# Introduction to the Special Section on Subjectivity in Shin Buddhism

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Welcome to this special section of *Pacific World*! Its theme is subjectivity in Shin Buddhism, so it is permissible and perhaps obligatory to begin, but remain only briefly, in the voice of this first person.

I am a person of intellectual enthusiasms. Ideas have excited me since my freshman year in college, almost sixty-five years ago, when my German teacher, Meyer Krakowski, demonstrated that learning another language opens a door into the space of another culture. In the case of German, the door opens wide into corridors and chambers that are essentially endless across all of Western art, literature, science, and philosophy. Thus the final lines of Goethe's *Faust* project a challenge of endless opportunity for minds and hearts to be fully engaged:

> Alles Vergängliche
> Ist nur ein Gleichnis;
> Das Unzulängliche,
> Hier wird's Ereignis;
> Das Unbeschreibliche,
> Hier ist's getan;
> Das Ewig-Weibliche
> Zieht uns hinan.

I was eighteen years old when I first learned these lines. Six years later I used the last four of them as the epigraph for my doctoral dissertation in biological psychology.[1] This was a choice that I intended to

1. Gordon Bermant, "Regulation of Sexual Contact by Female Rats" (PhD diss., Harvard University, 1961).

be ironic; perhaps it was merely inappropriate. No matter: the poetry remains with me.[2]

Twenty-five years and many physical and psychic miles later, at an Obon celebration in a parking lot of an office condominium in Springfield, Virginia, I encountered a man whose influence on my life has been as great as Meyer Krakowski's: Kenryu T. Tsuji (1919–2004), former Bishop of the Buddhist Churches of America and, in 1986, the resident minister at Ekoji Buddhist Temple.

I have described that initial meeting with Reverend Tsuji elsewhere.[3] It is enough to say here that he opened doors to a life of awakening fully discerned by Shinran Shōnin in thirteenth-century Japan, just as Mr. Krakowski opened doors to the classicism and Romanticism that flowered in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe. Rare is it to meet such teachers; yet now I have met them.

In 1991 I fell enthusiastically under the spell of a book published that year by three authors possessing broad scholarship and deep insight: Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch. Their book, *The Embodied Mind*, drew on three distinct intellectual traditions to construct an understanding of consciousness as a fundamental fact of life and a trainable skill. The three traditions are neuroscience, at all levels of granularity; Continental philosophy, especially the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty, which emphasizes the inextricability of mind and world from each other and refuses to give causal priority to either one; and Buddhism, first as Abhidharma, and then as the Madhyamika brought forward, through Nishitani's critique of Nietzsche's nihilism, to an existential appreciation of groundlessness that is more a matter of practice than of theory or doctrine. When a label is required for the "big picture" that emerges, the word of choice is *enaction,* as a form of cognitive science with unique characteristics.[4]

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2. Translations of the set of eight lines have been diverse and controversial among translators (e.g., Paul Weigand, "Problems in Translating the Song of the Chorus Mysticus in Goethe's Faust II," *German Quarterly* 33, no. 1 [1960]: 22–27). One English reading of the last four lines is "The indescribable is done here; the eternal feminine leads us onward." Hence the ironic connection to my dissertation.

3. Gordon Bermant, *Seeing What Is Already There* (New York: American Buddhist Study Center, 2005).

4. "We have therefore chosen to follow Nishitani's lead by building a bridge between cognitive science and mindfulness/awareness as a specific practice

I have been grateful for the opportunity, beginning in 1994, to teach a seminar at the University of Pennsylvania devoted to the worldview presented by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch. Then in 2010 I started to teach a related seminar, online, for the Institute of Buddhist Studies; my course is one of three offered at IBS under the title of Psychological Aspects of Buddhism. The emphasis in my seminar is again on re-joining the aspects of the world that have been put asunder in the "West" since the days of Descartes, creating the notorious mind-body problem.

For this seminar, however, Buddhism is the primary focus of attention rather than one of three co-equal world views systematically engaged together to understand consciousness in the world.

The Institute of Buddhist Studies is a Shin Buddhist seminary. Naturally, therefore, the relation of Shin Buddhism to a well-conceived psychology/cognitive science should have an important place in the seminar's syllabus. Achieving that reasonable result has not been easy for me; it remains a very much a work in progress. Because I personally sought refuge under the Shin umbrella in 1986 and still find it to be raining outside, my teaching skill is unavoidably affected by my limited dharmic alertness, or in another phrase, the murky atmosphere of my religious subjectivity.

