

Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific



The
Buddha
&
Jesus



An anthology of articles by Jesuits engaged in
Buddhist Studies and Inter-religious Dialogue

Edited by Cyril Veliath S.J.

A Publication of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

**The
Buddha
&
Jesus**

**An Anthology of Articles by Jesuits engaged in
Buddhist Studies and Inter-religious Dialogue**

Edited by

Cyril Veliath, SJ

**Faculty of Global Studies
Sophia University, Tokyo, Japan**

**Published on behalf of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific by
Tulana Jubilee Publications,
Tulana Research Centre for Encounter and Dialogue,
Kelaniya, Sri Lanka
2015**

First Published in 2015
Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific 2015

ISBN: 978-955-8459-10-2
Cover, Page Design, Layout and Typesetting: Sudath Attanayake

Published on behalf of the Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific by:
Tulana Jubilee Publications,
Tulana Research Centre for Encounter and Dialogue,
Kelaniya, Sri Lanka

Printed by Karunaratne and Sons (Pvt) Ltd.
67, UDA Industrial Estate, Katuwana Road, Homagama, Sri Lanka
Fax: 94 11 285520, Email: info@karusons.com



“If we go in search of other people, other cultures, other ways of thinking, other religions, we come out of ourselves and begin that beautiful adventure that is called ‘dialogue.’ Dialogue is very important for one’s maturity, because in relation with other people, relations with other cultures, also in healthy relations with other religions, one grows; grows, matures.”

Pope Francis



“The problems we face today, violent conflicts, destruction of nature, poverty, hunger and so on, are human-created problems which can be resolved through human effort, understanding and the development of a sense of brotherhood and sisterhood. We need to cultivate a universal responsibility for one another and the planet we share.”

Dalai Lama



“When we undertake interreligious dialogue, our aim must be to help one another mutually to combine and direct our energies towards [such] global problems and opportunities, for the benefit of a more human, more just, more caring and more merciful world.”

*Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, SJ
Superior General of the Society of Jesus*

Contents

Message	7
<i>Fr. Mark Raper, SJ</i>	
Editor's Note and Introduction	8
<i>Cyril Veliath, SJ</i>	
Articles	
1. Reflections on Some Psychological Aspects of Zen	16
<i>Jerry Cusumano, SJ</i>	
2. An Introduction to the Daily Ritual Prayer of Shingon Devotees	34
<i>Thierry-Jean Roboüam, SJ</i>	
3. The Relation between Dharmākara Bodhisattva and Amitābha: Structure of the Dharma Body of Buddha as a Compassionate Means of Salvation	45
<i>Yuichi Tsunoda, SJ</i>	
4. Further Along the Exploring Path of Dialogue between Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism: The Itinerary of the Soul toward God into the Godhead and the Enlightenment toward Absolute Nothingness	53
<i>Joseph Ng Swee Chun, SJ</i>	
5. Dialogue with the Buddhists of China	79
<i>Christian Cochini, SJ</i>	
6. The Debate in China on Humanistic Buddhism	87
<i>Thierry Meynard, SJ</i>	
7. Jesus Christ Encountering Gautama Buddha: Buddhist-Christian Relations in South Korea	105
<i>Bernard Senécal, SJ</i>	

8. A Radical Orthopraxis of Theravada Buddhism: Buddhadāsa’s Dhammic Essentialism	135
<i>In-gun Kang, SJ</i>	
9. The Dilemma of the “Supreme” Zen Meditation Method in Korea and Rethinking the Zen Master Seungsahn	156
<i>Pastor Yong Un Choe</i>	
10. An Inculturation of Faith in Practice: The Thai Catholic Use of Royal Words	169
<i>Wajira Nampet, SJ</i>	
11. Contemporary Buddhist Social and Political Activism in Asia	192
<i>Noel Sheth, SJ</i>	
12. Nirvana, as the Unconditioned Dharma, according to the Sarvastivada School and their Controversies	212
<i>Paulus Agung Wijayanto, SJ</i>	
13. Sacred Time for a Sacred Sojourn in the Mystical Age	220
<i>Jojo M. Fung, SJ</i>	
14. The Great Spirit in Indigenous Peoples’ Lives and the Future of Pneumatology	235
<i>Jojo M. Fung, SJ</i>	
15. The Buddha’s Psycho-Spirituality at the Service of Ignatian Spirituality ...	248
<i>S. Lawrence, SJ</i>	
16. Buddhist Education and its Relevance Today	275
<i>S. Lawrence, SJ</i>	
17. Index Reference Words	278

Message of Fr. Mark Raper SJ

President

Jesuit Conference of Asia Pacific

Despite vast differences between Christianity and Buddhism, and a variety of traditions within each, their points of similarity are fascinating and their study can be immensely fruitful, as this collection of studies reveals. For Christians (indeed for each of the religions in the Abrahamic tradition) a personal God who is engaged in mankind's story is central. Belief in a personal God may not be central to the Buddha's teachings. For Buddhists and Christians what is common is the human journey, and the desire to assist each person's own path to inner conversion and spiritual maturity.

The essays in this anthology do not represent a comprehensive overview of either Buddhism or Christianity, but rather they are reflections personal to each author. They are the fruit of a group of Christian, for the most part Jesuit, scholars of Buddhism, who live in various parts of Asia and who meet each year to share their experiences of engaging in dialogue with Buddhists and with the way of the Buddha, as it is lived in contemporary Asia.

In order that this conversation may be shared and reach others, we offer these studies by way of invitation, in the spirit of hospitality, gratitude and joy, common to both the Buddhist and Christian traditions. The venerable Gautama bids everyone welcome. He is congenial, conciliatory, not supercilious, and accessible to all, while Christ himself has declared, "Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you."

Both the Buddha and Jesus outline a path of detachment from self, and encourage compassion towards others. In that way, instead of centering on self, they urge us to create energy through giving fully in mercy towards others. Both are concerned with how we can live our daily lives and deal with our desires and experiences of love and hate, fear and sorrow, pride and passion, struggle and defeat.

We respect how the lives and customs of millions of people, especially in Asia, are guided by the Buddha's teachings. Through history, religion is at times exploited as a factor in conflicts. Asia is no stranger to this phenomenon. The names of the Buddha or Jesus can be exploited for political or material ends. This unacceptable reality only makes a deeper study of the true teaching more urgently needed.

Thich Nhat Han has written that whenever Buddhists and Christians who meditate and practice mindfulness come together, Jesus and the Buddha are in conversation. We hope that this collection of accounts will help to further this conversation at many levels.

Mark Raper SJ
October 2015

Editor's Note and Introduction

By

Cyril Veliath, SJ

Although it was the Jesuit Conference of the Asia Pacific that sponsored the publication of this book, yet I must nonetheless insist that right from the very outset, the Jesuit Buddhist scholars of the Asia Pacific Conference have worked in collaboration with their counterparts of the South Asian Conference, and have in consequence grown deeply indebted to them in a multitude of ways. Here special mention should be made of Fr. Aloysius Pieris of Sri Lanka, Fr. Noel Sheth and Fr. Eucharist Lawrence Soosai of India, and Fr. Gregory Sharkey of the New England Jesuit Province, who is currently associated with the work of Buddhist Christian dialogue in Nepal.

This book is the outcome of decisions taken at a meeting of the Asia Pacific Conference (which at the time was referred to as the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania) that was held in Manila in 2009. At that meeting the value of dialogue with Buddhism was underscored, and with a view to evoking a keener interest in Buddhism among our younger generation of Jesuits, a decision was taken to organize a workshop on Buddhist Christian dialogue in the city of Chiang Mai in Thailand. This workshop was subsequently conducted at the Seven Fountains Spirituality Center in Chiang Mai from April (23-24), 2010, and the participants who included Fr. Mark Raper were ten in number, including two from India.

The success of this workshop proved to be the start. In the ensuing years, similar workshops were conducted in Sri Lanka, Japan, Nepal, and China, and currently preparations are underway to hold the workshop for 2015 in Bodhgaya in India, the city where the Buddha is believed to have attained enlightenment. In all these workshops the participants presented scholarly papers, engaged in fruitful discussions with Buddhist monks and believers, visited temples and other historical sites, and in general amplified greatly their horizons regarding inter-religious dialogue. The number of our participants too has since then witnessed a sharp increase. Currently a total of 56 individuals are recipients of our communications, and not all are Jesuits. They include a Korean Christian clergyman, namely, the Reverend Yong Un Choe, and a Buddhist Nun from China, the Venerable Cetana. It is my earnest hope that ever more of our younger people, both Jesuits and non-Jesuits, come to realize the significance and worth of the study of Buddhism, a religion that constitutes the principal faith of the vast majority of the inhabitants of East and Southeast Asia. While estimates may vary concerning the exact number of Buddhists in the world, they are in general believed to constitute 6% of the world's population, thereby making Buddhism the world's fourth largest religion in terms of numbers.

The authors of the ensuing articles hail from a wide diversity of nations and provinces, both Asian and non-Asian. They are individuals who have devoted their lives to imbibing the teachings of love and harmony of the Lord Buddha, teachings that more often than not are in perfect accord with those of our Lord Jesus Christ. I shall in the following paragraphs present a brief description of each of them, in conformity with the order in which their articles appear in this publication.

Fr. Jerry Cusumano obtained a doctorate in Counseling Psychology from Arizona State University in 1990, after which he taught counseling in the Department of Psychology of Sophia University until 2015. He also served as Director of the Student Counseling Center from 1991 to 2008. In Japan he is licensed as a Clinical Psychologist (*Rinsho Shinri Shi*) and Industrial Counselor (*Sangyo Counselor*). He has practiced Zen since 1977 under the direction of the Roshi (Yamada Koun, Kubota Ji'un, Yamada Ryouun) of the Sanbô Kyôdan (re-named Sanbo-Zen in 2015), and he has also been directing the Zen group of the Arirang Free Institute in Korea once a year since 1995.

Fr. Thierry Jean Robouam lectures on Philosophy and Comparative Religion at Sophia University (both in the undergraduate and graduate sections), and also teaches a course on: Religious Encounters: “A Buddhist perspective,” for the Graduate program at Koyasan University. He received his doctorate from the Jesuit School of Theology at Berkeley in the field of Experiential Theology on Buddhist and Christian dialogue, and recently translated a book of the Acharya Ryojun Shionuma, who is known in Japan due to his having completed during the past ten years two of the most difficult practices of the Shugendo tradition, namely the One-thousand Days Trekking Practice on Mt. Omine and the Four-fold Renouncing Practice. Fr. Robouam’s research focuses on the esoteric traditions of contemporary Japanese Buddhism and their responses to globalization, and he is especially keen on revealing alternate models to neo-liberal capitalism using Mahayana Buddhist pedagogy, in order to discover in entangled structures the silent potential for transformation and liberation. His research does not focus solely on elitist Buddhism as he pays much attention to the practices of lay Buddhists as well, and hence we have his presentation of Buddhist Shingon prayers in this publication.

Fr. Yuichi Tsunoda is a Japanese priest and member of the Japan Jesuit Province. He studied philosophy at Sophia University in Tokyo prior to entering the Society of Jesus, and his chief interest now lies in Shin-Buddhism, a Japanese form of Pure Land Buddhism. He entered the Society of Jesus in 2005, and in the course of his early Jesuit formation he acquired a keen interest in Christology, and particularly in the Hypostatic Union of Jesus Christ. He currently studies systematic theology in the STD program at the Jesuit School of Theology in Berkeley, USA, and in the course of his forthcoming doctoral research he hopes to elucidate new perspectives on the Hypostatic Union, that may emerge from dialogue with the Buddha Body theory of Shin Buddhism.

Fr. Joseph Ng Swee Chun is a Malaysian Jesuit whose faith conviction could be described as “being religious inter-religiously.” He completed a year’s research in the Postgraduate Institute of Pali and Buddhist Studies at the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka, and his thesis for his Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL) was entitled: “Aloysius Pieris’ Two-edged Liberative Theology of En-religionization: A Contribution to Asian Theology and a Mystico-Prophetic Theology Today.” Although his chief interest lies in the psycho-spiritual and mystico-prophetic dimensions of all religions, yet as a Chinese he sensed within himself a natural affinity for Zen Buddhism, and he hopes to see the creation of a Chinese-inculturated Spiritual Exercises, inspired by the gifts of the Spirit as witnessed in the depths of Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. He earned a Postgraduate Diploma in Buddhist Studies in Sri Lanka (2009), a Master’s degree in Buddhism at the Centre of Buddhist Studies of the University of Hong Kong (2011), and currently pursues a Ph.D. in the same centre, with a focus on the concept of the Buddha-Nature: Contribution of Chinese Buddhism to Positive Anthropology, Universal Soteriology and Engaged Spirituality. The topic of his research is entitled: The Twofold “Surplus of Meaning” of the Polyvalent Concept of the Buddha-nature: Its Optimal Development in Chinese Buddhism and Its Ethico-Soteriological Efficacy in Contemporary Exigencies for a Transformative Spirituality.

Fr. Christian Cochini received his doctorate in theology *Magna cum Laude* from the Catholic Institute of Paris in 1969, before a jury presided over by the late Cardinal Jean Daniélou. He studied Chinese in Taiwan from 1961 to 1963, and taught French at the Guangdong Foreign Language Institute (now Guangdong University of Foreign Studies) during the years 1973-74 and 1986-90. From 1991 to 2001 he served as Director of the Jesuit China Center in Tokyo, a socio-pastoral institute that seeks to assist the Chinese people living in Japan. He was a member of the Macau Ricci Institute from 2002 to 2007, during which period he undertook a survey of the main Buddhist Temples in the People’s Republic of China. He currently lives in Hong Kong and China, and works for interreligious dialogue with Chinese Buddhist communities. The French edition of his “*Guide des Temples Bouddhistes de Chine*” was published in April 2008 by Les Indes Savantes in Paris, (704 pp.), followed by the English edition in 2009 by the Macau Ricci Institute. In March 2015 the Bayard Publishing House in Paris issued a French edition of his new book entitled, “*50 grands maîtres du Bouddhisme chinois,*” and the English edition of this book is due to appear next September, as a publication of the Macau Ricci Institute.

Fr. Thierry Meynard is currently a professor and doctoral director in the department of philosophy at Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou, China, where he teaches Western Philosophy and Latin Classics. He is also Vice-director of the Archives for the Introduction of Western Knowledge at Sun Yat-Sen University. During the years

2012 to 2014, he was director of the Beijing Center for Chinese Studies, a program established by the Jesuits in 1998, and he still supervises the research activities at the center. In 2003 he obtained his Ph.D. in Philosophy at Peking University, where he presented a thesis on Liang Shuming. From 2003 to 2006 he taught philosophy at Fordham University in New York, and since 2006 he has been a member of the Macau Ricci Institute. He has authored twenty academic articles and dozens of essays. He has also authored, *The Jesuit Reading of Confucius* (Brill, 2011), *The Religious Philosophy of Liang Shuming* (Boston: Brill, 2011), *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus* (Rome: IHSI, 2011), *Following the Footsteps of the Jesuits in Beijing* (St Louis: Jesuit Sources, 2006), and he has co-authored with Sher-shiueh Li, *Jesuit Chreia in Late Ming China* (Bern: Peter Lang: 2014). He also edited, *Matteo Ricci, Le sens réel de « Seigneur du Ciel »* (Paris, Bibliothèque Chinoise, Belles Lettres, 2013), and *Teilhard and the Future of Humanity* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

Fr. Bernard Senécal (Sō Myōngwōn 徐明源) is the Director of the Institute for the Study of Religion and Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at Sogang University in Korea. He received his Ph.D. from Paris VII University in 2004 with a dissertation on the Sōn Master Sōngch'ōl (1912-1993), and he has been a qualified Sōn 禪 instructor since 2007. His recent publications include *A Critical Reflection of the Chogye Order's Campaign for the Worldwide Propagation of Kanhwa Sōn* (2011), *Sōn Master T'oeong Sōngch'ōl's Legacy: A Reflection on the Political Background of the Korean Sudden/Gradual Debate* (2012), *Qohéleth et le Sūtra du Diamant, sagesse biblique et bouddhique (Qohéleth and the Diamond Sūtra, Biblical and Buddhist Wisdoms)* (2013), *Buddhism in the Two Koreas: North-South Interactions* (2013), and the book *Kayasan ūi ho 'rang iūi ch 'ech 'ui rūl mat'atta, T'oeong Sōngch'ōl, I'mwōkko?* (2013).

In his article, Fr. Senécal describes a community of lay Catholics in Korea, who are composed of Koreans and foreigners. They are people deeply attracted by the teachings of the Buddha and who desire to learn about those teachings in depth, while at the same time remaining Christians, that is, Christ-centered. This community began informally in January 2011 with four members including Fr. Bernard himself, but today it has ten core members, and over forty affiliated ones from five nations. Among their goals they seek to assist Buddhist-Christian couples who experience difficulty in staying together, due to religious differences. Since April 2015 the community has evolved into a federative nonprofit religious incorporated association, that is, an ecumenical, inter-religious and international body, having the name: Way's End Stone Field Community (道全石田共同體).

Fr. Ingun Kang is a Korean Jesuit who has served in Cambodia since 1997. In the course of his academic career he earned a Licentiate in Sacred Theology (STL) in the field of Missiology in 2002 from the Jesuit School of Theology at Santa Clara

University, Berkeley, an M.A. in Pali Buddhism from the University of Kelaniya in Sri Lanka in 2008, and a Ph.D. in Buddhist-Christian Relations in 2012 from Heythrop College, University of London. He has been actively engaged in Buddhist-Christian dialogue in the Theravada nations of Asia such as Cambodia, Thailand, and Sri Lanka. His inter-religious praxis is well grounded on academic depth and revealed in his two M.A. theses, one on Christian theology and the other on Buddhist philosophy, as well as in his doctoral thesis that deals with a comparative analysis of the radical orthopraxis of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa and Aloysius Pieris. His insights on the Buddhist-Christian praxis of spiritual detachment and social engagement have inspired many people of goodwill to rethink the meaning and role of religion, in the face of the enormous challenges and crises of globalization. What Fr. Ingun Kang asks is: “How can a religious faith with its truth and vision serve as a source of hope to the contemporary world? And not divorced from but in collaboration with other religions?”

Dr. Yong Un Choe is a Korean Christian clergyman and close associate of the Jesuits of the Asia Pacific Conference. He initially studied Christianity at the Graduate School of Theology in Yonsei University in Korea, and then went on to conduct further research on Christianity, Buddhism and Confucianism, both at the Boston University School of Theology in the USA, and the Graduate School of Sogang University in Korea. Dr. Choe is a gentleman whom the Jesuit Buddhist scholars of the Asia Pacific Conference have been closely associated with for the past seven years. He was an active participant at several workshops organized by the conference in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Japan, where he impressed all and sundry with his erudition and open attitude, and besides he has been the recipient of numerous awards and honors.

Fr. Wajira Nampet is a Jesuit of the Japan Province who was originally raised as a Buddhist in Thailand. Born in a Buddhist family in 1955, he accepted Christianity in 1980, joined the Society of Jesus in 1984, and was ordained a priest in 1997. Owing to his having spent a large portion of his life as a Buddhist believer, he now occupies the rare position of being able to view both Christian and Buddhist societies as an ‘insider.’ Fr. Wajira earned doctoral degrees in statistics and psychology, and though he generally teaches and conducts research at Sophia and other universities of Japan, he nevertheless also lectures worldwide at institutes and universities such as Harvard. Yet with all this, he manages also to find time to pursue his study of Buddhism.

Fr. Noel Sheth is a Jesuit priest and former President (or Rector/Principal) of the Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion in the city of Pune, India, where he taught for over thirty-five years. He possesses a doctorate from Harvard University and is a reputed scholar both in Sanskrit and Pali, with his name appearing in the *Who’s Who of Sanskrit Scholars of India*. He was the convener of the History of Religion Section of the 14th World Sanskrit Conference that was held in

Kyoto, Japan, and he has been the recipient of numerous scholarships and awards. A significant award that he received was the “Dr. Sam Higginbottom Award for the Best Principals [Presidents/Rectors] of India, 2004-2005.” Fr. Sheth has published widely in India and abroad on Sanskrit and Pali exegesis as well as comparative philosophy and theology, and has lectured on different Indian religions and philosophies in a variety of universities located in diverse parts of the world. Currently he is a member of several national and international learned groups and international administrative bodies, and he is also on the Board of Editors of various international journals. He serves as adviser to the Jesuit Superior General for issues related to interreligious dialogue with Hinduism, and is also a member of the international Secretariat for Ecumenical and Inter-religious Relations for the worldwide Society of Jesus.

Fr. Paulus Agung Wijayanto is an Indonesian Jesuit who studied under the guidance of Fr. Aloysius Pieris of Sri Lanka. He joined the Society of Jesus in 1983 and was ordained a priest in 1995, and for a time he even served as Socius to the Novice Director in the Maria Della Strada Jesuit Novitiate, situated in the city of Taunggyi in Myanmar. In 2005 he obtained a Master’s degree in Buddhism at the Center of Buddhist Studies of the University of Hong Kong, and from 2005 to 2007 he lectured on Eastern Religions in the Department of Religion and Culture at the University of Sanata Dharma in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. He was an energetic participant at the Buddhist Christian Workshops conducted by the Asia Pacific Jesuit Conference in Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Japan, and in the course of his parish ministry he wrote several articles for “Kompas,” a national newspaper of Indonesia, and often gave talks on Chinese customs and religious practices. Thanks to his Chinese links, he is currently able to provide support to Chinese Catholics, and particularly those hailing from a Buddhist background, enabling them to integrate their earlier religious beliefs with Catholicism. Although assigned to parish work these days his interest in Buddhism endures, driven by his belief that present-day Indonesian culture is in many ways still deeply rooted in Hindu-Buddhist traditions. He publishes his findings on Buddhism as articles, mostly in Indonesian nationwide dailies and Journals on Philosophy and Theology, with a desire to arouse the appeal of the common people with regard to their local spiritual heritage and traditions.

Fr. Jojo M. Fung is a Jesuit hailing from the Malaysia-Singapore Region. He teaches Contextual Theology in the Asian Theological Program of the Loyola School of Theology located in Ateneo de Manila University of the Philippines, while in the East Asian Pastoral Institute located in the same campus he teaches Indigenous/Shamanic Leadership. His publications appear in several journals, his latest articles being: *Living In Awe: A New Vision and Mission for Asia: Critical Orientations to Sustainability and Spirituality*, in the Public Media Agency for GCSSFS, Kuala Lumpur; *Indigenous Oral Lore and Digital Media*, in Encyclopedia of Popular Culture in Asia and Oceania, edited by Jeremy Murray and Kathleen Nadeau; *Voices of the Spirit*, an adaptation from his

own work entitled *A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability: Church and Shamans in Dialogue for Liberative Struggle*; and *An Awe-Inspiring Contemplatio*, in AMERICA THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REVIEW (online). His upcoming book is entitled *Spirit of The Earth: A Shamanic Pneumatology in a Mystical Age of Sacred Sustainability*, to be issued by Jesuit Communications Foundations INC, Manila, 2015.

Fr. Soosai Lawrence was born in the city of Nagercoil in the Southern Indian state of Tamil Nadu, and belongs to the Patna Jesuit Province. On concluding his high school education he entered Loyola College in the city of Chennai, India, and graduated with a degree in Zoology from Chennai University. He later went on to earn a Master's degree in Anthropology from the University of Pune in India, another Master's degree in Buddhism from the University of Kelaniya in Colombo, Sri Lanka, and a Ph.D. in Theravada Buddhist Psychology from the University of Peradeniya in Sri Lanka. He began his Jesuit training in 1984, and was ordained a priest in 1998. From the earliest stages of his Jesuit career he has manifested a keen interest in non-Christian traditions, and has often sought to experience the spiritual depths of their adherents. To attain an experience of the Divine that was devoid of all cultural and religious bias has been his incessant and lifelong obsession. From 2003 onwards he began working in the Buddhist city of Bodhgaya, and four years of life and service in the Holy Land of the Buddhists drew him closer to the Spiritual Wisdom of the Buddha, and motivated him into delving ever deeper into Buddhist research. Currently his favorite ministry consists in integrating the Wisdom of Buddhist Psycho-Spirituality and the Grace of Biblical Spirituality in order to liberate mankind, while Inter-religious Integration and Promotion of World Peace and Human Progress have constituted his passionate and life-long mission. Besides this he has several articles to his credit, published in a variety of journals.

Finally, I who have been endorsed with the task of editing this publication am an Indian Jesuit, the child of a Catholic father and Hindu mother, who has lived and served in Japan since 1974. After entering the Society of Jesus in 1968 I was ordained a priest in 1982, and on earning a Ph.D. in Hinduism under the direction of the late Fr. Richard De Smet, S. J. at the Jnana-Deepa Vidyapeeth Pontifical Institute of Philosophy and Religion in the city of Pune in India, I returned to Japan and entered the Faculty of Foreign Studies of Sophia University, Tokyo, as a tenured member of the teaching staff. Although most of my research has to date been on Hinduism, yet, since Buddhism is a religion born in South Asia, Fr. Adolfo Nicolas, SJ, the current Superior General of the Jesuits (who at the time was head of the Jesuit Conference of East Asia and Oceania), appointed me director of Buddhist Christian dialogue in the Jesuit Provinces of East and Southeast Asia, a post I occupied until recently. During the past 20 years I have been actively involved in inter-religious dialogue with members of the Nippon Vedanta Kyokai, a branch of the worldwide Ramakrishna Mission located in the city of Zushi in

the Kanagawa Prefecture of Japan, and since 2010 I have been a member of the Committee for Inter-religious Dialogue of the Catholic Archdiocese of Tokyo, on the request of the Archbishop, Peter Okada Takeo. My principal publications are, *The Mysticism of Ramanuja*, published by Munshiram Manoharlal in 1993, *The Love Song*, published by Minerva Press, 1998, and *The Life and Work of Blessed Mother Teresa*, (Co-authored with Hiromi Josepha Kudo), Sophia University Press, 2007.

The primary motive behind this publication was twofold, namely to reinforce bonds of camaraderie and teamwork that are present among our Buddhist and Christian scholars, and to inspire our Christian youth into evincing a keener interest in Buddhism. It is my hope that in years to come, more of our youngsters (both Jesuits and others) feel drawn into proffering gestures of amity and concern for their non-Christian brethren, and thereby disperse among them the precious gifts of the Spirit that they have blessed with. As the Lord Buddha himself is reported to have declared, “Thousands of candles can be lit from a single candle, and the life of that candle will not be shortened. Happiness never decreases by being shared.”

To conclude, I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all who assisted us in this venture, and in particular Mr. Robert Cruz of the Tulana Research Centre, located in Kelaniya in Sri Lanka.

Reflections on Some Psychological Aspects of Zen

By

Jerry Cusumano, SJ

Abstract

In this article I consider some psychological aspects of Zen from both a personal and professional point of view. Part One is a brief introduction about Zen, and Part Two is a recounting of some personal experiences. In Part Three I review briefly contemporary Zen writings on the concept of no self. In Part Four I look at implications Zen might have for psychology, especially therapy, both theory and practice. Finally, an appendix contains a selection of thought-provoking quotes from various Zen masters.

Part One: Introduction

Zen as the Practice of Zen

Since theoretical definitions of Zen differ greatly, a functional one, that is, how one does Zen, may be a more appropriate starting point. One does Zen in the following way (Enomiya-Lassalle, 1992). In a dimly lit room of moderate temperature one sits on the front third of a round, low pillow. One's right foot is put over the left thigh and then the left over the right thigh. The right hand is placed in front of the stomach and rests against the heel of the foot. The left hand is put on top of the right with thumbs touching together and pointing toward the navel. The back is held straight, so that the tip of the nose is in line with the navel and the ears in line with the shoulders. The eyes are half-closed and looking, though not focusing clearly, at a low spot on the floor (or wall), about three feet away. The breathing is not controlled in any way, however a piece of paper should not quiver if directly placed in front of the nose. Interiorly, one counts breaths or merely observes them or sits alert with no object of thought or wrestles with a *Koan* (a riddle that cannot be solved by conceptual thinking, e.g. the sound of one hand clapping). What one does with the mind during Zen depends on the directives given by the Zen master. However, the rule for intruding or distracting thoughts remains the same for all: one neither welcomes them and gets involved in them nor opposes them and tries to get rid of them; their presence is simply observed, and one continues with the assigned practice given by the Zen master.

Unlike other meditation systems the posture in Zen is greatly emphasized. The folded legs combined with the straightened back serve to increase one's alertness by creating a tension in the *hara* (lower abdomen), such that while it becomes filled with vitality, the mind becomes more calm, (Sato, 1958). Sitting in this posture and focusing on one's breathing will inevitably lower one's respiration even though no conscious effort is made to do so (Malec, 1977). And eventually even the slower breath ceases to

be an object of consciousness (Lesh, 1970). In the lotus position, because the feet are raised even with the pelvis, the blood circulation improves throughout the whole body. Combined with the vitality induced by the straight back and the calmness coming from reduced heart rate and respiration, this causes a general feeling of wellbeing. The emphasis on posture in Zen is because of its effects on behavior. By adjusting one's posture and breathing one can have an effect on one's temperament, (Sato, 1968).

A well-known series of studies using the EEG to measure brain waves showed that those engaged in Zen meditation produced markedly more alpha waves (Kasamatsu & Hirai, 1969). Alpha waves signal a lowered cortical activity between sleep and the ordinary waking state, resulting in the unusual state of consciousness in which one is fully aware of both internal and external stimuli and yet is not bothered by them (Goleman, 1971). That this state can be positively induced by one's doing Zen leads to a sense of control and self-regulation of one's body (Shapiro 1976).

In Zen meditation one does not try to blot out external stimuli from consciousness but rather habituate to them, that is to say, to be aware of them without thinking about them. For example, when one hears a noise, it is admitted fully to consciousness but no effort is made to think about where it came from and so on. With the neutralizing of external stimuli however a new obstacle arises, namely the anxiety caused by one's passing from the normal active mode of awareness to the passive-receptive mode, a passage often termed a regression in the service of the ego (Lesh 1970). Resistance arises as the mode of convergent thinking, that mode of thought associated with the left hemisphere and which structures the world into meanings, gives way to divergent thinking, a letting go and a non-doing mode associated with the right hemisphere, (Cusumano, 1980). The ego will resist any letting go that might open the way for inner conflicts to surface. By cutting off the ego's usual method of control (through thoughts and expectations), the Zen meditator opens his/her consciousness to a realization of something beyond his own personal consciousness (Ornstein 1972).

Zen and Zen Buddhism

The origins of Zen are found in a personal experience of a young man, Shakyamuni Buddha, born over 2500 years ago in what is now Nepal. After pursuing yogic ascetical practices for six years he developed his own form of meditation, which culminated in a very strong experience of an unusual form of consciousness. He began to bring others to that same experience by teaching them his way of meditation. After his death a body of doctrine and an organization grew from that experience, which developed into what is now called Buddhism. In this paper I prescind from that subsequent doctrinal and organizational development; this paper deals with Zen as a psycho-spiritual discipline, with special emphasis on the experiential dimension, apart

from Zen Buddhism as an organized religion. I begin with an account of my own personal experience.

Part Two: Personal Experience

In this part I present reflections on some of my own “psychological” experiences of doing Zen, especially working on the Koan Mu. I use the word “psychological” to differentiate these experiences from authentic Zen experiences.

The Koan Mu

This Koan is one of the oldest and most famous of the Zen Koans, although the “sound of one hand clapping” is probably known more popularly. It is quite simple. The 8th century Chinese Zen Master, whose Japanese name is Jôshû is asked by a monk whether or not a dog has the Buddha nature. He replies with one syllable, one ideograph, Mu (無), which can mean “nothing.”

”A monk asked Jôshû in all earnestness, ‘Does a dog have Buddha nature or not?’ Jôshû said, ‘Mu!’” (Yamada, 1979, p.11)

In former times the beginner was taught how to sit and then pretty much left on his own with no explanation of how to deal with this Koan. The usual process for most would be first to try to deal with the meaning of Jôshû’s answer logically. “Buddha nature is so great it could not possibly be in a dog.” “Buddha nature is everywhere so it must also be in a dog.” “Jôshû is saying both yes and no to the question,” and so on and so on. Eventually, since the Roshi would not accept such answers, the practitioner would get frustrated and begin to just sit with Mu without any thinking at all. This is the correct direction for solving this Koan.

However, as an adaptation to contemporary beginners, Zen Roshi nowadays often instruct their disciples to forego those “preliminaries” and simply absorb oneself in Mu from the beginning by repeating it quietly and internally with each exhalation. The aim of this practice has been expressed concisely by the 12th century Japanese Zen Master, Dôgen: the purpose of Zen is to find one’s true self; the way to this goal is to forget the self. This forgetting is accomplished by totally absorbing oneself in the practice of Mu without thinking.

Some Psychological Aspects of Working on the Koan Mu

As I noted in the introduction, I use the word “psychological” to distinguish these experiences from authentic Zen experiences, which must be confirmed by the Roshi. The experiences I will touch upon might be characterized as some side effects of the practice of Zen.

1. Posture: In the early stages of practice I had to work quite hard to achieve the proper position, the full lotus sitting position. It took me several years to be able to do this posture “comfortably.” I can remember the morning when I was finally able to do back-to-back sittings of an hour’s length each. Subsequently I was able to use the full lotus posture for an entire *sesshin* (five day intensive practice). The struggle with the posture and the subsequent satisfaction of achieving it were actually a distraction from the work on Mu, since, far from forgetting the self, the self was in the forefront of this experience. From this experience it was easy to see how egoism can creep in and take over the simplest acts.

2. Repressed Memory: My mother died when I was a second year novice. I had many feelings of guilt connected with this event. I was unable to cry at the time, partly because of a mistaken idea of how a religious should handle emotions. I had also reproached myself for not going to visit her more often. Shortly after my ordination, Fr. Tony de Mello, S.J., came to Japan, and I took part in one of his group therapy programs. He skillfully worked me through this problem, and I thought that it had been settled. However, several years after that, while working on the Koan Mu, a memory came back that had been repressed. It was from the time of my last visit. My mother was in much pain and before I left she asked me to kiss her. Although I did so, of course, my first spontaneous reaction was one of repugnance to do so. It had probably been this spontaneous reaction, later repressed, more than anything else that had been the source of my guilt. The focus of attention on Mu in a state of non-thinking weakened the defense mechanism of repression, and allowed this memory to come forward. It was a very helpful experience for me, but from the standpoint of Zen practice, not an authentic Zen experience.

3. Frustration/Acceptance: I worked on the Koan Mu for a total of 14 years. At first the novelty kept my spirits up but eventually frustration began to grow at not being able to solve it to the satisfaction of the Roshi. This actually contributed to a mild depression, which I suffered one summer. However, with continued practice, even though still not being able to solve the Koan, psychologically I moved to a better space, one of acceptance and letting things be as they are. This was expressed in a natural change of practice from Mu to what is called in Japanese “*shikantaza*,” usually translated as “just sitting.” It means to sit without any desire of solving anything or achieving anything. Before continuing with other Koans after Mu, I did this “just sitting” for seven years. This whole experience, easily and usefully applied to everyday life, was once again a helpful psychological side effect of working on the Koan Mu. I had reached an experiential grasp of the second part of the Serenity Prayer, to accept what cannot be changed. A conceptual understanding of this second phrase of the Serenity Prayer can be helpful. However, an experiential grasp of it is deeper and more long lasting.

Non-specific Factors:

The three experiences described above can be seen as a result of factors not specific to Zen or limited to working on the Koan Mu. Insight into one's egoism, recovery of repressed memories, and learning to accept things the way they are, could be the fruit of many different types of meditation or other psycho-spiritual disciplines. In that sense these experiences are not really sufficient motivation to continue with the practice of Mu. Likewise, Mu is quite similar to the AUM of Yoga, often used as a mantra for meditation. In fact, use of the so-called "liquid" consonants, of which "m" is one, is quite frequent in many forms of meditation.

Deikman has delineated the non-specific factor in any kind of meditation most clearly by contrasting what he calls the action mode and automatization with the receptive mode and deautomatization (Deikman, 1963, 1966, 1976). I summarize his thought below.

In the usual waking state, the normal adult functions primarily through a mode of consciousness Deikman terms the "action mode. This mode is characterized by abstract thinking, sharp differentiation between the self and the environment, and an attitude of knowing and manipulating the environment to fulfill a person's needs. Success in the action mode requires selective memory of the past as well as accurate predictions for the future. The action mode results from automatization, a learning process in which repetition of an act or percept eventually results in a mastered automatic act or percept. Automatization frees the attention from the intermediate steps that led to mastering the act or percept, with the result that these steps disappear from consciousness. With each automatization, especially those involved in the abstracting process for conceptual thinking, man becomes less and less conscious of his sensual being, increasingly differentiates his self from his environment, and finds it more difficult to live in the present moment. An inability to be fully present and at one with the world around him leads to confusion about the purpose of life.

A sharper sensory perception accompanying the absence of analytic thought, a blurring of the distinction between self and environment, and an attitude of allowing the world as it is to enter oneself, characterize the receptive mode. Success in this mode depends upon the ability to live in the present. The receptive mode results from deautomatization, a relearning process basic to every form of mediation (as that term is used in contemporary psychology) by which one reinvests automatized percepts and acts with the energy usually saved by automatization. Deautomatization sharpens sensual perception at the expense of abstract differentiation, breaks down the usual subject/object boundaries customarily experienced as the ego and its environment, and provides satisfaction gained through a deeper experience of the present moment. By regressing to a preautomatized childlike state, the normal healthy adult can open himself gradually to a new experience of reality that will effect a reorganization of his

personality, or in other words, a change of consciousness. Within the receptive mode of consciousness one may experience in the here-and-now an answer to the question about the purpose to human life that is more satisfying than any conceptual answer arrived at by reflection on the past or hopes for the future.

These are some of the non-specific factors involved in any form of meditation. So what is specific to the Zen practice of Mu?

Specific Factors

Apart from the above non-specific factors I think Zen is unique because of a combination of two factors. The first is the typical oriental method of training, described so well by Herrigel, (Herrigel, 1999). One does the same thing over and over, in his case traditional Japanese archery, with no thought to accomplishing a goal. Rather one puts his/her ego aside to follow intently the directives of the master. The second factor is the personal one-on-one direction from the Roshi who scolds, encourages, and makes sure one stays on the right path to solving the Koan Mu. The first factor is simplicity itself, simply repeating Mu with each breath. It is because of this simplicity that one can do it for hours, days, and years. There is nothing to be learned, mastered, or achieved, and so nothing to become tired of or confused about. The second factor is more complex because it is the peculiar relationship of each disciple with the Roshi. As all human relationships, this varies according to mood, situation, the passing of time, and so on. However, this direction is integral to the practice of Zen, and without it, it is no exaggeration to say, that there is no Zen. Practicing Mu on one's own can be a helpful exercise in mental relaxation or concentration, but it is not Zen.

Postscript: Integration of Zen with Christian Spirituality

This topic has been and will continue to be the subject of many articles and books. I am not an advocate of so-called Christian Zen (Kadowaki, 2002) or Zen Christianity (Sato, 2007). Here I only add a personal note from my own experience. In Christian spirituality we emphasize the Scripture as a way to know Christ and develop a personal relationship with him. We also emphasize that this process is carried on within the tradition of the Church. One element I find lacking here is “what I am experiencing right now”. It is this element, which I think that Zen in general, and the practice of Mu in particular as well as other Koans, can contribute to Christian spirituality. Too much emphasis on Scripture and the tradition of the Church can turn one's attention too much to the past. Adding the element of “what I am experiencing right now” makes both come alive in the present.

I have no major conclusion from this account of some of my personal experiences and reflections upon them. They stand on their own as unique since they are personal. I will try to balance them off, however in the next section, which deals with an

important teaching for all who do Zen, that is to say, no-self.

Part Three: No-self

The Teaching of No-self in Zen

The original experience of Zen precedes the doctrines that developed around it. That is to say, the primal experience that Shakyamuni had is the source from which later doctrines developed, and as such can be called the “normative” experience of Zen Buddhism. The claim of those who have had that experience is that it is non-conceptual and therefore beyond logic. Zen transcends logic, but is not illogical (Radcliff & Radcliff, 1993). Put another way, it transcends logic but is not unreasonable. This is seen most clearly in the explanation of no self (Harada, 1993; Harada, 1998).

The question of the self

From the history of both philosophy and psychology we know that conceptualizing the self has proved to be elusive if not impossible (Suler, 1993). Since one can only infer the existence of a self, there can always remain a doubt about its substance. And so we see that the meaning of self has changed with each generation, and within each generation it has always had multiple meanings, (Harre, 1998; Watts, 2002). This is especially true in our times when the interest in spirituality has become very great, (Schermer, 2003; Tacey, 2004).

And yet despite this ambiguity surrounding the notion of the self, philosophical and psychological systems are built around the presupposition of a self. What happens when no “self” is presupposed? I will try to answer this question after first looking at what contemporary Zen teachers mean when they speak of no self (Cusumano, 2004). There are four main approaches discernible in those writing on no self: 1) forgetting the self, 2) cessation from attachment, 3) giving up discriminating, and 4) the self as illusion.

