>
> He told us a fable.
>
> I dreamed that there's a piece of ivory in my stomach, it scared me to death!
>
> Have you thought of becoming a bird?
>
> Why a bird? I'm happy with the way I am, and he says he loves me.
>
> …
>
> Do you know how to read palms?
>
> …

[1014] I have explained this concept in Chapter Two.

This kitten is so cute.

…

I have a sweet tooth, and I'm also a sucker for sour milk.

(*The sound of a baby crying*.)

Sweetie, oh, sorry, I forgot to change your diapers!

(*The sound of a car engine starting*.)

How are you going to get back?

It's so bad, what kind of stupid play is this anyway?

(*Sounds of a baby crying, a car engine starting and running, bicycle bells and the trickle of running water from a tap, and in the distance, the siren of an ambulance*.)[1015]

The Heart depicted as drooping, blind, deaf, and extremely old, indicates that human subjective mental consciousness gives way to the dawn of luminosity and enlightenment.

Gao structures the framework of his third-period plays by literally or figuratively initiating a Zen koan which remains a mystery that his characters seek to answer, while also presenting it as a spiritual realization for his audiences to contemplate. In the second act of *Snow in August,* Gao invents an episode where the Sixth Patriarch conveys the Dharma to his youngest disciple Shen-Hui, who after decades becomes an heir to Hui-Neng's legacy of Southern Chinese Zen's "sudden enlightenment."

Huineng: I have but one way to the Dharma—it has neither name nor words, neither body nor concept, neither language nor manifestation, neither head nor tail, neither inside nor outside, nor anything in between, it neither comes nor goes, and it has neither presence nor absence, neither cause nor effect. May I put the

[1015] Xingjian Gao, *The Other Shore*, 40-41.

question to the learned members in the audience: what is this way? (*The monks look at one another, afraid to answer the question. Shenhui, a young apprentice monk, stands up*.)

Shenhui: Teacher, teacher, I have to pee!

Yinzong: Let us all retire to our rooms to ponder on the question the master has just asked. In this way his effort will not have been wasted and we will all benefit from his enlightening lecture. (*Exit all monks. Enter Shenhui, the apprentice monk*.)

Shenhui: What's this? It's all done? But I only went to pee! What kind of Dharma is this?[1016]

When Shen-Hui says, "Teacher, teacher, I have to pee," intriguingly, he seems "indirectly" and "unintentionally" just to answer Huineng's "esoteric" question by "performing" the most straightforward and spontaneous action. It is also worthwhile to note that the demonstration of a sudden illuminated spontaneity comes from the supposedly most inexperienced, unlearned, and innocent disciple. It seems that Shenhui just effortlessly provides an answer of no-answer. By indicating the potential of Shenhui's enlightened luminosity displayed in his performing "peeing" as a sudden reply, the Sixth Patriarch re-affirms Zen as a-logical, irrational, a-linguistic, anti-intellectual, presentational, and anti-doctrinal.

As Yi-Hung Zhao comments, taking into account the multi-dimensions (of characters and theatricality) interweaving Gao's theatrical world, the critical point for both his performers and spectators is the shift in perspectives that transform from one dimension into other layers in a

[1016] Xingjian Gao, *Snow in August*, 101-03.

Zen-like realization.[1017] The key to entering these multi-dimensional theatrical facets is similar to a transformation from unenlightened/clouded to illuminated or from bewildered to awakened. Out of this understanding, Gao's theatre aims to transcend conventional aesthetic practice and move beyond to the unconscious, irrational, and surreal.[1018] The koan mystery in Gao's theatre remains knotted even after the play ends, thereby signifying that it is never easy to be enlightened. In his dramatic plots, Gao prefers an illogical, obscure, indefinable, and unpredictable content that presents characters as irrational, ambiguous, and unidentifiable. Nevertheless, in addition to calling Gao's works "transcendental," I also argue that sober insight, coldness, elitist aloofness, and sense of all-embracing interpenetrative solitude creep into Gao's artistry and intermingle with those transcendental, esoteric, and religious facets. This is exemplified in *Between Life and Death*, when the character frightened Woman experiences the most scary episodes, including her limbs coming off her body during the process of aimless and endless waiting.

> Woman: (*Lifts her head, dejected*) She's just realized that she's the one who's lonely in the whole wide world, not the other people, whose loneliness she has been observing. Other people may be waiting, downcast, forlorn, and all by themselves, but after all they're still waiting, and they know in their hearts where they want to go, but she doesn't, she doesn't know if there's anything left for her to do, or if there's anywhere else she can go.[1019]

Due to the coldness, sober insight, elitist aloofness, and interpenetrative solitude that are peculiar to Gao's artistic expressions, he develops the philosophy or "agenda" of "cold literature." According to his lecture during the Nobel Prize Award Ceremony in 2000, which is

[1017] See Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*, 184-206.
[1018] Ibid.
[1019] Xingjian Gao, *Between Life and Death*, 59.

entitled “The Case for Literature,” Gao mentions that the earliest emergence of the idea about cold literature can be dated back to 1990, when he had just concluded *Soul Mountain* and wrote a short essay proposing the type of cold literature. As he explains:

> [T]he shared present in the writing and reading of literature is connected to its eternal spiritual value….Literature transcends ideology, national boundaries and racial consciousness in the same way as the individual’s existence basically transcends this or that -isms….Literature is not connected to politics but is purely a matter of the individual. It is the gratification of the intellect together with an observation, a review of what has been experienced, reminiscences and feelings or the portrayal of a state of mind….In fact the relationship of the author and the reader is always one of spiritual communication…in which both the reader and the writer are engaged of their own volition. Hence, literature has no duty to the masses….This sort of literature that has recovered its innate nature can be called cold literature. It exists simply because humankind seeks a purely spiritual activity beyond….For it to exist depends on a willingness to endure the loneliness….Cold literature is literature that will flee in order to survive, it is a sort of non-utilitarian literature that refuses to be strangled by society in its quest for spiritual salvation.[1020]