It was unsurprising, therefore, that I enthusiastically embraced the theme announced for the 2015 Conference of the International Association of Shin Buddhist Studies: Subjectivity in Pure Land Buddhism. Surely I could find some fluid there to clean my windshield. I attended the meeting, presented a paper of my own,[5] and reflected on

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that embodies an open-ended approach to experience. Furthermore, since we cannot embody groundlessness in a scientific culture without reconceptualizing science itself as beyond the need of foundations, we have followed through the inner logic of research in cognitive science to develop the enactive approach. This approach should serve to demonstrate that a commitment to science need not include as a premise a commitment to objectivism or to subjectivism" (Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, and Eleanor Rosch, *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience*, rev. ed. [Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016], 242–243). See also Robert A. Wilson and Lucia Foglia, "Embodied Cognition," in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed June 25, 2017, https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2017/entries/embodied-cognition.

5. Gordon Bermant, "Already but Not Yet: Calling and Called in Religious Time," in *Being Called: Scientific, Secular, and Sacred Perspectives*, ed. David B.

my experience. The meeting was an eye-opener for me, but not in the way that I anticipated. My reactions and responses to what I learned and didn't learn there became part of the web of causes and conditions that have produced this special issue of *Pacific World*.[6]

I asked the contributors to address themselves directly, subjectively perhaps, to the topic of subjectivity in Shin Buddhism. All responded in good faith while remaining true to their own scholarly commitments. What follows here are very brief introductions that aim to weave the contributions together on the frame of our topic.

## SHIN SUBJECTIVITY: THE CASE OF SHINRAN

Shinran was not the first Shin Buddhist, in the same sense that Siddhartha Gautama was not the first Buddhist or Jesus of Nazareth the first Christian. We should clearly distinguish between the life and profound insights of an originating genius and the subsequent propagation by followers who were inspired by the originator and the originator's teaching. The organized church is not the dharma, as the bottle is not the beer. But just as truly, neither beer nor dharma lasts long without means of protection and conveyance. Bottles and churches are good at that.

Some religious people still desire to go to the source, to search for authenticity in the historicity of an originator. Representatives of churches respond to that desire in various ways; call it theology? Perhaps there is more to the search than theologians can provide. Perhaps there is desire to see the founder's insights from the inside, as it were: to know *what it was like* to be Buddha during the watches of the night under the tree, to be Jesus at the moment of a miracle, on the cross or in the cave, or to be Shinran at the times of his visions and *shinjin*'s arising. This is to seek the religious subjectivity of an

Yaden, Theo D. McCall, and Harold J. Ellens (Santa Barbara, CA: Prager, 2015), 243–260.

6. Professor Richard K. Payne of IBS figured importantly in the causal process. It was to Richard that I voiced questions and concerns in conversations after the 2015 conference. At a certain point, he said something like, "Well if you think it's that important, why don't you edit a special issue of *Pacific World* devoted to it?" He was in a unique position to facilitate the effort. And here we are.

originating genius.[7] That is a very tall order of course, and perhaps an impossible one when the originator lived long ago in a very different physical and cultural setting.

In Shinran's case, we are fortunate to have a large corpus of his writing and an excellent group of translators and interpreters into English. Professor Kenneth Tanaka of Musashino University has been a leader in this group for many years, and it is an honor for us to open this set of contributions with his article "Subjectivity at the Heart of Shin Spirituality and Doctrine." Tanaka begins by identifying three dimensions of subjectivity: seeking, deciding, and awakening. And for each dimension he locates textual sources informing the idea of the dimension with richer meaning. His scholarship covers Buddhist texts from very early Pali examples (*Dhammapada*, *Sutta Nipāta*), through the *Kālāma-sutta* and *Mahāyāna Nirvāṇa-sūtra*, right up to Shinran's own writing and the *Tannishō.* The breadth of coverage illuminates an important distinction that can be puzzling to serious students of Buddhism, namely the distinction between "self" as Brahmanical *attā* or *ātman*, which the Buddha denied, and "self" as the *nātho* or *nātthas* of the *Dhammapada*, translated as "mainstay," "refuge," "protector," etc.