No-self is forgetting the self

In answer to his own question of why one should do Zen, the 12th century Japanese Zen Master Dogen said that the purpose of Zen was to learn about the self, and that this is done by forgetting the self (Aoyama, 1990; Otani, 2001). Wright has re-worded Dogen’s famous statement in the following way: “What Dogen is saying is that in learning about *jiko* (=self) in the broadest sense, that is, as our universal identity, we have to forget or let go of all the narrow ideas we might have about who we are,” (Uchiyama, 2004, p. xxv).

Forgetting the self is precisely letting go of those ideas of self that we have. Why must these ideas be abandoned? It is because they are the object of our own thinking about ourselves. Thinking about the self can never lead to a true understanding

of the self. That is to say, when one thinks about the self there is already another “self” in operation doing the thinking about the self, which is being thought about. Which is the real self? This question cannot be answered. And so many Zen teachers follow Dogen’s line in affirming that the self cannot be known by thinking about it, but rather by forgetting it.

Contemporary Zen teachers who follow this approach point out that the self cannot know itself, for then it would lose its subjectivity, and so it must transcend or negate itself by collapsing the structure of subject/object (Antinoff, 1990/1991; Kopf, 1996). This collapse is made possible by a shift from thinking to awareness. In this no-self state the operations of the intellect have ceased, and all that remains is pure awareness (Kamilar, 2002; Sargent, 2001). Thus even the objection that there is a self attempting to forget the self can be dealt with, by pointing out that awareness and thinking differ. When the self is forgotten, one achieves his/her own potential and unique creativity (Aitken, 1993; Kasulis, 1975; Pio, 1988). Creativity springs up from the spontaneity achieved when the fixed idea of the self is overcome. Even though the self is a commonly accepted belief, the self must nevertheless be negated, and this negation confirmed in a concrete way (Aitken, 1994; Sogen, 1996).

No-self is cessation from attachment

A second school of thought recognizes the state of no-self as being a state in which the self has no attachments. It is common in the West to see attachment in a positive manner, for example one speaks of a child being attached to its mother. The Zen approach to attachment does not deny this aspect, but stresses that no attachment can be absolute and unlimited. Therefore, the attitude of non-attachment even toward normal and desirable attachments is preferred. Non-attachment parallels the position that all beings are in a state of change, and so no attachment can be lasting and unchanging. When likes and dislikes, attractions and aversions cease, the external world as an object-of-the-self is no longer posited, with the result of no-self (Merzel, 1991; Teshima, 1995). Detachment from attachment is the cure for possessiveness. When possessiveness by the self ceases, anxiety also ceases leaving pure spontaneity (Suler, 1993; Tanahashi & Schnider, 1994).

No-self as cessation from attachment can be expressed in many ways. “How I was, how I am, how I will be” cease to be concerns (Aitken, 1993, p. 15). Attachment ceases when one no longer sees the world from the limited perspective of an individual self. No-self means lack of self-centeredness (Suzuki, 2002). “The ego-self which is oriented by self-centeredness is an unreal entity and the root-source of human suffering.” (Abe, 1995, p. 65). What we think of as the self is the “self-regarding ‘me’”, (Graham, 1994, p. 44). The high price one pays in psychological health from attachment to material things is well documented (Kasser, 2002). However, the Zen teaching of

no-self goes beyond these surface attachments to deal with the root of attachment.

No-self is giving up the discriminating self

A third line of thought interprets no-self as giving up a certain type of self. Here the self is not negated but the act of discriminating self from other is given up (Karasu, 1999). One does not feel separate from the other but rather experiences oneself as being with the other (Beck, 1993). One no longer speaks of having an experience of something but rather becomes one's experience and so identifies with the content of the experience (Ives, 1992). The attempt to keep the self separate from others comes to be seen as a defensive ploy, which brings on suffering (Chung, 1994; Gunn, 1996/1997). Thinking and thoughts are seen as the defenses put between self and reality as false determinants of reality (Knewitz, 1988/1989; Packer, 1990; Rudy, 1996). When the discriminating function (I-other) of the ego ceases, the true self appears.

No-self means the self is an illusion

This fourth position has various forms of expression. The movement of the mind, that is to say its various and incessant activities and functions, creates the illusion of a self (Loori, 1996). This is similar to the illusion of stability created by the speedy and continuous projection of still images in a film (Kamilar, 2002). The same idea can be expressed as "the Buddhist meaning of ego, a spiritually technical term for the delusive sense that oneself and the universe are fundamentally separate," (Young-Eisendrath & Martin, 1997, p. 33). Uchiyama's formulation of no-self as an illusion is: "Maybe it would be clearer to say that things have no substantial independent existence of their own," (Uchiyama, 2004, p. 7). The strong consciousness of a self prevents one from seeing reality as it is (Kubota, 2002). The thought that there is a self is simply a "secretion" of the brain with no basis in reality (Uchiyama, 1990). The illusion of a self comes from identifying with the functions of consciousness and the psychological patterns that accompany them (Blackstone & Josipovic, 1995; Kamilar, 2002). In this approach self is perceived as ever-changing and transient (Harada, 1993; Nukariya, 1961). Abe describes the notion of no-self in this way: "Though we have self-identity in a relative sense we have no self-identity in any absolute and substantial sense," (Abe, 1995, p. 66). Although the self is useful as a "reference for dealing with the world," because it is impermanent and changing, it is restrictive (Scott & Doubleday, 1992, p.5).

Summary

The positions outlined above can be briefly summarized as follows:

1. There is a self, but it must be transcended, negated, or forgotten. This is done by suspending the ordinary operations of the intellect and making

- impossible a subject-object relationship.
2. There is a self, but it is overcome by the giving up of attachments, self-centeredness, and possessiveness, that is, giving up a view of the world that sees all in relationship to the self.
 3. There is a self, but its function of discriminating itself from “the other,” especially by making comparisons, must be given up.
 4. The idea of the self itself is an illusion, the illusion that one is separate from “the other,” an illusion maintained by identifying with the functions of consciousness. The self is impermanent and changing and so cannot be the source of identity.

Contrast with Western Psychology

Although the words used to describe the term, “no-self” are vague and lack the precision and clarity of psychological definitions, nevertheless, they clearly point to a reality which differs from that current in western psychology expressed by terms such as: self-actualization, self-analysis, self-efficacy, self-monitoring, self-reinforcement, self-psychology, and so on. Whereas the latter set of psychological terms not only presume a self but consider it as an entity to be strengthened, equipped with skills, and focused upon, the terms that describe the no-self of Zen either deny the self as such or point to a radical diminishment of the self even to the point of negation. In the next section we take a look at how Zen with its teaching of no-self has been applied to the area of psychotherapy in particular.

Part Four: Zen in Psychology and Therapy

Zen in Psychotherapy

In the west Zen has been incorporated into clinical practice in various ways. Two therapies indigenous to Japan, Morita and Naikan, which stress a non-analytical approach, have incorporated Zen into their frameworks. In Morita therapy the patient is immersed in “inactivity” and must work his way through the boredom. In Naikan therapy one is led to re-discover feelings of gratitude to significant others through a carefully arranged system of meditations. Murase points out that the basic difference of these two with a western approach is that excessive analytical self-reflection as required by psychoanalytic work would be seen by these therapies as a form of sickness itself (Murase, 1975).

Zen has also been put to use in the training of counselors. Early on, Berger suggested that Zen would help the potential counselor from getting bogged down in abstractions (Berger 1962). Several studies attempted to show that Zen could foster empathy (Keefe, 1975; Lesh, 1971; Leung, 1973). While there is some support for the idea that training in Zen can help foster empathy, what seems to have been made more

clear is that empathy is a component of the “meditative” type of person.

Zen and Psychoanalysis

Although as noted above Zen and psychoanalysis appear to be at opposite ends of the spectrum with regard to the function of consciousness in psychotherapy, from the psychological standpoint many of the deeper insights into Zen have come from psychoanalysts.

Stunkard accurately conceptualized the task of the Zen practitioner as being one of eliminating the mediators between a person and his experience (Stunkard, 1951). Fromm compared Zen and psychoanalysis on the basis of the interplay between the conscious and the unconscious. By use of free association in psychoanalysis and Koans in Zen one is forced into a corner in which rationalizations are of no avail, and the only alternative is to face reality as it is by direct experience rather than through the filter of conceptual thinking (Fromm & Suzuki, 1960). Fromm concluded that Zen training could be very helpful for the psychoanalyst because of its radical approach to intellectualization and the delusions of the ego as well as its more positive emphasis on healthy wellbeing (Fromm 1959)

Deikman, whose ideas on automatization have already been introduced above, notes that with Zen there is heightened attention to sensory pathways, an absence of analytic thought, and an attitude of receptivity to stimuli (Deikman 1966). The action mode of consciousness entails automatization, in which one selects from reality only what is economical and/or useful for manipulating the environment. By contrast de-automatization brings about a receptive mode, which frees abilities that usually cannot function in the action mode (Deikman, 1976). Thus one can potentially open the self up to every aspect of reality. However, the ego will resist the receptive mode because that mode threatens it with the unknown and even possible extinction, for to let go of oneself in the receptive mode is to blur the sharp distinction between the “I” and what is not “I” (Deikman, 1976a). The receptive mode exposes the self as an illusion. Observation of the never-ending flux of one’s inner state leads to the realization that the idea of a constant permanent self is in itself an illusion (Deikman, 1977).

Conclusions from Research on Zen

Psychological research on Zen has verified the following points. During Zen meditation oxygen consumption, respiration rate, heart rate, muscle tension, and the secretion of lactate all decrease while blood circulation, the production of alpha waves, and activity of the right hemisphere all increase. These bodily changes have been correlated with the lessening of anxiety, increase of attention, awareness and alertness, and a release of repressed emotions. The Zen meditator learns to focus attention effortlessly and be attuned to reality, that is, the here-and-now as it is being experienced

regardless of the thoughts that one observes crossing the mind. The ability to experience thoughts as thoughts and not identify with them becomes an attitude of life that transforms consciousness, so that one can better experience the world as it really is and not as it is filtered by conceptual thought.

Zen: Therapy for the Therapist

The “talking cure,” whether it be the free association of psychoanalysis or the empathic understanding of humanistic counseling, relies upon words for its effectiveness. For the counselor or therapist who has undergone training in the “talking cure” method and practices it, there may come a point where a new mode of therapy can be helpful for the therapist’s own personal growth. Zen meditation can be such a therapy for a therapist who has attained a certain degree of personal stability and has progressed sufficiently to no longer rely exclusively on words or conceptual thought for personal help. While the use of Zen with clients is not recommended, since Zen practice presumes a certain amount of emotional stability, the counselor or therapist who deals with clients may very well profit from this different mode of “self therapy.”

What follows is an experiment done with students aspiring to be counselors to test this idea of Zen as a useful therapy for the therapist.

Psychology experiment with Zen

The following experiment was used to introduce counseling students to an experience of Zen (Cusumano & Moridaira, 1993). Over a period of five weeks students received brief instructions in Zen and were given 30 minutes of practice sitting once a week. Before each session began the students filled out the Mood Checklist (see appendix). The Mood Checklist has 6 positive mood adjectives and 5 negative mood adjectives. At the end of the five week period students participated in an intensive 24-hour overnight experience of Zen at a Zen training center on the outskirts of Tokyo.

Before beginning, the students once again filled out the Mood Checklist. The intensive sitting followed the pattern of 30 minutes of sitting, then 10 minutes of kinhin (slow concentrated Zen walk). Suitable time was allowed for meals and seven hours for sleep. Once in the evening and once in the morning the students again filled out the Mood Checklist while actually doing Zen.

At the end of the experiment students were asked to write their impressions and calculate the data in the following way. Each observation of mood was reduced to one figure by subtracting all individual scores from 5, then adding the positive scores to a total and the negative scores to a total, then subtracting negative from positive. This single score for each measurement was then recorded. The average of the first six scores was calculated to yield the baseline of each individual’s mood. Likewise, the average of

the two measurements during Zen was taken. Complete data was obtained for 31 subjects. The group mean for the baseline was 4.8 (SD 3.4), for the intervention 3.2 (SD 5.1).

On the surface most students registered a decrease in overall positive mood. However, their interpretation of this phenomenon was not that their mood got worse during Zen. Rather, many wrote in their experiences that the mood score was lowered because there was an absence of feeling, or no emotional movements, or no room to feel emotion (because of pain in legs), or because they were more mentally stable, or that feelings disappear, or that they were experiencing fewer things (and so time went faster).

This interpretation of the students was unexpected, as the experimenter had hypothesized that negative feelings would decrease leading to more positive scores on overall mood. However, the interpretation of the students may be more accurate in reflecting their experience and make better sense out of the data than the hypothesis of the experimenter.

In this research a qualitative analysis of the self-reports of the students was used to interpret the statistical results from the experiment. In research with human subjects, not subject to complete quantification, this may be the method of choice. Further research on the effects of Zen on human subjects should combine these two approaches.

Conclusion

In this paper I have looked at the psychological aspects of Zen from various perspectives: personal experience, teaching of Zen masters, research by psychologists, and a psychological experiment. With regard to the central purpose of Zen, that is, discovery of the true self, these psychological aspects are peripheral. However, they can serve as an introduction to Zen to those who do not practice and as guide to those who do to help interpret what they experience in Zen.

REFERENCES

- Abe, M. (1995). *Buddhism and interfaith dialogue*. London: MacMillan Press.
- Aitken, R. (1993). *Encouraging words*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Aitken R. (1994). *The practice of perfection*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Antinoff, S. (1991). *The problem of the human person and the resolution of that problem in the religio-philosophical thought of the Zen Master Shin'ichi Hisamatsu*. (Doctoral Dissertation. Temple University 1990). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 51, 3790A.

- Aoyama, S. (1990). *Zen seeds*. (P. Bennage, Trans.). Tokyo: Kosei Publishing Co. (Original: Utsukushiki Hito Ni 1990).
- Beck, C. (1993). *Nothing special: Living Zen*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Berger, Emanuel. (1962). Zen Buddhism, general psychology, and counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 9,122-127.
- Blackstone, J. & Josipovic, Z. (1995). *Zen for beginners*. New York: Writers & Readers Publishing, Inc.
- Chung, T. (1994). (B. Bruya, Trans.) *Zen speaks*. New York: Anchor Books. (Original: Ch'An Shuo 1966).
- Cusumano, J. (1980) *Consciousness Change*. *Human Development*, v. 1. n.3, p. 37.
- Cusumano, J. & Moridaira, N. (1993) *Zen Therapy for the Therapist*. *The Psychological Report of Sophia University*, v. 17, pp. 85-90.
- Cusumano, J. (2004) *No-self Counseling: An Application of Zen to Counseling Theory*. *International Journal of Counselling and Psychotherapy*, v. 2, pp. 17-26.
- Gunn, R. (1997). *The experience of emptiness in the process of self-transformation in Zen Buddhism, Christianity and depth psychology*. (Doctoral Dissertation. Union Theological Seminary 1996) *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 58, 2718A.
- Deikman, A. (1963) .*Experimental Mediation*, *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease*, v. 136(4), pp. 329-343.
- Deikman, A. (1966) *De-automatization and the Mystic Experience*, *Psychiatry*, v 29(4), pp. 324-336..
- Deikman, A. (1976) *Personal Freedom: On Finding Your way to the Real World*. New York: Grossman.
- Deikman, Arthur (1976). *Symposium on Consciousness*. New York: Viking Press.
- Deikman, Arthur (1977). *The missing center*. In *Alternate States of Consciousness*, Norman Zinberg (ed.), pp. 230-241. New York: The Free Press.
- Enomiya-Lassalle, H. (1992) *The Practice of Zen Meditation*. London: The Aquarian Press.
- Enomiya-Lassalle, H. (1965) *Zen-Way to Enlightenment*. London: Sheed and Ward.
- Fromm, Erich (1959.). *Psychoanalysis and Zen Buddhism*. *Psychologia*, 2, 79-99.
- Fromm, Erich, & Suzuki, Daisetz (1960). *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Harper.
- Goleman, Daniel (1971). *Meditation as Metatherapy*. *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, 3, pp. 1-25.
- Graham, D. (1994). *Zen Catholicism*. New York: Crossroad.
- Habito, R. (2005) *Experiencing Buddhism*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Harada, S. (1993). *Morning dewdrops of the mind*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.
- Harada. S. (1998). *The essence of Zen*. (D. Rumme, Trans.) Tokyo: Kodansha International. (Original: *Za Zen*, 1993).

- Harre, R. (1998). *The singular self: An introduction to the psychology of personhood*. London: Sage.
- Herrigel, E. (1999) *Zen in the Art of Archery*. New York: Vintage Spiritual Classics
- Ives, C. (1992). *Zen awakening and society*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
- Kadowaki, J. (2002) *Zen and the Bible*. New York: Orbis Books.
- Kamilar, S. (2002). A Buddhist psychology. In P. Olson (Ed.) *Religious Theories of Personality and Psychotherapy* (pp. 85-140). New York: The Haworth Press.
- Karasu, T. (1999). Spiritual psychotherapy. *American Journal of Psychotherapy*, 53, 143-162.
- Kasamatsu, Akira, & Hirai, Tomio (1969). An Electroencephalographic Study on the Zen Meditation. *Psychologia*, 12, pp. 204-225.
- Kasser, T. (2002). *The high price of materialism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: A Bradford Book.
- Kasulis, T. (1975). Action performs man: The meaning of the person in Japanese Zen Buddhism. (Doctoral Dissertation. Yale University 1975) *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 37, 0378A.
- Keefe, Thomas. (1975). A Zen perspective on social casework. *Social Casework*, 56, 14-144.
- Knewitz, J. (1989). The explication of Zen Buddhism as a foundation for counseling. (Doctoral Dissertation. Southern Illinois University 1988). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 50, 1564A.
- Kopf, G. (1996). Beyond personal identity: Rethinking a dominant paradigm from a Zen perspective. (Doctoral Dissertation. Temple University 1996). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 57, 3390A.
- Kubota, J. (2002). *Satori nasai: satori e no michi. (Reach Enlightenment: the Way to Enlightenment)*. Tokyo: Shunshunsha.
- Lesh, Terry (1970). Zen Meditation and the Development of Empathy in Counselors. *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, 10,
- Leung, Paul. (1973). Comparative effects of training in external and internal concentration on two counseling behaviors. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 29, 227-234.
- Loori, J. (1996). *The heart of being*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle.
- Magid, B. (2002). *Ordinary mind: Exploring the common ground of Zen and psychotherapy*. Somerville: Wisdom Publications.
- Malec, James (1977). Physiological and Subjective Effects of Zen Meditation and Demand Characteristics. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 45, pp. 339-340.
- Merzel, D. (1991). *The eye never sleeps*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Murase, T., & Johnson, F. (1975). Naikan, Morita, and Western Psychotherapy. In

- Behavior Change, Aldine Publishing Co: Chicago.
- Nukariya, K. (1961). Enlightenment. In Briggs, W. (Ed.), *Anthology of Zen* (pp.122-140). New York: Grove Press, Inc.
- Ornstein, Robert (1972). *The Psychology of Consciousness*. New York: Viking Press.
- Otani, T. (2001). *Suihei no Kaze: Dogen no Shogai. (A level wind: The life of Dogen)*. Tokyo: Bungeisha.
- Packer, T. (1990). *The work of this moment*. Boston: Shambhala.
- Pio, E. (1988). *Buddhist psychology: A modern perspective*. New Delhi: Abhiniva Publications.
- Radcliff, A. & Radcliff, A. (1993). *Understanding Zen*. Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle Co. Inc.
- Rudy, J. (1996). *Wordsworth and the Zen mind*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Sargent, J. (2001). *Asking about Zen: 108 answers*. New York: Weatherhill.
- Sato, Koji (1958). Psychotherapeutic Implications of Zen. *Psychologia*, 1, pp. 213-217.
- Sato, Koji (1968). Zen from a Personological Viewpoint. *Psychologia*, 11, pp. 3-24.
- Sato, M. (2007) *Zen Kirisuto-Kyo no Tanjô [The Birth of Zen Christianity]*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten.
- Schermer, V. (2003). *Spirit and psyche*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Shapiro, Deane (1976). Zen Meditation and Behavior Self-control: Similarities, Differences, and Clinical Applications. *American Psychologist*, 31, pp. 519--532.
- Scott, D., & Doubleday, T. (1992). *The elements of Zen*. Rockport, MA: Element Books Ltd.
- Sogen, O. (1996). *An introduction to Zen training. (D. Hosokawa, Trans.)* New York: Kegan Paul International. (Original: Sanzen Nyumon, 1964).
- Stunkard, Albert. (1951). Some interpersonal aspects of an oriental religion. *Psychiatry*, 14, 419-431.
- Suler, J. (1993). *Contemporary psychoanalysis and Eastern thought*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Suzuki, D. (1960) *Manual of Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press.
- Suzuki, S. (2002). *Not always so*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Tacey, D. (2004). *The spirituality revolution*. New York: Brunner-Routledge.
- Tanahashi, K. & Schnider, T. (Eds.). (1994). *Essential Zen*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Teshima, J. (1995). *Zen Buddhism and Hasidism*. New York: University Press of America.
- Uchiyama, K. (1990). *The Zen teaching of 'homeless' Kodo*. Kyoto: Kyoto Soto Zen Center.
- Uchiyama, K. (2004). *Opening the hand of thought*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
- Watts, F. (2002). *Theology and psychology*. Cornwall: MPG Books Ltd.

Yamada, K. (1979) *Gateless Gate*. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press. p.11
Young-Eisendrath, P. & Martin, R. (Eds.) (1997). *Awakening to Zen*. The teachings of Roshi Philip Kapleau. New York: Scribner.

Appendix

Some Quotable Quotes from a Selected Bibliography on Zen

No-thought and No-thinking

“As for the images and sounds which arise during meditation, they are all right if they do not give rise to dualistic thought and if they do not cause thoughts to follow.

Sogen, Omori (1996) *An Introduction to Zen Training*. London: Kegan Paul International, p.71

My true self

“What then is my (true) self? In this context, what is being asked is not about an *entity* called self but about a way of being that is ‘authentically myself.’ So this notion of ‘self,’ rather than being negated, is taken to a higher level of inquiry.”

Habito, Ruben (2005) *Experiencing Buddhism*. New York: Orbis Books, p. 50

Being without self

“Maybe it would be clearer to say that things have no substantial independent existence of their own.”

Uchiyama, Kosho (2004) *Opening the Hand of Thought*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, p.7

Attainment

“We have to kill off any notion we have that there is something to attain, something to hold on to, something special we can become once and for all.”

Magid, Barry (2008) *Ending the Pursuit of Happiness* Boston: Wisdom Publications, p. 85

Process not goals

“One does not meditate any better than anyone else. Meditation is a process without end, without goals. You may never experience something someone else does.”

Radcliff, Benjamin (1993) *Understanding Zen* Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, p. 140

Beginner’s mind

“If your mind is empty, it is always ready for anything; it is open to everything. In the beginner’s mind there are many possibilities; in the expert’s mind there are few.”

Suzuki, Shunryu (1983) *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*. Tokyo: Weatherhill, p. 21

The Roshi

“The roshi is not interested in being deified and will refuse to be.”

Aitken, Robert (1982) *Taking the Path of Zen*. San Francisco: North Point Press, p. 90

The ten ox herding pictures

Suzuki, Daisetz. (1960) *Manual of Zen Buddhism*. New York: Grove Press, p.129

Enlightenment

“Any attempt to define either *satori* or *kenshō* is doomed to failure and has to be considered mere personal interpretation.”

Enomiya-Lassalle, Hugo (1965) *Zen-Way to Enlightenment*. London: Sheed and Ward, p.11

An Introduction to the Daily Ritual Prayer of Shingon Devotees

By

Thierry-Jean Roboüam, SJ

My first encounter with a fervent Japanese Buddhist family occurred decades ago when an instructor of mine invited me to spend the weekend at his newly constructed home in the foothills of Mount Kōya. Although I was a student at the Buddhist University, his wife and child welcomed me into their home. Before breakfast on my first morning with them, my teacher's wife opened a rice cooker and scooped out a small quantity of freshly cooked white rice into a porcelain bowl. She then placed the rice offering at the family altar, on the right side of the sutra stand below the three sacred paintings of Buddha manifestations. My teacher followed suit and brought a little cup of freshly brewed green tea for the left side of the sutra stand. With the candle lit and an incense stick burning, we prayed together for fifteen minutes before eating our morning meal.

Based on this account, readers might conclude that all Japanese are devoted Buddhists belonging to one of the traditional Buddhist organizations, or that they practice daily meditation, ritual prayer, and visit temples regularly. In point of fact however, traditional Buddhist organizations do not enjoy a secure, comfortable social position in Japan today (McMahan, 2012: 50). Decades of persecution during the Meiji period (1868-1912), ambiguous attitudes towards militarism (1931-1945), and the land reform of post-war Japan (1946), have rendered traditional Buddhist organizations less relevant in modern Japan compared to the role they used to play during the Edo period (1615-1868). In contrast new forms of lay religious organizations (Buddhist and non-Buddhist alike) developed during the nineteenth-century, and some of those organizations flourished in post-war Japan. This movement caused the more traditional Buddhist organizations to renew their efforts to better serve their lay communities, and examples of such efforts include the books that ordained scholar Bhikṣu (Bonzes) wrote to help lay devotees nurture a rich spiritual life, the techniques of meditation that have been made available to lay practitioners (which until World War II had been taught only to ordained members of the community), textbooks on daily prayers and rituals and popular commentaries on Mahāyāna sutras that are now available in most bookstores, and ordained female members of Buddhist organizations such as Setouchi Jakuchō (瀬戸内寂聴), who responded to the needs of the lay Buddhist female members of the community through conferences and publications. It is difficult to know how many Japanese pray every day, but one would be mistaken to think that Japanese families have massively abandoned Buddhist practices. Japanese families are very discrete about their spiritual lives, and it is only when invited into their homes that you realize that although the content of their prayers may vary from one tradition to another, the

structure and result are very similar. Ritual prayers nourish their spiritual lives.

I shall now endeavor to explain in more detail how lay Buddhist devotees of the Shingon Tradition pray everyday. This is done with the hope of encouraging research in the field of lay Buddhist spirituality, since to my knowledge there are very few scholarly works dealing with the prayer life of Buddhist devotees in contemporary Japan.

As one of the many holy Buddhist Mountains of Japan, the headquarters of the Shingon (真言 Performative Utterances) tradition were established twelve centuries ago on Mount Kōya. At the top of the mount lies a small plain in the form of a lotus flower, with a complex of temples, halls, and pagodas called the Danjo Garan (壇場伽藍). Nowadays the Danjo Garan is surrounded by a small city composed of more than fifty massive temples, and it is home to shops, ordinary houses, schools and a university. Welcomed as a pilgrim myself, I have been trained in the University of Kōyasan and in the Shinnoin [親王院 (Shinnō temple)], where I was able to be initiated not only to the more specialized teachings of scholar Bhiksus, but also to the teachings offered to lay practitioners. In the following lines I shall introduce the fourteen sections of the daily prayers of Shingon devotees, and provide some background explanations, in order to enable readers who are not familiar with Japanese Buddhism to understand better the content and aim of the ritual prayers.

Prayer recitation is a prudently constructed tenet of Buddhism in Japan. Among the important elements are its location, performance and imagery. The location for prayer recitation must be chosen carefully. Manuals designed for devotees explain how important the environment is to support the ‘performative utterance and act,’ and it results in a meaningful affectation of the devotees’ social realities. Particularly in the context of esoteric traditions, prayer is part of what is referred to as *gyō* (行, Practice or Performance). While the majority of Japanese respond negatively to the aspects of religion referred to as *Shukyō* (宗教, Religious Organizations or Religion), most react positively with regard to *Shugyō* (修行, Purifying acts or Ascetic practices) aspects. This type of tension, which also arises in the West when authors compare religion and spirituality, results in the value of ritual prayers (referred to as ‘performances’). Thus, Japanese devotees ‘performing’ their daily prayers become a reflection or icon of the disentangling presence, despite the entangled reality of their daily lives.

In order to perform the prayer ritual in the best conditions, devotees are advised to pray around the family altar. There, in the upper part of the family altar, a triptych symbolizes the disentangling Buddha presence: the central image is the icon of Dainichinyorai [大日如来 (महावैरोचन Mahāvairocana)], the icon on the left is Fudomyōō [不動明王 (अचलनाथ Acalanātha)], and the icon on the right is Kōbōdaishi (弘法大師).

In order to avoid any misunderstanding, I would like to point out the fact that those icons are not three independent images of divinities to be worshiped by the devotees, but modes of the same liberating energy. The central Dainichinyorai is the

most encompassing, and it expresses the unborn life-energy of the universe. The image on the left reflects a particular mode of unborn life-energy, as a very powerful diamond-like energy that can cut through the most stubborn delusions, and the image on the right is a Japanese mode of the unborn life-energy, as a protecting diamond-like radiance that permeates all aspects of life in Japan.

The place around the altar must be welcoming, pure, quiet, and use images that can be traced back to the time of the Buddha, and the place around the family altar must be refreshing, like an early morning rain, (a metaphor made clear to me by a trip to India, where a few minutes of rain refreshed the environment better than any air conditioning could). To that end, devotees are encouraged to keep the family altar clean, decorate it every day with fresh flowers, make daily offerings of cooked rice and tea, and purify the room with burning incense. Within this peaceful environment of the family altar, the daily prayer service of Shingon devotees is comprised of thirteen acts.

- I. **Calming oneself:** Prayer begins with gestures, rather than words. Devotees sit on the floor and breath slowly. In and out, they breathe deeply, staying still a little while to find peace and calm within. This might be punctuated by three bows, not unlike those in Muslim traditions. Once devotees are calm, they can recite the prayer, “I bow down at the feet of the all Buddha-presence,” three times.
- II. **Penitential act:** Devotees recite the following penitential prayer: “Long before I was born and until today, all my deeds, my words and my intentions have been rooted in greed (貪 ton), ill will (瞋 jin) and foolishness (痴 chi), making my presence in the world irresponsible and offensive. I acknowledge that before the ‘all Buddha-presence’ and respectfully implore forgiveness.” Confession in Buddhism is a voluntary act that requires honesty and concentration. If the devotees are not sincere when performing the penitential act, then the sympathetic response of the ‘all Buddha-presence’ will have no affect. The sympathetic response never takes the form of an absolution of bad deeds, but rather, the entangling energy generated by foolish and harmful deeds, can only be diminished through confession. Devotees in many Buddhist countries practice the rite of confession of transgressions, known in Sanskrit as *pāpadeśanā*. Based on the ritual of the *uposatha*, during which a Bhiksu (ordained Buddhist monk), confesses any violation of the disciplinary rules to another Bhiksu or to the whole community of Bhiksus (Sangha), the ritual of *uposatha* goes back to the time of the historical Buddha. Without a ritual to purify devotees of carnal desires, oral expressions, and behavioral intentions,

the rest of the prayer becomes meaningless. The penitential act has the ability to transform devotees into portals that connect to Buddha energies.

- III. **Three Treasures:** After the penitential act, the devotees perform one of the foundational ritual practices in Buddhism known as the ‘recitation of three shelters for Buddhist devotees,’ that is, “I go for refuge to the Buddha (all Buddha-presence); I go for refuge to the Dharma (Buddhist teachings); I go for refuge to the Sangha (Community).”
- IV. **Three Vows:** The devotees then express their faith in liberating powers that can be accumulated by those who have taken shelter in the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Sangha. The devotees thus say, “I vow that I shall actualize my faith into the Buddha; I vow that I shall actualize my faith into the Dharma; I vow that I shall actualize my faith into the Sangha.”
- V. **Ten Worthy Precepts:** Now, able to actualize their faith in the three jewels (the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha), the devotees cement their practice by utilizing ten extremely efficient guiding precepts. Though the Buddhist traditions believe the following precepts are extremely helpful for devotees who struggle under the effects of entanglement, they are not ultimate divine commandments. Devotees freely decide to engage themselves in a way of life that is liberating, rather than take pride in suffering many privations. This choice testifies that the Buddha path is a worthy path to take. The first three precepts aim at purifying the way devotees deal with their bodily dimension, the next four precepts aim at educating the way devotees communicate, and the last three precepts purify the devotees’ intentions. The devotees recite the following words: “I refrain from irresponsible intentional killing, stealing, committing adultery, telling lies, licentious speech, abusive language, double-tongued speech, greed, anger and evil perspectives.”
- VI. **Aspiring to Enlightenment (Bodhicitta):** In order to live according to the precepts they have just vowed to cherish, the devotees seek help from inner energies so that they may cross over the sea of entanglement characterized by life and death, and reach the peaceful shore of enlightenment. This internal help comes from within, as they try to awaken within themselves dormant liberating energies by reciting this *dhārāni* three times: “*Om bōji shitta boda hadayami*” (Om, do arise awakening energies). The recitation of the *dhārāni* plays a central role in all esoteric retreats of the Shingon tradition. The word *dhārāni* can be traced to a Sanskrit root *dhr*, meaning to sustain or support

(Basic Sanskrit-English-Japanese Dictionary, 165). The *dhārāni* is believed to energize the practitioners and protect them from distractions.

- VII. **Samaya Vows:** To awaken liberating energies is one thing, but to cultivate them and make good use of those energies requires a clear engagement to persevere on the path of liberation. That is why devotees use the *Samaya* (समय) vows for their spirit and the spirit of Buddha to be one. In Sanskrit the *Samaya* vows point at four important characteristics. The first underlines the fact that the Buddha and the practitioners are equal. It is also the vow taken by the all Buddha-presence to save sentient-beings from the effects of entanglement, and it expresses the fact that the thing, which is an obstacle to liberation, is taken away. It also assures those who have difficulty reaching the fullness of liberation that they will not be discouraged, but will always find renewed energies to train even harder. The devotees thus recite: “*Om sanmaya satoban*” (Om, I shall reside forever in Buddha’s peaceful land of bliss).
- VIII. **The Study of Sūtras:** “The meaning of the unsurpassed teachings of the Buddha is deep.” Devotees use this sentence to express their intention of taking refuge in the teachings of the Buddha, but even if the devotees study the sūtras for a hundred years, a thousand years, or for eternity, they will not be able to fully grasp the intricacies of the Buddha’s teachings. Today I am graced with the possibility to read, listen and make mine the teachings of the Buddha. I desire that the Buddha make even clearer for me the teachings of the sūtras.
- IX. **Core Sūtra on Liberating Wisdom (Heart Sūtra):** The next section of the prayer is dedicated to the recitation of one of the most popular sūtras in our part of Asia, namely the Core Sūtra on Liberating Wisdom (also known in English as the Heart Sūtra). This sūtra is well known in Japan, and devotees of most Japanese Buddhist traditions are invited to memorize it and recite it regularly. In the context of the esoteric traditions of Buddhism that sūtra is important, as it’s teaching culminates in the recitation of a mantra, “*Gyate, gyate, hara-gyate, hara-sogyate, boji sowaka.*” Mantra is notoriously difficult to define. In esoteric traditions, mantra is a special type of *dhārāni* in which all the phonetic elements of the mantra express the truth of Buddhist scriptures. The sūtra expresses in a limited number of words what happens during the millisecond when practitioners move from a state of consciousness rooted in entanglement to the peaceful state of enlightenment. The liberating experience does not make the practitioners leave the ordinary life of suffering and struggling, but it means that ordinary life does not affect the liberated ones in

an entangling way. The practitioners who have reached this stage of liberating wisdom find perfect peace and freedom right in the midst of ordinary life. In the millisecond of the passage between two modes of awareness – like as in a near death experience – great fear permeates the conscious processes of the practitioners. It is a calling for the practitioner to stop clinging to the Buddhist teachings and practices, as they have now been rendered obsolete. The sutra is thus divided into two parts. The first part invites the practitioners to nullify all the Buddhist teachings they have valued and followed in order to attain liberation, while the second part invites the practitioners to let a new mode of consciousness affect all their acts, sayings, and intentions. The practitioners thus recite:

“Bussestu Maka Hannya Haramita Shin Gyō. Kwanjizai bosa, gyō jin-hannya-haramita ji, shōken goun kai ku, do issai kuyaku. Sharishi, shiki fu I kū, kū fu is shiki, shiki soku ze kū, ku soku ze shiki, ju-sō-gyō-shiki yakubu nyoze. Sharishi, ze shohō kū sō fushō fu metsu, fuku fujō, fuzō fugen. Zeko kū chū mu shiki mu ju-sō-gyō-shiki, mu gen-ni-bi-zes-shin-ni, mu-shiki-shō-kō-mi-soku-hō, mu genkai naishi mu ishikikai, mu mummyō, yaku mu mummyō jin naishi mu rōshi, yaku mu rōshi jin, mu ku-jū-metsu-dō, mu chi yaku mu toku, imu shotokko. Bodaisatta e hannya-haramita ko, shin mu kege, mu kege ko, mu u kufu, onri issai tendō musō kugyō nehan. Sanze shobutsu e hannya-haramita ko, toku anokutara-sammyaku-sambodai. Kochi hannya-haramita, ze daijinshu, ze daimyōshu, ze mujōshu, ze mutōdōshu, nōjo issai ku, shinjitsu fu ko, ko setsu hannya-haramitashu, soku sesshu watsu: Gyate, gyate, hara-gyate, hara-sōgyate, boji sowaka. Hannya-shin-gyō.”

“When the Bodhisattva Kwanjizai was practicing the profound method of meditation according to the Prajñā-Pāramitā tradition, the Bodhisattva realized and saw that the five components of our awareness are void of permanence, and thereby the Bodhisattva became free from all suffering. Śāriputra, form is none other than void and void is none other than form. Form – it is void and void – this is form. The same can be said of the other four components of awareness, that is, sensation, conception, predisposition and consciousness. Śāriputra, all aspects of what we are aware of are, in character, void. They are not characterized by birth and death, impurity or purity, increase or decrease. Therefore, in void, there is no absolute form, no absolute sensing, no absolute conceiving, no absolute predisposing and no absolute recognizing. There is no eye, no ear, no nose,

no tongue, no body and no mind; there are no sights, no sounds, no smells, no tastes, no objects felt and no objects conceived. No field of vision, and thus none of the eighteen fields of awareness including the field of the mind. Do not cling to the teachings about the twelve-linked causes of suffering: there is no absolute ignorance and thus there is no absolute extinction of ignorance... There is no absolute decay or death, and there is no absolute extinction of decay and death. Do not cling to the teachings of the Four-fold Noble Truths about suffering, the origin of suffering, the ceasing of suffering and the path leading to the ceasing of suffering. There is no absolute liberation, because there is no absolute goal to achieve. Because the Bodhisattva relies on Liberating Wisdom, the Bodhisattva's heart is free from obstacles. And because there are no obstacles, there is no fear. Released from all inverted thought and dreamlike delusion, the Bodhisattva enters into the ultimate Nirvana. All the Buddha-manifestations of the past, present and future, relying on the Liberating Wisdom are filled with the unsurpassable Universal Wisdom. One realizes the Liberating Wisdom is the great mantra, the great mantra of enlightenment, the peerless mantra, the mantra beyond compare which is capable of relieving all suffering and dissatisfaction. It is true, not mistaken. And so the Bodhisattva expounds the mantra of Liberating Wisdom. Thus, the Bodhisattva chants, *Gate, gate, pāragate, parāsamgate bodhi svāhā.*" Core Sūtra on Liberating Wisdom."

According to the teachings of Kūkai in his Hannyashingyōhiken (般若心經秘鍵, Secret Key to the Core Sūtra), the sūtra can be divided into 14 lines (Hakeda 264), which can, in turn, be sub-divided into 5 parts. The introductory line describes the setting of the sūtra. In the larger version of the sūtra (25,000 lines), the location is the Vulture Peak at Rajagriha. In the Core Sūtra, the location is no longer an external place. The location is a pure moment of consciousness beyond the opposition of exterior-interior. That pure moment of consciousness allows a disentangled awareness of reality to be permeated by liberating sounds/rhythms. The fear that is generated when one must let go of attachment to any refuge is echoed by joyful and liberating sounds/rhythms. The first line describes the ideal locus for nurturing liberating energies, namely, the moment the Bodhisattva Kanjizai (觀自在, Avalokiteśvara), as the Buddha manifestation of Prajna (wisdom), is aware that the components of reality are void of permanent substance. The devotee Śāriputra (Sharishi) is now going through the same process accompanied by the soothing sounds/rhythms of the Bodhisattva. The second part invites Śāriputra to stop clinging to the main teachings of Mahāyāna Buddhism. The

third part explains the benefits one receives from reciting the mantra found at the end of the sūtra. The fourth part is a dharani about the mantra and finally, the fifth part is the mantra itself. The newly liberated Bodhisattva is now permeated with the liberating sounds/rhythms of the sutra, which become the background for the Bodhisattva's liberating activities. The sūtra is thus constantly repeated, allowing the Bodhisattva to generate a liberating effect on all what has affected the Bodhisattva.

Shingon devotees who repeat every day the Core Sūtra might not be able to explain its content, but they know that Prajña (wisdom) as repeated sounds/rhythms is more liberating than the accumulation of scholarly knowledge.