Gao’s further elaboration of cold literature as an attitude, position, and aesthetic discourse is presented in chapter 72 of *Soul Mountain* as the manifesto of an artist. Chapter 72 is a section that presents an artist, who is merged with the narrator He, defending his art/works in the form of a most rebellious linguistic experimentation (e.g., there is no punctuation emerging in the entire statement, except for fourteen question marks and the last and only period), that is, a flow of language. Gao displays the beauty, playfulness, musicality, and “dramatic meta-sensibility”[1021]

[1020] Xingjian Gao, *The Case for Literature*, 32-48.
[1021] Yi-Hung Zhao, *Towards a Modern Zen Theatre*, 174.

that are exemplified in a stream of language, which does not aim at philosophical/metaphysical dialectics or comprehension. But instead, an acoustic linguistic fluidity appeals to being sensed, heard, felt, sung, chanted, and experienced, to expressing alternations between different realities and states of consciousness, and to a Zen state. Approaching streams of language is similar to achieving enlightenment, for both "should remain nameless, unspoken, and uninterpretable when truly attained."[1022] As the narrator He elaborates:

> Or is it not in the necessity but in the language? Or is it not in the language but whether the language is interesting? Nevertheless he is intrigued with using language to talk about women about men about love about sex about life about death about the ecstasy and agony of the soul and flesh about people's solicitousness for people and politics about people evading politics about the inability to evade reality about unreal imagination about what is more real about the denial of utilitarian goals is not the same as an affirmation of it about the illogicality of logic about rational reflection greatly surpassing science in the dispute between content and form about meaningful images and meaningless content about the definition of meaning about everyone wanting to be God about the worship of idols by atheists about self worship being dubbed philosophy about self love about indifference to sex transforming into megalomania about schizophrenia about sitting in Chan contemplation about sitting not in Chan contemplation about meditation about the Way of nurturing the body is not the Way about effability or ineffability but the absolute necessity for the effability of the Way about fashion about revolt agaomst vulgarity is a mighty smash with a racquet about a fatal blow with a club and Buddhist enlightenment…about humans by nature are more ferocious than wolves about the most wicked are other people and Hell in fact is in Nirvana about completion about completion

[1022] Ibid., 159.

> is nothing completed about what is right about what is wrong about the creation of grammatical structures about not yet saying something is not the same as not saying anything about talk is useless in functional discourse…but that it is impossible to arbitrate this as truth about the fallibility of experience which is only a crutch about falling if one has to fall about revolutionary fiction which samshes superstitious belief in literature about a revolution in fiction about revolutionizing fiction.[1023]

Gao's criterion of cold literature resonates with his previous declaration of a pair of "cold eyes" that he persists in marking/alienating his position and uses to describe his approach to the essence of literature, theatre, social reality, and "truth." He insists on remaining ideologically and politically anarchistic, in order for thorough individualistic independence and total spiritual freedom. He thus distances himself from the myth of nationalism and of the heroic savior of the people and race. Just as experiencing spiritual awakening and achieving religious enlightenment is personal and intimate, Gao sees writing as also an individualistic and intimate act, along with a self-addicted amusement of self. Therefore, for him, the only person (reader) for whom the writer writes, and therefore is responsible for, is just himself.[1024] He denies he is a mouthpiece of the masses and disassociates his writings, theatre, and arts from commercial merchandise.

On the other hand, the cold eyes of Gao refer to a direct penetrative awareness, which transforms into a transcendental luminosity and exposes humans' true nature, true self/original face, and profound essence. As Gao sketches in *The Other Shore:*

> Person I: Everyone's looking here, what are you going to do over there?
>
> Man: There is nothing I want here.
>
> Person I: What are you looking for?

[1023] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 454-55. The statement that I quote here is an excerpt, therefore only two question marks appear. The original text includes fourteen in total.
[1024] See Xingjian Gao, *Withoutisms* (2002). See also Xingjian Gao, *The Case for Literature* (2007).

Man: (*Troubled*) I don't know what I am looking for.

Person I: Everybody, look! The man is a weirdo, he doesn't know what he's looking for!

Person J: He must have found it already.

Man: No, I haven't. Really, I haven't.

Stable Keeper: Where are you going?

Man: Over there.

Stable Keeper: You haven't found anything yet, right? How come you're going over there?

Man: I am not going to look for anything any more. I just want to go over there.

Stable Keeper: We're all looking here, but you insist on going there.

Everybody: Shall we let him?

Crowd: No! Absolutely not! He can't go. Just wait until we've all found it, then you can go.[1025]

His affirmation of cold literature also means that a pursuit of enlightenment and an alternative "truth" (regardless of how noticeably and intentionally it is presented in his works, especially his plays) is not possible to be defined or located. Under the gaze of his skeptical, estranged, and atheist cold eyes, pursuing a spiritual or quasi-religious revelation is similar to an undefinable intimate experience that belongs only to individuals and not to the collective. Gao does not consider the so-called "truth" to be universal or ontological, naming it instead his personal truth that does not serve as a propagandistic mouthpiece for any community, political party, race, culture, or nation-state. Moreover, he also rigorously refuses commodity fetishism and declines

[1025] Xingjian Gao, *The Other Shore*, 34.

to associate his "intimate" artistic truth and individualistic belief in total spiritual emancipation with weapons for reformation and revolution. By claiming an emancipation of the unconscious truth and theatrical reality (unlike Artaud or Ankoku Butoh dancers, who yearn for enlightenment at the peak of a trance-like state), Gao strives to distance himself and his audiences from the preoccupation with ecstasy because introspective critical perspectives are crucial to his theatre. However, similar to Artaud, Hijikata and Ohno, and Cage, aspiring for a poetic or aesthetic truth as a higher true reality, Gao (and all the above-mentioned artists) end up with a quest for a quintessential religious-based or Zen Buddhist-inspired "enlightenment truth."

