
Abstract

“Everything”: The answer Hayao Kawai staked his existence on, and what it reveals of Kawai’s thinking and its issues

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This paper examines Hayao Kawai’s thinking through his answer, “everything,” when asked in an examination at the Jung Institute what symbolized the “self.” Kawai said that the Buddhist statement of “plants, trees, and, land all attaining Buddhahood,” was the reason for his answer and added, of the questions and answers there, that his existence was at stake. This statement reveals the idea that not only people and animals but also plants and inorganic objects have Buddha-nature, an idea developed in connection with the Hongaku (“original enlightenment”) thought developed in the Japanese Tendai school; this characteristically Japanese Buddhist ideology is thought to have influenced Kawai’s thinking as well. It is believed that Kawai emphasized the point of “staking his own existence on it” because he was aware that he was dealing with the disease of being “Japanese.” While addressing this issue, rather than adopting the dualistic idea of separating the self from the other or a monist approach integrating contradictions, Kawai developed a philosophy that emphasized the concept of jinen (nature), which embraces contradictions as they are and expects transformation to occur within them.

Keywords: Hayao Kawai’s thinking, everything, “plants, trees, and land all attaining Buddhahood”, jinen