- X. **Thirteen Mantras:** The recitation of the Core Sūtra is followed by the recitation of 13 mantras. A mantra, in the context of Shingon prayers is a series of Sanskrit syllables adapted to Japanese phonetics, whose semantic meaning is of very little importance. The recitation of those thirteen mantras is thought to be efficacious in producing a disentangling effect, and serves two main purposes. The first purpose is the duty of the living to transfer some of their energies for the benefit of the departed who are still on their path toward full liberation. The living must accompany their departed during thirty-three years. Those thirty-three years are divided into 13 periods, during which a departed benefits from the liberating energies of a particular Buddha manifestation. In Buddhism, death – understood as physical death – is not an ultimate moment but a passage. In a world that is characterized by entanglement and thus frustration, the physical death of someone does not mean an automatic erasure of all the bad effects an entangled life has generated. Members of the family of the departed might have some good memories of the departed, but they have also been hurt and have suffered from the entangling actions the departed performed during his or her lifetime. The recitation of the mantras is a very efficient method of cleansing oneself from entangling memories. It is also a way to make sure those entangling memories will not affect the following generations in a negative way. The Shingon traditions believe that thirty-three years of practice is sufficiently powerful enough to nullify the entangling effects of a departed. The second purpose of the recitation corresponds to the major Buddha manifestations, on which Japanese Buddhist traditions focus. For example, the Pure Land traditions focus on Amida, and the Zen traditions focus on Śhakyamuni. The recitation of the thirteen mantras is a way to pay homage to all the Buddha energies at work on the Japanese islands and are recited as follows:

1. Acala Vidyārāja (不動明王, Fudō Myōō): *Nōmaku sanmanda bazaradan senda makaroshada sowataya un tarara kanman.*
2. Sakyamuni Tathāgata (釈迦如来, Śaka Nyorai): *Nōmaku sanmanda bodanan baku.*
3. Mañjuśrī Bodhisattva (文殊菩薩, Monju Bosatsu): *On a rahashano.*
4. Samantabhadra Bodhisattva (普賢菩薩, Fugen Bosatsu): *On sanmaya satoban.*
5. Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva (地藏菩薩, Jizō Bosatsu): *On kakaka bisanmaei sowaka.*
6. Maitreya Bodhisattva (弥勒菩薩, Miroku Bosatsu): *On maitareiya sowaka.*
7. Bhasajyaguru Tathāgata (藥師如来, Yakushi Nyorai): *On koro koro sendari matōgi sowaka.*
8. Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (觀世音菩薩, Kanzeon Bosatsu): *On arorikya sowaka.*
9. Mahāsthāmaprāpta Bodhisattva (大勢至菩薩, Daiseishi Bosatsu): *On san zan zan saku sowaka.*
10. Amitābha Tathāgata (阿弥陀如来, Amida Nyorai): *On amirita teizei kara un.*
11. Aksobhya Tathāgata (阿闍如来, Ashuku Nyorai): *On akishubiya un.*
12. Mahāvairocana Tathāgata (大日如来, Dainichi Nyorai): *On abiraunken bazaradato ban.*
13. Ākāśagarbha Bodhisattva (虚空藏菩薩, Kokūzō Bosatsu): *Nōbō akysa kyarabaya on arikya mari bori sowaka.*

XI. The Ray of Hope Mantra: The recitation of the thirteen mantras is followed by the recitation of yet another mantra, The Ray of Hope Mantra (Light Mantra). Before reciting this mantra, devotees bring back to mind the importance of the meaning. They confess the essence of the teachings of Dainichi Nyorai (大日如来) (the main Buddha manifestation in the Shingon tradition), which is contained in the 23 syllables of the mantra. The recitation of the mantra has the power to make the devotees egoless, lowering their guard to be fully affected by the ray of hope that is Dainichi Nyorai (大日如来). Their worries and fears are cleansed and they experience for an instant what liberation is about. The wisdom of Dainichi Nyorai is for them like the full moon shining into their darkness. This is why they recite:

“The Ray of Hope Mantra contains in twenty-three syllables the entire power of the all permeating Mahāvairocana Nyorai. When we recite the mantra with all our hearts, the Ray of Hope of Mahāvairocana Nyorai envelops us casting away the clouds of illusions. The full moon like brilliance of Mahāvairocana's wisdom shines upon us. Therefore we say: On abokya beirosha nō maka bodara manu handoma jimbara harabaritaya un.”

XII. Taking Refuge in Kōbō Daishi: Devotees then take refuge in the name of the one who first preached the esoteric teachings in Japan. We know him under the name of Kūkai, and devotees refer to the practice as Gohōgō (御宝号). They confess their faith into the beneficial effects of reciting the name of Kōbō Daishi (弘法大師) and say, *“Kōbō Daishi is now on Mount Kōya working at saving those who suffer. We take refuge in the Great Master and say: Namu Daishi Henjō Kongō.”*

XIII. Intentions of Prayer: The devotees then pray on a set of intentions. They say, *“We pray wholeheartedly for eternal harmony in the cosmos, that all sentient beings may attain liberation in their very bodies, that they may enter the realm of esoteric teachings. We also pray that the rhythm of the change of seasons be regular, that harvest may be fruitful, that all people live in harmony and experience happiness. May all sentient beings be graced equally.”*

XIV. Benefitting All Sentient Beings: This is followed by a very important wish. Devotees wish that all of their good deeds, including the recitation of the present prayer, benefit all sentient beings. Known in Sanskrit as Parināmanā, the Japanese devotees call it Ekō (回向, transfer of merits), and they pray, *“May the merits we have accumulated benefit all sentient beings so that they, together with us, experience the fullness of liberation that is offered equally to all sentient beings.”*

Readers would have noticed that the prayer of lay Shingon devotees begins in the narrow confines of ordinary entangled reality. By an act of contrition it slowly opens itself to a cosmic reality, where all aspects of that reality are disentangled, joyful and compassionate. Shingon prayer is permeated with the hope that all sentient beings be delivered from entanglement and suffering. Daily prayers transform devotees into living presences, radiating hope that all in existence is no other than Mahāvairocana Nyorai: a compassionate energy equally shared by all sentient beings. On a more superficial level of analysis, the daily prayer of Shingon devotees is fundamentally *silkroadic*, weaving together threads from Indian, Central Asian, Chinese and many other cultures including

Japanese, producing a spiritual path leading from darkness to light: *On abokya beirosha nō maka bodara manu handoma jimbara harabaritaya un.*

REFERENCES

1. Conze, Edward, tr. 1975 (1984). *The Large Sutra of Perfect Wisdom*. Berkely, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press.
2. Hakeda, Yoshito S. tr. 1972. *Kūkai: Major Works*. New York: Columbia University Press.
3. LaFleur, William R. 1988. *Buddhism: a Cultural Perspective*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc.
4. Sakata, Kōzen. 1995 (2004). *Shingonshū Zaikekongyōkōgi (Instructions on the Daily Prayer for Lay Shingon Devotees)*. Ōsaka: Tōhō Shuppan
5. McMahan David L. ed. 2012. *Buddhism in the Modern World*. London & New York: Routledge.
6. Research Institute of Esoteric Buddhist Culture. 1990. *Mikkyō: Kōbō Daishi Kūkai and Shingon Buddhism*. Kōyasan: Kōyasan University.
7. Vidyalankar Bharat Bhushan, Anil Vidyalankar, and Iwao Nakajima. 1999. *Basic Sanskrit-English-Japanese Dictionary*. Toho Shuppan.

The Relation between *Dharmākara Bodhisattva* and *Amitābha*: Structure of the Dharma Body of Buddha as a Compassionate Means of Salvation

By

Yuichi Tsunoda, SJ

1. Introduction

In this thesis, I investigate the relation between the *Dharmākara Bodhisattva* and *Amitābha*, who together form the Dharma Body of Buddha, as a compassionate means. In the Buddha Body theory of Shin Buddhism, the *Dharmākara Bodhisattva* and *Amitābha* together comprise the Dharma Body of Buddha as a compassionate means of salvation, embodying the self-determination of the formless and ineffable Buddha Body, *Tathāgata*.

In this eternal movement, the *Dharmākara* took vows to save all sentient beings, and through many ages of rigorous practice finally attained true enlightenment as *Amitābha*, who has a Fulfilled Spiritual Body (*Sambhoga-kāya*), and contains all sentient beings. As a principle of compassionate means of salvation, *Dharmākara* imparts self-awareness, through which the individual recognizes his/her deep sinfulness, and by grace receives faith in *Amitābha* and is reborn in the Pure Land. The Fulfilled Body of *Amitābha* is in turn incarnated into countless transformed and assumed historical bodies (*Nirmana-kāya*). *Shakyamuni* (Gautama) is the preeminent historical Buddha among the transformed bodies of Buddha.

Modern Shin-Buddhist thinker Soga Ryōjin (1875-1971) regards the *Dharmākara* as our true self. We can find the *Dharmākara* in our self-awareness, and at the same time we can receive salvation by the power of *Amitābha*, who is the Fulfilled Body of *Dharmākara*'s salvific vow. How precisely do we understand the relationship between *Dharmākara* and *Amitābha*? Can they exist simultaneously in our experience even though *Dharmākara* has already attained full enlightenment as *Amitābha*, and thereby, as is commonly thought, is fully absorbed (and thus negated) into *Amitābha*? Soga's scholarship raises new questions in this regard and complexifies the discussion considerably by positing a dynamic relationship between *Dharmākara* and *Amitābha*, and according *Dharmākara* a prominent role in the soteriology of Shin Buddhism.

In attempting to address the above-mentioned problematic, I first explore the Buddha Body theory of Shinran (1173-1263), who is the founder of Shin Buddhism. Second, I elucidate the understanding of *Dharmākara Bodhisattva* in Soga, who understands *Dharmākara* as the principle of salvation, and argues for the eternal efficacy of his practice as a *Bodhisattva*. Third, I explore the roots of Soga's perspective in the work of his master Kiyozawa Manshi (1863-1903), who recognized the importance of the element of self-awareness in Shin Buddhist faith; in turn, this crucial element would be fully developed in his disciple, Soga, who would identify this

principle of self-awareness with *Dharmākara*. Finally, I explicate the relation between the *Dharmākara Bodhisattva* and *Amitābha*, who together form the Dharma Body of Buddha as a compassionate means, embodying the self-determination of the formless and ineffable Buddha Body, *Tathāgata*.

2. Buddha Body Theory in Shinran

The monk Shinran founded Shin-Buddhism during the 12th to 13th century. Shinran identifies two dimensions of the Dharma Body (*Dharmakāya*) of Buddha. One dimension is the Dharma Body as *suchness*, which is the formless and ineffable *Tathāgata* (法性法身). Our minds cannot grasp or describe this reality, as it is beyond concepts or words. The other dimension is the Dharma Body in its self-manifestation as a compassionate means (方便法身), whose name is *Dharmākara Bodhisattva*.¹ He established the forty-eight great vows before *Lokeśvararāja* Buddha (the name of the Buddha) after five *kalpas* (eons) of reflection, on how best to save all sentient beings. At the end of this long period, he determined that the best path to universal salvation lay in faith in the recitation of “*Namu-Amidha-Butsu*” (I take refuge in *Amitābha*) in order to reach the Pure Land. After innumerable kalpas, he achieved full enlightenment as *Amitābha* Buddha.

His most important vow is the eighteenth vow. In this vow, *Dharmākara* says, “if, when I attain Buddhahood, the sentient beings with ten quarters, with sincere mind entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in my land and saying my Name perhaps even ten times, should not be born there, may I not attain the supreme enlightenment. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offences and those who slander the right dharma.”² This means that when he becomes *Amitābha* Buddha, all sentient beings with

¹ Shinran, *Notes on ‘Essentials of Faith Alone’* trans. Dennis Hirota in vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Shinran* (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-Ha, 1997), 461.

² Shinran, *The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way*, trans. Dennis Hirota in vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Shinran* (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-Ha, 1997), 80.

a) “Ten quarters” signifies the eight directions, comprised of the four cardinal directions (north, east, south, and west), the four intermediate directions (northeast, southeast, southwest, and northwest), plus the zenith and nadir. As a general term, it refers to the entire sphere of reality everywhere.

Inagaki Hisao, *Glossary to Shinran, Kyōgyōshinshō: On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment*, trans. Inagaki Hisao, (Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003), 403.

b) The “five grave offences” represents the most serious offenses of Buddhist followers, commission of which consigns one to the *Avici* hell (the lowest and most permanent level of Hell). They are interpreted in slightly different ways in the Early Buddhist and Mahayana schools. The most commonly used version is that of the Early Buddhist school: (1) Killing one’s father (2) Killing one’s mother (3) Killing an *Arhat* (4) Causing the Buddha’s body to bleed (5) Causing disunity in the Buddhist order (*sangha*).

The Mahayana version is (1) Destroying stupas, burning sutra repositories, or stealing property belonging to the Three Treasures (2) Slandering the teaching of the three vehicles by saying that it is not the sacred teaching of the Buddha, obstructing and depreciating it, or hiding it (3) Beating and rebuking monks and nuns, whether they observe the precepts, have received no precepts, or have broken the precepts; enumerating their transgressions, confining them, forcing them back into secular life, forcing them to do menial work, levying tax duties on them, or putting them to death (4) Killing one’s father, killing one’s

sincere mind, entrusting themselves, aspiring to be born in the Pure Land and who recite “*Namu-Amidha-Butsu*” (I take refuge in *Amitābha*) even ten times, are saved and reborn in the Pure Land.³ If it should happen that these who faithfully observed these precepts were not born in the Pure Land and not saved, *Dharmākara Bodhisattva* could not have attained true enlightenment as *Amitābha*.⁴

After making these vows, *Dharmākara* made ascetic practices for innumerable kalpas as a *Bodhisattva*, and finally attained enlightenment and fulfilled his vow. “All sentient beings, as they hear the Name (of *Amitābha*), realize one thought-moment of faith and joy, which is directed to them from Amida (*Amitābha*)’s sincere mind, and aspiring to be born in that land, they then attain birth and dwell in the stage of non-retrogression. Excluded are those who commit the five grave offences and those who slander the right dharma.”⁵ *Dharmākara*, becoming *Amitābha*, thus opened the way in which all sentient beings can be saved in his Pure Land. *Amitābha*’s body is called “Fulfilled Body (*Sambhoga-kāya*)” because this body is realized when *Dharmākara Bodhisattva*’s vow is fulfilled and all sentient beings are saved in *Amitābha*’s Pure Land.

3. Subjective understanding of *Dharmākara* in Soga Ryōjin

From the 13th to the 20th century, most Shin Buddhist thinkers regarded *Dharmākara Bodhisattva*’s story as pure “myth” rather than as an embodied principle of salvation. As a result, they neglected *Dharmākara* and focused on *Amitābha* (the Fulfilled Body of *Dharmākara*), the merciful savior of all sentient beings. However, Soga Ryōjin, a preeminent modern Shin-Buddhist thinker, focuses on the salvific role of *Dharmākara* in his rigorous practice as a *Bodhisattva* to save sentient beings. He demythologizes *Dharmākara*’s enlightenment as *Amitābha* by interpreting *Dharmākara* as the center of our true subjectivity. Soga explains, “The *Tathāgata* becoming me saves me,”⁶ and “when the *Tathāgata* becomes me it signals the birth of *Dharmākara*

mother, causing blood to flow from the body of Buddha, destroying the harmony of the sangha, or killing an *Arhat* (5) Rejecting the law of causality and constantly performing the ten evil acts throughout one’s life. Inagaki Hisao, Glossary to Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō: On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment*, 368.

³ There are controversies among Shin Buddhist thinkers regarding whether one is reborn in the Pure Land after death or can experience the Pure Land when one attains faith in *Amitābha* in this world. In Soga’s view, when one attains faith, one can live in the state of non-retrogression, in which entry into the Pure Land is assured in the future. This future is not distinct from the present time, but sustains the present time as the coming of the Pure Land.

Soga Ryōjin Kōgiroku jo: Kyōgyōshinshō-taikō 曾我量深講義録上: 教行信証大綱 [The Lecture of Soga Ryōjin I: Principle of *Kyōgyōshinshō*] (Tokyo: Shunjusha, 2011), 417.

⁴ Shinran, *The True Teaching, Practice, and Realization of the Pure Land Way*, 80.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Soga Ryōjin, *A Savior on Earth: The Meaning of Dharmākara Bodhisattva’s Advent*, trans. Jan Van Bragt, in *Cultivating Spirituality: A Modern Shin Buddhist Anthology*, ed. Mark L. Blum and Robert F. Rhodes (Albany: State University of New York, 2011), 107.

Bodhisattva.”⁷ In my view, this statement indicates that the formless *Tathāgata* undergoes self-negation, assumes our humanity, and becomes our true self as *Dharmākara*. Though *Dharmākara* is not an historical person, he becomes our true self at the core of our consciousness, taking on our sinful humanity within the karmic cycle of evil. He takes the original vow and engages in rigorous practice to save us in the inmost dimension of our consciousness. Soga holds that although Jesus Christ is a historical human person who appeared as a mediator between God and humans, Christ is still an object for us. Soga writes, “He (Christ) is and remains himself, while I am and remain myself.”⁸ In contrast, *Dharmākara* was born in the heart-mind of human beings and thus salvation of all sentient beings arises from the dark breast of human suffering.⁹ Soga emphasizes that *Dharmākara* arises from the earth, which represents sinful human darkness and does not come from heaven.¹⁰

4. Self-transcendence to the Earth: Faith as Self-awareness in Kiyozawa and Soga

In my view, Soga’s understanding of *Dharmākara* as a true self on earth has its background in relation to his master, Kiyozawa Manshi, the pioneer of the modern interpretation of Shin-Buddhist doctrine. He understands faith in *Amitābha* as self-awareness and finds a final settlement (or realization) in this present moment, not in the future after death. He expresses this final settlement in terms of self-awareness: “This myself is none other than that which, following the way of suchness and entrusting itself to the wondrous working that is absolute and infinite, has settled down of itself in the present situation.”¹¹ The original word for “has settled down of itself” is “*rakuzai*” (落在). “*Rakuzai*,” literally means “fallen being.” Self is fallen (transcends) into this present situation, entrusting everything to the absolute infinite power of *Amitābha*. This self-awareness consists of: (1) Individual self (2) The interdependent relation between the individual self and other sentient beings, (3) The darkness of one’s participation in the karmic cycle of evil (4) The earth (present situation) where the self is placed (5) The absolute infinite power (*Tathāgata* or *Amitābha*), which saves the individual self. When I recognize myself deeply entangled in the darkness of the cycle of karmic evil on the earth (機の深信), paradoxically I find the final salvation in *Amitābha* (法の深信).

The self does not go to heaven and immediately receive the beatific vision, but goes down to the earth by deepening the self-recognition of one’s participation in

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid, 111

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Kiyozawa Manshi, *The Great Path of Absolute Other Power*, trans. Bandō Shōjun, *The Eastern Buddhist* 5, no. 2 (October 1972): 141.

karmic evil. In this context the “falling” of the self is the movement of self-transcendence, downward into the present moment. Our true self finds a final settlement in the present situation by falling to the earth in our self-awareness. Furthermore, when the true self has a final settlement in this present situation, it also recognizes the interdependent nature of its relation with all other sentient beings.

Soga deepens Kiyozawa’s view of self-awareness and finds *Dharmākara* in our true self on the earth, in the present moment. We can recognize *Dharmākara* in our self by the self-transcendence to the earth. When we believe deeply that we are foolish beings of karmic evil caught in the cycle of birth and death (*Samsāra*), we find that *Dharmākara* is living deep within our sinful human reality and carries our sins and sufferings as our true self. He saves us from the burden of sin by taking all people’s responsibility upon himself.¹² This might be understood as the integration of the darkness of karmic reality into the self, allowing the self to attain wholeness. Thus *Dharmākara* was born in the heart-mind of human beings, and his voice saving all sentient beings arises from the dark breast of the suffering of each human being.¹³

However, what is the relationship between our own individual self and *Dharmākara*? Is the self replaced by the subject of *Dharmākara*? In my view, when I recognize my human sinfulness, from which I am utterly unable to procure my salvation by my own power, I become a real individual. At the same time, paradoxically I am saved by the mercy of *Amitābha*.

In *A Record in Lament of Divergences*, Shinran says: “When I consider deeply the Vow of Amida (*Amitābha*), which arose from five kalpas of profound thought, I realize that it was entirely for the sake of myself alone!”¹⁴ When one recognizes “The Vow of *Amitābha* for the sake of [oneself] alone,” one can recognize oneself as the real individual in *Tathāgata*, and this true individual self is realized by *Dharmākara*. The salvific power of *Amitābha* spreads over all sentient beings, but the power of the vow is totally individualized by *Dharmākara* and directed to the salvation of the individual self.

5. Relationship between *Dharmākara* and *Amitābha* as a Fulfilled Body

The problematic Soga attempts to address concerns the understanding of the dichotomous presences of *Dharmākara* and *Amitābha*. On the one hand, we can see *Dharmākara* in our own self, which cannot be objectified. On the other hand, we can see *Amitābha* as an object of our faith. In the *Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life*, eons

¹² Soga Ryōjin, *Tannishō chōki 歎異抄聴記* (Lectures on Tannishō), in vol. 6 of *Soga Ryōjin senshu 曾我量深選集* (The Selected Works of Soga Ryōjin), ed. Soga Ryōjin senshū kankōkai (Tokyo: Yayoi shobō, 1971), 156.

¹³ Soga Ryōjin, *A Savior on Earth: The Meaning of Dharmākara Bodhisattva’s Advent*, 111.

¹⁴ Shinran, *A Record in Lament of Divergences*, trans. Dennis Hirota in vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Shinran* (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-Ha, 1997), 679.

(ten kalpas) ago, *Dharmākara*'s vow was fulfilled and he achieved true enlightenment, having become the Fulfilled Buddha Body as *Amitābha*, who dwells in the Pure Land. According to this progression, then, he can no longer be *Dharmākara Bodhisattva*. Moreover, if we find the presence of *Dharmākara* in our subjectivity, it means that he could not simultaneously be *Amitābha*, because his enlightenment would not have been accomplished. One entrusts everything to *Amitābha*, in the faith of *Namu-Amida-butsu* and is saved by his power. In this view, then, *Amitābha* exists as the Fulfilled Body, having absorbed and thus superseded, *Dharmākara*.

Soga attempts to resolve this apparent dilemma by reference to Shinran's notion of "eternal *Tathāgata*." Shinran notes, "It is taught that ten kalpas have now passed since Amida (*Amitābha*) attained Buddhahood, but he seems a Buddha more ancient than kalpas countless as particles."¹⁵ Though according to Pure Land tradition *Dharmākara Bodhisattva* became *Amitābha* ten kalpas ago, it is only some interpreters of the *Sutra on the Buddha of Infinite Life* who take this timeframe in the literal sense. Shinran, however, found in this text the hidden meaning of the "eternal" Buddha, who is the formless *Tathāgata* before the enlightenment of *Dharmākara*. Soga uses this notion and holds that the person of *Dharmākara* is the self-manifestation of the eternal *Tathāgata*.¹⁶ This *Tathāgata* becomes an embodied principle, assimilating itself into karmic reality as *Dharmākara*.

In my view, we should not apply the category of subject and object to the relation between *Dharmākara* and *Amitābha*. When one finds that the self is deeply caught in karmic evil and dwells on the earth (present situation), this self cannot be objectified by any self-reflection. Moreover, the self has interdependent relations with other sentient beings in the karmic sinful darkness of this present situation. Such an un-objectified self is called *Dharmākara*. When one finds the true self as *Dharmākara* in such darkness, at the same time, one can see *Amitābha*, who is an infinite light in our consciousness. *Amitābha* cannot be a mere object of our faith, but an infinite horizon that breaks the dichotomy of subject and object because it is the full self-determination of the infinite *Tathāgata*. As the self-realization of the formless *Tathāgata*, *Amitābha* is *Dharmākara* and *Dharmākara* is *Amitābha*. *Amitābha* cannot be *Amitābha* alone, but he contains *Dharmākara*, who enters the darkness of human reality for its universal salvation.

When I realize that the vow of *Amitābha* was entirely for the sake of myself

¹⁵ Shinran, *Hymns of the Pure Land*, trans. Dennis Hirota in vol. 1 of *The Collected Works of Shinran* (Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanji-Ha, 1997), 340.

¹⁶ Soga Ryōjin, *Kuon no Busshin no Kaikensha toshite no genzai no Hōzobiku* 久遠の仏心の開顕者としての現在の法蔵比丘 (*Dharmākara Bhikkhu as the one who opens the eternal Buddha mind in the present time*), in vol. 2 of *Soga Ryōjin senshu* 曾我量深選集 (*The Selected Works of Soga Ryōjin*), ed. Soga Ryōjin senshū kankōkai (Tokyo: Yayoi shobō, 1971), 372.

alone, I find the individual self as *Dharmākara* in the darkness of karmic evil. At the same time, I experience salvation by the infinite light of *Amitābha* to save my individual self in the power of the vow. In our self-awareness, *Dharmākara* is recognized as the individual self who eternally inhabits the sinful condition on earth. *Amitābha* is recognized as infinite horizon that saves all sentient beings on the earth. Both of them are the self-determination of the formless *Tathāgata* and both are found at the same time in the faith of *Namu-Amida-Butsu*. Because *Dharmākara* already accomplished his enlightenment as *Amitābha*, they are united as the self-determination of the formless *Tathāgata*. *Dharmākara* opens the way to his enlightened body, *Amitābha*, and *Amitābha* cannot cease to be *Dharmākara*, because he desires to be assimilated into our human sinful reality as a Bodhisattva in order to save us.

Conclusion

Dharmākara Bodhisattva and *Amitābha* are united as the self-determination of the formless *Tathāgata*. *Dharmākara* is our true self, which is on the earth and deeply embedded in karmic evil. This individual self cannot be objectified. When one finds the individual self as *Dharmākara* in sinful darkness on the earth, at the same time one experiences the infinite horizon of *Amitābha* in the faith of *Namu-Amida-Butsu*. Finally, one can make a final settlement in this present situation by entrusting oneself to the power of *Amitābha*, the Fulfilled Body of Buddha, in whom *Dharmākara*'s salvific vow is accomplished. *Amitābha* contains *Dharmākara*, who enters the darkness of karmic evil for the salvation of all sentient beings, and lives as the true self within the human reality. Through the recognition of *Dharmākara*, one can experience *Amitābha* in faith because *Dharmākara* has already attained true enlightenment as *Amitābha*. In the eternal movement of salvation, *Dharmākara* is the gate for experiencing the Fulfilled Body of *Amitābha*, who in turn saves all sentient beings through *Dharmākara*, our true self in our karmic situation. Therefore, *Dharmākara* and *Amitābha* are united in the relation between true individual self and infinite horizon. Together, they constitute the Dharma-body of Buddha as a compassionate means for universal salvation in the self-determination of the formless *Tathāgata*.

Bibliography

- Cultivating Spirituality: A Modern Shin Buddhist Anthology*. Edited by Mark L. Blum and Robert F. Rhodes. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2011.
- Kiyozawa Manshi zenshū* 清沢満之全集 [The Complete Works of Kiyozawa Manshi], 9 vols. Edited by Otani University. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten. 2002-2003.
- Kiyozawa Manshi, "The Great Path of Absolute Other Power." Translated by Bandō Shōjun. *The Eastern Buddhist* 5, no. 2 (October 1972): 141-152.

- Shinran chosaku zenshū: zen* 親鸞著作全集：全 [The Complete Works of Shinran]. Edited by Kaneko Daiei. Kyoto: Hōzōkan, 1964.
- Shinran, *Kyōgyōshinshō: On Teaching, Practice, Faith, and Enlightenment*. Translated by Inagaki Hisao. Berkeley: Numata Center for Buddhist Translation and Research, 2003.
- Soga Ryōjin kōgiroku* 曾我量深講義録 [The Lecture of Soga Ryojin], 2 vols. Tokyo: Shunjūsha, 2011.
- Soga Ryōjin senshū* 曾我量深選集 [The Selected Works of Soga Ryōjin]. 12 vols. Edited by Soga Ryōjin senshū kankōkai. Tokyo: Yayoi shobō, 1970-1972.
- The Collected Works of Shinran*, 2 vols. Translated by Dennis Hirota, Inagaki Hisao, Tokunaga Michio, and Uryuzu Ryūshin. Kyoto: Jodo Shinshū Hongwanji-Ha, 1997.

**Further Along the Exploring Path of Dialogue between Meister
Eckhart and Zen Buddhism:
The Itinerary of the Soul toward God into the Godhead and the
Enlightenment toward Absolute Nothingness**

By

Joseph Ng Swee Chun, SJ

I. The Encounter between Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism

Arnold Toynbee once said that the twentieth century would be stamped on historical memory for the beginning of a serious dialogue between Christianity and Buddhism – the two most strongly opposed positions.¹⁷ For the Christian what can be more other than the Buddhist ‘other’ who names Ultimate Reality not God but Emptiness? This other who declares that there is no self, or more exactly, with Nāgārjuna (second century C.E. Buddhist philosopher), that both self and no-self neither exist nor do not exist?¹⁸ From the Christian tradition, the medieval Dominican preacher Meister Eckhart (1260-1327), even without explicitly knowing so on his part, had actually entered into “intrareligious dialogue”¹⁹ – in his heart, in his intelligence, in his life – between Christian faith and Buddhist spirituality, and subsequently integrated

¹⁷ Quoted in Hans Küng, *Global Responsibility – In Search for a New World Ethic* (New York: Crossroad, 1991). William Johnston, in *The Still Point* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), p. xiv, also echoes, “the fact is that not only Zen but all forms of Buddhism are going to make an enormous impact on the Christianity of the coming century. If there has been a Hellenized Christianity... there is every likelihood that the future will see the rise of an Oriental Christianity in which the role of Buddhism will be incalculably profound. Indeed this process has already begun.” Writing on “Buddhism as a Challenge for Christians” in *Love Meets Wisdom: A Christian Experience of Buddhism* (Quezon City, Philippines: Claretian Publications, 1989), pp. 83-88, at p. 83 (first published in *Concilium*, 183 [1986]: 40-44), Aloysius Pieris remarks “many had hoped with Arnold Toynbee that an in-depth encounter between Buddhism and Christianity would usher in a new era in human history. Like no other two religions of the world, these two are a formidable challenge to each other, and their encounter, one hoped, would result in a *coincidentia oppositorum* that would give birth to a richer and nobler synthesis in each.” Pieris further argues that Buddhism and Christianity are best understood as emphasizing alternative ‘idioms of salvation’ that are mutually dependent, neither is sufficient on its own: “...both gnosis (or wisdom in Buddhism) and agape (or love in Christianity) are necessary precisely because each in itself is *inadequate* as a medium, not only for experiencing but also for expressing our intimate moments with the Ultimate Source of Liberation. They are, in other words, complementary idioms that need each other to mediate the self-transcending experience called ‘salvation’” (p. 111).

¹⁸ David Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other. The Inter-Religious Dialogue* (Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990), pp. 68-69. Tracy is affirmative that the Buddhist-Christian dialogue has proved to be one of the most puzzling and fruitful attempts at genuine dialogue in our period. It is an exceptionally fruitful dialogue insofar as the reality of the other as other is acknowledged as at the heart of all true dialogue. A more ‘other’ form of thought than Buddhist thought on God and self, on history and nature, indeed on thought itself would be difficult to conceive for Western Christians with different strategies and categories of philosophical and theological thoughts.

¹⁹ See Raimon Panikkar, *The Intrareligious Dialogue*, rev. ed. (Paulist Press, 1999).

them in his mystical experience and theology. This highly complex integration, without Eckhart's realizing or intending it himself, should make an effective contribution to Christian-Buddhist interreligious dialogue. For Hans Urs von Balthasar, Eckhart opens up the possibility of dialogue with "Asian metaphysical ways of redemption."²⁰ In modern time the dialogue between Buddhists and Meister Eckhart started by the Japanese Buddhist scholar, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki in the book entitled *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist. The Eastern and Western Way*.²¹ D. T. Suzuki was surprised to discover "the closeness of Meister Eckhart's way of thinking to that of Mahāyāna Buddhism, especially Zen Buddhism."²² The dialogue continues among a group of philosophers in Kyoto reflecting on Zen in the context of German philosophy and Christian thought, especially the mysticism of Meister Eckhart, which they claim to be close to Zen.²³ A recent example was the Buddhist-Jewish-Christian conversation around the topic "Kenotic God and Dynamic Sunyata" presented by Masao Abe.²⁴ In this essay I will try to explore the mystical theology of Eckhart regarding the itinerary of the soul toward God into the Godhead, in comparison and contrast to the enlightenment toward 'Absolute Nothingness' in Zen Buddhism as expounded especially by the Kyoto-school philosophers. Perhaps at the end of the comparison and contrast, we will see some implications for moving further along the path of Christian-Buddhist dialogue.

II. Meister Eckhart: The Itinerary of the Soul toward God into the Godhead

1. The Flowing Out-Back Structure of the Great Circle of Being-beings

The scheme of Eckhart on the structure of reality and the divine nature "can be viewed as a dynamic system whose basic law is the flowing out (*exitus*...) of all

²⁰ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *The Glory of the Lord*, vol. 5 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), p. 52. See p. 30: Balthasar, though quite critical of Eckhart, judges his experience to be "authentically Christian, even in its most daring conceptions," adding: "we have to divest Eckhart's wholly limpid and shadowless experience of God of its conceptual and verbal attire." A summary of Balthasar's negative assessment of Eckhart may be found in Raymond Gawronski, S. J., *Word and Silence: Hans Urs von Balthasar and the Spiritual Encounter between East and West* (Edinburgh and Grand Rapids: T&T Clark and Eerdmans, 1995), pp. 63-67. In his article, "Balthasar and Eckhart: Theological Principles and Catholicity," *The Thomist* 60 (1996), Cyril O' Regan examines Balthasar's negative and positive assessments of Eckhart. All these references are quoted in Stratford Caldecott, "Trinity and Creation: An Eckhartian Perspective," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 30 (Winter 2003), pp. 695-714, at p. 699, n. 8, p. 700.

²¹ Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist. The Eastern and the Western Way* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969).

²² *Ibid.*, p. 8.

²³ William Johnston, "Arise, My Love..." *Mysticism for a New Era* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 58.

²⁴ John B. Cobb, Jr., and Christopher Ives, eds., *The Emptying God. A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation* (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1990). See also Roger Corless and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *Buddhist Emptiness and Christian Trinity* (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1990).

things from God and the corresponding flowing back or return of all to this ineffable source (*reditus*...).”²⁵ This is exemplified from *Sermon 53*, where we read, “God’s going out is his going in,” and “They [created things] are all called to return into whence they have flowed out.”²⁶ The flowing out of all things from the divine ground can be presented in two broad stages: first, the inner emanation of the Trinitarian Persons, or *bullitio* as Eckhart calls it; and second, the creation of all things, or *ebullitio*, that is modeled on it. Similarly, the return of all things to God can also be said to take place in the two broad stages that describe the *reditus* of the soul to its divine ground: The birth of the Word in the soul, and the “breaking-through,” or penetration of the soul into the divine ground that is the God beyond God.²⁷

1.1 The Godhead beyond God and Nothingness

In the Meister’s ways of speaking about God, he gives priority to the hidden Godhead, the God beyond God. *Sermon 48* depicts the longing of the innermost part of the soul for the innermost ground of God:

I speak in all truth, truth that is eternal and enduring, that this same light [the spark of the soul] is not content with the simple divine essence in its repose, as it neither gives nor receives; but it wants to know the source of this essence, it wants to go into the simple ground, into the quiet desert, into which distinction never gazed, not the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit.²⁸

There can be no distinctions in the innermost ground of God. In different contexts Eckhart has used *esse*, *unum* and *intelligere*, all in their ineluctably dialectical character, as the transcendental predicate for the divine ground or essence. The Meister

²⁵ Bernard McGinn, “Theological Summary,” in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, translation and introduction by Edmund College and Bernard McGinn, (Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981), p. 30.

²⁶ *Ibid.* Due to the lack of resources in hand, I will give the quotations of the writings of Eckhart as they appear in secondary sources.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 36. See Bernard McGinn, “Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity,” in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O’Meara (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1981), pp. 128-39. At pp. 129-30: Traditional Latin theology, enhanced by the condemnation of the supposed Trinitarian errors of Gilbert of Poitiers at the Council of Rheims in 1148, resisted any separation of the Trinity from a prior unmanifested divine essence. McGinn asks how seriously are we to take Eckhart’s language? The solution lies in, as McGinn has insightfully presented, a perceptive understanding of Eckhart’s nuanced employment of predication, analogy and dialectic as three levels of increasing depth to arrive at the higher unity of a dialectical coincidence of opposites in Eckhart’s presentation of God and God’s relation to creation. This hermeneutic also applies to another problematic area of Eckhart’s teaching regarding the birth of the Word in the soul, which was condemned in six of the twenty-eight articles of the papal Bull “*In agro dominico*” promulgated on 27 March 1329.

was a logician as well as a metaphysician and theologian. The dialectical language of Eckhart can occur and be understood only after the possibilities and limits of predication and analogy have been tried. The Meister's doctrine of predication and his understanding of analogy both stress the radical difference between God and creation. While based upon the teaching of Aristotle and Aquinas on the distinction between two-term (*secundum adiacens*, e.g., "X exists") and three-term (*tertium adiacens*, e.g., "X is this") propositions to reflect on the nature of the language about created reality, Eckhart's analyses concentrate upon the preeminent case of the transcendental terms of existence, unity, truth and goodness. Two-term propositions imply the unlimited possession of the predicate, its absolute fullness, the negation of negation. Hence the transcendentals can properly apply to God alone. "God alone properly speaking exists and is called being, one, true, and good."²⁹ This overriding sense of the difference between God and creation is the hermeneutical key to unlock the peculiarities of Eckhart's doctrine of analogy. His notion of analogy rests on formal opposition rather than on proportionality, intrinsic attribution, or participation. For example, if *esse* is properly affirmed of God, it will be denied to creatures; but if *esse* is affirmed of creatures, it must be denied of God. Predication and analogy call for dialectic to integrate them as three levels of increasingly more profound ways in Eckhart's presentation of God and God's relation to creation. What the dialectical level shows is that "the inner meaning of *secundum adiacens* predication and of the reversible analogy of *esse* and *intelligere* as God-language" is best expressed in a dialectical grasp of the transcendental predicate of *unum*, or Absolute Unity that simultaneously manifests both the utter transcendence and the perfect immanence of the divine nature, thus combines the contradictory determinations of the negative (i.e., transcendent) and the positive (i.e., immanent) moments into some higher positive unity.³⁰

In Eckhart's understanding, the term 'one' (*unum*) is the same as 'indistinct', i.e., "not-to-be-distinguished": "...the term 'the One' is the same as 'indistinct,' for all distinct things are two or more, but all indistinct things are one." "Saying that God is one," as he puts it, "is to say that God is indistinct from all things, which is the property of the first and highest *esse* and its overflowing goodness."³¹ Since indistinction is the distinguishing mark of *unum*, to conceive of God as *unum*, or Absolute Unity, is to conceive him as simultaneously distinct and indistinct, indeed, the more distinct insofar

²⁹ McGinn, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," pp. 130-31. As for the three-term propositions, the key is the particularity of the predicate, the "this" or "that." The transcendental term is reduced to a "kind of copula" that connects predicate and subject according to a manner of classification. As a whole, this logic of two-term and three-term propositions coheres with the well-known distinction between *esse simpliciter* and *esse hoc et hoc*. If *esse* is taken *simpliciter*, it is properly predicated of God in *secundum adiacens* propositions and improperly predicated of created reality in *tertium adiacens*.

³⁰ McGinn, "Theological Summary," pp. 32-34; idem, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," p. 132.

³¹ Quoted in McGinn, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," p. 132.

as he is indistinct. In other words, the Godhead as One is indistinct and precisely as such is distinct from all reality (and vice versa). One may find Bernard McGinn's paraphrase of Eckhart's following key sentences in terms of transcendence and immanence and their relation to the language of *esse* helpful:

‘Everything which is distinguished by indistinction is the more distinct insofar as it is indistinct, because it is distinguished by its own indistinction’ can be read as: ‘Everything which is transcendent by reason of immanence is the more transcendent insofar as it is immanent, because it is made transcendent by its own immanence.’ In brief, God transcends creation because he is immanent to all creatures, or, in the language of existence, God alone is true *esse*. The following sentence, ‘...it is the more indistinct insofar as it is distinct, because it is distinguished from indistinction by its own distinction,’ means that: ‘It is more immanent insofar as it is transcendent because it differs (transcendently) from immanence by a difference that is no difference at all.’ Briefly put, God is the more immanent to creatures the more he transcends them because the distinguishing characteristic of the One is its indistinction from all things. In the language of *esse*, God is immanent to all creatures as their transcendental existence.³²

What is most characteristic of Eckhart's understanding of God as Absolute Unity is the dialectical way in which it demonstrates the coincidence of opposites of divine transcendence and immanence. In more familiar terms, precisely the divine transcendence of all reality renders the divine reality immanent to all reality (and vice versa). The dialectic functions as a way to bring to speech in speculative fashion Christian belief in a God Who is both utterly transcendent and yet perfectly immanent, and paradoxically because God is transcendent that God is more present to the creature than the creature is to itself.

In addition, although the predicate *unum* “sounds negative [because *unum* adds nothing to *esse* except negation] but is in reality affirmative; it is the negation of negation, which is the purest affirmation and the fullness of the term affirmed.” Therefore, to say that God is One is the highest affirmation of complete self-identity that it is not other than itself.³³ Eckhart further distinguishes between Godhead and God in terms of activity or otherwise. “Everything in the Godhead is one, and of that there is nothing to be said. God works, the Godhead does not work, there is nothing to do; in it is no activity. It never envisaged any work. God and Godhead are as different as

³² McGinn, “Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity,” p. 133.