My analyses of Xingjian Gao's (theatrical and physical) path towards (aesthetic and spiritual) enlightenment are chiefly inspired by crucial points raised by two Chinese literary critics, Yi-Hung Zhao and Tzai-Fu Liu, who specialize in Gao's works. They both agree that Gao's pursuit of a transcendental "Zen state" has been a principal theme of his "third-period" plays. These third-period plays are characterized by Zhao as a yearning for a symbolic modern Zen theatre, beginning with *The Other Shore* to *Snow in August.* Gao's innovation of a secularized apocalyptic theatre is manifested in his self-consciously integration of Buddhist ideas and Zen aesthetics as essential ingredients. In addition, his incorporation of Zen Buddhism into an experiment of total theatricality impacts the crosscurrents of modern world theatre and universally places his yearning for spiritual or poetic enlightenment in "Zen-state" theatre. Most of Gao's avant-garde plays that aim at experimenting with sur-linguistic and trans-expressional theatrical truth and unfolding the "Zen-State" transcendence are renowned on the European stage; his many plays, including those that were once forbidden on the Chinese mainland, are

performed in America, Italy, Poland, France, Sweden, Germany, England, Vienna, Australia, Hong Kong, Japan, and Taiwan.

According to Tzai-Fu Liu, the crux of Chinese Zen passed down by the Sixth Patriarch's teachings has had an immeasurable impact on Gao's outlook on life and his theatrical practices. Gao has been at the forefront of proclaiming Zen philosophy in contemporary Chinese literature, theatre, and arts by blending Zen ideas and Buddhist precepts with his artistic creations. As Tzai-Fu Liu observes, the essential Zen spirit acts as a perpetual and cohesive leitmotif for both Gao's dialectical revelation and aesthetic discourse. Namely, Zen is presented in the "third-period symbolic modern Zen" plays as he addresses universal deeper issues about "the quandary of humanity and hidden facets of human (un)consciousness,"[1026] in order to disclose the subtlety, elusiveness, and "profoundest recess of human soul,"[1027] to use Gao's words. According to Liu, Gao's Zen-inspired theatre always reflexively positions itself as humanitarian, transcendentally compassionate, and insightfully clear.[1028]

Throughout Gao's quasi-religious, ritualistic theatre (e.g., *The Other Shore*, *Between Life and Death*, and *Snow in August*), he dramatizes a spiritual pilgrimage from the unenlightened to the awakened, from a position of self-introspective soberness and self-isolated solitude. His quest for poetic truth and theatrical transcendence reveals this corporeal reality, crosses over to the lofty other shore-ness, and returns to the original face of this side-ness, where the ultimate and ordinary, supermundane and physical, esoteric and profane are not contradictory but a spontaneous simultaneity and compatible empty being. As Hui-Neng in *Snow in August* says: "The world is like this in the first place….People look for troubles themselves"[1029]; and the

[1026] Tzai-Fu Lin, *A Collection of Treatises on Gao Xingjian*, 8.
[1027] Ibid.
[1028] Ibid., 164-192.
[1029] Xingjian Gao, *Snow in August*, 107.

essence of Zen can be briefly summarized as: "The pile drivers drive their piles every day, when old bridges crumble new ones are built. Night rain drives banana leaves; a light carriage passing by, the wind murmurs….Tonight and tomorrow morning, it's the same, the same, just the same. Still wonderful just the same!"[1030] Hui-Neng's illumination and the song of extolling enlightenment sung by the characters Laymen and the Chorus echo the conclusion of *Snow in August*: "The brick carriers carry the bricks, the cleaners do the clean up! Great wisdom is to reach the other shore, great mercy is to have an ordinary heart. The baby cries, it's born. The old man noiselessly passed away. The living have to live, and live happily! The dead are sleeping, they're not moving."[1031] In Gao's open-ended plays (like *Snow in August* and *The Other Shore*), no answer is provided; there is no fixed meaning and no single theme or specific destination/purpose is confirmed. These plays resemble the juxtaposition of disjointed, illogical Zen koans. The objective (if there is any) is to provoke a self-enlightenment experience and self-committed contemplation in his spectators and appeal to their unconscious, direct perceiving, and instinctive sensibility instead of their intellect. Expressed through the conflicts and arguments between the characters Crowd and the Man in *The Other Shore*, Gao writes:

> Crowd: That is to say, yes, no, everybody looks or nobody looks, even if nobody looks or everybody looks, not looking is not the same as not wanting to look, the question is whether we can look and find it.
>
> Man: What if I don't want to look?
>
> Crowd: You don't want to look, sure, okay, we can't force you to if you don't want to, if you don't want to look, it doesn't mean nobody should look, and if everybody looks then you can't be not looking, nobody looks you don't look no more, everybody wants to look

[1030] Ibid.
[1031] Ibid.

