

3. Report

Write a report on your study experience, addressing the matters listed below. Your report should be around 500 words in English and completed in the space of this form. Submit your report form file by e-mail.

Matters to include in your report: (a) Academic outcomes (how participation in this program affected your motivation, university study and international understanding, and what interests and plans you developed for further study in the future); (b) Your experiences in Kyoto University; (c) The content of the program; (d) The impact of the program on your career plans. Please attach reference materials or digital photo to show your activities if available.

*The information you provide may be included in Re-discovering Japan Project reports, or published in printed materials or on our website in pages dealing with the outcomes of programs offered by the Asian Studies Unit and/or Kyoto University. Please ensure that your report only includes content which is publishable in light of privacy considerations and the need to safeguard personal information. Also note that depending on the publication format, we may need to edit parts of your report.

Zen and the Good Life – 10/11/2013 to 18/01/2014

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I first heard of the opportunity to study at Kyoto University in March 2013, Prof Deguchi visited NUS to introduce the establishment of a Centre for Asian Analytic Philosophy within KUASU. I was overjoyed to hear of the chance to study at the sacred ground that birthed Kyoto School philosophy. The actual experience has far exceeded my expectations. My academic background is in European history and Anglo-American Analytic philosophy, but I am writing my Master's thesis on Zen. Prof Priest's seminar series on Analytic Buddhist philosophy applied concepts and issues in contemporary analytic philosophy, such as non-classical logic, metaphysics and epistemology, to a wide range of Buddhist ideas, from early Buddhism all the way to Zen. Some of the ideas such as the applications of para-consistent logic were completely new to me, but even more familiar topics like Buddhist metaphysics and epistemology were given a fresh treatment which greatly enhanced my understanding. I also gained a fuller appreciation of how to approach Buddhism from an analytic standpoint, which will be invaluable to completing my graduate studies as well as in my future writing. Academics aside, the seminar series brought together students from Taiwan, Korea and various parts of Japan from different specializations and levels of study. Philosophy can be a very cloistered discipline and it was delightful to study alongside, interact with and learn from students across East Asia. I think we all basked in Prof Deguchi's vision of an Asian Analytic Philosophy program that is truly Pan-Asian, and will become some of its strongest advocates back home and throughout our academic endeavours. Aside from Prof Priest's seminar series, I was also pleasantly surprised to be introduced to Contemporary Indian philosophy here, having attended as well as presented at a reading group on 20th Century Indian philosopher KC Bhattacharyya's *Subject as Freedom*. I was very impressed by the calibre of my Japanese peers. They made light work of a very terse and complicated text. But I suspect it is their warm hospitality and merry companionship that I will remember most of all. I am also honoured to have the opportunity to attend Prof Deguchi's lectures and read his work on Nishitani. I have always admired Nishitani's philosophy, especially his work on transcending nihilism through emptiness. It was only during my visit here though that I could full-heartedly immerse in study of his work. Both Prof Deguchi's exegesis and Nishitani's ideas were very refreshing. Prior to this, I had never experienced philosophy like this, with poetry, aesthetics and feeling sitting alongside conceptual distinctions. I will certainly continue to explore Nishitani and the rest of the Kyoto school philosophers when I return to NUS. I look forward to February when Prof Deguchi and many Kyoto graduate students will visit NUS for more seminars on Asian Analytic Philosophy.