³³ McGinn, “Theological Summary,” pp. 32-35; see also idem, “Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity,” p. 134.

active and inactive.”³⁴

What is the relation of the soul to God considered as the *unum* who is at once *esse* and *intelligere*? For Eckhart the soul finds its true beatitude in knowing God, that is, becoming one with him in a transcendental union. “How then should I love him [God]?” Eckhart asks his audience. “You should love him as he is – a non-God, a non-Spirit, a non-Person, a non-Image. Yet more, [you should love him] insofar as he is sheer, pure and clear Absolute Unity differentiated from all duality. Let us eternally sink down into this Unity from something to nothing.”³⁵ Again in a passage from *Sermon 17* the Meister speaks of this: “When the soul comes into the One, entering into pure loss of self, it finds God as in Nothingness. It seemed to a man that he had a dream, a waking dream, that he was great with Nothingness as a woman with child. In this Nothingness God was born. He was the fruit of Nothingness; God was born in Nothingness.”³⁶ This deeper ground beyond the Trinity alternately is depicted as a womb, a nothingness, the most indistinct of indistinctions and a desert.³⁷ From the standpoint of such negation, neither Trinity nor Unity is a fully adequate term to give knowledge of a God who is “one without unity and three without trinity.”³⁸ This is one of the most striking aspects of Eckhart’s mysticism, the depth to which he moves along the apophatic path of negation with intricate dialectic and poetic daring in his constant protestation of the absolute ineffability of God.

1.2 The *Bullitio* of the Godhead into the Trinity of Persons

Even as we admit the grounding priority of the hidden Unity of the Godhead, absolute and undetermined *esse*, the God beyond God, over the Trinity of Persons, we shall be false to the Meister if we stop there and refuse to recognize that the *unum* dialectically demands expression as a Trinity of Persons.³⁹ The mystical theology of Eckhart retains a coterminous reciprocity between the indistinction of the God beyond God and the plenitude of the Trinitarian life.⁴⁰ For the Meister, distinction and indistinction, Trinity and One are intimately interrelated. *Sermon 10* puts the dialectical relation in a nutshell: “Distinction (in the Trinity) comes from Absolute Unity...

³⁴ Quoted in Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, p. 20.

³⁵ Quoted in Bernard McGinn, “The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart,” *The Journal of Religion* 61 (January 1981): 1-19, p. 11. See also citation in Matthew Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1983) p. 46: “One should love God mindlessly, by this I mean that your soul ought to be without mind or mental activities or images or representations. Bare your soul of all mind and stay there without mind.”

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁷ Beverly J. Lanzetta, “Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart,” *The Journal of Religion* 72 (April 1992): 248-268, p. 257.

³⁸ Quoted in McGinn, “The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart,” p. 11.

³⁹ McGinn, “The God beyond God,” p. 13.

⁴⁰ Lanzetta, “Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart,” p. 258.

Absolute Unity is the distinction and distinction is the Unity. The greater the distinction, the greater the Unity, for that is the distinction without distinction.”⁴¹

The dynamism of Eckhart’s notion of the relation of the Trinity of Persons to the divine ground finds expression in the divine *bullitio* (literally “boiling”):

The One acts as a principle through itself and gives existence and is an internal principle. For this reason, properly speaking, it does not produce something like itself, but what is one and the same as itself. For what is “like” entails difference and numerical diversity, but there can be no diversity in the One. This is why the formal emanation in the divine Persons is a type of *bullitio*, and thus the three Persons are simply and absolutely one.⁴²

In fine, the divine unity is prior to the Trinity as the hidden ground of the *bullitio* of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but it can never be considered alone as standing in some sort of frozen immobility, nor could such a desert without bloom be the goal of the soul’s journey.⁴³ Indeed, in its overflowing goodness, the “voluptuous and delicious” God, “in the same enjoyment in which God enjoys him/herself, S/he enjoys all creatures.”⁴⁴ Being bathed in God’s delight, Eckhart jovially says, “in the core of the Trinity the Father laughs and gives birth to the Son. The Son laughs back at the Father and gives birth to the Spirit. The whole Trinity laughs and gives birth to us.”⁴⁵

1.3 The *Ebullitio* of Creation

The divine *bullitio*, the emanation of the Persons of the Trinity, provides the exemplary model for a total *ebullitio*, that is, all efficient and final causality, either creation on the part of God or the making of one thing from another by secondary causes. In the act of *ebullitio*, God is the principle of all created things. For Eckhart every creature including human beings, is in God from the beginning before beginning, which is no beginning, because God has no beginning. Everything in its primal existence, which is in the divine “womb” prior to its actual creation, is in God without distinction, yet still absolutely distinct from Him. This is what the Meister means by, “In

⁴¹ Quoted in McGinn, “Theological Summary” pp. 36-37. McGinn further comments that “Eckhart seems to be asserting that the God beyond God, the hidden ground of the Trinity, is the more indistinct insofar as he is distinct, the more one insofar as he is three. In other words, the dialectical relation between oneness and threeness in God is isomorphically similar to the transcendent-immanent relation of God to creatures.”

⁴² Ibid., p. 37.

⁴³ McGinn, “The God beyond God,” p. 15.

⁴⁴ See Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, pp.33, 18.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 129. See also p. 29: “...it is a joy to God to have poured out the divine nature and being completely into us who are divine images.”

God all things are with the greatest distinction and however without distinction.”⁴⁶

1.4 The Divine Spark within the Soul

Eckhart becomes even audacious when he says, “...In this being of God...I myself, was, willing myself, knowing myself, wanting to create the man that I am. This is why I am myself the cause of myself according to my being which is eternal, but not according to my becoming which is temporal.”⁴⁷ As the Meister put it in *Sermon 15*, “Truly you are the hidden God (Is. 45:15), in the ground of the soul, where God’s ground and the soul’s ground are one ground.” Or seeing it from another perspective, we are from God, but still remain in God, as Eckhart says, “When the Father generated all the creatures, he generated me and I went out of him with all the creatures but nevertheless I remained inside of the Father.”⁴⁸ To Eckhart, the divine-human union existing from all eternity in the divine mind perdures in the created soul’s spark and is of such intensity because “the eye in which I see God is the same eye in which God sees me. My eye and God’s eye are one eye and one seeing, one knowing, and one loving.”⁴⁹ These dialectically and poetically daring images are tantamount to the bold claim of Eckhart that there was something in the soul that was uncreated – “Sometimes I have spoken of a light that is uncreated and not capable of creation, and which is within the soul.”⁵⁰ Was Meister Eckhart speaking principally of the virtual existence of the ground of the soul in God? Or perhaps the whole thing is better understood as an integral part of the four general themes of Eckhart’s preaching, which are really aspects of the correlative mysteries of God and the soul: detachment, being formed again into God, the nobility of the soul, and the purity of the divine nature.⁵¹ The spark of the soul should be the expression for the “nobility of the soul that God has bestowed on the soul in order that he miraculously comes to God.”

2. The Returning to God and the Releasement (*Gelassenheit*)⁵² into the Godhead’s

⁴⁶ Quoted in Yves Raguin, *Ways of Contemplation East and West. Part Three: Spiritual Writers and Works* (Taipei: Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies, 1998), p. 196.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 197.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Quoted in Harvey D. Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996), pp. 294-95.

⁵⁰ Quoted in McGinn, “Theological Summary,” p. 42.

⁵¹ Quoted in McGinn, “The God beyond God,” p. 4: “When I preach I always speak of detachment and that man shall be free of himself and of all things. Second, that man shall be formed anew in the simple goodness that is God. Third, that man shall think of the great nobility that God has bestowed on the soul in order that he miraculously come to God. Fourth, [I speak of] the purity of the divine nature – any brightness that is in the divine nature is ineffable. God is a word, a word that is not spoken.”

⁵² Cf. Margaret Guenther, “The Spirituality of Eckhart’s German Sermons,” *Studies in Spirituality* 9 (1999): 93-107, p. 99: Eckhart uses a trio of terms – *Abgeschiedenheit*, *Gelassenheit*, and *Ledigkeit* – to express the idea of detachment. *Abgeschiedenheit* seems the more vigorous, decisive word. Its root is *scheiden*, i.e. to separate; and if the etymology is pursued far enough, a relationship can be established

Indistinction and Nothingness

So far we have looked into the side of *exitus* from the perspectives of the Godhead beyond God, the *bullitio* of the Trinity of Persons, and *ebullitio* of creation with special attention to the nobility of the human soul. They are paradigmatic for the corresponding *reditus*, the flowing back of all to their ineffable divine source. The return of all things to God will take place, according to Eckhart, through two stages: the “birth of the Son in the soul,” and the “breaking-through to the divine ground.” They mirror the flowing-out from the divine Godhead, first the *bullitio*, and then its external copy, the *ebullitio*.⁵³

The *reditus* U-turning process is summarized in the four general themes of Eckhart’s preaching. Firstly, the necessity of inner detachment from the self and from all created things is a necessary precondition to union with God, because only a totally naked soul can receive the naked hidden God – “the greater the nudity, the greater the union.” The human being must make a pilgrimage into the desert within him/her in order to encounter the wilderness of the hidden Godhead; second, perfect union with God is a reformation, a recreation, a remaking of the human into the simple ground of God; third, perfect union with God is also a recognition of the godlike nobility that the soul never loses, which involves an intellectual conversion to the noble part of the soul that Eckhart speaks of as the spark or the “little town, or castle”; finally, since the soul is truly divine in its innermost ground, the goal of life is the attainment not just of similarity and unity but of true and undifferentiated oneness with God, with the pure ineffability of the divine nature.⁵⁴

2.1 Detachment – “Let Go” and “Let Be”

Detachment is absolutely essential for the return to God. Radical detachment can be seen as the moment of kenosis. In Eckhart is found a profound mystical understanding of a twofold kenosis: the one occurs in the *bullitio* of the Trinity from the nothingness of the desert and in which the Father pours the totality of his divinity into the Son; the other occurs in the *ebullitio* of the Trinity toward creation, and the Son’s self-emptying of his divinity for the sake of the world. The soul reenacts the twofold

with *schneiden*, to cut. Hence *Abgeschiedenheit* suggests a conscious act of separation. *Gelassenheit*, on the other hand, is a passive work, derived from *lassen*, which is cognate with the English ‘let.’ It implies a letting-go, a letting-be, abandonment rather than sharp separation. The third term, *Ledigkeit* is best translated as ‘emptiness’ (this term as linked with the first two, all three seem to belong together – emptiness, a state of being unencumbered, must logically result from the radical separation and letting-go advocated by Eckhart). There is an implied play on words in *Ledigkeit*, for *ledig* means unmarried as well as empty. Together these three words comprise Eckhart’s vocabulary of the *via negativa*.

⁵³ McGinn, “Theological Summary,” p. 47.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5, and n. 17: For the last theme about the pure ineffability of the divine nature, Eckhart says that the soul does not seek the uniting of two things that remain distinct, but the true union in which no distinction can be found.

emptying when the soul as a “virgin” strips itself of images – even of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – to enter the naked Godhead.⁵⁵ Since all creatures are nothing taken in themselves, the Meister advises that “if you want to be perfect, you must be naked of what is nothing.”⁵⁶ For, continues Eckhart, “you must know that to be empty of all created things is to be full of God, and to be full of created things is to be empty of God.”⁵⁷ Furthermore, detachment must be complete, which means that one must let go, even of the pleasure of experiencing God, until one no longer possesses anything. Therefore, the Meister exhorts one to a desirable poverty of spirit: “To have true poverty, one must be empty of one’s created will, to be as one was before one was. So long as will exists, i.e. the will to fulfill the will of God, longing for eternity and for God, one is not poor. A poor person is one who wants nothing and demands nothing.”⁵⁸ For Eckhart, “the highest and loftiest thing that one can let go of is to let go of God for the sake of God.”⁵⁹

One must get rid of “god” for God and be “too poor to have a god.” God is both One and Three and “neither this nor that.”⁶⁰ Therefore, says Eckhart, “I pray God that he may quit me of god, for [his] unconditioned being is above god and all distinctions.”⁶¹ For Eckhart, nothingness is profoundly serious and real, and it is to the depths of its liberation, where the soul in “let go” is freed from “god” and God is finally “let be.”⁶² In the absence of images, the person enters into a state of forgetting and unknowing, of complete silence.⁶³ In the language of apophatic theology the highest form of knowing is unknowing. But love is also a part of the path to detachment and in a transcendental sense may even be identified with its goal. The highest form of loving is to love nothing of loving in the inferior, interested form, but to love in some unknown transcendental way, or, as *Sermon 83* puts it, to love God “as he is a non-God, a non-spirit, a non-person, a non-image, but as he is a pure, unmixed, bright ‘One,’ separated from all duality.”⁶⁴

2.2 The Birth of the Son in the Soul

The utter emptiness of the soul, out of its radical detachment from all created

⁵⁵ Lanzetta, pp. 260-61.

⁵⁶ Quoted in McGinn, “Theological Summary,” p. 48.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Margaret Guenther, “The Spirituality of Eckhart’s German Sermons,” p. 100.

⁵⁹ Quoted from Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 50

⁶⁰ See Lanzetta, p. 258, n. 28: God is neither this nor that, as a master says: “Whoever imagines that he has understood God, if he knows anything, it is not God that he knows.”

⁶¹ Harvey D. Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, p. 295, 298.

⁶² Lanzetta, p. 268.

⁶³ Margaret Guenther, “The Spirituality of Eckhart’s German Sermons,” p. 100. See also n. 19: one of the three ways to God is described as “a pathless way, free and yet bound,” where one is without will and without images, exalted above and detached from oneself and free from all things.

⁶⁴ McGinn, “Theological Summary,” p. 49.

things, creates a place in which God must work. “Indeed, it would be a great failure on the part of God, if he did not accomplish great deeds in you and did not fill you with great possessions when he finds you empty and stripped of everything. When nature comes to its supreme stage, God gives his grace.”⁶⁵ In other words, the truly detached soul experiences the birth of the Son or Word in the soul. In contrast, some people do not bear fruit because “they are so busy clinging to their egotistical attachments and so afraid of letting to and letting be that they have no trust either in God or in themselves.”⁶⁶

The way of returning to God is the work of grace, given us through Jesus Christ who is “the image of God” (*Imago Dei*), while we are simply “at the image” (*Ad Imaginem Dei*).⁶⁷ Eckhart’s teaching about the birth of the Son was the basis for his stressing the identity of sonship between the good or just man and Christ, the Only-Begotten Son of God. The truly just man, the one who gives honor to God, is perfectly detached and seeks for no reward, not even holiness, from God.⁶⁸ As the generation of the Son in eternity involves an intradivine kenosis, which consummated in the self-emptying of Christ on the cross, the birth of the Son in the soul also must be a fullness that emerges from the radical detachment and self-emptiness of the soul.

According to Eckhart, there is “only one birth, and this birth occurs in the being and the ground of the soul.”⁶⁹ Over and over Eckhart speaks of the Father’s eternal begetting of the Son in that noble part of the soul. The Meister often expresses this in terms that seem to deny any distinction between the self and the Son, and at times even the distinction between the self and the Father, as in *Sermon 6*, “The Father gives birth to the Son unceasingly, and I say yet more – he gives birth to me as his Son and the selfsame Son. I say further that he gives birth to me not only as his Son, he gives birth to me as himself and himself as myself, and myself as his being and nature.”⁷⁰ While Eckhart’s language may seem pantheistic⁷¹, the birth of the Son or

⁶⁵ Quoted in Yves Raguin, *Ways of Contemplation East and West*, p. 198.

⁶⁶ Quoted from Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 82.

⁶⁷ See McGinn, “Theological Summary,” pp. 43-44: The Word, the true *imago Dei*, is fully one with the Father in all things. Following an ambivalent present in traditional Latin theology, which sometimes spoke of the soul as the image of God and sometimes as made *to* the image of God – that is, to the Word – Eckhart also found it useful to oscillate between “radical” formulations, the human being as the *imago Dei*, which highlight the identity of God’s ground and the soul’s ground, and “conservative” assertions, the human being as *ad imaginem Dei*, which emphasize the important difference between God and the soul. Both formulae should be taken together as expressions of the soul’s distinct/indistinct relation to God.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 51, 52.

⁶⁹ Guenther, “The Spirituality of Eckhart’s Sermons,” p. 103.

⁷⁰ McGinn, “The God beyond God,” pp. 8-9.

⁷¹ See McGinn, “Theological Summary,” pp. 52-54, where McGinn points out how Eckhart’s investigators were able to convert him into a seeming pantheist by misunderstanding his language and intentions.

Word in the soul has deep roots in Christian thought⁷² and a number of interpreters have stressed the conformity of Eckhart's views with Christian teaching on the divinizing power of grace. The peculiar twist that Eckhart's doctrine of divinization took was primarily due to the fact that for him "God's ground and the soul's ground is one ground."⁷³ Furthermore the process is Trinitarian: The Father gives birth to the Word in the soul and the Father and the Son together engender the Subsistent Love that is the Holy Spirit there because in its deepest reality the source of the Trinitarian processions is one with the source of the soul.⁷⁴

2.3 Breaking-through into the Divine Ground of the Godhead

Just as the divine ground, the hidden Godhead, has priority over as well as a dialectical relation to the Trinity of Persons, so too, above and beyond that stage of the return of the soul to union with God expressed through the birth of the Son, a deeper stage in the soul's return is to penetrate to the divine ground behind the three Persons. As "the divine spirit in the human soul...seeks to be broken through by God, God leads this spirit into a desert, into the wilderness and solitude of the divinity where God is pure unity and where God gushes up within himself."⁷⁵ Eckhart seems to say that it is the soul's breakthrough to the hidden Godhead rather than the birth of the Son that is the ultimate goal of the mystic path. *Sermon 52* ends on the note that only in the breaking-through can "I receive that God and I are one," that is, that I am one with the divine ground, and not with the "God" who is the cause of things. In *Sermon 48* Eckhart poignantly tells us that the spark in the soul is not content with Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, nor even with "the simple divine essence in its repose; as it neither gives nor receives; but it wants to know the source of this essence, it wants to go into the simple ground, into the quiet desert, into which distinction never gazed, not the Father, nor the Son, nor the Holy Spirit."⁷⁶ In the breakthrough to this solitude or desert Eckhart's sketch of the human spiritual itinerary finishes where it had begun. In breaking-through

⁷² Ibid., p. 50: As Hugo Rahner has shown, the notion that Christ is born in the faithful heart through baptism has deep roots in the Greek fathers, and from the time of Gregory of Nyssa the birth of Christ in the believer was used as a way to express the mystical union of the soul and the Logos. Latin theologians also spoke of the birth of Christ in the soul, usually in ascetical and moral terms, but John the Scot, in line with Gregory and Maximus the Confessor, revived the mystical interpretation, and through him elements of it appear in Cistercian and Victorine authors. See also idem, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," p. 137, for related issue on Eckhart's use of Neoplatonic dialectic, which underlined his teaching on the birth of the Son in the soul. Christian Neoplatonists, with Eckhart included, beginning at least with the Pseudo-Dionysius, diverged from their non-Christian predecessors and contemporaries by "shifting attention away from consideration of the emanationist structure of reality toward an attempt to investigate God considered as transcendent cause, immanent cause, and both transcendent and immanent cause at the same time."

⁷³ McGinn, "The God beyond God," p. 9.

⁷⁴ Ibid..

⁷⁵ Quoted from Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 70.

⁷⁶ McGinn, "Theological Summary," p. 55.

the person has also achieved full humanity, a humanity that is both a completion and a return. When the person is “as he was when he came from God,” Father, Son, and Holy Spirit disappear into the desert Godhead from whence they came. Then the person experiences that he or she is perfectly one with God.⁷⁷ The union that is achieved by the breaking-through to the divine ground is a union that is without a medium, a union totally without distinction. The soul does not seek the mere uniting of two things that remain distinct, but desires the true union in which there is nothing but Absolute Unity, the “Simple One.” True blessedness, then, is found in the soul’s return to its divine ground.⁷⁸

3. From Virgin to Wife: Creative Fruitfulness in Justice and Compassion

The path of salvation does not end in Eckhart’s mysticism with the *reditus* and breakthrough into the abyss but must be followed as it pours forth again into the Trinity and the determination of one’s own existence. The self-emptying of the virgin-soul is not finalized in the stillness and indistinction of the Godhead, but it must go further and become a wife, that is, must in turn beget the Son with the Father who can do nothing but to give birth, and beget itself as the selfsame Son in the Father. For Eckhart, the resurrected or new existence takes place in this life when the soul as a virginal wife lives out of its own ground: “A virgin who is a wife is free and unpledged, without attachment; she is always equally close to God and to herself. She produces much fruit, and it is great, neither less nor more than is God himself.” This movement of the soul from radical detachment (“virgin”) to the exuberance of the fruitful life (“wife”) follows the dynamic pattern of the intradivine kenosis and God’s love as boiling over into creation.⁷⁹ “The soul alone among all creatures is generative like God is.”⁸⁰ For a person to be united with this active God one must be swept into God’s eternal and fruitful dynamic activity by one’s own work. Eckhart reverses the story of Mary and Martha from the tenth chapter of Luke’s Gospel (Luke 10:38-42).⁸¹ According to the Meister, as long as we find ourselves in this life, Martha’s way is to be preferred to Mary, who is advised to get up and “learn life,” with Mary working to become what Martha already

⁷⁷ Egan, *Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, p. 295.

⁷⁸ McGinn, “Theological Summary,” pp. 56-57.

⁷⁹ Lanzetta, p. 262.

⁸⁰ Quoted from Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 74.

⁸¹ For an interesting history of interpretations of Luke 10:38-42, which examines the common tendency of seeing the women’s roles as exemplifying the active and contemplative models of religious life in the Church, see Luke Ssemakula, “Luke 10:38-42, Martha and Mary: A History of Interpretation,” *African Christian Studies* 18 (2002): 22-46. Of Meister Eckhart’s interpretation on the text, Ssemakula refers to the works of Matthew Ashley, “Contemplation in Prophetic Action,” *Christian Spirituality Bulletin* 8 (Spring/Summer 2000): 6-13, at 9; Giles Constable, “The Interpretation of Martha and Mary,” in *Three Studies in Medieval Religious and Social Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 44, 90, 116, 112; Blake Heffner, “Meister Eckhart and a Millennium with Mary and Martha,” *Lutheran Quarterly*, 5 (1991): 171-85, at 179-81, 19.

was. Martha is the type of the soul that is both a virgin and a fruitful wife, who in the summit of the mind or depth of ground remains unchangeably united to God, but who continues to occupy herself with good works in the world that help her neighbor and also form her total being closer and closer to the divine image.⁸²

For Eckhart all experience of union is meant to bear fruit – “by their fruit you will know them” – and so creativity is as much a test of true spirituality as it is a result of it. But since “the first outbursts of everything God creates is always compassion,” Eckhart insists that our spiritual life is not ended with creativity but rather we are to employ creativity for the sake of personal and social transformation.⁸³ Justice and compassion are the tests of this authentic living. “Compassion clothes the soul with the robe of God and divinely adorns it...for the best name for God is compassion.”⁸⁴ And justice would gladden the heart of God through and through, as “at every deed, however puny, that results in justice...at such a time there is nothing in the core of the Godhead that is not tickled through and through and that does not dance for joy.”⁸⁵ So important is justice to Eckhart’s understanding of the spiritual journey that he can say: “The person who understands what I have to say about justice understands everything I have to say.”⁸⁶

The Meister insists that the union of God and the soul is not a matter of a special state of experience outside the usual daily round, but is rather a special awareness of the meaning of everyday life. He points out that “it is a delusion to think that we can obtain more of God by contemplation or by pious devotions or by religious retreats than by being at the fireplace or by working in the stable.”⁸⁷ For the Meister, all paths lead to God, for God is on them all evenly “for the person who has learned letting

⁸² McGinn, “Theological Summary,” p. 60. See Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 77 where the Meister is quoted as saying: “It is good for a person to receive God into himself or herself, and I call this receptivity the work of a virgin. But it is better when God becomes fruitful within a person. For becoming fruitful as a result of a gift is the only gratitude for the gift. I call such a person a wife and in this sense the term wife is the noblest term we can give to soul, it is far nobler than virgin.” Also see p. 115, where Eckhart endorses Martha who in her spiritual maturity was so real that her works did not hinder her. She represents an ideal of someone who lives “the wayless way free and yet bound, learn to live *among* things but not *in* things...”

⁸³ See Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 120, where the Meister underscores the praiseworthiness and priority of a caring gesture over and above mystical rapture: “If a person were in a rapture as great as St. Paul once experienced and learned that her neighbor were in need of a cup of soup, it would be best to withdraw from rapture and give the person the soup she needs.”

⁸⁴ Quoted from Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, pp. 102, 111. See also pp. 100-112.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 130. See also pp. 94-96.

⁸⁶ Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 5. Fox sees Eckhart, in contrast to the fall-redemption tradition, representing the creation-centered tradition whose fourfold path of spiritual journey can be summarized in the following broad outline: 1. *via positiva* – creation; 2. *via negativa* – letting go and letting be; 3. *via creativa* – breakthrough and birth of self, God and self as child of God; 4. *via transformativa* – the new creation: compassion and social justice. See pp. 3-7.

⁸⁷ Quoted from Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 55. Also at p. 63: “When one has learned to let go and let be, then one is well disposed, and he or she is always in the right place whether in society or in solitude...”

go and letting be...seeing the world as God sees it: Transparently!” and thus knows with transformed knowledge.⁸⁸ Eckhartian mysticism aims at penetrating the ordinary in order to reveal the extraordinary. Meister Eckhart’s “this-worldliness” shows little interest in special states of religious experience. Eckhart’s real appeal is to an intellectual and above all to a religious conversion, one in which our eyes are finally opened to see what has always been the case, that God and the soul are truly one in their deepest ground. In the final analysis Eckhart’s mystical theology is both theocentric and at the same time fully anthropocentric. God is God and the human is human, and yet God’s ground and the soul’s ground are one ground.⁸⁹

3.1 To See as God Sees; Seeing God in All

The spark-of-the-soul theology – that God and the soul are truly one in their deepest ground – allows for a mysticism that finds God in all things, even in the most ordinary.⁹⁰ According to Eckhart, “the one who possesses God in his essence grasps God according to the mode of God, and for him God shines in everything, because all things have for him the taste of God and he sees his image in everything.”⁹¹ “Thus all things become nothing but God. And we learn to know with God’s knowledge and to live with God’s love.”⁹² The Meister even insisted that to love in the truest sense of the word is to love all things equally. The seeming polarities of complete detachment from creatures and total love of God attain a *coincidentia oppositorum* when we love God above all things with our whole heart and soul, only then do we come to love ourselves and all other things truly and equally. Indeed, if love means to become indistinct in the Absolute Unity, then the act of loving must also be indistinct, that is, it must not differentiate among its objects.⁹³

4. “Living without a Why”

The whole itinerary of the soul of the “poor man,” “just man,” “good man,” or

⁸⁸ See Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, pp. 55, 56, 64. See p. 56: “Transformed knowledge which is an unknowing, is the way of transparent knowing, it is the way of unselfconsciousness. When you learn this, you can learn everything and return to everything and praise everything.”

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

⁹⁰ Egan, p. 295.

⁹¹ Raguin, p. 198. To see God in all things, for Eckhart, is indeed the touchstone of the true birth “...if this birth has truly taken place within you, then no creature can any longer hinder you...In fact, everything becomes for you nothing but God. For in the midst of all things, you keep your eye only on God. To grasp God in all things, that is the sign of your new birth.” See Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 83.

⁹² Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 55. See also p. 90: “Spirituality is not to be learned by flight from the world, by running away from things, or by turning solitary and going apart from the world. Rather, we must learn an inner solitude wherever or with whomsoever we may be. We must learn to penetrate things and find God there.”

⁹³ McGinn, “Theological Summary,” p. 58. See Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 25: “Love will never be anywhere except where equality and unity are...”

“noble man” (all synonyms for the true Christian), after going through the great circle of *exitus* via detachment and receptivity before God to *reditus* and back to the daily round of everyday “this-worldliness”, should arrive at a life “living without a why”:

If anyone went on for a thousand years asking of life: Why are you living?” life, if it could answer, would only say, “I live so that I may live.” That is because life lives out of its own ground and springs from its own source, and so it lives without asking why it is itself living.⁹⁴

The just man “lives in the goodness of his nature lives in God’s love; and love has no why.”⁹⁵ The inner oneness of ground shared by God and the soul once again provides the basis for this inner attitude or modality describing the daily life of the noble soul. For,

It is proper to God that he has no “why” outside or beyond himself. Therefore, every work that has a “why” as such is not a divine work or done for God. “He works all things for his own sake” (Pr. 16:4). There will be no divine work if a person does something that is not for God’s sake, because it will have a “why,” something that is foreign to God and far from God. It is not God or godly.⁹⁶

Just as God’s mode of being and acting is characterized by absolute inner self-sufficiency and spontaneity, not being and acting “for,” but simple joy in the reality of supreme being and omnipotent activity, so too the soul that is one with God lives without a “why” in the sheer delight of its existence.⁹⁷ When one truly recognizes the unity of ground of God and the soul the Meister says, “here I am living from what is my own as God lives from what is his own... From this inner ground you should do everything you do without a why.”⁹⁸ This is the goal of human life, the height of Eckhart’s mysticism.⁹⁹

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 59.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 59-60. See Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 61: “As long as we perform our works in order to go to heaven, we are simply on the wrong track. And until we learn to work without a why or wherefore, we have not learned to work or to live or why.” Also see pp. 97-99 on the inward work which “receives and draws all its being from nowhere else except from and in the heart of God.”

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 60.

⁹⁸ McGinn, “The God beyond God,” p. 18.

⁹⁹ A life living without a why can be arrived at via the three paths to God taught by Eckhart: One walks the first path by seeking and finding God in all things; the second “pathless” path, “beyond self and all things, beyond will and images,” requires the voiding of the mind of all created things; the third path is both a path and a “being-at-home,” because one follows Christ who is the way. God leads a person on the third path of the “one beloved Christ” “by the light of his Word” and “embraced by the love of the Spirit.”

III. Comparison and Contrast between Eckhart and Zen Buddhism

For Suzuki, the case of Meister Eckhart was puzzling, as he was unable to imagine a Christian having developed a mystical theology so close to the experience of Zen Buddhism. Thomas Merton points out the affinity between Eckhart and Zen, “Whatever Zen may be, however you define it, it is somehow there in Eckhart.”¹⁰⁰

1. Affinities amidst Differences

At a glance, Zen Buddhism will find in Eckhart certain affinities in such themes as the nothingness of God, the nothingness of creatures, life lived “without why,” the Mary-Martha story, and pure detachment from all created things.¹⁰¹ If there is such a thing as Zen Christianity, if Zen as a form, or even as a state of becoming and being attainable and describable by those themes above, then Eckhart’s mystical theology would surely be suitable as a foundation and framework to develop such a Zen Christian spirituality and way of life (Christian Zen). Eckhart, faithful to his Dominican tradition, in contrast to the greater love orientation of Bernard of Clairvaux and the Franciscans, represents the apophatic intellectualist mysticism.¹⁰² This intellectualism, in turn, leads to a spirituality, in Eckhart, of radical detachment that bears remarkable resemblances to the non-attachment, non-clinging spirituality of all forms of Buddhism. Eckhart is not interested in such intense experiences as rapture or ecstasy but like Zen Buddhists, far more interested in illuminating our true awareness of everyday life.

Zen, as a form of spirituality and analysis in which meditation plays a key role in finding inner peace, is also intellectualist and teaches a mysticism of the mind. For Suzuki, *satori*, means seeing into one’s own nature, which is the Buddha-Nature, or the Absolute.¹⁰³ In the Buddhist case, *nirvāna* and *samsāra* are one. In Eckhart’s case, the disclosure of the Godhead beyond God is, at the same time, the disclosure of our release to the everyday life of activity-in-the-world.¹⁰⁴ Eckhart’s reinterpreted Mary-Martha story, may be seen to be a Western mystical version of the “*samsāra* is *nirvāna*” for, it is the active-contemplative Martha and not the purely contemplative Mary who is the best illustration of the Christian living as a life-in-the-world “without a why.”¹⁰⁵ Zen expresses this ideal in the famous series of ten ox herding pictures, which illustrate the

See Egan, pp. 296, 301-302.

¹⁰⁰ See *Zen and the Birds of Appetite*, (New York, 1968), p. 13, cited by Robert Faricy, “On Understanding Thomas Merton: Merton, Zen, and Eckhart,” *Studies in Spirituality* 9(1999): 189-202, p. 192.

¹⁰¹ Lanzetta, p. 253.

¹⁰² Tracy, *Dialogue with the Other*, p. 85. Both love-mysticism and apophatic intellectualist mysticism developed through many medieval debates on the relative priority of “love” and “knowledge.” See also Faricy, “On Understanding Thomas Merton,” p. 189: One can find two currents in Christian theology and in Christian mysticism: the intellectualist and the voluntarist, the mind and the heart. Meister Eckhart represents the intellectualist tradition, the mysticism of the mind.

¹⁰³ Faricy, pp. 192-93.

¹⁰⁴ Tracy, p. 88.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*; also Lanzetta, p. 268.

stages of spiritual growth. The ox is the mind. The herder is the seeker. He moves through the stage of seeking, finding the tracks, the first glimpses, then of catching it, taming it, and riding it home. The ox is then forgotten and the self is alone. Next – an empty circle – both ox and self are forgotten. Then comes a return to daily life: “the waters are blue, the mountains are green;” finally he enters the market place with helping hands. “Carrying a gourd, he strolls into the market; leaning on his staff, he returns home. He leads innkeepers and fishmongers in the Way of the Buddha. Bare-chested, barefooted, he comes into the market place. Muddied and dirt-covered, how broadly he grins. Without recourse to mystic powers, withered trees he swiftly brings to bloom.”¹⁰⁶

The dialectical language of Eckhart bears some striking resemblances to much Buddhist use of dialectics. The Buddhist often employs a highly metaphysical vocabulary and insists on the need for correct thinking, while at the same time suspecting all metaphysics and, at the limit, all language.¹⁰⁷ The “nothingness of metaphysics” is expressed most eloquently by Eckhart in his discourse on leaving behind the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to enter God where he is beyond God and “neither this nor that” and in his famous sermon on poverty of spirit where the detached soul “wants nothing, and knows nothing, and has nothing.” It is in these instances that Eckhart’s nothingness comes the closest to the Mahāyāna Buddhist notion that “form is emptiness and the very emptiness is form;” at times the Meister’s thought even displays traces of the Absolute Nothingness of Zen: “But if God is neither goodness nor being nor truth nor one, what then is He? He is pure nothing: he is neither this nor that.”¹⁰⁸

The nothingness in Eckhart bears a remarkable similarity to the Buddhist expression of *śūnyatā*, or emptiness (or in one of the modern translations as dynamic openness).¹⁰⁹ According to the understanding of Masao Abe, a Zen Buddhist

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Daniel J. O’Hanlon, “Zen and the Spiritual Exercises: A Dialogue Between Faiths,” *Theological Studies* 39(1978): 737-768, p. 756. See also Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 91. Meister Eckhart lightly depicted a person returning to work after having a breakthrough: “A person works in a stable. That person has a Breakthrough. What does he do? He returns to work in the stable.”

¹⁰⁷ Tracy, pp. 89, 68.

¹⁰⁸ Lanzetta, p. 253.

¹⁰⁹ *Śūnyatā*, or *Suññatta* (Sanskrit, Pali, ‘emptiness’; Chinese, *k’ung*; Japanese, *ku*; Korean, *kong*): The major translations of the term “*śūnyatā*” have varied and have included such English expressions as “emptiness,” “nothingness,” “nonsubstantiality,” “relativity,” and “voidness.” In early Buddhism, the term *Suññatta* is used primarily in connection with the ‘no-self’ (*anatman*) doctrine to denote that the Five Aggregates (*skandhas*) are ‘empty’ of the permanent self or soul which is erroneously imputed to them. By extension, with the development of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtras* (The Perfection of Wisdom Discourses) from around 100 B.C.E., the term came to be applied to reality as a whole: just as the individual is ‘void’ of a self, in the sense of an unchanging controlling agency, so too is the whole universe ‘void of a self or anything belonging to a self’ (*suññam attena va attaniyena va*). Since then, *śūnyatā* has undergone a subtle development over time and in different cultures. *Śūnyatā* has been described as referring to (1) a religious attitude or state of awareness; (2) a focus of meditation; (3) a manner of ethical action; or (4) a statement about the reality, such as corresponding to the Buddhist notion of the interrelated nature of all existing things. See Gregory K. Ornatowski, “Transformations of

philosopher of the Kyoto-school, the Godhead or *Gottheit* is grasped as *Nichts* by Meister Eckhart. Furthermore, Abe sees that in Eckhart the essence of God is not the Supreme Good but lies beyond good and evil. For him, this is strikingly similar to the Buddhist understanding of ultimate Reality.¹¹⁰ Emptiness as *Śūnyatā*, as Abe puts it, transcends and embraces both emptiness and fullness. Abe traces the idea of *Śūnyatā* back to Nāgārjuna, who not only rejected what came to be called the ‘eternalist’ view, which proclaimed the reality of phenomena as the manifestation of one eternal and unchangeable substance, but additionally denounced its exact counterpart, the so-called ‘nihilistic’ view, which insisted that true reality is empty and non-existent. Instead, Nāgārjuna’s idea of the Middle Path refers to the Way that transcends every possible duality including that of being and non-being, affirmation and negation. Thus, in *Śūnyatā*, Emptiness-as-it-is is Fullness and Fullness-as-it-is is Emptiness; formlessness-as-it-is is form and form-as-it-is is formless. This is why, as Abe sees it for Nāgārjuna, true Emptiness is wondrous Being.¹¹¹

2. Buddhist *Intradialogue* on the Transformations of “Emptiness”

But after having examined the history of *śūnyatā* as a concept within Buddhism and the transformations it underwent in its long development, Gregory K. Ornatowski disagrees with Abe’s interpretation of Nāgārjuna’s notion of *Śūnyatā*. As Ornatowski sees it, from the historical perspective, the main achievement of Nāgārjuna was not simply his insistence upon the importance of “emptiness” but also his identification of emptiness with dependent co-origination (*pratītya samutpāda*). Nāgārjuna and his followers in the Mādhyamika school were intent to avoid both the extreme of substantialism/eternalism (*sasvatavada*) and annihilationism (*ucchedavada*) through adoption of a “middle way” similar to the Buddha’s, a way that avoided all “clinging” views, even to Buddhist teachings themselves. Nāgārjuna’s intent was primarily soteriological, while his method was primarily negative that consists of convincing an opponent of the falsehood of his own thesis without at the same time offering a counter-thesis. *Śūnyatā* for Nāgārjuna, thus was not the “Wondrous Being” itself but a means or method “used to shift the mode of apprehending ‘existence’ and ‘ultimate reality’ so as to allow the Absolute Reality to be apprehended.”¹¹²

‘Emptiness’: On the Idea of *Śūnyatā* and the Thought of Abe and the Kyoto School of Philosophy,” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34:1(Winter, 1997): 92-114, p. 93-94.

¹¹⁰ William R. LaFleur, ed., *Zen and Western Thought by Masao Abe* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986), p. 133. Suzuki, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist*, pp. 12-13, Quoting and commenting on Eckhart’s saying that “God makes the world and all things in the present now,” Suzuki finds that such an idea of God creating the world out of nothing, and in an absolute present will not sound strange to Buddhist ears. Perhaps they may find it acceptable as reflecting their doctrine of Emptiness.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-27.