> and you don't look, everybody looks for everybody, you don't look for everybody, you don't look and everybody looks, you look or not you don't look everybody looks, you look or not you don't look everybody looks you look or not nobody looks you look everybody looks.
>
> …
>
> Man: But I haven't found anything!
>
> Stable Keeper: Then keep looking.
>
> Man: I'm not looking here any more. I—want—to—go—there. [1032]

In order for an aim to reach and transmit the unapproachable and ungraspable, Gao invents an obscure conceptual term and a transcendental expression, a stream/flow of language, which is related to his creation of a Zen state. (The above quotations from *The Other Shore* is the example). Both a flow of language and the Zen state do away with the signifier-signified or subject-object, self-other bond, in order to expose the alternative phases of "truth," feelings, and consciousness beyond the rational, visible, tangible, recognizable, and definite. Despite the fact that it looks sophisticated, dialectical, and abstract, the rhetoric of Gao's stream of language is precise, ordinary, and spontaneous rather than flamboyant; meanings are elusive, surreal, irrational, and indefinite like those based on dream logic and rhythmic chants or meaningless murmuring sounds.

Moreover, the use of stream of language is also a search for the sur-linguistic Zen state and trans-linguistic expression that corresponds to the negation of the subjective self and abandonment of individual identity for the higher (un)consciousness and unimpeded, indefinable transcendental I. The attainment of a trans-linguistic Zen state and transcendental I is not unlike summoning meditative stillness (silence or compassion) and penetrative insight (illumination or

[1032] Xingjian Gao, *The Other Shore*, 35.

wisdom) and experiencing enlightenment. For Gao, who deems his own self as nothing but an individualistic conscience, this kind of transcendence (aside from its more religious bearing) resembles the necessity of launching continual self-banishment (going into both physical and spiritual exile) for true emancipation.[1033] As mentioned earlier, he employs a number of eccentric techniques in order to achieve the inexplicable "Zen state," including the "three layers in/of an actor" and "three dimensionalities in/of theatre" (the three-dimensional theatricality) manifested in the multifarious narrative perspectives and manifold performing personifications (expressed by the "stream of language") within the text. Gao writes in chapter 70 of *Soul Mountain* through the perspective of the narrator You, who initiates dialogues with the shifting, indefinite narrative subjects when commenting on the snow-scene scroll of Gong Xian in the form of a koan (e.g., the last five lines). Interestingly, through the dialogues and the shifting, manifold storytellers, both Gao's outlook on aesthetics (litarature and art), out of which it formulates what he calls cold literature, and a kind of ultimate Zen state he strives for attaining via artistic practicies are revealed. First, Gao the novelist is represented by the narrator You, then the narrator I, and starting from the lines "however Gong Xian did not go mad, he transcends the world" to "his paintings were not for money, painting itself was an expression of feelings in his heart," Gao is merged with both the painter Gong Xian and the narrator He.

> --Facing this snow scene scroll by Gong Xian what more can one say! There is such tranquility one can almost hear the snow falling. It seems audible and yet is soundless.
>
> --It is a dream scene.
>
> --The wooden bridge on the river overlooks the clear stream and solitary hut. *You* can feel the signs of human existence but also the pure isolation and serenity.

[1033] This is Liu's analysis of Gao and his aesthetic discourse. See Tzai-Fu Liu, *A Collections of Treatises on Gao Xingjian*, 164-192.

--This is petrified dream, the intangible darkness at the edges of dream is faintly visible.

…

--The insipid elegance of literati painting often only has ideas but no art, *I* detest this affectation of pedantry.

…

--However, Gong Xian didn't go mad, he transcended the world. Because *he* did not want to fight against the world he was able to preserve his innate nature.

--He did not want to pit rationality against being muddle-headed, he withdrew far away to a remote corner and immersed himself in a realm of pure dream.

--This was just another form of self-defence when he came to the realization that it was impossible to fight the world which had gone mad.

--He did not fight, he did not rationalize, and hence preserved the totality of his being.

…

--His painting transcends language.

--His paintings were not for money, painting itself was an expression of feelings in his heart.

--Would *you* and *I* be capable of this?

--He achieved it, as in this snow-swept landscape.

--Can you verify that this painting is authentic?

--Surely that's not important? If you think it is then it is.

--What if I think it isn't?

--Then it isn't.

--In other words, you and I think we have seen his work.

--Then it is his work.[1034]

Most importantly, it is apparent that Gao's theatrical endeavors are subject to summoning an unnamable interpenetrative state that pierces into the true essence and transcendence.

Gao further explains the transcendent "Zen state" by using his ideas about the three dimensionalities of/in an actor presented throughout the continuingly shifting manifold narrative perspectives of I, You, He (and She) and how they are entwined and integrated with each other in the vastness of essential being and empty-nature self. Inspired by the perspectives of a painter embedded in and inherited from traditional Chinese figurative paintings and also similar to a revelatory experience of directly seeing into true reality when practicing deep tranquil abiding and luminosity, Gao expresses a realization of the Buddhist enlightenment state: "as such" (profound/true suchness) in his book, *An Alternative Aesthetics*. He articulates his "stream of language" through an attainment of a Zen state where inexplicable and non-signified experience is expressed by challenging and re-structuring conventional language to its primordial expressiveness and extremity. To offer a fuller realization of the dynamism and intricacies in "perceiving" by situating the painter/artist's individual perspective of seeing and placing his alternative/surrealistic/unconscious self (which is beyond the painter's intellect and rationality), the inclusion of the perspective of You is necessary. By You (the artist's other self) seeing Me (the artist), the more transcendental I emerges and is able to observe the entire world.[1035] The alienated, cold eyes of You prevent the subjective I from being occupied with excessive self-absorption, while the dimensionality and perspective of You is isolated from the smaller consciousness of I. At this moment, both the subjective (I) and the objectified (You) are equal, because they turn out to be the ones, who are simultaneously the (self) observers and the