Tanaka argues that it is this sense of self can become a personal focal point and be strengthened with mindful practice. And mindful practice is, exactly, active subjectivity. It is to this aspect of our nature that the Buddha directed his final admonition "make yourself the light."

Tanaka concludes his article with quotations from Shinran's letters in the *Mattōshō* as well as *Gutoku's Notes*. From the notes, he observes that Shinran drew on several of the seven patriarchs to support the claim that to entrust totally in the Primal Vow is to become "a definitely settled bodhisattva." On the use of this term, Tanaka says, "I wish to underscore 'bodhisattva' since by any standard within Buddhist thought, a bodhisattva denotes an attainment of a higher awakened state." And from the letters, Tanaka refers to number twenty, in which

7. The phrase "what it is like" to point to the qualities of a certain experience became a term of art when Thomas Nagel wrote "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" in 1974 (*Philosophical Review* 83: 435–450). It has served usefully, even though some commentators have been scornful of it (e.g., Douglas R. Hofstadter and Daniel C. Dennett, *The Mind's I: Fantasies and Reflections on Self & Soul* [New York: Basic Books, 2001], 403–414).

Shinran chastises followers who confuse Amida's universal vow with a license to commit evil; this error must be overcome. The morality that is intrinsic to Shinshū arises from the realization of the truth and power of the vow, as an explicit recognition by the practitioner, a "hearing" of the truth. Truly hearing the vow creates a virtuous cycle of rejecting evil spiraling into even fuller entrusting. This is the complex subjectivity of the highly alert practitioner, combining simultaneous recognition of one's own flawed self and the wide-open invitation to go beyond it.

The case of Shinran continues with a beautiful evocation of Shinran's subjectivity by Patti Nakai in her article "The Subjective View of the Student: Aṅgulimāla and Myōhōbō." Nakai traces close parallels between two narratives in which would-be assassins are thwarted by the overwhelming imperturbability of awakened beings. The Pali canon tells the story of serial killer Aṅgulimāla ("Finger Necklace"), who is stopped in his tracks as he stalks Śākyamuni Buddha, while *Godenshō* recounts the encounter between Shinran and Myōhōbō, who confronted the Shōnin while he was seated in contemplation. The minds of the masters are at rest, filled with compassion for all sentient beings. They welcome their would-be assassins from that quiet place; the assailants just stop in their tracks; they become transformed.

Nakai emphasizes the totality and immediacy of the assailants' transformations and asks us to reflect on the scenes as if they had been captured by security cameras. The assailants throw down their weapons and fall to their knees, but the masters *seem to have done nothing at all.* Nakai notes that this is understandable only if we consider the minds of the attackers as well as the minds of the masters. These episodes are extraordinary lessons in both subjectivity and intersubjectivity. The scenes are noteworthy, even sacred, because of what does *not happen* rather than what the camera captures. Nakai's article has presented a wonderful account of how, in a profound but unexpected way, absence softens the heart.

Concluding the first section is my contribution, "The Nature and Importance of Subjectivity in Shin Buddhism." The first part lays out the unfortunate history of "subjectivity" in Anglo-American usage; for many years, like Rodney Dangerfield, it got no respect. But it is making a comeback, driven by the rise of "consciousness studies," themselves benefitting from the rapid growth of neuroscience and related technologies. Another boost for subjectivity is a growing appreciation of

the depth and benefits that mindfulness practice brings to its practitioners; this, in turn, can segue into an appreciation of phenomenology, a way of doing philosophy that was for many years available only in very difficult German and French. That limitation is now falling away.[8]

The second part of my paper is an appreciation of a scholar who has made a case for the fundamental subjectivity of Shinran's teaching: the late Professor Tamaro Shigaraki, in his book *Heart of the Shin Buddhist Path: A Life of Awakening* (Somerville, MA: Wisdom Publications, 2013). Shigaraki contrasts Shinran's religious subjectivity with the objectivity of Rennyo Shōnin's teaching at the end of the fifteenth century. It was Rennyo, of course, who guided the church through extraordinarily difficult times and facilitated its subsequent growth.[9] The distinction between Shin subjectivity and objectivity resonates today in arguments that are fairly characterized as traditional versus modern forms. Perhaps surprisingly, Shinran's teaching of subjectivity, as explicated for example by Shigaraki, Tanaka, and Nakai, becomes the modern form, in contrast to Rennyo's traditionalism, which is chronologically two centuries younger.