¹¹² Gregory K. Ornatowski, “Transformations of ‘Emptiness’: On the Idea of *Śūnyatā* and the Thought of Abe and the Kyoto School of Philosophy,” pp. 94-95. See also *2500 Years of Buddhism*, General Editor,

However, as Mādhyamika thought developed in various new schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and as the concept *śūnyatā* evolved first within India (the *Yogācāra* School), then moved across cultures to China and Japan (especially T'ien T'ai/Tendai, Hua-Yen/Kegon, Ch'an/Zen Schools), this Absolute Reality came to be ascribed to such notions as *tathatā* (suchness), *tathāgata garbha* (womb of Buddhahood), and *dharmakāya* (absolute truth body of the Buddha) and was viewed as what “remained” after the radical “emptying” of all things’ substantive nature.¹¹³

The notion of *śūnyatā* underwent numerous shifts in meaning, and finally in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism it came also to be connected with the idea of the absolute truth body (*dharmakāya*) of the Buddha (itself considered both transcendent and immanent) and with the idea of *tathatā* (suchness) as representing the totality of reality in both its transcendent (*li*) and phenomenal (*shih*) aspects. In addition, Ch'an/Zen views of *śūnyatā* also seem to have been influenced by the Neo-Taoist idea that regarded the Tao as a “nothingness” or pure potentiality from which all things come forth.¹¹⁴ When it finally comes to the Kyoto-school philosophers such as Nishida, Nishitani, and Abe, all who have been practitioners of Zen, the concepts of “nothingness” and “absolute nothingness” come to be closely knitted with the notion of *śūnyatā*. By negating both the “non-Being” and the “Being” of traditional Platonic philosophy, “absolute nothingness” thus results in an emptiness that is at the same time an “absolute present” (Nishida), “creative nothingness” (Nishitani), or “positive fullness” (Abe). Abe tends to view nothingness as “a fully positive emptiness that affirms all things in their suchness.” By giving the term “absolute nothingness” an absolute and universal nature and making it a metaphysical equivalent of “Being” in Western Philosophy, their work runs counter to the soteriological intent of Nāgārjuna’s use of the term *śūnyatā*. By viewing *śūnyatā* as both a positive affirmation of the

Prof. P. V. Bapat (Government of India: The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, May 24, 1956): Nāgārjuna describes dependent co-origination by means of eight negatives: ‘There is neither origination nor cessation, neither permanence nor impermanence, neither unity nor diversity, neither coming-in nor going-out, in the law of *Pratītya-samutpāda*.’ Elsewhere he also states that *Pratītya-samutpāda* is called *śūnyatā*. Hence *śūnyatā*, as referring to non-origination, is in reality the middle path which avoids the two basic views of existence and non-existence. In this sense of relativity, there is no difference between saṃsāra (phenomenal world) and nirvāna or *śūnyatā* (reality). The Mādhyamika-kārikā, regarded as Nāgārjuna’s masterpiece, further deals with two kinds of truths: *saṃvṛti* (conventional or empirical truth) and *paramārtha* (higher or transcendental truth). Viewed from the relative standpoint (*saṃvṛti*), *Pratītya-samutpāda* explains worldly phenomena, but looked from the absolute standpoint (*paramārtha*), it means non-origination at all times and is equated with nirvāna or *śūnyatā*. In the latter sense, *śūnyatā* (the indescribable absolute) is the absolute. And *Śūnyatā* or the absolute corresponds to the nirguna Brahman of the Upaniṣads (pp. 121-22). The understanding of the aforementioned fundamentals of Nāgārjuna’s philosophy will perhaps provide fertile ground and context for further exploration and dialogue, as the Indian concept of *śūnyatā* arises in the same Indo-European linguistic background shared by Meister Eckhart.

¹¹³ Ibid., p.95.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 96-99.

phenomenal and the harmonious totality of the phenomenal and the absolute, Abe, as well as Nishida and Nishitani, thus reflect more a positive Chinese and Japanese “world affirming” Buddhism than the “otherworldly” flavor of Indian Buddhism.¹¹⁵

Such a dynamic evolution of the idea of *sūnyatā*, not only due to the inherent development of the idea itself but also the impact of various cultural traditions and ways of thinking upon the idea, might actually turn out to be good and conducive to the progress of interreligious dialogue.¹¹⁶ Hans Küng, judging from the context of the macro-paradigm-changes, points out that besides “emptiness” being understood by Nāgārjuna and the Mādhyamikas as primarily negative, it is also an authentically Buddhist position to interpret “emptiness” positively in the Yogācāra school. Yogācāra with its interest in an *ālaya-vijñāna* (storehouse consciousness), often identified this with the Ultimate Reality or “Suchness.” Eventually there arose a new interest in a positive Buddha Nature, that which the Sūtra of Queen Shrimala (*Shrīmāladevī Sūtra*) specifically identifies as *Asūnya* (Not-Empty). For Küng, therefore, there is more than one way to present Ultimate Reality, and the best way is to present it dialectically in the Buddhist-Christian dialogue.¹¹⁷

3. Differences amidst Affinities

To be sure, on the other hand, Buddhist thinkers have been quick to note, even

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 100-103.

¹¹⁶ Ornatowski is rather critical, perhaps even negative about the interpretation of *sūnyatā* as absolute nothingness by the Kyoto-school philosophers in their dialogue with the West, mainly due to what he perceives as hidden cultural nationalism behind the use of the concept – to the extent that the interpretation of *sūnyatā* used turns out to be a type of “*Volksidee*” best realized in Japanese Zen, and yet is presented simultaneously as a worthy universal absolute by which to measure all other religious concepts of God. As he sees it, the interreligious dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity that has been led by Abe on the Buddhist side over the past thirty years or so has very much depended upon what is most appropriately termed a “philosophical Japanese Zen” interpretation of Buddhist *sūnyatā*, rather than a Zen interpretation practiced institutionally throughout much of Zen or Ch’an history in Japan and China. Ornatowski would like to see in the future, for such Buddhist-Christian interreligious dialogue to progress further, participants on both sides realizing the crucial importance of *intrareligious* dialogue prior to the beginning of interreligious dialogue, so to become more aware of the historically and culturally specific meaning of the “*sūnyatā*” that has underlain much of the dialogue to date and, as a result, to work more toward broadening the dialogue by taking into account other possible meanings of *sūnyatā*. See pp. 109, 112-13, 114. See also Yukio Matsudo, review of *Masao Abe: Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, edited by Steven Heine, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 18 (1998): 242ff: Abe’s abstract concept of Dialectical Emptiness which affirms everything in the world as it is, may serve as an ideology, not only legitimating the status quo of the society, but also asserting a universalistic claim for the uniqueness of Japanese cultural nationalism, aggressively propounded out of Kyoto. “This ideological implication becomes clearer when Abe intends to absorb the founders of world religions as well as their gods and buddhas in his self-emptying system as ‘manifestations of the dynamic “Boundless Openness” as the ultimate ground’...trying to replace the Christian, God-centered model for a common denominator for world religions... This kind of approach can be characterized as religious imperialism.”

¹¹⁷ Hans Küng, “God’s Self-Renunciation and Buddhist Emptiness: A Christian Response to Masao Abe,” in *Buddhist Emptiness and Christian Trinity*, edtd. by Roger Corless and Paul F. Knitter (New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1990), pp. 26-43, see pp. 38-41.

Eckhart's "nothingness" is not the "absolute nothingness" of Zen thought. In comparing the desert of the Godhead with dynamic *śūnyatā*, Buddhist scholars contend that while Eckhart presents a radical apophatic perspective, the desert of the Godhead is not an absolute nothingness since it still retains an ontological vocabulary intrinsic to Christianity. To quote Shizuteru Ueda, "The radicalness of Zen is evident from the fact that it speaks of nothingness pure and simple, while Eckhart speaks of nothingness of the godhead. For Eckhart, to say that God is in his essence a nothingness is to treat nothingness as the epitome of all negative expressions for the purity of the essence of God, after the manner of negative theology; conversely, when Eckhart arrives at affirmation, he does so in the first instance mediately, through God who is the first affirmation."¹¹⁸ In contrast, *śūnyatā* is depicted as a self-negating ultimacy, which cannot be seen as any kind of "thing" and, therefore, cannot be affirmed or denied in substantialist language. The importance of nothingness in the context of Zen is its destabilizing dynamism in which all duality is denied in and of itself, and not for the sake of a higher unity. The differences between the Buddhist *śūnyatā* and Eckhart's desert of the Godhead can be summarized as follows: 1) Buddhism speaks of nothingness and transparency, while Eckhart refers to the nothingness of the Godhead; 2) "nothingness" in Zen is an absolute nothingness ("*zettai mu*"); Eckhart follows the Christian apophatic tradition, thus his "nothingness" is a linguistic strategy designed to preserve God's purity of essence; and 3) affirmation, for Eckhart, is achieved through the mediation of God, who is the first and formal affirmation, while in Zen ceaseless negation leads to straightforward affirmation: tree is tree.¹¹⁹

For David Tracy, however radically apophatic Eckhart is for a Christian thinker, he remains a God-obsessed thinker who constantly shifts, in different contexts, his language of transcendentals for both God and the Godhead beyond God. Not only Nothingness but One, Intelligence, and *Esse* seem to him appropriate if always inadequate language.¹²⁰ Beverly J. Lanzetta believes it accurate to say that Eckhart broke through into what might be loosely called a Buddhist perspective, and he did so in a manner that is intrinsic to Christianity itself:

¹¹⁸ Shizuteru Ueda, "'Nothingness' in Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism with Particular Reference to the Borderlands of Philosophy and Theology," in *The Buddha Eye: An Anthology of the Kyoto School*, ed. Frederick Franck (New York: Crossroad, 1982), p. 159, quoted in Lanzetta, p. 255.

¹¹⁹ Lanzetta, p. 255. See also William Johnston, *Mystical Theology: The Science of Love* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995), p. 68; Dr. D. T. Suzuki found in Eckhart much that resonates with Zen Buddhism; but he believed that Eckhart's God was quite different from the God of the Christians. On the other hand, Professor Shizuteru Ueda, the distinguished Kyoto professor believes that Eckhart's teaching is in harmony with the institutional Church. Yet, since Eckhart was condemned by ecclesiastical authority and comes across as a kind of Galileo among the mystics, it is difficult to quote him as a spokesman for Christianity in the modern world. One can only hope that the proposal of the Dominican General Chapter at Walberberg in 1980 that the whole question of Eckhart be ecclesiastically re-examined will lead to his reinstatement as an orthodox spokesman for a mystical understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

¹²⁰ Tracy, p. 89.

Eckhart retains theistic metaphysics precisely because in the Christian context he uncovers the road to liberation by going *through* the metaphysics of Being to the point (or breakthrough) where Being itself ceases to be (or unbecomes) in the ground and fount of divinity – the womb of nothingness. Thus for the Meister, the Trinity, metaphysics, and so on, are essential for *Gelassenheit* (“releasement”) because it is only by following the paradigm enacted by the Son at the moment of his death, when the determinate divinity reenters the abyss, that the soul finds its true ground and understands why God is both “One and Three.”¹²¹

IV. Further along the Path of Christian-Buddhism Dialogue and Mutual Enrichment

In dialogue, the genuine differences that arise from the encounter of the other as really other can be venues for deeper interaction and mutual enrichment. Eckhart’s dialectic demands the self-manifestation of the Godhead in the distinct *bullitio* as the Trinity and the *ebullitio* of the creature. A Buddhist dialectic of dynamic *śūnyatā* may have a similar self-manifestation character insofar as dynamic *śūnyatā* manifests itself as wisdom and as compassion to the enlightened one. In Buddhist terms, Eckhart’s “Godhead beyond God” is a route to, but is not finally an awareness of, “absolute nothingness.” In Eckhartian Christian terms, a Buddhist needs to show how dialectically “dynamic *śūnyatā*” is not only immanent in all and thereby transcendent (and vice versa) but how that immanence-transcendence discloses itself as wisdom and as compassion. Here, Eckhart, in the tradition of Christian neo-Platonism, especially in its more intellectualist, detached, and apophatic expressions, may have much to suggest to the need of the Buddhist to know why dynamic *śūnyatā* is necessarily disclosed as wise and as compassionate.¹²²

The dialogue between the apophatic mystic Eckhart and Zen Buddhists can help many Christians in search of a faith-filled meaningful life in a postmodern time. The true God – the God of the prophets and Jesus Christ – can nonetheless become, through our clinging and through our refusal to let go of the chain of infinite desire because of our refusal to face the radical transience which terrorizes us, merely a projected Other to whom we egoistically cling out of our insecurity. Listening to the challenge of the Buddhist insight that belief in “God” can be the subtlest form of egoistic clinging, and as the Zen saying that goes, “If you meet the Buddha on the way, kill him,” the modern Christians may rejoin Meister Eckhart and pray, “I pray God to rid me of God.” The Meister’s advice is that “let your own ‘being you’ sink away and

¹²¹ Lanzetta, p. 256.

¹²² Tracy, p. 90.

melt into God's 'being God'...God does not ask anything else of you except that you let yourself go and let God be God in you."¹²³ The "Godhead beyond God" of Eckhart is a possible, and perhaps in the postmodern situation, even for some, a salutary theological move for those Christians concerned to learn to live, both like and unlike the Buddhist, in a situation of radical transience where Eckhart's "life without a why" becomes a new Christian option.¹²⁴ The itinerary of the soul (person) toward God into the Godhead, beginning from the delight of creation, via the process of radical self-emptiness to the union and birth of God in the soul, becoming fruitful with compassion and justice, imbued with the grandeur of God and back to the starting point in daily round of ordinary life, should arrive at a life "living without a why." This path, explored and traveled by Eckhart, is an ever-growing and expanding spiral in which "God who is whole and entire will possess [the person] whole and entire" that, according to the Meister, "is beautiful and pleasant and joyful and familiar."¹²⁵ Hopefully further along and beyond the dialogical path started between Meister Eckhart and Zen Buddhism, through greater letting-go/letting-be toward "living without why," there will also be one that is ever more beautiful, pleasant, joyful and familiar.

Bibliography (English Works)

- Caldecott, Stratford. "Trinity and Creation: An Eckhartian Perspective," *Communio: International Catholic Review* 30 (Winter 2003): 695-714.
- Egan, Harvey D., *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism*, 2nd edition, Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1996.
- Faricy, Robert, "On Understanding Thomas Merton: Merton, Zen, and Eckhart," *Studies in Spirituality* 9(1999): 189-202.
- Fox, Matthew, *Breakthrough*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1980.
- _____, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, Santa Fe, New Mexico: Bear & Company, 1983.
- Guenther, Margaret, "The Spirituality of Eckhart's German Sermons," *Studies in Spirituality* 9(1999): 93-107.
- Johnston, William, *Mystical Theology: The Science of Love*, London: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995.
- Johnston, William, "Arise, My Love..." *Mysticism for a New Era*, Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2000.
- Küng, Hans, "God's Self-Renunciation and Buddhist Emptiness: A Christian Response to Masao Abe," in *Buddhist Emptiness and Christian Trinity*, edited by Roger Corless and Paul F. Knitter, New York/Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1990, pp.

¹²³ Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 46, 52.

¹²⁴ Tracy, p. 82.

¹²⁵ Fox, *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*, p. 131.

26-43.

- LaFleur, William R., ed., *Zen and Western Thought by Masao Abe*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986.
- Lanzetta, Beverly J., "Three Categories of Nothingness in Eckhart," *The Journal of Religion* 72 (April 1992): 248-268.
- Matsudo, Yukio. Review of *Masao Abe: Buddhism and Interfaith Dialogue*, edited by Steven Heine, *Buddhist-Christian Studies* 18 (1998): 242ff.
- McGinn, Bernard, "Theological Summary," in *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons, Commentaries, Treatises, and Defense*, translation and introduction by Edmund College and Bernard McGinn, Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981.
- _____, "The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart," *The Journal of Religion* 61(January 1981): 1-19.
- _____, "Meister Eckhart on God as Absolute Unity," in *Neoplatonism and Christian Thought*, ed. Dominic J. O'Meara, Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1981, pp. 128-39.
- O'Hanlon, Daniel J., "Zen and the Spiritual Exercises: A Dialogue Between Faiths," *Theological Studies* 39(1978): 737-768.
- Ornatowski, Gregory K., "Transformations of 'Emptiness': On the Idea of *Śūnyatā* and the Thought of Abe and the Kyoto School of Philosophy," *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 34:1(Winter, 1997): 92-114.
- Raguin, Yves, *Ways of Contemplation East and West. Part Three: Spiritual Writers and Works*, Taipei: Ricci Institute for Chinese Studies, 1998.
- Ssemakula, Luke, "Luke 10:38-42, Martha and Mary: A History of Interpretation," *African Christian Studies* 18 (2002): 22-46
- Suzuki, Daisetz Teitaro, *Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist. The Eastern and the Western Way*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1969.
- Tracy, David, *Dialogue with the Other. The Inter-Religious Dialogue*, Louvain: Peeters Press, 1990, pp. 68-94.
- Wong, Joseph H., "Through Nonattachment to Vision: Chuang Tzu and Meister Eckhart," n. p., n. d. (given personally by the author).

Bibliography (Non-English Works)

- 沈清松，〈表象、交談與身體——論密契經驗的幾個哲學問題〉，《哲學與文化》，廿四卷第三期（1997·3），頁262-74。
- 李滿開，〈「超越神的神」：師長艾克哈的天主觀〉，《神思》，第39期，頁60-68。
- 吳汝鈞，〈阿部正雄的訪問與對話〉，載於《京都學派哲學：久松真一》，臺北市：

文津，民 84，頁 107-25。

阿部正雄，〈從「有」「無」問題看東西哲學的異向〉，載於吳汝鈞，《佛學研究方法論》，臺北市：臺灣學生書局，民七十二年三月出版，頁 371-86。

_____，〈禪與西方思想〉，載於吳汝鈞，《佛學研究方法論》，臺北市：臺灣學生書局，民七十二年三月出版，頁 387-422。

陳德光，〈艾克哈思想中的兩主題：「聖子的誕生」與「突破入神的源頭」〉，《哲學與文化》，第 274 期（1997 年 3 月），頁 206-15。

_____，〈艾克哈的神秘主義與「創造神修」初探〉，（發表於台灣宗教學會主辦之「宗教學者論壇：宗教與修鍊」，中研院，民族所，2000 年 8 月 26 日）。

_____，〈「神」「神的根源」—艾哈克神秘思想與中華文化交談初探〉，（發表於 2000 年 11 月 23-25 日「第三個千禧年哲學的展望：基督宗教哲學與中華文化的交談」）。

_____，〈「神」「神的根」—艾克哈思想的正統性與文化交流的意義〉，《哲學與文化》，第 323 期（2001 年 4 月），頁 315-29。

_____，〈中世紀密契主義的創造神修〉，（供學期上課時參考）。

_____，〈艾克哈神秘主義的創造神修〉，《神學論集》，第 132 號（2002·夏），頁 205-24。

_____，〈艾克哈涉及廿八條異端命題初探〉，《輔仁宗教研究》，第 7 號（2003·6），頁 75-117。

陳德光、胡功澤譯、葛道明校訂，《神對他無所隱藏的人—艾克哈大師勸言集與讚頌之書譯注》，臺北：光啟，2003。

黃克鑣，〈從道家的「無」談聖父〉，《神思》，第 39 期，頁 47-59。

賴賢宗，〈佛教的空與基督教哲學—基督教哲學與佛教哲學之對話的一個當代反思〉，（發表於 2000 年 11 月 23-25 日「第三個千禧年哲學的展望：基督宗教哲學與中華文化的交談」）。

關永中，〈神秘經驗知識論〉，《哲學與文化》，二十卷第三期（1993·3），頁 324-28。

_____，〈師長艾克哈（Meister Eckhart）所提示的靈修歷程〉，《哲學與文化》，廿四卷第三期（1997·3），頁 216-49。

Dialogue with the Buddhists of China

By

Christian Cochini, SJ

I realized the importance of Buddhism during the years 1961-1963 while studying Chinese in Taiwan, and it was a realization that coincided with the Second Vatican Council and the Catholic Church's opening to the world. The necessity of dialogue with non-believers and non-Christians was for me something obvious. I realized fully that it was a safe compass for my work in China, regardless of any misunderstandings that were bound to arise. Throughout these past years I have had occasions to visit temples in Taiwan, Japan, Mainland China and other Asian countries, and in this way the Buddhist world steadily became familiar to me, although the knowledge I possessed at the time was merely superficial. When I resided at Sophia University during the 90s I was fortunate to acquire the companionship of Frs. Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle and Heinrich Dumoulin, both of whom were experts in Zen and internationally known, and I also had occasions to meet other Jesuit specialists in Buddhist studies, who were indirectly instrumental in keeping alive my interest in Buddhism, and more specifically in inter-religious dialogue. However, it was only after I had left Japan and returned to China that circumstances permitted me to dedicate myself entirely to it.

Thanks to the sponsorship of the Macau Ricci Institute I was able to undertake at the close of 2003 a survey of the situation of Buddhism in China, which, since the reform and opening policy ushered in by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 had witnessed a dramatic revival, and accordingly, I had to make a choice of over 13,000 temples that existed on the mainland. An official list of the more important temples had already been published in 1983, and this served as a roadmap. Hence, I visited 157 major monasteries of the Han nationality one after the other, crisscrossing China from North to South and East to West, interviewing Monks and Nuns and gathering vast quantities of documents, and all this enabled me to compose and write my "Guide to Buddhist Temples of China," the French edition of which was first published in Paris in 2008, and a year later the English version was issued by the Macau Ricci Institute.

There were many things I learned during this extended survey, and one of the most significant of these was the fact that inter-religious dialogue in China was not only possible but highly desirable. When I started out on my visits I must confess to feeling a bit apprehensive, wondering how the Buddhists of a nation run by Communists would welcome a foreign Catholic Priest. My fears however were dispelled from my very first encounter, for I was received with sympathy and cordiality. The welcome I received was such that I was encouraged not just to continue my survey but to proceed further and forge ties of friendship with Monks and Nuns, and deepen my knowledge of the history

and doctrines of Buddhism. As in the case of the late Matteo Ricci, I am convinced that an attitude of sincere friendship towards the people of China is today the key that can open many doors.

It was also apparent to me that Buddhism was in effect a vital element of Chinese culture, and that along with Confucianism and Taoism it formed an inseparable trilogy. Although the ideology now prevailing within the nation is still largely Marxism and Leninism, yet after the Cultural Revolution, China, that ancient Middle Kingdom, stimulated by pride in its five-thousand-year-old patrimony once again chose to honor its traditional culture, with economic and cultural expansion linked to its global impact. Present-day Neo-Confucianism and the increasing numbers of Confucian institutes worldwide are positive indicators of this, and such markers are also visible with regard to Buddhism, especially when one considers the massive investments carried out by the government for the maintenance and growth of world-renowned Buddhist sites such as the grottoes of Dunhuang, Yungang, Luoyang, and others. Spurred on by the impending glory of the nation, Buddhism, with its culture officially being conceded as constituting an intrinsic element of the national heritage, experiences and will continue to experience in the years to come a cumulative growth in diverse countries, and today, dialogue with the Buddhists of China is simultaneously and inseparably a mission of inculturation.

A third crucial issue was to notice that for Chinese intellectuals and Buddhist leaders, Buddhism is undoubtedly a doctrine of atheism, where the initial fundamental point is the negation of a Creator God. Inter-religious dialogue can then preferably take place on an ethical level, for the high morality of Buddhism has many points of similarity if not profound agreement, with Christian morality. The sentence that sums up the teachings of the Buddha, and which is written on the walls of most of the temples, is consonant with the Gospels, and the sentence is as follows: “Avoid evil, do good, purify the mind. This is the Dharma!” Buddhist ethics is a call to transcend the ego. One wonders whether this self-transcendence in its highest form is not a search for the absolute, whose path beyond the limits that his atheism and his images seem to impose, orients the Buddhist towards a “Mystery whose name is still unknown to him. I would hereafter like here to narrate some of my most recent encounters.

On July 14, 2010, I was invited to give a talk at the Longquan temple (temple of the source of the Dragon). This was a major Buddhist monastery of Beijing, and the Abbot Ven. Xue Cheng, was vice-chairman of the China Buddhist Association and Prior of four monasteries. I was moved and happy to speak in mandarin to a community of over 300 monks and lay people. I thanked Ven. Xue Cheng for his gracious welcome, and after having briefly introduced myself I emphasized the value of dialogue between Buddhism and Christianity saying: “I am not a Buddhist but a Catholic priest, and I have been so for over 50 years. Although there are differences between our two religions I have a great reverence for Buddhist morality, which is very profound. My

survey made me realize the extent to which Buddhism is part of Chinese culture, for it is obviously the most significant of the five great religions of China. Tai Xu the great Reformer of Chinese Buddhism said that he had a dream, namely to see all civilizations, old and new, western and eastern, merge into a world civilization. Chinese culture plays a strategic role these days in shaping this world civilization, and hence Buddhism also which constitutes an integral part of this culture, does so in order to overcome the crises encountered by human society and construct a new civilization. All religions need to jointly contribute to harmony and peace in the world. In the West, Christianity is the most influential religion, while in Asia the most influential is Buddhism. We need to mutually respect each other, enter into friendly dialogue, and collaborate for a better world. People often say, “Harmony of society begins with a change of heart.” I however desire to say, “Inter-religious dialogue begins with friendship,” for friendship dispels misunderstandings, prejudice, and all that prevents people from comprehending each other. It was to reveal my friendship that I came to see you. Every religion throughout history has made mistakes, and Christianity is no exception. But, in reality, mistakes are not caused by religion, but by people. In 1962 the Catholic Church convened a great council in order to examine the major problems of the contemporary world, and here it changed its attitude concerning many things and specially concerning other religions, and adopted a very “open” attitude. We need to be mutually “open” for the sake of peace and progress in the world society.” The warm applause that greeted my words and the stirring commentary of Ven. Xue Cheng assured me that what I said had been well accepted, and as early as the next day, the extensive publication of my speech on the website of the Longquan temple was an even more certain sign that my words had been agreeably received. On that day, as I departed from the monastery under the ambience of this profound spirit of amity, my commitment to inter-religious dialogue in China was reinforced even more.



A week later I paid a visit to Ven. Ru Rui, Abbess of the Women's Buddhist Studies Institute of Wutaishan, in the Shanxi province. As co-founder and director of the Institute, this remarkable lady is known both for her work in the field of religious education and her social action in favor of poor children and the elderly. A Swiss association had selected her as a possible candidate to the Nobel Prize, and submitted her name in 2005 to that famous Scandinavian institution. I personally had known her for a few years and had a great esteem for her. On seeing me, she smilingly said, "Come to-morrow and give a lecture to our community." This invitation surprised me, for I was aware of the strict regulations governing women's Buddhist communities. The next afternoon I naturally arrived on time for the appointment, and Ven. Ru Rui led me into a great hall where over 300 young Bikkhunis (Nuns) in gray dress had already gathered, divided into two groups on either side of the room. As in Beijing eight days earlier I began by explaining my interest for Buddhism, and spoke at length of the need to develop amiable relations between religious groups, chiefly Buddhists and Christians, in order to contribute to harmony in society and world peace. Before this female audience I stressed the leading role women would play in modern society, and of the value of the training these young Buddhists received in their institute. "Do not be discouraged by obstacles," I said, "and always aim higher. As women, you have a mission to fulfill. We are no longer in a society dominated by men, but in a society where men and women are equal." I could read on their faces that my words rang true. "I am a bachelor, a religious like you," I said, "and I see women as my sisters. Harmony begins from the heart, that is from the hearts of all, namely Buddhists, Christians and others, all united by the same ideal and the same love." Ven. Ru Rui approved of what I said, and stressed the urgency of the union of hearts in our world that had become exceptionally small, thanks to the media. Later when she invited questions from the audience a few hands were raised, and I remember one Nun in particular who wished to know how we Christians spread our faith. I seized this opening to speak among others of great missionaries like St. Francis Xavier, who is still not well known in China, and Matteo Ricci, of whom they had often heard. I was happy to share my faith with those young Buddhist women, and I hope the future holds other such opportunities in store for me, and even more fruitful exchanges.



Recently when travelling to the Henan province I visited Ven. Yong Xin, who is the Abbot of the famed Shaolin temple, which is well known as the ancestral temple of Chan (Zen) Buddhism, and the cradle of martial arts. Ven. Yong Xin is chairman of the Buddhist Association of Henan province, as well as delegate to the People's National Assembly and member of the National Youth Federation. Owing to the fact that he cannot avoid allegations of involvement in marketing, and also because of his spectacular success, he is at times viewed as a controversial figure and is often the target of criticism. Nonetheless he is one of the most prominent monks of China, and enjoys a worldwide reputation. His teams of martial arts practitioners have undertaken successful tours in over 60 countries, including the USA, U.K. and France. The opportunity to meet him was providentially granted to me by friends from Rome, who informed me that he had been invited to participate in the day of Prayer for World Peace that was to be held in Assisi on October 27, 2011. Ven. Yong Xin willingly agreed to see me, and he also confirmed the fact that he intended to travel to Assisi, requesting me however to keep the news confidential until the event. I enthusiastically counseled him to travel to Assisi, promising to pray that this crucial trip of his turned out to be successful and trouble-free. We had two long private conversations, one in his office at the Shaolin temple and the other on the following day in my hotel. Being blessed with a nature that was open to dialogue, and desirous that links between the People's Republic of China and the Holy See be normalized soon, he spoke of his great regard for His Eminence Cardinal Etchegaray, who had earlier visited China. I hastened to inform the Abbot that since the Pope's influence in the world was vast, it was my modest belief that good relations with the Holy See would greatly benefit China, and the Abbot wholeheartedly concurred with this. Around the end of October I was glad to know that Ven. Yong Xin had indeed participated in the inter-religious gathering at Assisi, and on July 2012, when I had occasion to visit him again, he joyfully displayed a photograph of his taken along with His Holiness Benedict XVI, and offered it to me as a sign of friendship. I informed him that it was in truth a picture of historical value, since he to my knowledge was the first Buddhist monk of Mainland China ever to have had an audience with the Pope. He agreed with me and expressed the desire to continue relations with Rome.



Conclusion

It is highly desirable that there be encounters between the Buddhists of mainland China and Christian organizations involved in dialogue with the world's great religions, such as the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious dialogue or the various monastic or secular societies in Europe or the USA. Although regular encounters may officially appear unfeasible at this juncture, yet private conversations such as those I just mentioned may prove useful in setting up a network of amity, besides dispelling prejudices and enabling the creation of a growing climate of mutual trust.

I would emphasize once more the value of friendship with reference to human relationships in China. This was something Matteo Ricci understood well. He did not count on an abstract strategy of inculturation of the faith, but rather, guided by diverse events, encounters and experiences, he developed on each occasion precious bonds of goodwill. His example is still relevant, for a sincere friendship, proven by deeds, is the criterion that provides the climate necessary for fruitful meetings, in a society where Confucian virtues are still alive.

Considering the fact that Buddhism is a key component in Chinese culture, dialogue with Buddhists, to the extent that it requires an ever-greater knowledge of their history, doctrines and institutions, is an effort towards inculturation that affects Chinese culture in its entirety. Unlike in the days of Ricci, efforts towards inculturation today cannot lead to a successful end unless we take into account also the role of Buddhism. Dialogue with Buddhism not only contributes to raising the moral and spiritual plane of Chinese society, it also serves to affect the nation's culture via the path of international relations, and works to promote the world civilization that is desired by all who yearn for peace and universal fraternity. The Jesuits of the end of the Ming and start of the Qing dynasties were pioneers with regard to the exchange of knowledge between China and Europe, and they were moreover instrumental in introducing into Chinese society their knowledge of mathematics, astronomy, cartography and other sciences. One of the principal tasks for their successors in the 21st century will be very likely be the reverse, namely, to enable the Christian West to revitalize, by providing values borrowed from some of the best sources of Chinese culture, which include also Buddhism.

We must indeed pay heed to the worldwide promotion of traditional Chinese culture, which is currently fostered by the nation's authorities. In an important speech at the UNESCO, Xi Jinping, the President of the People's Republic of China, stressed the need to endorse exchange and mutual sharing of knowledge among civilizations. This historic speech, which happens to be the first by a Chinese head of state at the United Nations, focused clearly as never before on the value and significance of the traditional Chinese civilization, to the extent of being called the manifesto of the renaissance of Chinese civilization:

“Having gone through over 5,000 years of vicissitudes, the Chinese civilization has always kept to its original root. As the unique cultural identity of the Chinese nation, it contains our most profound pursuits and provides it with abundant nourishment for existence and development. The Chinese civilization, though born on the soil of China, has come to its present form through constant exchanges and mutual learning with other civilizations...”

Of the world civilizations called to mutually enrich each other in harmony, the Chinese civilization with its two thousand years of history appears to be a productive and potentially effective participant. It is a civilization encompassing traditional religions and philosophies and especially Buddhism, which over the centuries has transformed into a vital component of the nation’s culture. Hence one can expect Buddhism to make a special contribution to the promotion of Chinese culture at the global level.

Echoing these words, people in Chinese Buddhist circles are now committing themselves to this program of international range. Ven. Xue Cheng, the Vice-chairman of the Buddhist Association of China and one of the most prominent personalities of the Sangha, likes to underscore the fact that of the three religious components of China, Buddhism is one that has and will exert the greatest impact. After propagation in East and Southeast Asia, Buddhism has now extended its reach to Europe and the USA, and it now serves as a powerful vehicle for the revival of Chinese culture. In this context he declared,

“If we hope to see the culture of China (including Buddhism) make an even greater contribution to the civilizations of mankind, we must above all ‘go out,’ go into all regions of the world, learn languages and understand the cultures of different countries, and in a process of continual self-improvement, permit Chinese culture to bring happiness to men, and Buddhist culture, by the spiritual quality of compassion, bring freshness in the world.”

Also, in a recent interview conducted by a famous Confucian magazine, Ven. Xue Cheng reaffirmed the following: “To let other nations of the world know about our two thousand years old experience and way of proceeding, has become now our common responsibility.”

In diffusing its stimulus around the countries of the world China’s Buddhist culture will enable the advancement of its civilization, and the nation’s rise in the global sphere too will in all likelihood promote the extension of Buddhism in several countries, since appearances suggest that China today is steadily headed towards becoming a global political and economic power. The Christian community and Jesuits in particular

can in no way ignore this major alignment of Chinese culture, which, together with its essential Buddhist component, is aimed at the welfare of mankind and peace in the world at large. Dialogue with Chinese Buddhists in a spirit of mutual reverence and camaraderie, will in all likelihood prove to be one of our most stimulating enterprises in the years to come.

Here, the participation and initiatives of the local Churches are indispensable. As stated in the documents of Vatican II, the formation of the clergy and faithful with reference to inter-religious dialogue is an issue of prime concern. Whenever conditions permit, the creation within China of Buddhist-Christian organizations will not merely enable such formation, but serve as a major contribution to both the Church of China and the nations of the world. “*Non coerceri maxima, contineri minimo, divinum est,*” are words often used by St Ignatius. That is to say, not losing sight of our principal project, and weaving daily modest bonds of friendship whenever possible, are tasks that slowly build up the future.

The Debate in China on Humanistic Buddhism ¹²⁶

By

Thierry Meynard, SJ

How does religion relate to society? Are they in opposition or in harmony? This question has become very important in modern times in China, and it formed a line that divided religious traditionalists from religious reformers. We shall first examine the traditionalist stance of the Chinese thinker Liang Shuming (1893-1988), who upheld a clear separation between Buddhism and society, thereby preserving the function of religion as a vehicle of radical criticism. We shall also examine the agenda put forth by the Buddhist monk Taixu (1890-1947), the most important Buddhist reformer of the first-half of the twentieth century in China. We shall then examine the debate that arose between Liang on one side, and Taixu, his disciple Yinshun (1906-2005) and the *Sangha* on the other. Since Liang regarded Buddhism to be a religion of pure transcendence, he opposed using it to tackle social problems. Liang instead advocated Confucianism, as a form of *upāya*, which could more effectively lead towards the ultimate Buddhist goal of renouncing to the world.

1. Buddhism in Liang's Framework of the Three Cultures

In his masterwork, *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* (1921), Liang established a comparative cultural framework in which the three cultures of the West, India, and China, followed their own specific paths, according to the three orientations of the will. Therefore, the manner in which the will relates to life gives a culture its fundamental orientation. Accordingly, Western culture is sustained by the will to conquer and control life and the environment, in order to satisfy individual and collective desires. Chinese culture is sustained by the will to balance the desires, and Indian or Buddhist culture seeks a total suppression of the self and its desires.

Liang used a metaphor in which three people, a Westerner, a Chinese and an Indian, live inside the same house. He explained:

The first orientation is a need to project, or a conflictual attitude. When a person encounters difficulty, he deals with the future's possibilities. Through his actions, he can transform the situation in such a way that his needs are fulfilled. The second orientation consists of modifying and adjusting one's desires. When encountering difficulties, he does not attempt to solve and transform the situation, but finds satisfaction amid the present circumstances. For example, if he lives in a

¹²⁶ This basically reproduces chapter seven of my book: Thierry Meynard, *The Religious Philosophy of Liang Shuming: The Hidden Buddhist*, Boston: Brill, 2011. I express my thanks to Qin Highley for giving the authorization on behalf of Brill.

dilapidated house, according to the first orientation, he would surely move to another house. But, when the same problem is met by those with the second orientation, he does not need to move house, but finds satisfaction by changing his way of looking at it and seeing that this way is equally good. In this case, the person does not deal with a possibility, and does not look ahead, but looks around. He does not want to fight to change the situation, but he accepts it as it is. The third orientation consists of turning around and looking back. Unlike the first orientation, the person does not want to change the situation. Unlike the second, he does not want to change his own way of looking at things, but wants to radically eliminate the question. This is one way to confront the difficulty, but it completely contradicts the nature of life, because the nature of life is to go ahead. All people who maintain this attitude of suppressing their desires walk along this path.¹²⁷

This cultural typology has received many critiques. For example, the Taiwanese scholar Lin Anwu has pointed out the difficulty in reducing all human cultures to just three.¹²⁸ Indeed, today we are much more knowledgeable about, and aware of, the cultural diversity of our world than Liang was one hundred years ago. However, Liang's theory seems more advanced than what we see today in a Chinese academic discourse dominated by a dualistic vision consisting only of China and the West. The Republican era in China (1911-1949) was characterized by greater cultural openness than today, since India and Japan were regarded in that period as serious intellectual partners.

To this cultural typology, Liang added a dynamic of historical evolution in which the human will or spirit was the determining factor. This spiritual vision of history went against the materialist view that has prevailed since the nineteen-twenties in China. Liang stated:

Materialist history considers consciousness to be determined. It is unable to determine anything itself. I accept this point, but spirit cannot be compared with consciousness. Materialist history is wrong to use the two words in an undifferentiated sense... I see the human spirit as able to determine economic reality, but consciousness cannot.¹²⁹

Liang therefore distinguished between consciousness, which was momentary

¹²⁷ *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, in *Complete Works (Liang Shuming quanji)*, Ji'nan: Shandong People Press, 1989-1993, Vol. 1, p. 380

¹²⁸ Lin Anwu, *Dangdai Xinrujia Zhaxue shilun [History of Contemporary New Confucian Philosophy]*, Taipei, Mingwen Shuju, 1996, p. 116.

¹²⁹ *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, p. 375.

and individual, and spirit, which was permanent and collective. In that sense, spirit was both a transcendent reality and an immanent reality — a continual activity which was eternal and without rest. Spirit had a cosmic meaning, as it gave birth to the cosmos and allowed history to develop. It also had an ontological meaning, since it was the basis of all that exists. As Lin Anwu remarked,

The human being, who is filled with this spirit, can consider himself to be his own master, as well as of the world and of history.¹³⁰

While in the past, the three cultures of the West, India, and China have taken their own independent paths; they have come into closer contact in modern times. Because of the influence of economics and politics, cultures come into conflict with one another. Western culture invades and attacks cultures that have taken the second and third paths. However, Western culture faces the question of “alienation” (*yihua*), which is created by an excessive concern with forward and external projection and by its desire for conquest and competition. Always projecting itself ahead, Western culture cannot solve its problems by itself. Therefore, in the near future, Western culture shall reorient itself along the line of Chinese culture. The West will not need to completely abandon the fundamental products of modernity, such as science, democracy, and so on, but it will abandon its onward thrust toward progress and adopt a more conciliatory approach to life. Then, China will become the model for world culture. However, at present China needs to successfully and sufficiently appropriate and integrate elements of the first path, in order to fully develop its traditional harmonious spirit. This was a subtle balance that China needed to get right; it could not take too much from the first path, which would run against its own spirit, but it needed enough to provide a sufficiently comprehensive material and social basis for the moral principles of Confucianism to fully develop. In a more remote future, however, humanity would shift to the third path. After having successfully resolved the questions of inter-personal relationships and personal cultivation thanks to Confucianism, humanity could then face the radical question of the meaning of life. Then, the Indian, Buddhist path would impose itself on the whole of humanity. After the affirmation and harmonization of the human will, the will would itself be negated.

Liang’s position vis-à-vis Buddhism was ambivalent. On one hand, he considered it to be the perfect religion, leading to the supra-mundane reality. However, in order to preserve its transcendent function, Liang considered that Buddhism should not compromise at all with the mundane world. Liang’s theory of the three cultural stages makes this clear. In this, social and moral issues were addressed in the first and

¹³⁰ Lin Anwu, 115.

second stages, while religious issues were reserved for the future. Therefore, Liang opposed the revival of Buddhism for the present age, since this would lead to social escapism and weaken efforts toward national salvation. Liang thought that calls for a Buddhist revival would be irresponsible given China's precarious situation. He stated:

It is too early to uphold the third attitude. This is very obvious. If someone wishes to walk the Buddhist path for himself, I can accept that. But if he promotes it for society, then I am forced to oppose it.¹³¹

With China facing the collapse of its national institutions, as well as civil unrest and encroachments on its national sovereignty, Liang asserted that the Chinese people should adopt the proactive attitude of the West in order to defend "their rights to life, to property and other individual rights" and, at the same time, promote the Confucian way of harmonizing conflicts.¹³² In other words, according to Liang, while the nation was engaged in a fight for survival, it would be suicidal to promote the Buddhist goal of renouncing the world. Liang clearly understood that, by engaging in conflict, many wrong ideas and imperfect attitudes may arise, but he thought that the survival of the Chinese nation and culture was the priority. He stated:

It is not because I believe life to be so good that I want the Chinese to live it, or that human culture has such a high value that I want the Chinese to realize it. I am merely cognizant of what the world is today for the Chinese.¹³³

Liang's pragmatic attitude led him to understand that Buddhist transcendence was not the most important matter at that time.