[1034] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 444-46. My italics.
[1035] Xingjian Gao, *An Alternative Aesthetics* (Taipei: Lien-Ging Publisher, 2001).

observed. Therefore, the autonomous subjective expressions deriving from the playwright's self-recognition/identification take a step back to make room for fluctuating perspectives and shifting observers. While You and I confront each other, the obscure, indescribable, and liminal self becomes unclouded, straightforward, free of difference or judgment and simultaneously placed under the gaze of He. Under the gaze of He, the process of conversing and questioning between I and You turns out to be a ritual of introspection. In Gao's theatre, the indefinable transcendent self is spontaneously multiplied into three-dimensionalities of I, You, He (and She) and has nothing to do with metaphysical representations, discursive thoughts, or psychological reflections. Instead, it is a "Zen state" that a playwright can approach when an unimpeded luminosity is evoked and flows from his intuitive unconscious sensibility.[1036]

According to Liu, the essential Zen that fundamentally influences Gao and later makes his works remarkable and distinctive is actually due to his deliberate uses of the Buddhist principles expounding on self-liberation and self-salvation as redemptive aesthetics. In particular, these ideas about an emancipation of self and rescue of self affirmed by Buddhism correspond to positions of self-awareness, self-examination, self-questioning, self-introspection, self-skepticism, and self-isolation that Gao espouses in his literature, theatre, and arts and even makes his works more unusual.[1037] Liu creates a classification "humans and themselves" to characterize Gao's plays that aim to deal with the preceding issues.[1038]

Liu also names "the kind of 'I' that Gao yearns for in expressing his 'own self' as an illumination of the empty-nature I. The true self whose essential own being is absolute nothingness (emptiness)."[1039] For Liu, it is evident Gao embraces his aesthetic agenda by

[1036] Xingjian Gao, *An Alternative Aesthetics*, 27.
[1037] Ibid., 189.
[1038] Ibid., 206.
[1039] Ibid., 151.

connecting the intricacies of humans and his true self inside a deep-seated Zen Buddhist inspiration. Thus, Gao's search for unfolding dynamics of humans and their own selves and revealing "true reality" of human existence and the predicament is withdrawn and introspective and carries with it a deep soul investigation and spiritual awakening. Liu is astounded by Gao's enlightened presentations in his full-fledged plays, where the theme of "human's self as the imprisonment and inferno of itself" stemming from the Buddhist Four Noble Truths that are predicated on sufferings, cessation of the sufferings, and the path towards final nirvana is thoroughly explored.[1040] The intricacies of humans and their true selves are later expressed in Gao's works as dynamism of a fraudulent self (subjective rational consciousness) and real self (translucent surreal unconsciousness), in order to express the multi-faceted self altering from the phenomenal realm to transcendental reality and from cloudiness to luminosity. In chapter 52 of *Soul Mountain*, Gao describes this situation:

> *You* know that *I* am just talking to myself to alleviate my loneliness. You know that this loneliness of mine is incurable, that no-one can save me and that I can only talk with myself as the partner of my conversation. In this lengthy soliloquy *you* are the object of what I relate, a *myself* who listens intently to me—you are simply my shadow. As I listen to myself and you, I let you create a *she*, because you are like me and also cannot bear the loneliness and have to find a partner for your conversation. So you talk with her, just like I talk with you. She was born of you, yet is an affirmation of *myself*….I am on a journey—life. Life, good or bad, is a journey and wallowing in my imagination I travel into my inner mind with you who are my reflection….Like me, you wander wherever you like. As the distance increases there is a converging of the two until unavoidably you and I merge and are inseparable. At this point there is a need to step back and to create space.

[1040] Ibid., 168.

> That space is *he*. He is the back of you after you have turned around and left me. Neither I nor my image can see his face, it is enough to know that he is someone's back….For you and me, the women who constitute they are simply a composite image of her. And the men who constitute they are also a composite image of him. In the boundless world, there are all sorts of mysteries external to you and me. In other words, they are all projections of my back which I can't get rid of.[1041]

An expedition to *Soul Mountain* for illumination is like an experience of the Zen state, which suggests that the only exit for reaching the inaccessible non-existent Soul Mountain is through self-extinction, self-emancipation, self-enlightenment, and self-completion.

In the final section of chapter 52, Gao notes: "Fiction…is the same as life and does not have an ultimate goal,"[1042] to a certain extent, it vibrates with the narrator You's description in Chapter 1: "You can't explain why you're here. It happened that you were on a train and this person mentioned a place called Lingshan [Soul Mountain]."[1043] "Life does not have an ultimate goal" corresponds to the precepts of "as such" and "non-attainment and not non-attainment" in Buddhism and "you can't explain why you're here" is a manifestation of unintentionality (non-intentionality) in Zen. Interestingly, a journey into emptiness departs from the place of "non-existence" (as the narrator departs from a missing place called the town of *Wu Yi*, which means "there exists total nothingness") and arrives at the realm of the esoteric and mystical (as the narrator's quest for the absence of Soul Mountain in corporeal reality is proved a vain endeavor). Both appeal to utter emptiness and exist inside the ultimate absoluteness in order to answer the very summit of human existence and the true self's final mode of subsistence. A voyage from nothingness towards emptiness is a recurring theme that permeates Gao's art and literary works

[1041] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 312-13.
[1042] Ibid., 315.
[1043] Ibid., 2.