## BODIES AND EMBODIMENT

> This is the era of the body, particularly of the brain.... Increasingly the prevailing assumption in psychology, cognitive science, and many other fields is that the mind (and hence experience) is just the brain and that the gold standard for studying anything human is to observe changes in the brain.... But *body* is not necessarily the same as *embodied:* What is that body that is under scrutiny?[10]

German distinguishes between two words for *body*, marking a distinction that is not as economically noted in English. The noun *Körper*

8. See, for example, Shaun Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, *The Phenomenological Mind*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012); and Evan Thompson, *Mind in Life: Biology, Phenomenology, and the Sciences of Mind* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2010).

9. James C. Dobbins, *Jōdo Shinshū: Shin Buddhism in Medieval Japan* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1989).

10. Eleanor Rosch, "Introduction to the Revised Edition," in *The Embodied Mind: Cognitive Science and Human Experience* by Francisco J. Varela, Eleanor Rosch, and Evan Thompson, rev. ed. (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2016), xxxvi.

points to the body objectively considered. For example, the Wiktionary entry for *Körper* includes drawings of male and female figures with the common German names for major body parts. The word is also used, as it is in English, to cover some classes of inanimate and abstract objects (e.g., body of water, heavenly bodies, body of work). The noun *Leib*, on the other hand, has no exact English equivalent, especially in its use as appropriated for phenomenology by Husserl:

For Husserl, the body [*Leib*] is not an extended physical substance in contrast to a non-extended mind, but a lived "here" from which all "there's" are "there"; a locus of distinctive sorts of sensations that can only be felt firsthand by the embodied experiencer concerned; and a coherent system of movement possibilities allowing us to experience every moment of our situated, practical-perceptual life as pointing to "more" than our current perspective affords).[11]

*Leib* is thus the "lived body" rather than the conceptualized body. This is, moreover, just the beginning of the distinction. Gallagher, for example, makes a thorough distinction between *body schema* and *body image,* the schema being the structure that comprises fundamental, pre-reflective awareness (*primordial subjectivity*), while the image is the reflective, evaluated, emotionally freighted image that each of us has of our physicality.[12] This distinction is important but not central to our present concern for religious subjectivity. What is central is the essential subjectivity of body as *Leib*. Under normal circumstances, it is the largely unnoticed "felt context" within which we live our lives. Bringing it into focus is an accomplishment of mindfulness and other contemplative practices, including disciplined constitutive phenomenology.[13]

The next two papers in our issue exemplify approaches to religious experience that introduce both *Körper* and *Leib*.

David Yaden, Mostafa Meleis, Andrew Newberg, Dave Vago, and Justin McDaniel bring diverse disciplinary perspectives in "Cross-Cultural Contributions to Psychology and Neuroscience: Self, Mind,

11. Elizabeth A. Behnke, "Edmund Husserl: Phenomenology of Embodiment," *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed July 4. 2017, http://www.iep.utm.edu.

12. Gallagher, *How the Body Shapes the Mind*.

13. E.g., Joona Taipale, *Phenomenology and Embodiment: Husserl and the Constitution of Subjectivity* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2014).

and Mindfulness in Buddhism." In their approach, the centrality of subjectivity in practice is taken for granted rather than made problematic. They begin with early Buddhism and *abhidhamma* (Skt. *abhidharma*) to clarify and emphasize the distinction between *attā* (Skt. *ātman*) and *citta*, or "self" and "mind." Clarifying this distinction becomes especially important in research that searches for neural and other biophysical correlates of psychological states and traits. In the early Buddhism of the five aggregates (P. *khandhas,* Skt. *skandhas*), the aggregate of materiality (*rūpa)* is, approximately anyway, the category of existence that includes the body as *Körper,* that is, the body in the physical world. Importantly for our modern understanding, this is also the *medical body,* the *soma* of psychosomatic medicine. This understanding, in turn, illuminates the rationale behind the extraordinary growth of interest in contemplative practices, especially mindfulness (P. *sati*, Skt. *smṛti*) as simultaneously religious and secular. The authors sketch a brief history of mindfulness. They point to the importance of the modern Burmese teachers who brought mindfulness practice forward for lay Buddhists, and they comment with favor on the widespread growth of mindfulness practice in the form of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction.[14] Finally, they give an example of how mindfulness theory might be furthered. The authors' most general conclusion is that Buddhism has had positive effects on theory and method in religious studies, psychology, and neuroscience. Their article thus exemplifies a multi-level analysis and interdisciplinary collaboration that some scholars recommend as the most productive model for progress in the field.[15]