But if the time for the religious question had indeed not yet come, could some resources be drawn from Buddhism to address the social and moral issues of the present age? In other words, could Buddhism be reformed so that it addressed mundane issues? In fact, Liang held, first, that Buddhism could not be changed, and second, that even if it could, it should not be changed. His first assertion was related to the practical situation of Buddhism in China, and the second, with Buddhist theory. Concerning the first, Liang regarded popular Buddhism to be replete with superstitions. Most of the people going to temples were not really seeking *nirvāna*, but rather a better reincarnation in the next life, either for themselves or their relatives. Liang considered such popular views to be contrary to authentic Buddhism. Yet, he judged popular Buddhism to be so engrained in the minds of Chinese people that it would be impossible to eradicate it.

¹³¹ *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, pp. 533-534.

¹³² *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, p. 534.

¹³³ *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, p. 535.

At the same time, other Chinese intellectuals were influenced by Buddhism, while Buddhists themselves came up with new interpretations they hoped could meet the challenges of modern times. In *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, Liang mentioned that he had discussed the possible adaptation of Buddhism to modernity with leading intellectuals such as Liang Qichao (1873-1929) and Zhang Taiyan (1868-1936).¹³⁴ While Liang Qichao considered Chan Buddhism to be a possible resource, Liang Shuming considered Chan to be an inarticulate discourse, unsuited to people's present needs. Zhang Taiyan agreed with Liang Shuming that true Buddhism was, in the present circumstances, reserved to just a few elites, and was essentially out of reach for the common people.

Not only did Liang believe that Buddhism could not be reformed, he also stated that it should not be reformed. Even if Buddhism could be reformed by adapting itself to modern times and to the level of the common people, this would be detrimental in the long run. Therefore, not only was reforming Buddhism impossible, it more importantly was undesirable. As Liang stated concerning this Buddhist reform effort, "if this succeeds, it would not be Buddhist anymore."¹³⁵ Here, Liang's stance was connected to his theoretical understanding of Buddhism as a religion of ultimate transcendence. Considering the reform efforts from his position grounded in the fundamental teachings of Buddhism, Liang believed they should not be made because they would dilute its core message and emphasize worldly considerations, such as politics, education and morality. Liang thus opposed any changes that would denature Buddhism. From his perspective, Buddhism should be kept intact, and held in reserve for eschatological times.

Both Liang Qichao and Zhang Taiyan were intellectuals who had been influenced by aspects of Buddhist history, culture or history. Yet, neither of them were true believers in Buddhism. Rather, they looked at Buddhism as one of many resources available to address the national crisis. Their choice of Buddhism was dictated mostly by strategic considerations. Unlike Liang Qichao and Zhang Taiyan, Liang Shuming had a more complex relationship with Buddhism. He valued the transcendent message of Buddhism and throughout his life, he believed in it. Yet, his understanding of Buddhism as a pathway to transcendence led him to downplay institutional Buddhism, which he saw as secondary, or even as an obstacle. So, when Liang's views were confronted with the reformist ideas of Taixu, the debate about the role of Buddhism in society became intense. We shall first present the basic ideas of Taixu.

¹³⁴ *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, pp. 536-537.

¹³⁵ *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, in *Complete Works*, Vol. 1, p. 536

2. Taixu's Program to Reform Buddhism

Same as Confucianism, but at a lesser degree, Buddhism came under the attacks of the New Culture Movement, for which Buddhism was a superstitious tradition to be eliminated in order to modernize national culture. Buddhism was also a victim of the anti-religious movement affecting society at that time. When establishing a tight system of religious control, the Nationalist government of the Guomindang implemented an anti-Buddhist program, turning many Buddhist temples into schools. Some Buddhist laymen like Yang Wenhui (1837-1911)¹³⁶ had previously understood the growing divide between modern Chinese society and Buddhism. Yet, a thorough reform of Buddhism could not avoid reforming the *Sangha* — something difficult for a layman to do. Any institutional reforms of Buddhism had to be made by a monk.

The monk Taixu was indeed the most important reformer of Buddhism. After having taken part in revolutionary activities directed at overthrowing the imperial system,¹³⁷ he applied himself to the reformation of Buddhism. Like Liang Shuming, Taixu was deeply influenced by Western humanism. Yet, as Don Pittman says, “although external influences must be acknowledged, the sources of Taixu’s position were profoundly Buddhist.”¹³⁸ Taixu drew much from the schools of Chinese Buddhism, such as Chan and Tiantai. Pittman qualifies Taixu as an “ethical pietist” who wanted to realize “a communal utopia on earth.”¹³⁹ From 1920, he edited the Buddhist periodical *Sound of the Sea Tide (Haichaoyin)* — the sea tide being a metaphor for Buddhism. This served as a forum for Taixu to promote his reformist ideas. These included advocating three Buddhist revolutions: revolutions of doctrine, of the *Sangha*, and of temple management. The two last revolutions would indeed entail significant changes for Buddhist monks and devotees. Like Liang Shuming, Taixu was dissatisfied with the central position Buddhist rituals for the dead had attained in China. Yet, for Taixu, the problem was not so much that people had forgotten that the Buddhist ideal was to reach *nirvāna*, but rather that they relied on magical rituals instead of focusing on their Buddhist practice in order to progress on the path to enlightenment here and now. Therefore, Taixu proposed a sweeping reform — getting rid of the Buddhist ceremonies for the dead, which was also one of the main sources of income for monks. Instead, Taixu encouraged them to work for themselves.¹⁴⁰ As we can imagine, this was an explosive proposal within Buddhist monasteries and communities.

¹³⁶ Yang Wenhui is also called Yang Renshan or the venerable monk from Shidai in Anhui province (*Shidai zhanglao*).

¹³⁷ See Edward S. Krebs, *Shifu: Soul of Chinese Anarchism*, Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998, pp. 85-88.

¹³⁸ Don A. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism, Taixu's Reform*, University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, p. 169.

¹³⁹ *Ibid*, p. 169

¹⁴⁰ See “Zhengli sengqie zhidulun [Reorganization of the *sangha* community],” in *Taixudashi quanshu [Complete Works of Master Taixu]*, Taipei: Shandaosi, 1946, vol. 17.

However, Taixu considered doctrinal reforms, without which the other two could not succeed, to be the most important. For him, Chinese Buddhists were too concerned with their next reincarnation and largely ignored the human world as the necessary basis for enlightenment. Therefore, Taixu put his theoretical emphasis on the two vehicles, the vehicle of human beings and the vehicle of *devas*. A vehicle (*yāna, sheng*) is a way of carrying beings across the sea of suffering. According to the Mahāyāna tradition, there were five vehicles. The human vehicle (*rensheng*) was intended for human beings. It consisted of following the five precepts of Buddhism. The *deva* vehicle (*tiansheng*) was intended for gods, who were to perform the ten forms of good action. The śrāvaka vehicle (*shengwensheng*), or the vehicle of the hearers, consisted of adhering to the four noble truths. The *pratyekabuddha* vehicle (*yuanjuesheng*), or the vehicle of the solitary Buddha, involved contemplating the twelve-fold dependent arising. Finally, the Bodhisattva path was for Bodhisattvas, who could leave the world but have decided to stay to help sentient beings. Mahāyāna Buddhism stressed the importance of concrete forms of practice and universal liberation, and has therefore regarded the Bodhisattva path as the ideal. Also, Mahāyāna broadened the notion of the Bodhisattva to include anyone who aspired to enlightenment for himself and for all sentient beings, and actively engaged in the six perfections (*pāramitās, boluomi*).¹⁴¹ Taixu did not deny the existence of the other three vehicles, but he considered that only two vehicles — the vehicle of human beings and the vehicle of *devas* — could provide a solid platform for enlightenment in the modern age.

Though Liang Shuming and Taixu's understandings of Buddhism were quite different, they both accepted modern science and sought scientific proofs as a way of confirming Buddhist beliefs. Yet, they rejected any scientism that would reduce the reality of life and of the world to the narrow limits of what modern science already knew. They held that, besides the forms of life recognized by modern science, there were others that we may not fully know about, such as spirits or ghosts. Life and the world were still mysteries, and they believed that one day science might explain rationally phenomena such as spiritual powers (*shentong*) and miracles. They did not see these things as completely superstitious, although they believed that paying too much attention to them was problematic. Both Liang Shuming and Taixu recognized that popular Buddhism had laid too much emphasis on spirits and ghosts. They therefore deemphasized the importance of the extra-human forms of life so as to not encourage attachments to them. Yet, they also had more specific motivations for opposing popular Buddhism. Liang judged popular Buddhism from the perspective of the Buddhist

¹⁴¹ The six perfections are donation, morality, forbearance, effort, meditation and wisdom. See Kogen Mizuno, *Essentials of Buddhism*, translated by Gaynor Sekimori (Tokyo: Kosei Publishing, 1996), pp. 26-28.

teachings on radical transcendence. He saw the common people not as searching for *nirvāna*, but as trying to secure a better place for themselves in *samsāra*. Taixu, from a more practical stance, felt that due to popular Buddhism's focus on future reincarnations, people were not actively engaging with the present world.

It may seem as if Taixu attached more importance to the concrete, present world than Liang. Indeed, Liang criticized Buddhists for not aiming at a sufficiently radical transcendence, while Taixu criticized them for not paying enough attention to the present world. In fact, both of them did pay attention to the more germane issues of human life, but in different ways. For Taixu, only a Buddhist engagement with the world could offer a platform for reaching *nirvāna*, while for Liang, only a Confucian engagement could solve the world's problems and prepare the way to Buddhism. Liang did not belittle Buddhism, but on the contrary, he respected Buddhism for what he thought was its core message.

3. The Two Phases of the Debate between Liang and Taixu

In *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, Liang mentioned briefly that he had read in the *Sound of the Sea Tide* an article by Taixu in which he promoted the idea of the two vehicles. Liang criticized Taixu's view, stating that such an idea ran against the fundamental spirit of Buddhism, which, for Liang, "only talks about things outside of the present life."¹⁴² Liang's position is easily misunderstood and it is therefore important to analyze it carefully. Liang did not deny that Buddhism was connected with the practical world. As we have seen above, Liang understood perfectly that Buddhism essentially consisted of concrete forms of practice directed at correcting our misconceptions, and alleviating the undue suffering attached to them. Such practice would necessarily involve all the elements of human existence, including its moral, social and political dimensions. In other words, Liang was not opposed to the Buddhist reform effort because he believed that Buddhist teachings should remain separate from social realities. In fact, Liang stressed that Buddhism's purpose was not to talk about this world as a permanent and absolute reality, since it aimed at something that was beyond the world. In other words, the goal of Buddhism was not to make the world a better place, much less save the world, but to transcend it. If people forgot about Buddhism's transcendent orientation, they would completely denature the Buddha's message.

The First Phase of the Debate on Buddhism for Human Life: 1921-1928

On the tenth of October 1921, Taixu took the night train from Beijing to Hangzhou. During the ride, he read Liang's *Eastern and Western Cultures and their*

¹⁴² *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, in *Complete Works*, p. 536.

Philosophies from beginning to the end. Shortly after, he wrote a short review of the book, which was published in the November issue of *Sound of the Sea Tide*.¹⁴³ Taixu had previously read Liang's *Outline of Yogācāra (Weishi shuyi)*, which had been published one year before. He had praised Liang's efforts in explaining Yogācāra theory in the language of Western philosophy. Therefore, when *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* was published, and when Taixu read that the young teacher of Indian philosophy at Peking University had apparently shifted to Confucianism, and advocated putting Buddhism in reserve for the future, he and others in Buddhist circles were very surprised.

In his review, Taixu first discussed Liang's theory of the three stages of culture, as well as its underlying epistemology. Taixu was deeply impressed by the importance Liang Shuming gave to the religious quest, and indeed he called *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies* "the best book of the recent New Culture Movement."¹⁴⁴ Then, Taixu launched two critiques against Liang. First, he criticized Liang for his aristocratic (*guizu*) understanding of Buddhism. He wrote that "if Liang Shuming can understand that Buddhism is the only truth, then, the common people can also understand this." Taixu could not accept Liang's elitism since it went against his efforts to present a modern form of Buddhism that was accessible to the masses. Yet, Taixu's critique was in a sense flawed. Liang did not state that people were unable to understand authentic Buddhism because they were intellectually limited. Nor did he claim that Buddhism was, ultimately, out of reach for most people. Rather, he stated that Buddhism did not answer the questions that most people were facing at that time.

Taixu probably understood the weakness of his first critique, because he then moved to present a second one aimed at Liang's claims concerning the inadequacy of Buddhism for the present time. In *Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies*, Liang expressed his fear that promoting Buddhism would create even more chaos and confusion. Taixu rejected Liang's opinion and countered that Buddhism was in fact the best remedy for the problems of their era. There were two parts in Taixu's argument. First, Buddhism could directly address the question of suffering, which was universal and acute at that time. Second, Buddhism offered a viable alternative to Westernization, and was superior to the "inarticulate discourses" of Confucianism, Neo-Confucianism and Daoism. Like Liang, Taixu recognized that there was a deep need to first address "the peace and happiness of the people in this world" (*renshi zhi anle*). In this sense, both of them shared the same awareness of the present challenges. They did not seek to

¹⁴³ Taixu, "Lun Liangshuming dongxiwenhua jiqi zhexue [About Liang Shuming's Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies]," in *Sound of the Sea Tide*, 1/11 (1921), reproduced in *Taixudashi quanshu* vol. 25, pp. 302-304.

¹⁴⁴ Taixu, "Lun Liangshuming dongxiwenhua jiqi zhexue," [About Liang Shuming's Eastern and Western Cultures and their Philosophies], *Haichaoyin [Sound of the Sea Tide]* 1/11 (1921). Reprint: *Taixudashi quanshu*, vol. 25, p. 304.

escape into a transcendent realm beyond the present world, but work for a series of moral, social, political and cultural goals that would decrease the level of suffering in their individual lives and in the world in general. While Liang felt that Confucianism was better equipped than Buddhism to alleviate worldly suffering, Taixu believed that Buddhism could create an earthly “Pure Land.” Taixu thus rejected the first of Liang’s critiques, about the possibility of reforming Buddhism and adapting it to the needs of the modern age. But, as Cheng Gongrang has recently remarked, Taixu failed in this hasty response to answer the second, and more important, of Liang’s questions — the question of the theoretical legitimacy of the reform effort. This was because Liang considered that such reforms would constitute the abandonment of original Buddhism, and therefore should not be made.¹⁴⁵ Clearly, Taixu’s “two vehicles” theory did not provide a sound theoretical basis on which to address Liang’s question.

In 1923, partly as a reaction to Liang’s advocacy of the Neo-Confucian school of the mind, Taixu wrote an article arguing against the idealist philosophy of the great Chinese thinker Wang Yangming (1472-1529). In it, Taixu criticized Liang’s theory of the three stages. He wrote:

Liang Shuming has devoted a long time to Buddhist studies. He first caught a glimpse of Confucianism and Buddhism. He then taught about the experience of the true meaning of human life. In fact, it is necessary to first promote Buddhism. Putting Buddhism at the end is like wishing a branch to flourish and yet cutting its roots, or wishing a river to flow far and yet drying its source.¹⁴⁶

Taixu emphasized here the continuity between the present and the future stages, a continuity that should be grounded in Buddhism. However, at this stage Taixu had not yet found a common theoretical foundation that would unite a Buddhist engagement with the world and the Buddhist supra-mundane reality.

In 1924, Taixu engaged in the famous metaphysics-versus-science debate, which had enlivened China’s intellectual world. Taixu then wrote *Science of Human Life*, which was published in 1929.¹⁴⁷ In this book, he reiterated his rejection of Liang’s theory of the three cultures. He stated that Buddhism should not be reserved only for the third stage, but that it should be used in each of the three stages. While Liang had distinguished between cultures on the basis of the different issues they addressed, Taixu considered Buddhism to be a comprehensive system that could provide for all human

¹⁴⁵ Cheng Gongrang, “Cong Taixu yu Liang Shuming de yichangzhengbian kan renshengfojiao de lilunnanti [Theoretical issues with Humanistic Buddhism examined from the debate between Taixu and Liang Shuming],” in *Zhexue yanjiu [Philosophical Investigations]* 5 (2002), p. 74.

¹⁴⁶ Taixu, “Lun Wang Yangming [On Wang Yangming],” in *Taixudashi quanshu*, vol. 21, pp. 509-510.

¹⁴⁷ Taixu, *Renshengguan de kexue*, Shanghai: Taidong Tushuju, 1929.

needs. Compared to his two previous articles, Taixu this time provided more systematic answers to Liang's ideas. He addressed, for the first time, Liang's accusations regarding the modification (*gaizao*) of Buddhism. Taixu argued that his own interpretation of Buddhism, which aimed at perfecting and completing human life, in fact represented true Buddhism. He held that the human vehicle was "the main base" from which one could reach Buddhahood, without going through the other intermediary vehicles.¹⁴⁸ As we have seen above, Mahāyāna Buddhism differentiated between five vehicles. It was believed that sentient beings would have to climb slowly upwards from the human vehicle to the Bodhisattva vehicle. Only through a long process, requiring eons, could sentient beings finally reach Buddhahood. Now, Taixu was arguing that by practicing the human vehicle, one could attain Buddhahood during their own lifetime, without going through the other vehicles. In fact, Taixu combined the human and Bodhisattva vehicles together. The basis of the human vehicle was to make the Bodhisattva vow of universal liberation. The Bodhisattva vehicle therefore became the theoretical basis bridging human existence and Buddhahood. A human being committed to the Bodhisattva path could reach Buddhahood directly, without needing to first progress through other forms of existence. Taixu claimed that the Bodhisattva path was the foundation of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and that the human vehicle, based on the Bodhisattva path, represented authentic Buddhism. According to Cheng Gongrang, this "was a decisive step in the elaboration of Buddhism for human life."¹⁴⁹ Indeed, human life was then endowed with the capacity to attain Buddhahood. But what was the concrete expression of the Bodhisattva path in human life? It was mostly to perform moral duties and engage in social reform for the benefit of all. There was no need for the intercession of superhuman powers. Everything was within reach of the ordinary human being. By working to make this world a better place for oneself and for others, one could reach Buddhahood. Taixu could thus answer Liang's accusation that he was distorting Buddhism; his ethical form of Buddhism was in complete accordance with the true intent of Śākyamuni, which was to help all human beings gain ultimate liberation.

Like Liang, Taixu had rejected popular forms of Buddhism, which focused on obtaining benefits in the next life. However, in *Science of Human Life*, Taixu went further, condemning also "mystics who gain special experiences from their meditative practice."¹⁵⁰ This seems to be a reference to Liang, whose method for reaching *nirvāna* tended to transcend concrete human life by emptying it of any ultimate value. In other words, while Liang understood Buddhism to entail renouncing human nature, Taixu

¹⁴⁸ See Taixu, "Fo jiao zhijie fosheng de zhuyao jichu" ["The main basis for direct access to Buddhahood"], in *Taixudashi quanshu*, vol. 46, p. 40.

¹⁴⁹ Cheng Gongrang, "Cong Taixu yu Liang Shuming de yichangzhengbian," p. 74.

¹⁵⁰ Taixu, *Renshengguan de kexue*, in *Taixudashi quanshu*, vol. 23, 42.

understood Buddhism as completing it. As can be seen, Liang's stance, and that of some of the other intellectuals who were against Buddhist social engagement, convinced Taixu that he needed to develop a more comprehensive theory concerning his modernized version of Buddhism. We can therefore say that Liang indirectly influenced Taixu.

A few years later, in 1928, Taixu developed his concept of "Buddhism of Human Life" (*Rensheng Fojiao*), which was a theoretical clarification of his "two vehicles" theory.¹⁵¹ Taixu narrowed the focus from two vehicles — those of human beings and *devas* — to only one: the vehicle of human beings. Though he never denied the existence of other realms besides the human one, he stated that, in the current age, the human vehicle alone should be practiced. When it came to practical matters, the other vehicles should be disregarded. By focusing on Buddhism for human life, Taixu directly denied Liang's affirmation that Buddhism was unfit for solving the challenges of human life and society. Taixu affirmed that, on the contrary, modern Buddhism should focus exclusively on the present, as in Confucianism or Western culture. Furthermore, this humanistic Buddhism was, for him, more suitable than either Confucianism or Western culture in meeting the challenges posed by the moral and political crises facing the country.

The Second Phase of the Debate on Buddhism for Human Life: 1940-1942

After the Japanese invasion and the termination of the program of rural reconstruction in which he was engaged, Liang Shuming left Shandong and went for a series of discussions with Mao Zedong in Yan'an in 1938. Afterwards, he settled in Chongqing, which was the seat of the Guomindang government. Nanjing was subsequently taken by the Japanese. In January 1940, Liang visited the Sino-Tibetan Teaching Institute (*Hanzang jiaoli yuan*). The talk Liang gave to the monks was recorded and published that same year in the *Sound of the Sea Tide*.¹⁵² In this, Liang first acknowledged that he had long wished to visit this institute, which Taixu had founded in 1930.¹⁵³ Liang openly admitted that in his youth, he had shifted from Buddhism to Confucianism. However, he also emphasized that his belief in Buddhism, in "transmigration," and the "three worlds" remained unchanged.¹⁵⁴

Interestingly, in his talk Liang emphasized not the transcendent path of Buddhism, but ethical engagement. He was convinced that Confucianism was the best

¹⁵¹ See "Duiyu Zhongguo fojiao geming seng de xunci [Exhortation about the revolution of the Chinese sangha]," in *Taixudashi nianpu* [*Chronicle of the Life of the Great Master Taixu*], edited by Yinshun, Taipei: Zhengwen chubanshe, 1985, pp. 256-257.

¹⁵² This talk was first published in 1940 at Chongqing by *The Sound of the Sea Tide* and it is reproduced as "Wo de guoqu [My past life]," in *Complete Works (Liang Shuming quanji)*, vol. 6, pp. 68-73.

¹⁵³ It was closed down by the new regime in 1950.

¹⁵⁴ Liang Shuming, "My past life," in *Complete Works*, vol. 6, pp. 71-72.

vehicle for ethical engagement in the present world. Yet he perfectly respected the choice of Buddhist monks to engage with the world. Liang admonished them, stating that “human life is a rare opportunity,” that “time does matter,” and that time should not be wasted. If one only says prayers and spends all his time dawdling, then even though he may have renounced the world, such a person would be as senseless as worldly people are.¹⁵⁵ In other words, Liang exhorted the monks to engage with the world from the perspective of their lives as Buddhist monastics. Here, Liang adopted a very ecumenical approach, developing his conception of engagement with the world around concepts that could be considered both Buddhist and Confucian, such as “self-reflection” (*fanxing*) and “love for others” (*airen*).¹⁵⁶ Liang therefore did not argue from a doctrinal perspective in his speech to the monks. Though he did not advocate using Buddhism as the main force for social reformation, he welcomed the contribution Buddhism could make, since he understood that Confucianism and Buddhism shared common values. Liang also suggested, however, that he was using Confucianism as a tool to further the Buddhist goal of ultimate liberation, stating that all his efforts were intended to help “ferry the living across the sea of *samsāra* to the shore of *nirvāna*.” In other words, Liang was dedicated to the Bodhisattva path, which he pursued using the unorthodox means of promoting Confucianism.

However, some Buddhist monks were more doctrinal, and had difficulty accepting Liang’s ecumenical approach. They asked him why he had stopped advocating Buddhism. Liang replied laconically that it was because of “this time, this place, this life” (*cishi, cidi, ciren*).¹⁵⁷ By “this time,” Liang meant that Buddhism was overtly focused on the two worlds of the past and of the future, but Liang was more concerned with the world of the present. Also, Buddhism considers the earthly realm to be one of ten places or directions. Liang, however, had more concrete concerns about the present time and world. Finally, Buddhism also considered human life to be one of the six forms of existence. However Liang, again, had explicit concerns about the current state of humanity.¹⁵⁸ We should understand Liang’s answer in the context of his background, which involved ten years in rural reconstruction. During this time, he advocated Confucianism as the practical solution to the problems of Chinese society *hic et nunc*. In other words, for Liang, Buddhism’s temporal and spatial expansiveness

¹⁵⁵ Liang Shuming, “My past life,” in *Complete Works*, vol. 6, p. 72.

¹⁵⁶ Liang Shuming, “My past life,” in *Complete Works*, Vol. 6, p. 73.

¹⁵⁷ Yinshun, *Yindu zhi fojiao [Indian Buddhism]*, Taipei: Zhengwen Chubanshi, 1985, pp. 1-2. Yet it is quite strange that when the *Sound of the Sea Tide* published Liang’s speech, the words “this time, this place, this life” did not appear. We may conjecture that these words were not part of Liang’s formal speech but answers to a question. Another hypothesis is that they were judged at that time by the editor of the *Sound of the Sea Tide* too dismissive of Buddhism and may have been deleted.

¹⁵⁸ While the three worlds refer to past, present, future, the ten directions refer to to East, West, North, South, the four points between these, and up and down. The six realms of existence are hell, ghost, beast, demon, human and heavenly being.

precluded it from taking human life seriously. Though his Confucian program in the rural villages of Shandong province had collapsed due to the war, Liang still held Confucianism to be a better response than Buddhism to the present national crisis. For Liang, the efforts of Buddhism, while worthy, could not deal with such an acute disaster.

Liang knew the intellectual efforts Taixu had made to provide Buddhism for human life with its theoretical foundation. Liang's objections to the Buddhist revival have a doctrinal basis. In a context in which the country was under a full-fledged invasion, Liang welcomed the efforts of the Buddhist *Sangha* in reconstructing society, but yet he had serious doubts about the effectiveness of these efforts.

The monk Yinshun, a young disciple of Taixu who later became a very famous Buddhist scholar and religious leader in Taiwan, was present during Liang's lecture at the Sino-Tibetan Teaching Institute in January 1940. Yinshun was so deeply impressed and challenged by Liang's words that he mentioned them in the preface to his book *Indian Buddhism (Yindu zhi Fojiao)*, 1942.¹⁵⁹ Taixu himself did not attend the talk by Liang since he was in India at that time. However, after his return to Chongqing, Taixu came to know the content of Liang's lecture, which appeared in *Sound of the Sea Tide*. Taixu would therefore certainly have heard about Liang's famous six words — “this time, this place, this life.” On the 17th of June that same year, Taixu gave a lecture during a celebration at the Institute. The lecture was entitled “On the Bodhisattva path in the present-day from the perspective of Buddhist teachings in the Pali language” (*Cong baliyuxi Fojiao shuodao jinpusaxing*). In this lecture Taixu presented some of his thoughts from his overseas trip, however he also directly responded to Liang Shuming's critique that Buddhism was too aloof from practical concerns to deal with human realities. Taixu again called for the reform and modernization of Chinese Buddhism. He stated, “the implementation of Mahāyāna theory is what I call the new Bodhisattva path. And this Bodhisattva path must adapt to the concrete needs of the present time, the present place and the present life.”¹⁶⁰ The last words are clearly a response to Liang. Here, Taixu expressed his opinion that Buddhism could constitute a clear path for the modern world. He had therefore developed a new interpretation of the Bodhisattva path, stating that it needed to provide germane solutions to the problems that were affecting people at that time. Taixu emphasized that Buddhahood was reached, not in spite of human suffering, but on the contrary, only through a direct engagement with it. Crises should not be feared, but welcomed. Liberation was reached not by cutting oneself off from suffering, but by transforming suffering from the inside, thereby progressing

¹⁵⁹ In the preface of *Indian Buddhism*, Yinshun dated Liang's visit to the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute in the winter of 1938. However, this seems a mistake since the *Complete Works of Liang Shuming* dates the visit to early 1940. Also, Liang said in his speech, later published by the *Sound of the Sea Tide* and inserted in the *Complete Works*, that he was coming then for the first time to the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute.

¹⁶⁰ Taixu, *Taixudashi quanshu*, vol. 35, p. 30.

towards Buddhahood. Buddhahood could therefore be reached not only by monks, but by Buddhist laypeople, because each of them had decided to remain in this world and tackle the problems of humanity.

Taixu's best answer to Liang's doubts about the effectiveness of Buddhist engagement was simply to implement the program and then check its level of effectiveness by assessing its tangible results. Taixu still wanted to preserve the transcendent aspect of Buddhism. Engagement with the world was the basis for enlightenment, but it could not be an end in itself. Therefore, although monks would pursue an engagement with the world, they nevertheless had to remain committed to the *Sangha's* ideals and requirements, which would express this transcendence both to themselves and to laypeople. And so, Taixu differentiated between monks who would participate in culture, education and charity, and laypeople who would participate in politics, military, business, finance and labor, so that the country, society and the common people could benefit from Buddhism.

As stated above, Yinshun was among the monks who listened to Liang's speech at the Sino-Tibetan Teaching Institute in 1940. Liang's words had a strong impact on Yinshun, who then experienced a religious crisis, leading to him "having doubts and feeling extremely unsettled" (*wuxin yishen shubu'an*).¹⁶¹ Sometime later, while studying Yogācāra and the Agama sūtras, Yinshun came across the sentence "all Buddhas come from the human realm; ultimately they do not become Buddhas in heavens" (*zhufu jie chu renjian zhongbuzaitianshang chengfoye*). In other words, although there were ten directions and three worlds, the Buddhas accorded the earth with the highest level of importance and focused on human beings in the present. According to Yinshun's own account, when he understood the meaning of this sentence, he shed tears of joy. As we can see, Yinshun's compassion was as strong as Liang's. On the basis of Taixu's Buddhism for Human Life, Yinshun came to develop his own notion: Buddhism for the human realm (*renjian fojiao*). In some ways, Yinshun's concept was even more radical than Taixu's. While Taixu emphasized the suitability of the human vehicle for modern times, he had not yet denied the existence of the other vehicles and even paid respect to them. In contrast, Yinshun came to believe that the human vehicle alone was the basis for obtaining Buddhahood. As Marcus Bingenheimer has stated,

Taixu is much more inclusivistic regarding Buddhist deities, heavens, hells and devotional practices. Yinshun tends to qualify them at best as *upāya*, at worst as defiling true Buddhism by assimilating theistic concepts and practices.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Yinshun, *Indian Buddhism*, p. 1.

¹⁶² Marcus Bingenheimer, "Some Remarks on the Usage of Renjian Fojiao," in *Development and Practice of Humanitarian Buddhism, Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, edited by Hsu Mutsu, Chen Jinhua, and Lori

As we can see, with Yinshun, modern Buddhism's anthropocentric reached a new level. Yinshun reduced Buddhism's six traditional realms of existence to only one. Yinshun's new brand of Buddhism may be understood to be a rationalist purification of the Buddhist discourse. Yet, unlike Yinshun, both Taixu and Liang Shuming resisted going in this direction, because they did not want to renounce to the richness of Buddhist cosmology which was, after all, a traditional means of expressing religious transcendence.

4. Buddhism as Spirit or as Religion?

Facing the challenge of Christianity and the marginalization of Buddhism in twentieth century China, Taixu envisioned constituting Buddhism as a modern organization, which could implement an ethical and social program. While the center of Buddhist life has traditionally been local temples, which are largely independent from each other, Taixu decided to set up Buddhist organizations that were centralized at the national level. These included the Association for the Advancement of Buddhism (*Fojiao xiejinhui*) in 1912; the Buddhist Society of the Great Vow (*Fojiao hongshihui*) in 1913; and the League for the Support of Buddhism (*Weichi fojiao tongmenhui*), also in 1913.¹⁶³ He envisioned the establishment of Buddhism in a form akin to the Christian Church, with an international network, so it could be an effective force in the globalizing world. In 1928, Taixu founded the World Buddhist Institute (*Shijie foxueyuan*) in Paris.¹⁶⁴ He closely collaborated with the Guomindang regime in the establishment of Buddhism as a unified organization. During the war, he even placed patriotism at the foundation of Buddhist practice. In 1939 he toured East Asia on behalf of the Chinese government to gain support for the war effort from Buddhist communities in Burma, India, Ceylon and Malaysia.¹⁶⁵ However, Taixu met strong resistance from these local Buddhist communities and he ultimately failed to realize his dream of a unified Buddhist organization.

While the establishment of Buddhism as a modern religion made it more effective in social reform efforts, this came at a great cost, with many local traditions and practices being undermined and abandoned. Liang fully understood that the Western model of a centrally organized religious organization was not suitable for either Chinese society or for a religion of radical transcendence like Buddhism. Also, Liang opposed any control of religion by the state.

Meeks (Hua-lien: Tzuchi University Press, 2007), p. 147.

¹⁶³ Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 51, 77-76.

¹⁶⁴ Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism*, pp. 120-122.

¹⁶⁵ This is why Taixu was not present at the Sino-Tibetan Buddhist Institute, his usual residence at that time, when Liang came to visit and give his talk.

In the case of Buddhism, Liang even rejected efforts at proselytization. For him, people could address the religious question, only when they faced it. At times of national crisis, people were concerned with their own individual survival, with the survival of their family and friends, or with the survival of the country and the national culture. Most people had not yet developed the sensibility for suffering that could lead to renouncing the world, and so the Buddhist path was impossible for most individuals and for society at large. Still, Liang held that some individuals were more precocious than others, and could address religious questions for themselves. Consequently, there was no need to impress one's own religious experience upon others, since in the end this would be ineffective. Buddhism entailed affective and moral experiences, which could not be taught to anyone else. Liang believed that people generally lived in their own mental worlds and, even though they were interrelated, they could not truly communicate with one another. In this sense, there was no need to teach someone Buddhism. If an attempt was made to do so, it would only lead to confusion by making Buddhism appear to be just another ideology.

Consequently, Liang refused to understand Buddhism as an organized religion in charge of disseminating a belief. He saw Buddhism, for the most part, as a religious spirit. In this sense, Liang's view of religion was very individualistic. In many ways, he was like people today who affirm that they are spiritual but not religious, having personal experiences with transcendence but yet refusing any association with a religious group or Church. Liang's religious spirit and Taixu's collective form of religious piety therefore stand as two extremes.

Taixu had a comprehensive approach to Buddhism, and maintained that it could be the main force, which could drive modern society. Buddhism could resolve all the issues facing humanity, including material, social, moral and transcendent. For Taixu, none of these things were foreign to Buddhism, and instead represented a concrete path for reaching Buddhahood in the present age. By establishing a Buddhist society on earth, the human realm could become a Pure Land. In addition, Taixu represented institutional Buddhism and was committed to reforming Buddhism not only as a philosophical idea, but also as a social institution.

In fact, Liang Shuming was not opposed to the discourse surrounding the modernization of Buddhism. He regarded Buddhism as compatible with modern science, and he himself used recent scientific theories to discuss it (for example, as it related to ether, relativity, and Darwinism). Liang also contributed to the insertion of Buddhism into academic discourses. Yet, he maintained that Buddhism should not become involved in social or political activities, and was therefore opposed to humanistic Buddhism. Liang and Taixu came to oppose each other because of their different perspectives and social positions. As a philosopher, Liang had a specialized approach to Buddhism; he emphasized Buddhist transcendence and was concerned

about diluting the Buddhism's religious message, and turning it into a form of worldly activism. Yet, it was to Liang's credit that he did not descend into a kind of Gnosticism, and thereby congratulate himself on being one of the happy few who could attain liberation. He did not disregard the social reality, but instead came to advocate Confucianism as the social and cultural form, which gave flesh and body to his faith.

While Taixu focused on institutional reforms, Liang was more interested in Buddhism's spiritual message, and for him, preserving or strengthening Buddhist institutions was secondary. Liang considered a religion like Christianity to play an important role in social life. Therefore, why could Buddhism not play the same role? This is because Buddhism was, for Liang, a religion of transcendence. It was therefore essential to preserve Buddhism's purity for eschatological times. It was vital for Liang to preserve Buddhism from secularization. Only after humanity had exhausted all the questions of this present life would it turn to face the painful question of its meaning. What, in the end, were all their struggles for? People will not find any answer. Then, realizing the inanity of these struggles, humanity will enter *nirvāna*.

However, the period of eschatology would not necessarily take place at the end of history. In fact, this eschatological age was present throughout history, meaning it judges each moment. In this sense, each moment can be eschatological. Liang stood as a prophet who fully understood the course that humanity, of necessity, would run. He realized that the eschatological question was always present. At each moment in his social and political activism, Liang knew he would have to leave the world in order to open himself to the transcendent realm of Buddhahood. Yet, Liang believed that, at present, most people could not adopt such a view. He therefore decided to help them—not by introducing them to Buddhist transcendence — but by introducing them to the Confucian way of engaging with the world. As can be seen, Liang's decision was historically situated and dictated by the struggle for national survival. Under different circumstances, Liang may have made another choice. Had the nation already appropriated the spirit of renunciation that Liang stated was characteristic of India, then cultural and national survival would have not been an absolute necessity. In such a situation, people may have decided not to fight, pursuing instead the Buddhist path of renunciation. We can ponder the failure of Taixu's Buddhist reforms. For Liang, such a failure was intrinsic to Buddhism. Yet, we could also argue that external causes played also an important role, since Taixu's attempt to change the course of Chinese society was terminated with the onset of war and the rise of Communism. Under the Marxist regime, Buddhism was banned. Yet the recent Buddhist revival since the nineteen-eighties, could prove Liang wrong, since it seems that Buddhism can now, in a more peaceful and stable environment, contribute to social life and tackle the question of the relationship between society and religion anew. Yet, it is Liang's great credit to remind that the religious quest should not be confused with worldly activism.

Jesus Christ Encountering Gautama Buddha: Buddhist-Christian Relations in South Korea

By

Bernard Senécal, SJ

Abstract

Korea's Presidential Council on Nation Branding works hard to match the country's international image with the level of its economic clout. Meanwhile, Korea's suicide rate remains at least twice as high compared to any other country of the 34 member countries of the OECD. That suicide rate spares neither Buddhists nor Christians. Despite the so-called Han River Miracle, democratization, and cutting edge technology in several key industries, contemporary Korea seems to be in serious want of the wisdom that can give everlasting peace and joy to each of her citizens.

In answer to this dramatic social situation, the development of a constructive Buddhist-Christian encounter in Korea could become a remarkable source of wisdom, not only for Koreans but also for mankind. To be sure, with Buddhists and Christians representing 42.95% and 55.1% respectively of the 53.8% of its citizens claiming a religion, Korea is a uniquely privileged country for a meeting of the followers of Christianity and Buddhism. But in spite of those favorable circumstances, this essay points to the existence of a huge gap between Buddhists and Christians in Korea, which has a negative impact on social life, and analyzes the reasons behind it.

Against that backdrop at the crossroads of the Buddhist-Christian encounter, Cho'gye-jong's 曹溪宗 2011 Aśoka Declaration to promote interreligious dialogue and social peace, and a Christian alternative community to achieve the same goal at a grassroots level, represent prophetic initiatives to develop the wisdom needed to foster peace on the Korean peninsula and in northeast Asia.

This essay has been written with the help of a grant provided by Sogang University's Research Department, and the key words here are Korea, Buddhists, Christians, Ashoka (Aśoka), dialogue, suicide, and wisdom.

A Huge but Dormant Potential of Wisdom

Judging from the most recent religious statistics, the development of a constructive Buddhist-Christian encounter in South Korea (hereafter Korea) could become a remarkable source of wisdom for mankind. To be sure, judging by East Asian

and world standards, with Buddhists and Christians representing 42.95% and 55.1%¹⁶⁶ respectively of the 53.8% of its citizens claiming a religion, Korea may certainly be considered a uniquely privileged country for a meeting of the followers of Christianity and Buddhism (*Munhwa ch'eyuk kwan'gwangbu* 文化體育觀光部¹⁶⁷ 2012, 9, 11).

It is well known that Arnold Toynbee (1889-1975) once wrote “that of all the historical changes in the West, the most important—and the one whose effects have been least understood—is the meeting of Buddhism in the Occident. (Verhoeven 2001, 77).”¹⁶⁸ The famous historian meant that human wisdom could considerably grow, if the tradition founded by the Buddha Śākyamuni (ca. 583-483 BCE, hereafter Buddha) and the one founded by Jesus Christ (6 BCE-27 CE) began to learn from and enrich one another in the West.¹⁶⁹

In this context I define “wisdom” as “what can give everlasting peace and joy to each and every creature or sentient being, by providing them with total liberation from all suffering, including suffering caused by death.” Indeed, at their best, both Buddhism and Christianity are destined to provide a teaching that leads to such wisdom. As Siddhārtha Gautama taught a path leading to the peace and joy of Nirvāṇa beyond the *samsāra* (transmigration, *sengsa yunhoe* 生死輪廻), Jesus of Nazareth taught a way of life leading beyond earthly sufferings and death symbolized by his passion and his crucifixion, to the peace and joy of Resurrection in God’s Kingdom. Granted with such a definition of wisdom, there is no reason why Toynbee’s famous statement could not be applied to the meeting of Christianity in the Orient, and more specifically to the encounter of Christian and Buddhist wisdom in the North Eastern part of Asia, nicknamed “the land of the Morning Calm.”

However, at the crossroads of Buddhism and Christianity, Korea’s

¹⁶⁶ 34.5% Protestants and 20.6% Catholics.

¹⁶⁷ The Ministry of Culture, Physical Education, and Tourism

¹⁶⁸ “However much people today realize it, the encounter of Oriental and Occidental religious and philosophical traditions, of Buddhist and Christian and Hindu and Islamic perspectives, must be regarded as one of the most extraordinary meetings of our age ... (Toynbee’s quotation) ... when and if our era is considered in light of larger societal patterns and movements, there can be no doubt that the meeting of East and West, the mingling of the most ancient traditions in the modern world, will form a much larger part of history than we today with our political-economic emphases, may think.” Dr. Martin J. Verhoeven, “Buddhism and Science: Probing the Boundaries of Faith and Reason,” *Religion East and West*, Issue 1, June 2001, pp. 77-97.