such as *Soul Mountain*, *Bus Stop*, *Escape*, *The Other Shore*, and *Snow in August* and is dramatized by way of mysterious koans that need to be meditated upon, in order to reach self-enlightenment. In chapter 76 of *Soul Mountain*, when the journeys of the I and You narrators towards the primordial, authentic, mysterious, spiritual, and absolute near an end and the answer of enlightened truth remains perpetually absent, so that Soul Mountain emerges as ultimate emptiness, Gao leaves the readers to contemplate the following:

> He is all alone. He has been drifting around for a long time and eventually encountering an elderly man….He goes up and politely asks, "Can you tell me the location of *Lingshan* [Soul Mountain]?" "Where have you come from?" He says from *Wuyizhen*. "Wuyizhen? It's on the other side of the river." The old man ruminates for a while. He says he just come from that side of the river. Can he have taken the wrong road? "The road is not wrong, it is the traveler who is wrong." But what he is asking is whether Lingshan is on this side of the river. "If I say it's on that side of the river then it's on that side of the river." The old man is annoyed. He says he has already come to this side of the river from that side of the river. "You're moving further and further away." Insists the old man. "Then I'll have to go back again?" He can't help saying to himself I really don't understand. "I've already put it very clearly….What is it that you still don't understand?" The old man scrutinizes him from under his eyebrows. He says he still doesn't understand how to get to Lingshan. The Old man closes his eyes to concentrate. "Venerable elder, didn't you say it is on the other side of the river?" he has to ask again. "But I've already come to this

> side of the river." "Then it's on that side of the river," the old man crossly interjects. "And if I use Wuyizhen to get my bearings?" "Then it's still on that side of the river." "But I have already come to this side of the river from Wuyizhen, so when you say that side of the river, shouldn't it be this side of the river?" "Don't you want to go to Lingshan?" "Precisely." "Then it's on that side of the river." "Venerable elder, surely you're talking metaphysics?" The old man says in all earnestness, "Aren't you asking the way?" He says he is. "Then I've already told you." The old man raises his staff, dismisses him, and walks along the river-bank into the distance. He stays alone on this side of the river, the other side of the river from Wuyizhen. The problem now is on which side of the river is Wuyizhen? He really can't make up his mind and can only think of an old proverb dating back a thousand years: "Existence is returning, non-existence is returning, so don't stay by the river getting blown about by the cold wind."[1044]

A quest for *Soul Mountain* in the mundane outside world is doomed to failure. What is visible is not, what is told is not, what is found out or reached is not, what is imagined or longed for is not, yet one cannot but continue searching. As Shantideva's *Engaging in the Bodhisattva Deeds* explicates: "Without contacting the imagined existent, its non-existence is not apprehended."[1045] After all, Soul Mountain is not over this side-ness or the other shore beyond, it exists somewhere within the seeker's own self; it *is* the self.

[1044] Xingjian Gao, *Soul Mountain*, 478-79.
[1045] See *Bodhicaryavatara*, Bibliotheca Indica Vol. 280, edited by Vidhushekara Bhattacharya (Calcutta: the Asiatic Society, 1960), 221.

In Conclusion: Life is a Dream and All the World's a Stage

Buddhism somewhat represents a masculine-dominated discourse.[1046] My dissertation, whose analysis is principally based on masculine examples, can be seen as a reflection of the above understanding, for I realize the apparent lack of female artists, whose works are strong enough to imagine this version of theatre (except for the performances of Japanese female Butoh dancers like Anzu Furukawa, Yoko Ashikawa, Natsu Nakajima, and Carlotta Ikeda). Affirmed by the Dalai Lama of Tantric Buddhism and Sheng-Yen Shih of Chinese Mahayanist (Zen) Buddhism that a realization and validation of emptiness is the determinant criterion to differentiate Buddhists from non-Buddhists, I also use such an understanding as the principle for the selection of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao as particular cases that can stand for my argument. I see their theatre as essentially structured around the core Buddhist philosophy of self-emptiness (substance) and its manifestation (perturbation). In other words, my project situates Artaud, Cage, Hijikata, Ohno, and Gao in the position that resembles a practicing Buddhist meditator and symbolizes the true mystic Sudhana of *The Hua-Yen Sutra*. The philosophy and manifestation of their theatre are in alignment with pursuing, practicing, becoming, experiencing, deepening, achieving, and demonstrating Buddhist enlightenment, along with being and performing the presentation/appearance of self-emptiness. All the subjects that are included into my case discussions have certain knowledge of Buddhism (though the amount and depth of perception varies); however, they are by no means the only five artists, who conceive working this way. Samuel Beckett, Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Philip Glass, and Zhang Huan, a Chinese

[1046] Buddha, the founder of Buddhism, is male; his leading disciples, who are deemed the most enlightened ones and respectively play important roles, are without exception all males. In particular, these disciples contributed to documenting, collecting, and interpreting the (oral) teachings of the Buddha in the course of five decades, and transformed and compiled all his preachings into the canonical sutras. In the history of Chinese Zen School, the six patriarchs are males; even in the tradition of Tantric Buddhism, the reincarnations of the fourteen Dalai Lamas are all males.

avant-gardist and performance/conceptual artist based in New York, are the possible candidates for application of my thesis and approach; their artistic manifestation and aesthetic discourse are opposed to what frames and is exemplied in, for example, Gertrude Stein, Pina Bausch, Martha Graham, even Robert Wilson's works.