In his paper "Constructing the Self in Pure Land Buddhism: The Role of Ritualized, Embodied Activity in a Social Context," Richard K. Payne highlights embodiment in a different fashion, by bringing phenomenological and anthropological insights to bear on important questions about Jōdo Shinshū in the modern American setting. He shows how the phenomenologies of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty

14. E.g., Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living: Using the Wisdom of Your Body and Mind to Face Stress, Pain, and Illness*, rev. updated ed. (New York: Bantam Books, 2013).

15. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park, "Recent Progress and Core Issues in the Science of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality," In *Handbook of the Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, ed. Raymond F. Paloutzian and Crystal L. Park (New York: Guilford Press, 2013).

illuminate otherwise obscure distinctions between the mental and the physical. He describes the embodiment of religion in traditional performance and dancing by villagers in north India. And drawing on a conceptual scheme developed by David Morgan, Payne shows how American Shin Buddhism creates an environment in which religious embodiment plays out along six material dimensions: shaping, collectivizing, augmenting, transforming, housing, and projecting. Both *Körper* and *Leib* are the bodies in play. The traditionally strict distinction between mental and physical is no longer useful, because "the body" and consciousness occupy a third position: "both/and" or "between." So we learn that an initial emphasis on the material culture of our religion opens into opportunities to understand how American Shin operates subjectively, intersubjectively, and objectively.

## SUBJECTIVITY FINESSED?

In his article "The Stories We Tell: The Study and Practice of Jōdo Shinshū Buddhism," Scott Mitchell presents a case for setting subjectivity aside in the study of religious life. Mitchell is skeptical about the success of efforts to clarify subjectivity, but more importantly, he contends that it is our behavior that gets closer to the core of religious identity than does detailed attention to religious beliefs or other nonbehavioral religious states and experiences.

Two forms of religious behavior are particularly salient: ritual and narrative, and it is to narrative that Mitchell turns most of his attention here. He provides a definition of narrative that moves it from a mere "ordering of facts and events" to a more significant, yet abstract role: "the *process* by which one constructs and orders these facts and events into a specific story." Much follows from this definition, and it is some of the features of narrative that Mitchell spells out with examples from Jōdo Shinshū *gāthās* and historical narratives, particularly those that interpret the life and character of Shinran.

Both explicitly and implicitly, the scholarly commitments Mitchell avows represent an *externalization* of the subject matter appropriate to religious studies, whether Buddhist or otherwise. In the text associated with footnote 7 above, I referred to the phrase "what it is like" as a label often applied to the quality of experience, whether religious or otherwise. It is this feature of religious life which is bracketed, held in abeyance, by exclusive reliance on studies of religious ritual and narrative. There is a considerable history of support for this way of studying

religion. The eminent Dutch psychologist Jacob Belzen stated the case forcefully for the psychology of religion:

> This needs to be done from a scholarly, distant perspective, remaining as personally detached as possible, as is required in all of the Religionswissenschaften, those scholarly disciplines dealing with "religion" such as the history, sociology, anthropology, archaeology, and economics of religion.[16]

Here, then, is a discipline of religious studies intentionally remaining at arm's length from its content, so as not to become personally attached, to escape the risk of subjectivity in the pejorative sense that is described in my article later in the issue. S*ubjectivity as autobiography* is doubly discredited, both because it seeks an account of experience and because the experience-seeker is also the subsequent reporter.