<http://online.sfsu.edu/rone/Buddhism/VerhoevenBuddhismScience.htm> (accessed January 30, 2014)

¹⁶⁹ Since there is plenty of room to argue whether the Buddha and Christ ever intended to become the founders of Buddhism and Christianity as we know these religions today, it solely is for the sake of convenience that this essay introduces them as such.

considerable interreligious potential remains quite unknown, rather underestimated, and practically untapped. Metaphorically speaking, it is useless to claim that huge reserves of crude oil and natural gas lie somewhere several thousand meters under the bottom of unfathomable oceans. Engineers must detect their exact location, master the techniques required to extract their content, and deliver the contents safely to the world markets. Since what is at stake in Korean Buddhism's encounter with Christianity is not sophisticated technology but wisdom, this metaphor's limits are obvious. However, just as technology and energy are needed to develop more sources of energy, basic knowhow and wisdom are needed to develop more sources of wisdom through the practice of interfaith dialogue.

Judging from statistics on the performance of its economy, Korea does not lack cutting edge technology. On the contrary, it is one of the most technologically advanced economies in the world. However, judging from the country's suicide rate, a key social index, Korea seems to be in serious want of wisdom. Indeed its suicide rate—which spares neither Buddhists nor Christians—is at least twice as high compared to any other country of the 34 member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).¹⁷⁰ If we were to accept what those committing suicide tell us through their behavior, namely that “society is not worth living in any more,”¹⁷¹ we must conclude that many a Korean is neither at peace nor joyful. This disturbing truth compels us to try to understand why relations between Buddhism and Christianity in Korea remain mostly underdeveloped, to the detriment of the huge wisdom that they could otherwise generate for the benefit of all of us.

In Seoul on January 16, 2013, Father Adolfo Nicolás (b.1936), the General of the Jesuit Order, declared during a conference given to the faculty and staff of Sogang 西江 University¹⁷² that the greatest threat to our world was not a lack of knowledge—far more of it is available than anyone or any organization could reasonably manage—but a chronic lack of wisdom and the resulting superficiality

¹⁷⁰ “The OECD report for 2011 showed that the rate of suicide in Korea was 33.3 per 100,000 people, not only the highest among member countries but nearly triple the average of 12.4. ... Korea has consistently reported some of the highest suicide rates, not only among OECD countries but in the world, indicating that there could be serious social problems involved.” Available online at, https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2013/11/116_146676.html (accessed January 30, 2014)

¹⁷¹ There are numerous articles in Korean on the internet claiming that “there are no suicides, but just plain murders (*chasal i öpta, t'asal pakke öpta* 自殺이 없다. 他殺 밖에 없다).”

¹⁷² A Catholic University managed by the Jesuits.

characterizing our materialistic civilization (Nicolás 2014, 3-5). With its impressive GNP though stunningly high suicide rate, Korea constitutes a case in point illustrating the dramatic consequences of an imbalance between knowledge and wisdom. In such a context, writing about Buddhist-Christian encounter does not in any way amount to talking something high and mighty (*paeburŭn sori rŭl hada* 배부른 소리를 하다). On the contrary, by sharing the wisdom developed as a Western Christian during two decades of in-depth encounter with Korean Buddhists, it is a humble attempt on my part to address the urgent crisis of a country with too many restless and joyless people.

This essay is not solely based on the knowledge accumulated as a Jesuit priest specializing in Korean Buddhism and teaching Buddhism as a professor in Sogang University's Religious Studies Department since 2005. It is also the result of the wisdom slowly and painstakingly acquired since 1996, as an active member of the Korean *Sŏndohoe* 禪道會 (Sŏn or Seon Way Association¹⁷³) and, since 2007, as a *pŏpsa* 法師 (dharma teacher), of the same Buddhist organization. As a result of these commitments, I write this essay as a Christian for whom encountering the Buddha, Buddhist *samghas*, and Buddhism, is a way of life, to the point that my religious identity could hardly be defined outside of this dynamic encounter. Consequently, the methodology used in this essay is not confined to the perspective of a single religion or discipline. On the contrary, it is at the crossroads of Buddhist studies, diverse branches of theology, religious studies and mysticism.

After defining Buddhist-Christian dialogue and the conditions for its success in the first section, the second section points to the existence of a huge gap between Buddhists and Christians in Korea and analyzes the reasons behind it, and the third section demonstrates that the existence of the aforementioned gap is easily denied, despite its negative impact on social life. The fourth section introduces the so-called "2011 Aśoka Declaration (2011 *Asyok'a sŏnŏn* 아쇼카 宣言)" to promote interreligious dialogue, a top to down approach led by *Cho'gye-jong* 曹溪宗, the most powerful Korean Buddhist body; and the final section describes the concrete experience of a Catholic alternative community in seeking to achieve the same goal at a grassroots level. The conclusion provides a few guidelines on how to develop more wisdom at the crossroads of the Buddhist-Christian encounter, in view of fostering peace on the

¹⁷³ A Korean lay Buddhist organization belonging to the Imje 臨濟 school (ch. Linji, Jap. Rinzai). <http://seondohoe.org>

Korean peninsula and in North East Asia.

Buddhist-Christian Dialogue: Definition and Conditions

Deeply crouching frogs jump long distances
(*kip'i umch'u'ri nŭn kae'gu'ri ka mŏlli ttwinda*
깊이 움추리는 개구리가 멀리 뿔다).

Interreligious or interfaith dialogue consists of people who belong to different religions talking and listening to one another, in order to learn from each other and develop the wisdom required to live together in harmony. Based on this definition, to be genuine and fruitful, the Buddhist-Christian encounter ought to meet four basic conditions, and these are: (1) A thorough knowledge of one's own tradition (2) Regular and significant interaction between a Christian community and a Buddhist *Samgha* (3) It should be based on a strong doctrinal and scriptural knowledge of one's religious neighbors' traditions (4) It should have an in-depth practice of at least one of the meditation or prayer techniques that tradition teaches. Needless to say, unless such an encounter is a dynamic process taking place over a long period of time (between several years to a lifetime), grounded in humility and patience and accompanied by a clear declaration of never attempting to convert one's religious counterparts, it will be neither genuine nor fruitful.

Those standards are high, and it seems as though few people have matched them in Korea,¹⁷⁴ but unless more people keep striving to meet them, Korea will always lack the number of leading figures needed to teach and spread the positive fruits of interfaith dialogue: a task that could be accomplished through Buddhist and Christian networks and the national education system. Ordinary people obviously have neither the time nor energy to practice interfaith dialogue at such a high level. Accordingly, the training of experts who are willing to popularize the wisdom acquired through their practice, is all the more important. When compared with countries where great pioneers have demonstrated the possibility of such training and sharing,¹⁷⁵ Korea is still seriously

¹⁷⁴ Kil Hŭisŏng, a Protestant, has trained both Pastor Lee Ch'ansu and Sister Ch'oe Hyŏnmin in Buddhist studies. I myself have trained Pastor Ch'oe Yongun.

¹⁷⁵ For instance, in Japan, Enomiya Lassalle (1898-1990), Kakichi Kadowaki (b. 1926), Heinrich Dumoulin (1905-1995), William Johnston (1925-2010), Klaus Riesenhuber (b. 1938) etc. and, in Sri

lagging behind. The next section attempts to explain the reasons why.

Why Are Buddhists and Christians so Far Apart?

Before answering questions such as: What is Korean Buddhism? What is Korean Christianity? How do they interact and why are they far apart? Let us define the limits of the analysis provided in this section.

First, when dealing with Buddhism and Christianity, one should not forget that contemporary Korea's religious landscape is in no way reducible to those two traditions, although they obviously represent a considerable part of it. When including all ancient and new religions, the picture is indeed much bigger. For instance, although only 104,575 out of 47,041,434 Koreans declared Confucianism as their religion in 2005 (Munhwa ch'eyuk kwan'gwangbu 2012, 9, 11), yet, it is hard to deny the still all-pervading influence of the Confucian value system that has shaped the Korean mind throughout the 518 years that composed the Chosŏn 朝鮮 dynasty (1392-1910). Another example is Shamanism, which as the most ancient and deepest religious layer in the Korean psyche keeps thriving in urban as well as rural Korea, even though almost no one declares himself a "believer in Shamanism." Things become even more complex if one considers the religious situation of the Korean peninsula as a whole, and recognizes that the North Korean *Chuch'e sasang* 主體思想 (or Juche, Self-reliance ideology) functions more or less as a state religion (Baker 2008, 145-151, 2013). Above all, it must be underscored that none of the aforementioned systems of belief exist fully independently. On the contrary, they keep interacting in complex and subtle ways, not only as observable phenomena on the surface of society, but also as unfathomable ones deep inside the people's subconscious. Buddhist monks and nuns, male and female Protestant pastors, and Catholic priests and nuns, may try hard at times to establish inviolable boundaries between traditions, but the results of those attempts remain mostly rhetorical, because they never fully work in reality. Put in other words, the Buddhist-Christian encounter in Korea has never been, and will never be, a remote island disconnected from the rest of the Korean religious landscape. Tan'gun's myth will provide a case in point in the third section of this essay.

Second, speaking of "Korean Buddhism" and "Korean Christianity" in general, one obviously risks not meaning much, unless one clearly specifies which

Lanka, Aloysius Pieris (b. 1934).

Buddhist and Christian organizations, or which Buddhist(s) and Christian(s) one is speaking about. In Korea, there are no less than 137 officially registered Buddhist *chongdans* 宗團, and 118 Protestant ones (Munhwa ch'eyuk kwan'gwangbu 2012, 9). Moreover, when taking a closer look at a single Buddhist body like the Cho'gye-jong, one discovers that it is characterized by a considerable diversity of monks, nuns, temples, monasteries etc., and the same is true of large monasteries like Haein-sa 海印寺. Korean Catholicism too is far from monolithic. A quick look at the divergence of views between for instance the centrist *Han'guk Ch'ŏnjugyo chugyo hyŏbŭihoe* 韓國天主教主教協議會 (Korean Catholic Bishops Conference) and the leftist *Chŏnjugyo chŏngŭi sahoe kuhyŏn chŏn'guk sajedan* 天主教正義社會具現全國司祭團 (Catholic Priests Association for the Nationwide Embodiment of Social Justice¹⁷⁶), allows one to understand that diametrically opposed trends of thought coexist within Korean Catholicism, just as they do within the Roman Catholic Church at a worldwide level despite its highly centralized organization. In addition to Catholics and Protestants, let us not forget that Christianity in Korea is also comprised of approximately 65,000 Anglicans who are amazingly dynamic, and at least a few hundred Orthodox Christians,¹⁷⁷ not to mention other Christian minorities. Consequently, for the most part this section only deals with some of the most easily and empirically identifiable tendencies dominating Buddhist-Christian relations in Korea, and it does not encompass the numerous exceptions that could or should deserve more attention in other contexts.

Finally, for a number of reasons including *ch'emyŏn chik'im* 體面 지킴, or keeping face, it seems much easier for a Western Christian to engage in Korean Buddhism than it is for a native Korean Christian. For instance, Koreans often tell me that the mere fact of showing interest in Buddhism as a Christian can easily be interpreted by Buddhists as a lack of confidence in one's own tradition: in my case, Roman Catholicism. This of course may lead some to question the relevance of this essay, since its chief content, that is, interreligious dialogue, could be alien to the concerns of the so-called *han'guk sago pangsik* 思考方式 or Korean mind. Nevertheless, as a foreigner living in Korea, and having spent almost thirty years studying its language and civilization, I consider myself part and parcel of the Korean religious landscape. Accordingly, I do not see any reason not to share through this essay

¹⁷⁶ Catholic Priests' Association for Justice or CPAJ. See www.sajedan.org

¹⁷⁷ Please see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Church_of_Korea, and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Korean_Orthodox_Church (accessed January 30, 2014)

some of my hard won convictions. It is not xenophobic isolation that keeps religions and cultures alive and favors their progress. Rather, it is the free, broad, and dynamic interactions between them.

Having acknowledged the limits of this section's content let us now answer a question that is often asked, namely, "What is Korean Buddhism?" Although there certainly are several ways of addressing this query, in the context of this essay let us say that Korean Buddhism is, above all, a Buddhism that has to encounter Christianity, whether it likes it or not. Conversely, in the context of this essay, Korean Christianity may be defined as "one that has to meet Buddhism," and here again, "whether it likes it or not." However there are two major differences between the situations of the two traditions at stake in this encounter, and unless they are fully taken into account, it is not possible to grasp the complex interactions of Buddhism and Christianity in Korea, and why there is a crucial gap between them.

The first difference is the fact that Buddhists and Christians have divergent understandings of "Christianity." Since the 19th century, Christian missionaries of all denominations and from all over the world freely decided to come to Korea in order to work for its evangelization, that is, for its development and salvation. However, Korean Buddhists, who generally perceive themselves as representatives of a native tradition—as Buddhism was introduced into the Korean peninsula through the Kogu'ryŏ 高句麗 kingdom (BCE 37-CE 668) as early as 372 CE—have never chosen to be in the interreligious situation they find themselves in. On the contrary, it was imposed upon them. Consequently, Buddhists naturally tend to view themselves as victims of history, and to perceive Christians as unwanted rivals if not foreign invaders. To be sure, until the election of President Pak Kŭnhye 朴槿惠 (b. 1952), a long series of Christian presidents aggravated the consciousness of those victims.¹⁷⁸

Although Korea unlike other countries of East Asia has been spared the trauma of direct conquest by Western imperialism, yet the tragic and shameful history of Buddhist-Christian encounter in Sri Lanka¹⁷⁹ for instance is regularly quoted by Korean

¹⁷⁸ The Presbyterian Kim Yŏngsam (1993-1998), the Catholics Kim Taejung (1998-2003) and No Muyŏn (2003-2008), and the Presbyterian Lee Myŏngbak (2008-2013).

¹⁷⁹ "... the domination of European powers, Portugal (ca. 1540-1658), Holland (1658-1795), and finally England (after 1795). The Portuguese attempted to convert the Ceylonese to Catholicism, and to this end pursued a policy of ruthless destruction of monasteries and libraries, pillage of temple treasures and execution of any monk found wearing the yellow robe. After the Portuguese had been expelled, there were no more than five fully ordained monks in the entire island. (Ch'en 1968, 118)"

Buddhists, as an instance of the deep collusion between Western imperialism and Christianity's barbarity.¹⁸⁰ Other routinely invoked examples are the Crusades and the Inquisition. As a consequence of this undeniable and tragic historical inheritance, Christians willing to interact fruitfully with Buddhism need to realize first why Buddhists may be so defensive at times and so aggressive towards others, and they also need to avoid as much as possible any behavior likely to reinforce that defensiveness and/or aggressiveness.¹⁸¹ They should not spare any effort to remain humble and patient, especially when the best of their intentions is misinterpreted. It helps to keep in mind the Korean proverb that states, "He who has been startled at the sight of a snapping turtle is also startled at the sight of the lid of a kettle (*cha'ra rūl po'go nollan kasūm ūn sottukkōng ūl po'go nollanda* 자라를 보고 놀란 가슴은 솥뚜껑을 보고 놀란다)." ¹⁸²

The second difference is that compared to Christian missionaries, the readiness of Korean Buddhists for an encounter with an unfamiliar religion is low. Indeed, after having suffered harsh persecution at the hands of the Chosŏn dynasty's *Ŏkpul sungyu chōngch'aek* 抑佛崇儒政策 (Policy of Repression of Buddhism and Promotion of Confucianism), Korean Buddhists were ill-prepared to pick up the completely unexpected and new challenge of an encounter with Western Christianity. To make things worse, the Japanese colonial rule (*Ilbon kangjōmgi* 日本□占期, 1910-1945), beyond its promises to favor the revival of the Korean Buddhist *saṃgha*, did not do enough to truly improve Buddhism's fate on the peninsula. On the contrary, by strongly exhorting all Korean Buddhist monks to get married and bear children, the Japanese governors laid the ground on which *taech'ōsūng* 帶妻僧 and *bi'gu* 比丘 (married and unmarried monks) would fight mercilessly, over the ownership of fixed Buddhist property. That bloody internecine feud¹⁸³ began after the end of the Korean War (1950-1953), at the instigation of President Rhee Sūngman 李承晩 (1875-1965), a

¹⁸⁰ In order to keep a balanced view of history, let us keep in mind that the *Chuch'e sasang* has done a considerable amount of harm, not only to Buddhism but also to all other religions in North Korea (Senécal 2013b, 13-19).

¹⁸¹ As an example, even though I have tried to present a strongly balanced image of Sŏn Master T'oeong Sōngch'ŏl 退翁性徹 (1912-1993) in *Kayasan ūi ho'rang iūi ch'ech'ui rūl mat'atta*, *T'oeong Sōngch'ŏl, imwōkko?* 가야산의 호랑이의 채취를 말았다. 퇴옹성철, 이뻐고? (Sŏ 2013c, 21-27), I have been accused of defaming him by the *Pōppo sinmun* 法寶新聞 (Lee Chaehyōng 2014, 1).

¹⁸² "Once bitten twice shy."

¹⁸³ *Kor'yuk sangjaeng* 骨肉相爭.

Methodist Protestant who was as much in favor of the purification of Korean Buddhism from its so-called Japanese elements (*woesaek pulgyo ch'ŏnghwa undong* 倭色佛教青華運動), as he was in spreading the Christian Gospel throughout South Korea. The conflict finally ended in 1962 under the pressure of President Pak Chŏnghŭi 朴正熙 (1917-1979), with the foundation of Cho'gye-jong for celibate monks and nuns and T'aego-jong 太古宗 for married ones. From then on Korean Buddhism began to achieve the minimal stability required to start rebuilding itself. Although it could be an exaggeration to say that it underwent a restoration from death (*kisa hoesaeng* 起死回生), it must be acknowledged that by then Korean Buddhism did not enjoy anymore the extraordinary doctrinal diversity and participation in social affairs that had characterized it during the Unified Silla 統一新羅 period (668-935), and, albeit to a lesser extent, during the Koryŏ 高麗 period (918-1392).

Today, Cho'gye-jong's excessive focus on a bibliophobic and iconoclastic conception of *kanhwasŏn* 看話禪 (keyword meditation or KWM)¹⁸⁴ as a unique meditation technique to achieve a full and irreversible awakening (*chŭngo* 證悟), may be viewed as an attempt to compensate for the loss of Korean Buddhism's past glory. It seems even more so when Buddhists claim that they have power to awaken sentient beings, and thus completely liberate themselves and others from *samsāra*; while Christians keep themselves occupied with secondary issues like social work, and the running of hospitals and all kinds of academic institutions from the kindergarten level to higher education, such as Yŏnse 延世 University. Such Buddhist claims are naturally reinforced by the fact that it is not uncommon to hear remarks such as “no one has ever seen an economically developed Buddhist country.”

The dire situation of the Buddhists when Western Christian missionaries moved into the peninsula does not mean to say that the latter were better prepared to encounter Korean Buddhism in a respectful and constructive manner. On the contrary, for the most part Buddhism's weakness reinforced the Christians' sense of superiority. It encouraged the latter to look down upon the former instead of trying to engage them as representatives of an ancient and venerable tradition, from which much wisdom could be learned. Such attitudes could not but contribute to the broadening and deepening of the gap between Buddhists and Christians in Korea.

¹⁸⁴ See “A Critical Reflection on the Chogyo Order's Campaign for the Worldwide Propagation of Kanhwa Sŏn. (Senécal 2011, 76; 78)”

Between Reality and its Denial

Although, upon closer consideration Korean Buddhism and Korean Christianity are divided by a deep and broad gap, which is a result of the aforementioned two major differences between them, on the surface of everyday day life that gap is all too often denied. This is done by taking refuge in an imaginary community called “*u’ri* 우리”, a rather insubstantial kind of “us,” supposedly capable of transcending all differences between people and creeds. This is done to such an extent, that it is not uncommon to hear Koreans who talk about religion say that in the end, they “all boil down to the same (*ta ttok katt’ayo* 다 똑 같아요).” This denial of differences is easily reinforced by the Korean Race Doctrine (*paedal minjok sasang* 倍達民族思想), which claims that Korea is a racially homogeneous nation (*tanil minjok kukka* 單一民族國家) whose inhabitants share the same pure blood (*sunhyōl chuūi* 純血主意), because they have a common ancestor, Tan’gun 檀君 (ca. BCE 2333), and among whom religious conflicts have never taken place. As mentioned previously, the Buddhist-Christian encounter does not exist in splendid isolation. On the contrary, it takes place in a broader religious space involving cultural mechanisms, which tend to deny its importance and urgency.

Against that backdrop Christians say: “I know a Buddhist monk” or “a Buddhist nun.” Buddhists say: “I know a Catholic nun,” or “a priest,” or “a pastor” etc. However, almost always those friendships merely amount to sharing a cup of tea or a meal every once in a while. If suggested to do more, Buddhists and Christians often retort: “Why? Aren’t we already doing enough?” In other words, people do not feel a need for a more elaborate encounter. Meanwhile, if one really pays attention to what happens in everyday life in terms of religious matters, Buddhists, Catholics and Protestants read different newspapers, listen to different radio stations, watch different television channels, and access different websites.

Buddhists and Christians hardly ever marry each other. If they date one another or get married, the odds are they will experience disturbing conflicts that will only cease if the pair takes the decision to divorce or separate, or if one of the two partners—almost always the female—gives up his or her religion in order to convert to the religion of the other.

Buddhists generally believe, as aforementioned, that their tradition is a

uniquely peaceful one, while Christianity has always been and is still a warmonger.¹⁸⁵ As a result, Christian clerics are routinely denied access to Tongguk 東國 University's Buddhist Studies Department, owing to the fear that they might use the knowledge acquired there to undermine the foundations of Korean Buddhism.¹⁸⁶ Those who have specialized in Buddhist studies elsewhere must often be careful to conceal their Christian identity, if they want to access Buddhist circles and Buddhist sources of information.

Generally speaking, it is short-term growth¹⁸⁷ goals that top the priority list of Korean religious organizations, and not the development of genuine interreligious dialogue. According to statistics, Buddhism and Christianity are often at war with one another. For instance, many a Buddhist holds that Buddhism (22.8%) remains the largest religion in Korea, because Catholicism (10.94%) and Protestantism (18.32%) are understood not as parts of the same larger religious entity called Christianity that recognizes Jesus Christ as its founder, but as two distinct religions.¹⁸⁸ This view is reinforced by the widespread but oversimplified belief that Protestants reject Buddhism, while Catholics do not.

In reality, despite the 1965 *Nostra Aetate* declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions of the Second Vatican Council, and despite Cardinal Kim Sunhwan's 金壽煥 (1922-2009) broadmindedness, it seems as though at least some of the Korean Catholic Bishops tend to suspect the motives of diocesan priests who are willing to specialize in Buddhist studies. As a result, the latter almost never fulfill such aspirations, and if they take the risk of persevering in them, they know that their job prospects will not be good.¹⁸⁹ Besides, there are Protestant pastors who display far more open-mindedness toward Buddhism than many a Roman Catholic

¹⁸⁵ Faure's *Bouddhisme et violence* (Buddhism and Violence), and the history of Buddhism in Sri Lanka, Indochina, and Tibet, just to mention a few examples, completely debunk that view (Faure 2008, 7-8, 9-16, 149-156; Ch'en 1968, 123-124, 129, 189-210).

¹⁸⁶ A Catholic female student of Tongguk University once asked me what to do, because Tongguktae's administration required that she convert to Buddhism before becoming a *cho'gyo* 助教 (professors' assistant).

¹⁸⁷ *Kyose kanghwa* 教勢強化.

¹⁸⁸ I have often heard Brother Antony, alias An Sŏnjae 安善財 (b.1942), a member of the Taizé Community in South Korea, say that the kind of ecumenical dialogue encouraged by Brother Roger (1915-2005) was lying hundreds of years ahead of the contemporary preoccupations of Korean Christianity.

¹⁸⁹ Apparently, this is the main reason why two Catholic priests recently dropped out of a doctoral program in Buddhist studies at the Religious Studies Department of Sogang University.

priest, and Professor Kil Hŭisŏng 吉熙星 and his disciple Pastor Lee Ch'ansu's 李贊洙 are well known examples.

After obtaining a PhD in Buddhist studies at Sogang University in 1998,¹⁹⁰ Pastor Lee got a professor's job at Kangnam 江南 University, a Protestant institution. However, his contract was not renewed in 2006, because an EBS television crew had filmed him three years earlier, while making three bows in front of a Buddha statue in Namyang-ju 南楊州 Sujong 水鐘 temple (*taeungjŏn* 大雄殿). It was for the program entitled *Ttollerangsŭ* (тол레랑스: tolerance). By taking part in that program Pastor Lee had intended to demonstrate that not all Protestants were narrow-minded. Fortunately however he was reinstated in September 2010, but only after a trial that lasted four years (Sin Tongju 2011). However, Pastor Lee's open-mindedness remains an exception to the rule.

In reality, Korean Protestant Churches rarely allow such freedom of thought. Judging by the contents of admission interviews to the postgraduate school of Sogang University's Religious Studies Department, we see that some Protestant pastors suffer from the absence of an encounter with Buddhism. During those interviews, they often confess that they are literally "choking to death" in the churches where they work. They complain that they have to preach a theology which does not recognize the value of Buddhism and other religions, and in which they cannot believe anymore. Even though they are eager to open their hearts and minds to the teachings of other traditions, they beg the examiners not to let anybody know that they are applying for a postgraduate program, owing to fear of losing their jobs.

The data presented in this essay until now points to the fact that aside from certain rare exceptions, Korean Buddhists and Korean Christians have yet to take into full account the interreligious situation they are in. Very few of them have really begun to answer to the long lasting challenge that they represent to one another. It certainly is easier to use acrimonious words and make endless criticisms: Buddhists accuse Christians of being "barbaric imperialistic warmongers" and "unenlightened socio-political activists," whose religion should never have been introduced to Korea, while Christians retort by begging God to collapse all Korean Buddhist temples, and declare that Buddhists "run a monkey business"¹⁹¹ and are "idol worshipers destined to

¹⁹⁰ "Sin 神, in'gan 人間 kŭ'ri'go kong 空: K'al Ra'nŏ wa Nisit'ani K'eiji pi'gyo yŏngu."

¹⁹¹ This is because some Buddhist clerics take advantage of the fact that Buddhist believers consider that their offerings (*posi* 布施) go to the Buddha, not to the abbot (*chujŏ* 住持) or to the head

go to hell.”

It could be wiser to humbly look at one’s own failures than to waste time criticizing others. Everybody hides a skeleton in his cupboard,¹⁹² and if one forgets it, one becomes like the dog smeared with excrement who gives a scolding to the dog smeared with chaff (*ttong mud’ŭn kae ka kyŏ mud’ŭn kae rŭl na’mu’randa* 똥 묻은 개가 겨 묻은 개를 나무란다).

It is only when one begins to look beyond the numerous and undeniable existential failures of both Buddhism and Christianity at the noble ideals professed by the Buddha and Christ, that one may start to work with wisdom at bridging the gap between them. It is precisely this kind of wisdom that inspired Emperor Aśoka’s interreligious policy in the 3rd Century BCE.

Cho’gye-jong’s “2011 Aśoka Declaration”

Emperor Aśoka Maurya’s (ca. 304-232 BCE) reign lasted almost four decades (ca. 269-232 BCE) and, with the exception of the British imperial empire, he ruled over the largest empire in Indian history in keeping with the Buddha’s *dhamma*. Among the numerous edicts he ordered engraved on stone pillars and rock walls, three rock wall edicts are dedicated to interfaith relations. These are the 12th edict of a set comprised of 14, which have been found in three locations, namely Girnār, Kālsi and Shāhbāzgarhī¹⁹³ (Hultzsch, E. 1925, 20-22; 41-43; 64-66). Besides minor differences between the three versions of the 12th rock edict, their content is basically the same and displays a remarkable degree of broadmindedness. Here is the English translation, from the Brāhmi language, of Girnār’s 12th rock edict¹⁹⁴:

“King Dēvānāmpriya Priyadarśin is honoring all sects: both ascetics and householders: both with gifts and honors of various kinds he is honoring them.

But Dēvānāmpriya does not value either gifts or honors so (highly) as (this), (viz.)

administrator (*ch’ongmu wŏnjang* 總務院長) of Cho’gye-jong. Those clerics assume that as long as sentient beings confronted by the suffering of birth, age, sickness and death (*sengno pyŏngsag’o* 生老病死苦) will keep making offerings to the Buddha in exchange for his compassion, the system will keep going on no matter how corrupt it may be (*Economist* 2013, 16).

¹⁹² *T’ŏ’rŏsŏ mŏnji ka an na’nŭn sa’ram’i ŏpta* 털어서 먼지가 안 나는 사람이 없다.

¹⁹³ For geographical information on the exact location of these rock walls, see Hultzsch, E. 1925, ix-xii.

¹⁹⁴ A copy of a mechanical reproduction of this inscription can be seen in the appendix at the end of this essay.

that a promotion of the essentials of all sects should take place.

But a promotion of the essentials (is possible) in many ways

But the root is this, viz. guarding (one's) speech, (i.e.) that neither praising one's own sect nor blaming other sects should take place on improper occasions, or (that) it should be moderate in every case.

But other sects ought to be duly honored in every case.

If one is acting thus, he is both promoting his own sect and benefiting other sects.

If one is acting otherwise than thus, he is both hurting his own sect and wronging other sects as well.

For whoever praises his own sect or blames other sect, —all (this) out of devotion to his own sect, (i.e.) with the view of glorifying his own sect, —if he is acting thus, he rather injures his own sect very severely.

Therefore concord alone is meritorious, (i.e.) that they should both hear and obey each other's morals.

For this is the desire of Dēvānāmpriya, (viz.) that all sects should be full of learning, and should be pure in doctrine. (Hultzsch, E. 1925, 21)”¹⁹⁵

Directly inspired by the spirit of this edict, three years ago on August 23, Cho'gye-jong, the most powerful Korean Buddhist body, presented at a press conference the first draft of the 2011 Aśoka Declaration (*Asyok'a sōnōn* 아쇼카 선언). The declaration was intended to promote peaceful interreligious dialogue in order to reduce the many sociopolitical tensions characterizing Korea, especially since the beginning of Lee Myōngbak's (2008-2013) administration (Hong 2011).¹⁹⁶ It clearly stated that religions ought to be an instrument of peace, not one of war (Kim Kapsik 2011). The 2011 Aśoka Declaration undoubtedly is Korean Buddhism's most radical and constructive institutional attempt ever to take up the challenge of Christianity.

¹⁹⁵ Ch'en interprets the content of this edict as follows: “Aśoka exhorted his people to hearken to the teachings of other creeds. He felt that the effects of this would be that although the people would see that the creeds differ from one another in many details, still they would agree on important points. Thus the attention of the people would be drawn to the areas of agreement that would be considered the essentials of all religions. He also felt that by listening to the teaching of another group, one would become learned, possessed of much knowledge, and would be able to evolve his own religious system in a satisfactory manner. Furthermore, knowledge of other creeds would produce restraint in criticizing others, and this would help to promote the sense of unity among the various creeds. (Ch'en 1968, 114)”

¹⁹⁶ In 2008, an essay on Aśoka's interreligious policy, which was highly publicized, seems to have significantly influenced the process leading to the declaration (Sō 2008b, 54-57).



Toböp presenting the 2011 Aśoka Declaration

The declaration was made by Toböp 道法 Sūnim whom Chasŭng 慈乘 Sūnim, Cho'gye-jong's head administrator, appointed *chongdan chasöng kwa soesin ch'ujin kyölsa ponbujang* 宗團自省과 刷新推進結社 本部長 (chief of the office for the community promoting Cho'gye-jong's self-reflection and reformation). Toböp sees interfaith dialogue as a way not only to renew Korean Buddhism but also to reform it completely. As Toböp explains, “Cho'gye-jong is like France before her revolution in 1789, it needs self-reflection and reformation” (Paek 2011). Cho'gye-jong also has to become more socially engaged (Sin Chungil 2012). Most strikingly, the declaration fully acknowledges values of other religions as a means of liberation or salvation, and promises to stop trying to convert non-Buddhists to Buddhism. For good measure, it states that other religions' teachings ought to be respected as much as the Buddha's teachings (Kim Kapsik 2011).



Toböp sending the dove of peace to other religions (Hong 2011)

Not surprisingly, right from the start, the declaration has been met by a considerable amount of resistance from Buddhist circles. Nevertheless, it has been welcomed by other religions in Korea, especially Catholicism, and strongly defended by a number of well-known Buddhist figures. Cho Söngt'aek, for instance, thoroughly and keenly refuted many of the major arguments against the declaration (Cho Söngt'aek 2011). Chi'gwang 智光 Sūnim insisted that the best way to propagate Buddhist faith is not the denial of other religions' values, but the embodiment of the Buddha's way of life (Chi'gwang 2011). One of the main arguments against the declaration is the refusal of the religious pluralism serving as its foundation. The detractors claim that such pluralism is a concept of Christian origin, based on the assumption of God's existence as the origin of all religions including Buddhism, and thus totally incompatible with the Buddhist doctrine of interdependence (*sangho ũijonsöng* 相互依存性). Strangely, the protagonists of this argument appear to fail to see what it entails, namely that Emperor Aśoka's religious pluralism was unorthodox. But as the next section ought to explain the concept of "religious pluralism" is not monolithic for it can be understood in at least three different senses, one of them acceptable to Buddhists. Be that as it may, the declaration certainly is a realistic first step in the right direction.

Fortunately, his opponents have not deterred Toböp. On the contrary, he has kept re-launching the campaign to put in practice the content of the declaration (Sin Chungil 2012; Kim Kyubo 2014). In the long run, the campaign cannot but lead Korean Buddhism to move beyond the shallow understanding of Christianity that at present still characterizes it, and hopefully, it will also encourage a few Buddhists to specialize in Christian studies. That may sound difficult, but it certainly is not impossible considering the precedent established by the Jesuit Aloysius Pieris (b. 1934) in Sri Lanka. He has financially and morally supported the theological studies of a Sri Lankan *bhikṣu* at the Ateneo de Manila. The result is not a new Christian convert at all, it is a *bhikṣu* fully open, not only to Christianity but also to other religions, in conformity with the best of Aśoka's spirit of wisdom as it is displayed in the rock edicts on interfaith relations.

Bridging the Gap: a Pioneering Experience

“The wind goes where its pleasure takes it, and the sound of it comes to your ears, but you are unable to say where it comes from and where it goes: so it is with everyone whose birth is from the Spirit. (John 3:8)

This last section describes, from the viewpoint of a participant-observer and mostly from a theological perspective, an alternative community of lay Catholic Christians living in Korea, composed of both Koreans and foreigners. These Catholics, even as they are deeply attracted by the teaching of the Buddha and want to learn about it in depth and put it in practice, albeit paradoxically firmly intend to remain Christians, that is, fully Christ-centered. In other words, they neither claim to be “Buddhist Christians” nor intend to start a new religion.¹⁹⁷ If ever they evoke “multiple religious belonging,” it definitely is as a “Christ-centered” one.

The community started informally in January 2011 with four members including myself, during an eight-day silent Sōn retreat in a Franciscan contemplative monastery in Kangwōn 江原 province. Today, the community has a core of ten members and more than forty affiliated ones from five different countries. It is also comprised of three physically disabled people in quest of a spirituality adapted to their needs. The community is fully international. It accepts all people regardless of their gender, age, academic background, and social condition, as long as they can share its ideals. The core members, according to the financial resources of each one, share all expenses. Among its goals, the community also aims at helping Buddhist-Christian couples experiencing difficulties staying together, because of religious differences.

Once a week, all who are able to do so meet in Toljōn-ni 돌田理,¹⁹⁸ a tiny mountain village located near the eastern border of Kyōnggi 京畿 province, and there they meditate, study Buddhism and Christianity, do research on Buddhist-Christian encounter, and practice organic farming.

These Christians acknowledge that Buddhism is a tradition half a millennium older than theirs, that is, one that did not wait for the advent of Christ in Palestine, and founded by the Buddha in Indian Antiquity. They make a clear distinction between the ideals taught by the Buddha and Christ, and the way those ideals have often been misappropriated by human nature throughout history. In other words, they remain undeterred by the all too often disappointing existential aspects of Buddhism and Christianity, in Korea and elsewhere in the world. On the contrary, they are eager to let

¹⁹⁷ That is precisely what Mun Sōnmyōng 文鮮明 (1920-2012) did as the founder of the T’ongilgyo 統一教.

¹⁹⁸ Alt. Tojōnni: Stony Field village.

Buddha's wisdom complement and enrich the wisdom of Christ.¹⁹⁹ They know that any religion has to be constantly reinterpreted, both in conformity with its tradition and in answer to the signs of the times.²⁰⁰ For them, the possibility of encountering the Buddha, Buddhists, and Buddhism in depth is not only a unique opportunity to grow spiritually, but also an indispensable duty.

Fully aware that the Buddha and Christ never met on Earth, they nevertheless let these two famous religious founders and their teachings meet in their hearts and minds. For good measure, as a *sitz im leben* they are in constant touch with the Sōndohoe.²⁰¹ These Christians also practice Sōn 禪²⁰² on a regular basis, both on their own and together, once a week, as a one day retreat.²⁰³ Sōn practice includes two full-fledged courses of *kongans* 公案 (jap. *kōan*), a Buddhist and a Christian one (Senécal 2008a, 369-377; 2010, 211-213). These Christians read thoroughly Theravāda²⁰⁴ and Mahāyāna²⁰⁵ sūtras and systematically study Buddhist doctrine, and if possible, they travel to Buddhist holy places in India, Nepal, China, Japan, Tibet etc. However, as an irrevocable principle, they must invest as much time and energy to understand more in depth the Christian tradition, as they invest time and energy to discover Buddhism. Studying the Bible, spirituality, and theology as well as saying mass and going on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land are part and parcel of their lives. As an overall result of the practice of this “middle path,” the more those Catholics encounter the Buddha, Buddhists and Buddhism, the more dedicated Christians they become.

A dedicated Christian is one who strives to become one with God through Christ and in the Holy Spirit. That requires that one accepts to lay down one's life for the salvation of All, whether creatures or sentient beings, creation or myriads of Buddhist worlds etc. To be sure, it is an ideal compatible with Mahāyāna's soteriology, that is, a doctrine of salvation for all. Accordingly, it proposes a mystical journey based

¹⁹⁹ See “*Qoheleth* and the *Diamond Sutra*, Biblical and Buddhist Wisdom” (Senécal 2013a, 250).

²⁰⁰ That is, the so-called hermeneutical circle composed of: the body of literature of the tradition at stake, the socio-historical context in which that body has to be reinterpreted, and the community who does its reinterpretation.

²⁰¹ See note 173.

²⁰² Sometimes, also the Vipassāna meditation. I have already written extensively on the many risks and difficulties involved in Christian Zen practice (Senécal 1998, 25-68; 2005, 99-100; 2009, 121-124).

²⁰³ Six hours every Friday, starting at 4:45 A.M. and finishing with a mass at 2:00 P.M.

²⁰⁴ *Dhamma-cakkappavattana-sutta*, *Kaccāyanagotta-sutta*, *Aggañña-sutta* etc.

²⁰⁵ *Diamond Sūtra*, the *Platform Sūtra* or the *Vimalakīrti Nirdeśa Sūtra* etc.

on a new spirituality, a new Christology with a strong pneumatology, and a theology of religions adapted to its needs. At the core of this spiritual journey, beyond the enormous historical and doctrinal complexity of the Buddhist and the Christian traditions, one may find root symbols of full awakening: a lotus blossom as an expression of total freedom from disorderly attachment,²⁰⁶ and a cross expressing Christ's sacrifice for the salvation of All.

Essentially, this spirituality is one of dialogue, characterized by both intra-ecclesial and trans-ecclesial ecumenism. The former corresponds to dialogue with other Christian denominations, the latter to dialogue with Buddhism and other religions. Going back to the core of Christianity and other religions renders dialogue much easier, because it primarily focuses on the essentials and not on what is secondary. It is like looking at the main root of a tree, instead of looking at its branches and leaves. Dialogue with Buddhism and other religions ought to be intra-religious as well as inter-religious. Intra-religious dialogue takes place within one's heart and mind in relation to the teachings of the religion encountered, without the need to be in touch with its members. Inter-religious dialogue requires, on the contrary, regular and qualified contacts with those members.

At all levels, dialogue is based on a paradoxical approach, which acknowledges both the relative and the absolute nature of one's religion. In other words, one recognizes that from the viewpoint of the history of religions, one's religion is merely one among many. At the same time however, one does not renounce the absolute significance of one's own beliefs as a source of ultimate meaning in one's own life. Such a position has nothing to do with the "-ism" of relativism, because it is not disconnected from real life. On the contrary, it unfolds right in the middle of one's concrete existence. Metaphorically speaking, it is like one's mother tongue. Although it cannot be but one among countless human languages, it nevertheless is the language in which one's brain has been and remains formatted. As a *sine qua non*, this dialogical approach requires that one stop making value judgments like "Buddhism is superior to Christianity," or "Christianity is superior to Buddhism." Such value judgments not only render inter-religious dialogue impossible, they also transform it into a masquerade.