My dissertation argues that since at least the early 1930s, Zen spirit and Buddhist philosophy have become an alternative aesthetic mindset, a specific gesture or language of performance, and transformed performance (un)consciousness by intermingling with a religious/transcendental epistemology in the practices of both Eastern and Western theatre artists, including Antonin Artaud, John Cage, Tatsumi Hijikata, Kazuo Ohno, and Xingjian Gao. Observing Zen ingredients or Buddhist criteria integrated into theatrical explorations, my arguments echo David E. R. George's investigation of "Buddhism *in* performance" through case studies of Buddhist legacies in different cultural traditions and theatrical practices.[1047] Zen elements and Buddhist principles as themes or unifying threads are used throughout Gao's theatre and literary works, including *Between Life and Death*, *Hades* (*Dark City*), *Dialogue and Rebuttal*, and *Bus Stop*. In his plays and novels, such as *Snow in August*, *The Other Shore*, and *Snow Mountain* that are most obviously based on Zen Buddhism, Gao launches direct dialectical dialogues (and rebuttals) with this spiritual tradition, thereby shaping his works into a modern symbolic Zen theatre. The better-known Zen Buddhist pedagogical tools, especially koan, hua-tou, methodological peculiarities of frightening acts of brutality and violence, along with non-sensical absurd expressions or simultaneous odd juxtapositions of the contradictory (for an evocation of shock experience and letting go of subjective/objective attachments) are employed in the theatrical practices of Artaud, Cage, Butoh, and Gao.

[1047] David E. R. George, *Buddhism as/in Performance: Analysis of Meditation and Theatrical Practices* (New Delhi: D. K. Printworld Ltd., 1999), 63-200.

My argument about Zen spirit and Buddhist epistemological philosophy as particular performance languages or a performance (un)consciousness vibrates with George's conclusion of "Buddhism *as* performance," in which he considers Buddhism to be a theoretical discourse, theatrical dialectic, and epistemology of performance.[1048] Artaud, Cage, Hijikata, Ohno, and Gao all tend to translate/transfer their redemptive awakening from the existential quandaries into the foundation of their aesthetic discourse and performative posture. The existential quandaries that these theatre practitioners realize are comparable to the Buddhist precept of "four wrong thoughts," described as "apprehending what is impermanent as permanent; apprehending what is miserable as happiness; apprehending what is impure as pure, and apprehending what is selfless as having a self."[1049] This particular kind of philosophy of performance is thus crystallized in a form of negative (non-affirmative) aesthetics, which is not unlike an understanding of "life [as] a dream from which only death awakens us."[1050] As the Seventh Dalai Lama expounds through *Songs of Spiritual Change*: "For a consciousness made crazy by sleep, there are dream objects. For those affected by magic, there are horses, elephants, and so forth. Aside from mere appearances, there are no factually established phenomena there—They are only imputed by [mistaken] consciousness."[1051] Therefore, the performative aspects of Buddhism and Zen in their arts are manifested in the theoretical framework through the "four distinctive views or the four seals of the Buddhist doctrines in order for the (four) establishments in enlightened

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[1048] Ibid., 3-60. My italics.
[1049] Chong-An Lin, *Basic Chinese-Tibetan-Sanskrit-English Buddhist Terminology* (Taipei: Torch of Wisdom Publishing, 1991), 30-31.
[1050] I make use of the play title *Life is a Dream* by Calderón De La Barca and its famous quotation to suggest what is reflected in conventional reality is a dream and absolute nothing. Here, the use of the title has a deeper meaning, for the state of dream and life complexed with the issue of death, human beings' free will, and eternal truth are crucial materials and leitmotif subjects permeated throughout Artaud, Hijikata, Ohno, Gao, even Cage's art works.
[1051] The Seventh Dalai Lama, quote in The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard*, 203-04. See also *Songs of Spiritual Change*, translated by Glenn H. Mullin (Ithaca: Snow Lion Publication, 1982), 53-55.

mindfulness."[1052] I also argue that these theatre artists all reveal a revelation in correspondence with the Buddhist doctrinal four seals--"All products (or compound things) are impermanent; all contaminated things are miserable; all phenomena are empty and selfless; nirvana is peace"[1053]--as the point of departure, which not only helps to construct their performative discourses but is also showcased through their theatrical presentations. Their theatrical endeavors begin with the *samsara*, bound by the sphere of conventional divisions, and yearn for liberation. For example, Artaud's approach of idealistic theatrical cruelty is based on a renunciation of relative truth (logicality and rationality) in exchange for ultimate reality (surreality and absoluteness). Also, Hijikata and Ohno's dance of utter darkness strives for killing the subjective self and negating individual identity, in order to summon the transmigration of the dead body and merge with the higher mysterious. In Cage and Gao's practices of non-dualism (not independent realities but in union) in this-worldliness, the profundity of one thusness is fully expressed. All of their theatricality yearns for attaining ultimate reality and aesthetic transcendentality, which dialectially points toward the four virtues or four qualities of Buddhism which are: "Permanence, joy and bliss, personality, and purity,"[1054] consummated in the nirvana state of true suchness.