## SUBJECTIVITY AS AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND THE FUTURE OF AMERICAN SHIN BUDDHISM

The virtues of externalization proposed by Professor Belzen find their foil in the life and work of the Theravāda monk Ñāṇavīra Thera, born Harold Musson (1920–1965).[17] A volume of his collected works begins as follows:

> The scholar's essentially horizontal view of things, seeking connexions in space and time, and his historical approach to the texts, disqualify him from any possibility of understanding a Dhamma that the Buddha himself has called akālika, 'timeless'. Only in a vertical view, straight down in to the abyss of his own personal existence, is a man capable of apprehending the perilous insecurity of his situation; and only a man who does apprehend this is prepared to listen to the Buddha's Teaching.[18]

This is strong stuff, and we need to reflect on it rather than simply react to it. First, of course, we must wonder about the implication of gender-specificity in his exhortation. But not for long; we are justified

16. Jacob A. Belzen, *Towards Cultural Psychology of Religion: Principles, Approaches, Applications* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2010), 4.

17. For a heartfelt yet clear-eyed appreciation of Ñāṇavīra Thera by an esteemed Buddhist teacher, see Stephen Batchelor, *Confession of a Buddhist Atheist* (New York: Spiegel & Grau, 2010).

18. Ñāṇavīra Thera, *Clearing the Path: Writings of Ñāṇavīra Thera* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Path Press, 1987), 5.

to conclude that the exhortation is directed to *all* who would listen to the dharma, to apprehend the perilous insecurity of our existential situation. Second, apprehending the entanglement of one's life in *saṃsāra*, in the age of *mappō*, is not the same thing as sitting down to write about it, or even to discuss it with others. These are separate moves, which must be governed by social and cultural considerations if we are to have any hope of being understood. Indeed, I believe it is possible for one to encounter the abyss of existence, including one's profound spiritual incompetence, and conclude that contemplation in silence about it is the best course. Alternatively, one might transform existential angst into public expression in ways that do not explicitly articulate the source of the psychic energy.[19]

And yet, there is an intimate relationship between religious experience and subsequent explicit autobiographical expression, whether as confession, revelation, evangelizing, testimony of healing, or otherwise. There is in such expressions an *avowal,* a claim to authenticity, which cannot be matched in the arm's length discourse of disinterested scholarship.

In December 2016, Mary Dunn published a critique of the status of religious studies scholarship, stating her position unequivocally: "Against those who would argue for the reformation of religious studies as a species of the natural sciences, this article contends that there is something about religion that exceeds what can be observed in the material conditions of its existence."[20] Dunn argued that in their research reports, scholars should interweave several incommensurate narratives, challenging the reader to encounter realities of religion that exceed material dimensions. Dunn urged authors to include

19. For example, consider Edward Munch's famous 1893 painting "The Scream." An authoritative source says: "Here, however, in depicting his own morbid experience, he has let go, and allowed the foreground figure to become distorted by the subjectivized flow of nature; the scream could be interpreted as expressing the agony of the obliteration of human personality by this unifying force." The power or benefit of the painting is hard to objectify, of course, but perhaps it is worthwhile to note that it sold in 2012 for more than $119 million, at that time the most ever paid for a work of art (Edvard Munch, *The Scream, 1893*, accessed July 10, 2017, https://www.edvardmunch.org/the-scream.jsp).

20. Mary Dunn, "What Really Happened: Radical Empiricism and the Historian of Religion," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 84 (2016): 882.

*auto-biography* among the narratives: the scholarly author should bring a first-person account into her publications along with a variety of other narrative styles.

I applaud Dunn's arguments. And I am honored to conclude our special issue with a frankly autobiographical article by Galen Amstutz: "Subjectivities, Fish Stories, Toxic Beauties: Turning the Wheel beyond 'Buddhism'?" Amstutz is perhaps uniquely qualified to write such an article. He has published traditional scholarly work, as in his book *Interpreting Amida: History and Orientalism in the Study of Pure Land Buddhism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1997). He has taught Buddhism in the US and Japan and has served as a BCA Resident Minister and as Coordinator of the Reischauer Institute of Japanese Studies at Harvard. He has thought long and deeply about Shin Buddhism in its historical homeland and its transplanted presence in the US, and in his own unique, deeply personal style, he expresses concern for its future given his understanding of its past and present circumstances. He weaves his concern into his narrative as it developed in the multiple complicated personal pathways of his life and career to date. I am certain that not all *Pacific World* readers will agree with his arguments and conclusions. But sooner or later, the issues that he identifies will need to be addressed directly by the leaders among us, and, one hopes, with all the wisdom and compassion that is available to us in the world.