David George also points out the historical primacy of the Buddhist speculation about the linguistic logic-manipulated tradition and text-oriented cultural mechanism, offering "[an alternative] system, which…exposed the distorting mediation of language and argued for reestablishment of the primacy of experience—the personal, direct, immediate act of

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[1052] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard: Lectures on the Buddhist Path to Peace*, trans. Jeffrey Hopkins (Ithaca, N. Y.: Snow Lion Publications, 1988), 18, 125.
[1053] Ibid., 18, 125-26.
[1054] Chong-An Lin, *Basic Chinese-Tibetan-Sanskrit-English Buddhist Terminology*, 29. In Buddhism, these are the four virtues or four qualities that can only be experienced in the state of "nirvana as peace." Such statements sound paradoxically and dialectically contradictory to what are elucidated by the doctrinal four seals or four noble truths, therefore, in order not to falsify humans' mental consciousness that are less enlightened or to exacerbate their subjective/objective attachments, the Buddhist scriptures remain very cautious (indefinite and unclear) when rendering on the notions concerning permanence, bliss and joy, personality, and purity.

knowing."[1055] I posit that being empty of text, language, abstract discursive thought, and conceptuality, meditation is a reflexive praxis, out of which Buddhist concepts dictating ephemerality, non-abiding (detachment), other modes of subsistence, and the liminal (transcendent) state between (beyond) subjective/objective self, can defy language-based knowledge and confront a dichotomous philosophical system. The Buddhist meditative state can be transformed into the domain of performance if it is understood that contemplation is active, practical, self-reflective, and a process of (ever) becoming rather than deadly stillness, for meditation consciously or unintentionally focuses on "turning ideas into truths, knowledge into experience and experiences into forms of action."[1056]

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players [practitioners]."[1057] Here, I use the metaphor of "all the world's a stage" to indicate that the Buddhist meditative state is not only a performative discourse manifested in ordinary everyday existence but also a performance gesture or an epistemology of performance that points towards the true absolute, when completing a cycle of karmic reincarnation and entering empty nothingness. In other words, through *samatha* and *vipasyana*, a performer (not unlike a meditation practitioner) is able to shift thought into practice, alter cognitive rationality and analytical preconception into direct sensing, perceiving, observing, and being, and nullify/close theological authoritarian representation for a total sacred presence (to use Artaud's idea). The Buddhist practices of *samatha* and *vipasyana* represent an attainment of deep concentration of tranquil abiding[1058] and penetrative insight[1059] that shapes a subjective experience of essential emptiness. *Samatha* and *vipasyana* seem twofold yet are actually interpenetrative; they not only signify the Buddhist meditation techniques (or

[1055] David E. R. George, *Buddhism as/in Performance*, 37.
[1056] Ibid., 57. Part of my analysis is taken from George's thought-provoking ideas presented in this book.
[1057] This metaphor is taken from Act II, Scene VII of Shakespeare's pastoral comedy *As You Like It*.
[1058] It means meditative stabilization, illuminating silence, and compassion.
[1059] It means unimpeded awareness, clarity, silent illumination, and wisdom luminosity.

forms of meditation) which mark the different layers of meditative achievement but also suggest the profundity of emptiness. The states of *samatha* and *vipasyana* represent liminal thresholds that mark a transition from this side-ness to the other realm and connect the descendent, mundane, or artistic revelations with the ascendent, supermundane, or religious enlightenment. As Buddhist performative aspects enveloped with aesthetic mystical experiences, *samatha* and *vipasyana* are particularly exemplified in Artaud's absolute plague and divine cruelty and in Cage's simultaneous contradictions of indeterminate, translucent, poetic/spiritual yet profoundly worldly musicality. They are also transmitted through Gao's flow of language and flux of indescribable sensibility that seeks a transcendental, symbolic Zen state and secularized avant-garde theatre, and are practiced by Ankoku Butoh's metaphysical dance metamorphosis that is identified with the primordial expressiveness. For all of them, theatre is an absolute spectacle of empty trueness made visible through performance epistemology.

I argue that such an alternative mind or "third mind"[1060] marks a new wave of theatrical enlightenment, whose dialectical discourse and aesthetic practice centers on the present and instantaneous, the process of becoming, as well as fluidity, fluctuation, and being/total presence. This alternative aesthetic mindset delves into the experiential terrains of directness, momentariness, immediacy, spontaneity, suddenness, particularity, singularity, triviality, and detail,[1061] in order to unfold a higher truth or poetic transcendence at the expense of relative reality and phenomenal truth projected by calculative perception. The third mind targets the realms of unimpeded luminosity and lucid interpenetration, which is, "an exalted non-dualistic

[1060] Here I use the title of the thematic exhibition that featured American artists contemplating Asian philosophical/religious traditions since the mid-nineteenth century that took place in the Guggenheim Museum in Spring, 2009.
[1061] See Hsueh-Li Cheng, "The Roots of Zen Buddhism", in *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 8, 1981, 451-478.

consciousness."[1062] This new epistemology of performance (un)consciousness also aims for a trans-expressional expression of no-mindedness predicated on the principles of the anti-intellectual (no-thought), the unconventional (non-technique), anti-individuality (no-identity), de-subjectivity (no-self), centerlessness (selflessness), insubstantiality, the pre-linguistic, the a-logical, the irrational (surreal), and liminality (non-form).[1063] Transcendent empty mindedness suggests that this type of performance philosophy not (only) stems from the West or belongs to the East but instead is derived from a state of true reality denoting essential compatibility (absolute nothing), total unanimity (not two and not one), and the Middle-Way illumination of ultimate emptiness. As Nagarjuna states in *The Middle Treatise*: "The cessation of all conceptual games. The true nature of an event is marked by no origination, no extinction; no permanence, no impermanence; no identity, no difference; no arrival, no departure."[1064]

[1062] The Dalai Lama, *The Dalai Lama at Harvard: Lectures on the Buddhist Path to Peace* (1988).
[1063] Part of my analysis is taken from David E. R. George, *Buddhism as/in Performance*.
[1064] Nagarjuna, *Nagarjuna's Twelve Gate Treatise*, translated by Hsueh-Li Cheng (New York: Springer, 1982).

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