²⁰⁶ Following authorities in Buddhist studies like Kalupahana, Magnin and others, I assume that the four noble truths constitute the ubiquitous core of all forms of Buddhism (Kalupahana 1992, 237-239; Magnin 2003, 7-13). Nevertheless, I know that the Buddha in the *Lotus Sūtra* exhorted his disciples to forego him and the four noble truths, including the eightfold path.

Christology, directly inspired by the key Buddhist concept of “awakening,” is centered on Christ as the completely enlightened²⁰⁷ one.²⁰⁸ That is because, from a Christian perspective, Jesus of Nazareth, from the time of his baptism until his last breath, lived in the fullness of the Holy Spirit and was entirely focused on the accomplishment of God’s will, to such an extent that according to the New Testament, the Roman centurion who supervised his (Jesus’) crucifixion was so impressed by the way he died, that he called him “Son of God,”²⁰⁹ which is the highest achievable degree of perfection in the Roman world. Going one step further, early Christianity, sometimes but not always, added the Greek definite article ‘o’²¹⁰ in front of this title, thus shifting from “Son of God” to the much more compelling “*the* Son of God.”²¹¹ Interestingly, in Luke’s Gospel the centurion says: “Certainly, this human being was *a righteous man*,”²¹² a title also corresponding to one of the highest possible praises in Greco-Roman Antiquity. According to Christian tradition, all these titles point to the greatest possible proximity of Jesus of Nazareth to God, that is, to ultimate truth, to the point of having become one with It, or with Him, because Christians understand ultimate truth as a personal God. It is precisely Jesus’ oneness with God defined as ultimate truth that can be understood as a fully and irreversibly awakened state of mind.

Be that as it may, interpreted from a Buddhist perspective, Jesus’ baptism as described by Matthew, Mark, and Luke’s Gospel,²¹³ may well be understood as a “sudden enlightenment sudden practice awakening experience (*tono tonsu* 頓悟頓修²¹⁴),” that is, a mystical experience that irreversibly transforms one into an entirely new human being.²¹⁵ As the *Platform Sūtra* says, after fully awakening one’s behavior

²⁰⁷ *Myōng* 明 (light, illumination, knowledge, understanding, the wisdom of enlightenment, enlightenment etc.), as the antonym of *mu’myōng* 無明 (ignorance, delusion, folly), that is, the root cause of transmigration, may well be used as a synonym of full awakening comprised of understanding awakening (*haeo* 解悟), and realization awakening (*chūngo* 證悟). Consequently, in the context of this paper I do not hesitate to use the word “enlightened” as a synonym of “awakened.”

²⁰⁸ According to William Johnston, if Christianity had spread towards the East instead of the West, it would have evolved into a “religion of awakening” (Johnston, 1970, 71).

²⁰⁹ Matthew 27:54; Mark 14:39

²¹⁰ Pronounced *ho*.

²¹¹ See, for instance, John 1:34, 49.

²¹² Luke 23:47

²¹³ Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 4:21-22

²¹⁴ See *Liuzu tanjing* 六祖壇經, T 2008.48.358c28 and *Zongjing-lu* 宗鏡錄 T 2016.48.626b17.

²¹⁵ This does not entail that Jesus was not awakened until he made that mystical experience, which would be contrary to orthodox Christology. It means that he then became fully aware, all at once, of what he had always been since before the beginning of the world. See John 1:1.

becomes a Buddha's behavior (*taeo ... ihu ... nyōmnyōm suhaeng purhaeng* 大悟²¹⁶ ... 已後 ... 念念修行佛行²¹⁷). According to the New Testament, the authenticity of Jesus' awakening is attested to by the fact that he remained invulnerable to temptation, not only during the forty days that he spent in the desert immediately after his baptism,²¹⁸ but also—since he spent the three years of his public life entirely focused on God's will—until the very moment of his death on the cross. Seen from the perspective of a functional comparison, these facts may be understood as a Christian equivalent of a Buddhist awakening certification (*in'ga* 印可²¹⁹). But in Jesus' case the certification did not come from a master, but from the Christian community, just as the authentication of the Buddha Śākyamuni's awakening did not come from a master but from the early Buddhist community. There are major differences, however, between the content of Jesus' awakening and that of the Buddha. By God the Father's revelation in the Holy Spirit, Jesus became awakened to the fact that he was the Beloved Son. Siddhārtha Gautama saw his past lives, and all sentient beings transmigrating, and understood the cause of transmigration, that is, the twelve links of dependent arising (*sibiji yōn'gi* 十二支緣起).

Moreover, as a fully enlightened man, Jesus can be understood as a master leading his apostles and disciples toward full awakening, that is, life in the Spirit understood as a total surrender to God and thus characterized by the gifts²²⁰ and the fruits of the Holy Spirit.²²¹ According to the New Testament, it is possible because God “chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blemish before him in love.”²²² Therefore according to this perspective, we originally also are “sons of God” or “children of God”, as Jesus Christ was (the) Son of God. Such is the foundation of the *imago dei* (image of God) doctrine developed by the Fathers of the Church. Within the Christian tradition, it functions in a way that may strongly evoke the functioning of the Buddha nature (*pulsōng* 佛性) within Mahāyāna Buddhism. In both traditions, the ultimate goal of practice consists in becoming what one has always been (*ponsōng* 本性), that is, what one originally was: either a Buddha or a Son of God.

²¹⁶ *Taeo* 大悟 means great enlightenment, the destruction of all duality-based illusions (DDB 2013).

²¹⁷ See T 2007.48.343a4-7.

²¹⁸ Matthew 4:1-17; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13

²¹⁹ “Approval of the enlightenment of the disciple by the teacher. An acknowledgment of the disciple's ability to be a teacher in her/his own right (DDB 2010).”

²²⁰ Wisdom, understanding, knowledge, piety, fear of the Lord (wonder and awe), counsel, fortitude

²²¹ Love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control

²²² Ephesians 1:4

“Become who you are!” as the Greek philosophers used to say. But for Christians, one becomes what one originally was “through Christ, with Christ, and in Christ” acknowledged as a unique mediator between God and creation in the Holy Spirit. Buddhists never say that they achieve Buddhahood “through the Buddha, with the Buddha, and in the Buddha.” But as Jesus the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head, so must his apostles, his disciples, and all his followers (Matthew 8, 20; Luke 9, 58).

At this point, Christians must move from Christology to pneumatology, that is, the study of the biblical doctrine of the Holy Spirit. All too often Christians are literally stuck in Christology, to the detriment of a fully awakened life in the Holy Spirit. They do not pay attention to what Jesus, their master, told them: “I tell you the truth: It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter (Holy Spirit) will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send him unto you.”²²³ It is here, very precisely, that the practice of Sōn 禪 can play an invaluable role in helping Christians to move from the so-called *via positiva* (positive way or kataphatic path) to the *via negativa* (negative way or apophatic path). Indeed, Sōn may be understood as a radical form of apophatism that refuses all forms of idolatry.

Moving from the positive way to the negative merely consists in letting Christ, God and everything else go. Let Christ and God and everything else come back if they want, as they want, and when they want. They may never come back, to be sure, but unless one accepts this risk, one will never achieve the enlightened life in the Spirit, which characterizes Christian awakening (Senécal 2002, 83-84). This is not unlike what Linji Yixuan 臨濟義玄 (? -866) meant as a Chan 禪 master when he made the famous statement: “If you see the Buddha(s), kill the Buddha(s); if you see the Patriarchs, kill the Patriarchs (*kyōnbul salbul kyōnjo saljo* 見佛殺佛 見祖殺祖²²⁴). In his own way, in all his writings, John of the Cross (1542-1591), keeps repeating the same over and over again. To put it bluntly, it amounts to saying: “If you see Christ, kill Christ, if you see God, kill God; because the Christ that you see is not Christ, because the God that you see is not God.” Ultimately, Christ and God will eternally be beyond what we human beings can perceive with our sense organs and our mind. That is why Eckhart (1260-1328) talked about the inexpressible “deity” beyond the Trinity, and why John of the Cross kept repeating “*nada, nada ... (nothing, nothing ...)*.”

As the *Diamond Sūtra* says, the Buddha is not “the Buddha,” that is the reason

²²³ John 16:7

²²⁴ T. 1985.47.498b10-11.

why he is called “the Buddha.”²²⁵ The same can be said of Christ and God: Christ is not “Christ,” and God is not “God”; that is why they are called “Christ” and “God.” In other words, let us let Christ go if the time has come to let him go; let us let Christ take care of himself and come back if he wants. Let’s also let God go, take care of himself, and come back if he wants. In the end, there is no other way to become one with God, through Christ, in the Holy Spirit. That is because the existence of Christ and God does not depend on human thoughts. Theology and spiritual life do not consist in unceasingly trying to take hold of Christ and God, but in letting God, through Christ and in the Holy Spirit take hold of oneself. The resulting theology at the crossroads of the Buddhist-Christian encounter is an “inchoate” one:

“A theology of insights wrenched out of intense practice, engaged in the world, hesitant to reach final verbal statement, always driving one back toward the deepest core of what it means to be human. It refuses to rush toward conceptual clarity, for the great and constant danger of religions is to grasp in words what one has hardly even begun to experience in one’s innards. ... This is a groaning theology, one that struggles through hours of practice and sitting to express what clear words often hide. (Habito 2004, xiii²²⁶)”

The theology of religion best adapted to this inchoate theology is a “monistic pluralism,” not an “inclusive pluralism,” or a “pluralistic pluralism.” “Monistic pluralists” recognize a common origin, albeit one that is eternally unknowable, to all religions and other phenomena. Metaphorically speaking, a monistic pluralism is like different paths leading to a summit so enshrouded in clouds that no one has ever been able to see it clearly. “Inclusive pluralists” ultimately reduce the summit of the mountain to the core of their system of belief, thus imposing it on all others. “Pluralistic pluralists” do not admit the ultimate oneness of all that is, thus rendering dialogue with others impossible. To be sure, judging from the content of his rock edicts on interfaith dialogue, Emperor Aśoka was an awakened monistic pluralist. The detractors of the

²²⁵ The Tathāgata said: “All dharmas are the Buddha-dharma. Subhuti! What is called ‘all dharmas’ is not ‘all dharmas’; therefore it is called ‘all dharmas’. 如來說一切法皆是佛法。須菩提。所言一切法者。即非一切法。是故名一切法 » (T. 235.8.751b1-3).

²²⁶ *Living Zen, Living God*, Habito’s book title, has obviously been inspired by Thich Nhat Hanh’s *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (Thich 1995).

2011 Aśoka Declaration apparently ignore the possibility of defining different kinds of religious pluralisms. As a result, they seem to mistakenly understand Aśoka's "monistic pluralism" as a Christian inspired "inclusive pluralism," that is, incompatible with the possibility of a fair Buddhist-Christian encounter on the Korean peninsula.

The prologue of John's Gospel may serve, for instance, as a scriptural grounding for the monistic pluralist perspective: "All things came into existence through *him*, and without *him* nothing was." But monistic pluralist Christians accept that the *him* identified with Jesus Christ and the Eternal Word of God by Christian tradition, can be understood otherwise: as the Tao 道 by Taoists, as Heaven by Confucians, as the Brahman by Hindus, as Allah by Muslims, as the Buddha Nature by Buddhists, etc.

Monistic pluralism offers the unique advantage of leaving wide open the possibility of interreligious dialogue. That is because although the summit of the mountain eternally remains enshrouded in the "cloud of unknowing," the numerous paths that lead to it can communicate with one another. In time and space, Buddhism remains a Buddha centered system of belief, and Christianity remains a Christ centered one. But crossing over to the Buddhist path and returning to one's own Christian one and vice-versa, without having to become a convert, is an open possibility.²²⁷ One may go up to the mysterious top of the mountain that transcends all paths, but no one can dwell on it forever; sooner or later one should return to Earth. But after having gone to the summit, without having to renounce to the unique beauty of one's own path, one has become more aware of the unity of all that is, and thus realizes more fully how close and beautiful all paths ultimately are. As an awakened monistic pluralist ruling over the Mauryan Empire, Emperor Aśoka was probably quite accustomed to going to the top of the mountain and coming back to state affairs.

Emperor Aśoka and Korea's International Standing

As early as the third century BCE, Emperor Aśoka Maurya's rock edicts taught that in order to be "religious" one also had to be "interreligious." That is because the paradigmatic Cakkavatti²²⁸ understood, as Hick (1922-2012), Cantwell Smith

²²⁷ Unless someone felt so attracted by another tradition that he also felt at least once the desire to convert to it, one cannot pretend that he has really encountered that tradition.

²²⁸ Literally, a "wheel-rolling world ruler," that is, "a raja of rajas" or a universal monarch.

(1916-2000), and many others also have in the 20th century, that “to know only one religion is to know none” (Caps1995, 267-268). Unfortunately, when examined in the light of this sophisticated understanding of interreligious encounter, until now Korea has been lagging behind. At the crossroads of Buddhism and Christianity, the land of the Morning Calm’s considerable interreligious potential, as a source of wisdom capable to generate joy and peace, has remained practically untapped.

Against that backdrop, the Cho’gye-jong’s 2011 Aśoka Declaration represents a remarkable source of hope, not only for Korean Buddhists and Christians but also for members of all other religions. For men and women of good will, the time may have come to acknowledge the failures of the past, and to show the world that Korea can be as good at interfaith dialogue as it is at producing dramas, oil tankers, smart phones, pop music etc.

The 2011 Aśoka Declaration is an invitation for Buddhists and Christians to acknowledge one another, not as enemies but as honest rivals, if not as partners having much to learn from each other and to accomplish together. This task can be facilitated by the fact that many a Christian is deeply attracted by Buddhism, and that Buddhists must pick up the challenge represented by Christianity.

But good intentions alone will not suffice to the task, for ultimate meaning resides in practice and not in theory. Accordingly, unless enlightened personalities and alternative communities play a prophetic role on both sides, any changes will forever remain superficial. Ultimately it belongs to the Korean Ministry of Education to make the practice of interfaith dialogue part and parcel of a national policy, offering a strong religious education to all youngsters. This, is all the more important, in a country which cannot escape the question of reunification with North Korea. Experts agree that it will happen in one way or another for it is just a matter of time, and that South Korea has to get ready for it (Senécal 2013b, 37-39). Common sense suggests that religions in South Korea ought to head toward, and get ready for reunification together.

It is well known that Korea’s Presidential Council on Nation Branding invests a considerable amount of money in order to allow the country to enjoy an international image corresponding to its economic clout. Favoring the development of the

Buddhist-Christian encounter could well play into the sense of that policy. One of Paul Knitter's bestsellers, which has been translated into Korean (Knitter 2011), is entitled *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian* (Knitter 2009). If many Korean Christians could say the same, and if many Korean Buddhists could say: "Without Christ I could not be a Buddhist," Korean Buddhists and Korean Christian would become the best of friends in the world. As such, they would also rank among the best Buddhists and best Christians on Earth. This, as a result, would certainly contribute to the upgrading of Korea's international prestige, but above all, it would definitely help in transforming Korea into a place brimming with wisdom, joyful and peaceful, a nation where people desire to live.

- 1 (A) देवानंपिये पियदसि राजा सवपासंडानि च पवजितानि च घरस्लानि च पूजयति दानेन च विवाधाय च पूजाय पूजयति ने
- 2 (B) न तु तथा दानं व पूजा व देवानंपियो मंजते यथा किति सारवढी अस सवपासंडानं (C) सारवढी तु बहुविधा
- 3 (D) तस तु इदं मूलं य वचिगुती किति आत्मपासंडपूजा व परपासंडगरहा व नो भवे अपकरणमिह लहुका व अस
- 4 तमिह तमिह प्रकरणे (E) पूजेतया तु एव परपासंडा तेन तन प्रकरणेन (F) एवं करं आत्मपासंडं च वढयति परपासंडस च उपकरोति
- 5 (G) तदंजथा करोतो आत्मपासंडं च छणति परपासंडस च पि अपकरोति (H) यो हि कोचि आत्मपासंडं पूजयति परपासंडं व गरहति
- 6 सचं आत्मपासंडभतिया किति आत्मपासंडं दीपयेम इति सो च पुन तथ कारतो आत्मपासंडं वाढतरं उपहनाति (I) न समवायो एव साधु
- 7 किति अजमंस धमं सुणारु च सुसुंसेर च (J) एवं हि देवानंपियस इहा किति सवपासंडा बहुसुता च असु कलाणागमा च असु
- 8 (K) ये च तच तत प्रसंना तेहि वतथं (L) देवानंपियो नो तथा दानं व पूजां व मंजते यथा किति सारवढी अस सर्वपासंडानं (M) वहका च एताय
- 9 अथा व्यापता धंममहामाता च इथीमूखमहामाता च वचभूमीका च अजे च निकाया (N) अयं च एतस फल य आत्मपासंडवढी च होति धंसस च दीपना

Girnar's 12th rock edict* (See Hultsch 1925, 20.)

References

5. Baker, Don. 2008. *Korean Spirituality*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
6. —. 2013. "Is North Korea a Religious Country? Juche and the Definition of Religion." Paper presented at the Institute for the Study of Religion, Sogang University, Seoul, June 18, 2013.
7. Caps, Walter H. 1995. *Religious Studies. The Making of a discipline*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
8. Ch'en, Kenneth K. S. 1968. *Buddhism, the Light of Asia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
9. Chi'gwang. 2011. "Muhanhan kamdong mani chönböb ül sönggong üro ikkūnda

- 무한한 감동만이 전법을 성공으로 이끈다.” *Pöppo Sinmun*, September 27. <http://www.beopbo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=67473> (accessed January 24, 2014)
10. Cho, Söngt’aek. 2011. “Kidokkyo pip’anha myönsö talma kaja nün kön’ga基督教 批判하면서 답아가자는 건가.” *Pöbppo Sinmun*, September 15. <http://www.beopbo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=67316> (accessed January 24, 2014)
 11. *Economist*. 2013. “Buddhism in South Korea, Monkey Business.” October 5. p. 16. <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21587267-it-not-all-sweetness-and-light-big-gest-buddhist-order-monkey-business> (accessed January 31)
 12. Faure, Bernard. 2008. *Bouddhisme et violence*. Paris: Le Cavalier Bleu.
 13. Habito, Ruben L. F. 2004. *Living Zen, Living God*. Boston: Wisdom Publications.
 14. Hong, Ch’ansik. 2011. “[Hoegsöl susöl / Hongch’ansik] Asyoka sönön [橫說豎說 / 홍찬식] 아쇼카 宣言.” *Tonga Ilbo*, August 24. <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20110824/39755909/1> (accessed February 6, 2014)
 15. Hultsch, E. 1925. *Inscriptions of Asoka*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
 16. Johnston, William. 1970. *The Still Point. Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism*. New York: Fordham University Press.
 17. Kalupahana, David J. 1992. *A History of Buddhist Philosophy, Continuities and Discontinuities*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.
 18. Kim, Kapsik. 2011. “Chogye-jong ‘ta’rün chonggyo kaejong haryönün p’o’gyo an k’etta 曹溪宗 다른 宗教 改宗하려는 布教 않겠다 *Tonga Ilbo*, August 24. <http://news.donga.com/3/all/20110823/39754591/1> (accessed February 6, 2014)
 19. Kim, Kyubo. 2014. 7) 2014년 1월 27일: “Putta ro salja’ süllö’gan ūro kyölsa taejunghwa maejin ‘붓다로 살자’ 슬로건으로 結社 大衆化 邁進.” *Pöbppo Sinmun*, September 27. <http://www.beopbo.com/news/articleView.html?idxno=80426> (accessed February 6, 2014)
 20. Knitter, Paul. 2009. *Without Buddha I could not be a Christian*. New York: One world Publications.
 21. —. 2011. *Putta öpsi na nün kürisüdo in il su öpsötta* 붓다 없이 나는 그리스도인 일 수 없었다. Chöng Kyöngil, Lee Ch’angyöp tr. Seoul: külliö maindü.
 22. Lee, Chaehyöng. 2014. “Sögangdae Sö Myöngwön sinbu, Söngch’öl sünim p’yömh wue nollan 서강대 서명원 신부, 성철 스님 폼훼 논란.” *Pöppo Sinmun* 法寶新聞, January 15.
 23. Magnin, Paul. 2003. *Bouddhisme, unité et diversité, Expériences de libération*. Paris

s: Cerf.

24. Paek, Söngho. 2011. “Cho’gye-jong i hyöngmyöng chön p’ü’angsü wa katt’a nün y e’gi rül haeyo, t’umyöng heya chiyo 조계종이 혁명 전 프랑스 같다는 얘기를 해요, 투명해야죠.” *Chungang Ilbo*, September 1. http://article.joins.com/news/article/article.asp?total_id=6101248&cloc=olink|article|default (accessed February 6, 2014)
25. Senécal, Bernard. 1998. *Jésus le Christ à la rencontre de Gautama le Boudha, Identité chrétienne et bouddhisme*. Paris: Cerf.
26. —. 2002. “Une retraite ‘Zazen-Exercices spirituels’.” *Cahiers de spiritualité ignatiennne* 102: 75-86.
27. —. 2005. “Prière chrétienne et méditation bouddhique.” *Cahiers de spiritualité ignatienne* 114 : 93-106.
28. —. 2008a. “Vers une pratique des kōans bibliques. Le *Passe sans porte* de l’évangile de Luc. *Recherches de Science Religieuse* : Tome 96, 2008/2, 369-379.
29. —. 2008b. See Sö, Myöngwön.
30. —. 2009. “Neurological Underpinnings of Zen Meditation and Christian Orison.” In Swanson 2009: 121-138.
31. —. 2010. “Kanwhasön 看話禪 üi söyang chöndal kwa kü suyong: ipsil chedo rül入室制度 chungsim ũro (The Transmission & Reception of Hwadu Investigation Meditation) in the West: a Research Centered on the Master-Disciple Encounter System).” *Han’guk Sönhak* 26: 181-215.
32. —. 2011. “A Critical Reflection on the Chogye Order’s Campaign for the Worldwide Propagation of Kanhwa Sön.” *Journal of Korean Religions*, vol. 2, no. 1: 75-105.
33. —. 2013a. “Qohéleth et le Sūtra du diamant. Sagesses biblique et bouddhique (*Qohéleth and the Diamond Sutra*, Biblical and Buddhist Wisdom),” *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, Tome 101, 2013/2 : 233-250.
34. —. 2013b. “Buddhism in the Two Koreas: North-South Interactions.” *Journal of Korean Religions*, vol. 4, no. 2: 9-50.
35. —. 2013c. See Sö, Myöngwön
36. Sin, Chungil. 2012. “2 ki hwajaeng wi sahoe sok ũro türö kaja 2 기 화쟁위 ‘사회속으로 들어가자’.” *Hyöndae Pulgyo*. <http://www.google.co.kr/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCUQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.hyunbulnews.com%2Fnews%2FarticleView.html%3Fid%3D272580&ei>

=cp7zUoiDrSU0QXbh4HACw&usg=AFQjCNGtyvnjdeWTpldWNFeoyhVAEZA
&sig2=yDg4mdapiCuGmdWSCKrjQg&bvm=bv.60799247,d.d2k&cad=rjt (access
ed February 6, 2014)

37. Sin, Tongju. 2011. “Han’guk chök t’ollerangsü ūi kil (2) t’ollerangsü ka p’iryohan chonggyogyo 한국적 톨레랑스의 길(2) 톨레랑스가 필요한 종교계,” *Se’gye Ilbo* 世界日報, January 3. <http://www.segye.com/content/html/2011/08/02/2011080203569.html> (accessed January 30, 2014)
38. Sō, Myōngwōn. “Chonggyo kan hwahae ūi silmari rül ch’ajasō 宗教間 和解의 실마리를 찾아서.” *Pulgyo Pyōngnon* 37: 53-67.
39. —. 2013ab. See Senécal, Bernard.
40. —. 2013c. *Kayasan ūi ho’rang iūi ch’ech’ui rül mat’atta, T’oeong Sōngch’öl, I’mwōkko?* (伽倻山の 호랑이의 體臭를 맡았다. 退翁性徹, 이뵈고?). Seoul: Sōgang Taehakkyo Ch’ulp’anbu.
41. Swanson, Paul L. ed. 2009. *Brain Science and Kokoro*. Nanzan: Nanzan Institute for Religion and Culture.
42. Thich, Nhat Hanh. 1995. *Living Buddha, Living Christ*. New York: Riverhead Books.

Websites

Bible on the Web (<http://bibleontheweb.com>)

Catholic Priests’ Association for Justice or CPAJ (www.sajedan.org)

Digital Dictionary of Buddhism (<http://buddhism-dict.net/ddb/index.html>)

Economist (<http://www.economist.com/news/asia>)

Korea Time (<https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation>)

Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (<http://www.mcst.go.kr>)

Seon (Sōn 禪) Way Association (<http://seondohoe.org>)

Sogang University (<http://www.sogang.ac.kr>)

**A Radical Orthopraxis of Theravada Buddhism:
Buddhadāsa's Dhammic Essentialism**

By

In-gun Kang, SJ

**Bhikkhu
Buddhadāsa**



**The Servant
of the Buddha**

Introduction

This paper is the summary of the first part of my doctoral thesis,²²⁹ in which I construct a creative Buddhist-Christian dialogue and action, appropriate to the Theravada countries of modern Asia, through a comparative analysis of two models of

²²⁹ In-gun Kang, S. J., “Buddhist-Christian Dialogue and Action in the Theravada Countries of Modern Asia: A Comparative Analysis of the Radical Orthopraxis of Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa and Aloysius Pieris,” unpublished Ph.D. thesis (London: Heythrop College, University of London, 2012).

radical orthopraxis: Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa's Dhammic essentialist praxis for human liberation and Aloysius Pieris' dialogical integrationist action for justice and peace. My own neologism "radical orthopraxis" indicates how these two thinkers go back to the roots of their respective religious traditions, in search of the inspirational principles to guide their liberating praxis; and how they also strive to penetrate into the root problems of their contemporary society, in the light of the praxis-oriented orthodox perspectives of their respective religious traditions.²³⁰ This paper focuses on Buddhadāsa's radical orthopraxis, presenting his approach as *Dhammic Essentialism*²³¹ which returns to the heart of the early Buddhist sources in order to retrieve the purity and integrity of the original Buddhadhamma,²³² and applies the Dhamma principles to the contemporary needs of socio-spiritual transformation in the rapidly changing society of modern Thailand. It reflects on three points of Buddhadāsa's Dhammic essentialist thought and praxis: (1) His hermeneutical theory of two levels of language (*phasa khon* and *phasa tham*) and doctrinal reinterpretation. (2) His theory of the void mind (*chit-wāng*), a liberative spirituality for personal transformation. (3) His political theory of Dhammic Socialism, which promotes Buddhist engagement with the various problems of modern Thai society. Finally, I will provide concluding remarks on Buddhadāsa's contribution to the interreligious transformative spirituality and praxis for peace and justice in the globalized capitalist world.

Dhammic Essentialist Hermeneutic

Buddhadāsa was keen on retrieving the heart of Buddhism, the pristine teachings of the Buddha, which he believed to be essentially in accord with the modern rationalist mind. He sought a rational and doctrinal consistency in his new interpretations of Buddhism, which the educated modern Buddhist elite find appealing. For this purpose, he drew a hermeneutical principle, the theory of everyday language (*phasa khon*) and Dhamma language (*phasa tham*), out of the early Buddhist discourses. The Thai term *phasa khon* literally means the "language of people," referring to the conventional view of ordinary people who do not really know the true meaning of the Buddha's teachings; while the term *phasa tham* (Dhamma language) refers to the Dhammic perspective of the wise people who know and practice the essence of the

²³⁰ See Ibid. p. 11.

²³¹ In this work, the term 'essentialism' is used to refer to Buddhadāsa's insistence on the pure Dhamma as the essence of Buddhist thought and praxis. It does not refer to the Western philosophical concept of "essentialism."

²³² Buddhadāsa and other Thai scholars like to use the term "Buddhadhamma" or "Dhamma" to refer to both the most fundamental Buddhist "doctrines" and the "Truth" that those doctrines designate. In this paper, I will use the definite article before the terms to indicate the doctrines (for example *the* Buddhadhamma or *the* Dhamma); and omit the article (Buddhadhamma or Dhamma) for the Dhammic Truth. See Ibid. p. 37.

Buddhadhamma.²³³ Buddhadāsa applied this theory of the two levels of language to his radical reinterpretation of the basic Buddhist doctrines and to his critical understanding of the situation of modern Thai society. More precisely, he strove to reform the traditional Buddhist beliefs and practices through his innovative hermeneutic of Dhamma language: what I call a Dhammic essentialist radical orthopraxis.

The distinguishing point between the two kinds of language is the different approach to seeing or knowing things. Buddhadāsa emphasizes the need to see things beyond external or material phenomena in order to realize the inner truth of things. He remarks that there are two ways of seeing things: one is “looking within” and the other is “looking without.” He says, “If a person only looks without, he is the slave of external objects; but if he looks within, he becomes the master of those objects.”²³⁴ In other words, looking without is to see things with the state of mind that is dominated by sense objects, and looking within is to see things with a mind freed from the outer conditions. Therefore, *phasa khon* refers to the conventional view of ordinary people whose minds are caught within the sensory experience of the physical world; while *phasa tham* refers to the Dhammic view of the wise whose minds are freed from attachment to sensory objects.

Buddhadāsa remarks that the Buddha often expressed Dhamma in the spoken language of the ordinary people, so that people who know only the conventional meanings of the Buddha’s words (*phasa khon*) could never understand their profound meanings (*phasa tham*). To Buddhadāsa, this means that the difference between the two languages does not lie in the expressions themselves, but rather in their different meanings: *phasa khon* conveys the literal meanings of the word; while *phasa tham* refers to the hidden, symbolic and religious meanings of the word. Hence he suggests a general principle for studying and interpreting the Pali texts: the constant discernment of the conventional meaning (*phasa khon*) and the ultimate meaning (*phasa tham*) of the Buddhadhamma. To Buddhadāsa, the true meaning of the Buddha’s words can be grasped only at the level of *phasa tham*. It does not mean that the whole *Tipiṭaka*²³⁵ must be read as symbolic expressions of the hidden truth, for there are words which must be read in a literal sense as well. Buddhadāsa’s main concern, however, lies in the parts of the Buddha’s discourses (the *Suttapiṭaka*) that he believes should be interpreted in the Dhammic sense (*phasa tham*), but have been literally understood in the conventional

²³³ See Buddhadāsa, “Two Kinds of Language: Everyday Language & Dhamma Language,” trans. by Roderick S. Bucknell, in *Keys To Natural Truth*, ed. by Santikaro and others (Bangkok: Sukhapabjai, 2008), p. 35.

²³⁴ Buddhadāsa, “Looking Within,” trans. by Roderick S. Bucknell, in *Keys To Natural Truth*, p. 105.

²³⁵ The Pali canon has three sections (*ti-piṭaka*, literally meaning “three-baskets”): the *Suttapiṭaka*, the five collections (*Nikāyas*) of the Buddha’s discourses (*suttas*); the *Vinayapiṭaka*, the code of monastic discipline; and the *Abhidhammapiṭaka*, the systematic analysis of the Buddhist doctrine, consisting of seven books.

sense (*phasa khon*) by the Pali commentarial tradition.²³⁶

The traditional cosmological concepts, such as heavens and hells, are good examples of this misunderstanding. Buddhadāsa is critical of the naïve readings of those Pali texts based on ancient cosmology. In his view, those texts are to be reinterpreted through the Dhamma language, which is in accord with a modern scientific worldview. For example, the hell denizens (*naraka*) refer to the anxious states of mind: “whenever one experiences anxiety, burning, and scorching, one is simultaneously reborn as a creature of hell. It is a spontaneous rebirth, a mental rebirth. Although the body physically inhabits the human realm, as soon as anxiety arises the mind falls into hell. Anxiety about possible loss of prestige and fame, anxiety of any sort—that is hell.”²³⁷ Similarly, to Buddhadāsa, different levels of heavenly worlds refer to different levels of one’s mental development in this life. Māra, the lord of the *Paranimmitavasavatti* heaven²³⁸ is reinterpreted as the mental state which obstructs the spiritual progress towards the complete cessation of suffering (*dukkha*).²³⁹ Buddhadāsa does not totally reject the possible existence of those cosmological worlds and rebirths either. He emphasizes, however, that those concepts must be reinterpreted in the light of the fundamental teachings of the Buddha. To him, the essence of the Buddhadhamma is the liberation (*nibbāna*) from suffering (*dukkha*) here and now.

Buddhadāsa’s reinterpretation of Dependent Origination (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) is the best example of his radically praxis-oriented Dhammic essentialism, distinct from the traditional interpretation. He regards the twelve links of *Paṭiccasamuppāda*²⁴⁰ as the

²³⁶ See Peter A. Jackson, *Buddhadāsa: Theravada Buddhism and Modernist Reform in Thailand* (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 1987, 2003), pp. 71-4.

²³⁷ Buddhadāsa, *Buddha-Dhamma for Students*, trans. by Ariyananda Bhikkhu, rev. by Santikaro Bhikkhu (Chaiya: Dhammadāna Foundation, 1988), p. 67.

²³⁸ The Theravada cosmology talks of the three worlds (*tiloka*): (1) The world of sensuous desire (*Kāmaloka*) includes the beings in hell, human beings, and the gods of the first 6 heavens. (2) The world of the fine material form (*Rūpaloka*) comprises 16 heavens. (3) The world of formlessness (*Arūpaloka*) is comprised of 4 heavens. *Paranimmitavasavatti* heaven is the highest stage of the sensuous sphere (*Kāmaloka*). For more details, see Jotiya Dhirasekera, “Devaloka” in *Encyclopaedia of Buddhism*, ed. by Jotiya Dhirasekera and W.G. Weeraratne, Vol. IV (Colombo: Ministry of Buddhasasana, 2000), p. 424.

²³⁹ See Buddhadāsa, “Two Kinds of Language: Everyday Language & Dhamma Language,” pp. 51-2.

²⁴⁰ The twelve links of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* are given in the Pali texts as follows:

avijjā (ignorance) gives rise to *saṅkhāra*

saṅkhāra (disposition) gives rise to *viññāṇa*

viññāṇa (consciousness) gives rise to *nāma-rūpa*

nāma-rūpa (name-and-form) gives rise to *saḷāyatana*

saḷāyatana (sense bases) gives rise to *phassa*

heart of Buddhism, in the sense that it is another version of the Four Noble Truths: It is a detailed demonstration of how suffering (*dukkha*) arises and ceases every moment from interdependent psychophysical factors.²⁴¹ He critically notes however that since Buddhaghosa explained *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as a rebirth process over the three life times in the *Visuddhimagga*, the Pali commentarial tradition has followed that interpretation.²⁴² Buddhādāsa clarifies that the term *dukkha* used in this core doctrine (*Paṭiccasamuppāda*) refers to a specific kind of suffering, not the ordinary meaning of suffering. It is a suffering dependent on “attachment” to the concept of “I” or “self.”²⁴³ In his new interpretation, therefore, the term “birth” (*jāti*) of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* refers to the birth of the concept of “I” and “mine,” not physical birth.²⁴⁴ This is a crucial point where Buddhādāsa differs from the traditional interpretation. The traditional commentators consider birth (*jāti*) a physical birth in the conventional meaning (*phassa khon*), and so they interpret *Paṭiccasamuppāda* as the process of rebirth over three lifetimes. However to Buddhādāsa, the term “birth” (*jāti*) in the context of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* means the full blossoming of attachment to the idea of “I” and “mine.” To him, the birth of the “self” concept and of selfish desire, is the starting point of human suffering such as sickness, grief, sorrow, and distress. He remarks that the Buddha summarizes all these sufferings in one compound Pali word, namely *pañcupādāna-khandhā* (the five aggregates of clinging), showing that the origin of human suffering (*dukkha*) is not the physical-mental elements (*pañcakkhandha*) themselves, but the ignorant attachment (*upādāna*) to those elements as “myself.”²⁴⁵

Buddhādāsa also points out that, in the *Visuddhimagga*, the meaning of *anupādisesa-nibbāna* is misinterpreted as the “full extinction of the five aggregates of the arahant after death” and *saupādisesa-nibbāna* as the “experience of the arahant

phassa (contact) gives rise to *vedanā*

vedanā (feeling) gives rise to *taṇhā*

taṇhā (craving) gives rise to *upādāna*

upādāna (clinging) gives rise to *bhava*

bhava (becoming) gives rise to *jāti*

jāti (birth) gives rise to *jarā-maraṇa* (suffering: decay and death)

²⁴¹ See Buddhādāsa, *Paṭiccasamuppāda: Practical Dependent Origination*, trans. by Steve Schmidt (Bangkok: Vuddhidhamma Fund, 1992), pp. 22-4.

²⁴² For Buddhaghosa’s expounding of this doctrine, see Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification*, trans. by Bhikkhu Ñāṇamoli (Kandy: BPS, 1999), pp. 525-604.

²⁴³ See Buddhādāsa, *Paṭiccasamuppāda: Practical Dependent Origination*, p. 42.

²⁴⁴ See *Ibid.* pp. 15-6, 44

²⁴⁵ See *SN V*, 421.

while living.”²⁴⁶ To Buddhādāsa, this explanation is not in accordance with the original Pali text, the *Nibbānadhātu Sutta* of *Itivuttaka*, in which both terms refer to the “living experience” of the arahant who attained *nibbāna* in this very life.²⁴⁷ He remarks that the ancient Thai farmers were wiser than Buddhaghosa when they created the following proverb: “*nibbāna* is in dying before death.” To Buddhādāsa, this rural proverb illustrates the correct meaning of *nibbāna* as “dying to selfhood” before the “death of the body.”²⁴⁸ In the Buddhism popular among the Thai, however, *nibbāna* is usually understood as the city of immortality where all wishes are granted. In many Thai temples, Dhamma preachers often talk of the “wonder city of *nibbāna*” in the sense of a wish-fulfilling paradise after death.²⁴⁹ Hence, Buddhādāsa holds that both the Pali commentarial tradition and the Thai popular Buddhism misunderstand the real meaning of *nibbāna*, which is never to be referred to as the state after death. He asserts: any time there is freedom from mental defilements (*kilesa*), there is *nibbāna*; if defilements have been eradicated completely, it is permanent *nibbāna*—the total extinguishing and cooling of the fire of *kilesa* and *dukkha* here and now.²⁵⁰

Thus, Buddhādāsa reinterprets the traditional cosmology and basic Buddhist doctrines, by using his theory of everyday language (*phasa khon*) and Dhamma language (*phasa tham*). In his Dhammic essentialist hermeneutic (*phasa tham*), the term *dukkha* always refers to suffering caused by attachment, and the term *jāti* refers to the birth of the concept of “I” and “mine.” To Buddhādāsa, liberation (*nibbāna*) is not a far distant ideal or a paradise to reach after numerous deaths and rebirths; it is an actual living experience occurring whenever we understand and practice the process of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* properly. His rationalistic interpretation of the traditional beliefs and practices enabled modern Thai Buddhist intellectuals to deepen their understanding of Buddhism as a this-worldly transformative spirituality, motivating not only personal transformation but also social change. His radical Dhammic thought and praxis resonated with the religio-intellectual, socio-political needs of his time. In the following sections, I will examine how Buddhādāsa develops his spiritual and political theories of human liberation from this practical Dhammic essentialist hermeneutic.

²⁴⁶ See Buddhaghosa, *Visuddhimagga: The Path of Purification*, pp. 516-7.

²⁴⁷ See Buddhādāsa, *Paṭiccasamuppāda: Practical Dependent Origination*, pp. 86-7. Abeynayake also points out that the term *anupādisesa-nibbāna* indicates the living experience of an arahant because the word *idheva* (right here) is used for that term in the *Itivuttaka* text (no. 38). In his interpretation, *saupādisesa-nibbāna* refers to the nirvanic experience of arahants with their contacts and feelings, while *anupādisesa-nibbāna* refers to the nirvanic experience of arahants without any feelings and perceptions (*nirodha-samāpatti*) in the deepest meditation. For more details, see Oliver Abeynayake, “Nibbāna as Empirical Reality,” *JCBSSL*, Vol. II (January, 2004), 167-79.

²⁴⁸ See Buddhādāsa, *Buddha-Dhamma for Students*, trans. by Ariyananda Bhikkhu, rev. by Santikaro Bhikkhu (Chaiya: Dhammadāna Foundation, 1988), pp. 38-9.

²⁴⁹ See Buddhādāsa, “Two Kinds of Language: Everyday Language & Dhamma Language,” p. 49.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 49-50.

The Theory of the Void Mind (*Chit-Wāng*)

Buddhadāsa acknowledges that all the basic doctrines reflect the heart of Buddhism to a certain degree. He asserts, however, that the true heart of Buddhism is found in the one phrase of the *Cūḷataṇhāsankhaya Sutta (MN)*: “nothing is worth clinging to” (*sabbe dhammā nālaṃ abhinivesāyāti*).²⁵¹ Hence, to him, all Buddhist teachings and practices can be integrated into a single Dhamma practice—the practice of the void-mind (*chit-wāng*). He explains that the Thai term *wāng* (*suññā* in Pali), which means “void” or “free,” refers to the two characteristics of voidness (*suññatā*): the inherent nature of all things as void of self; and the quality of mind when it is not clinging to anything.²⁵² To Buddhadāsa, the insubstantial reality of things and the non-clinging mind are the two sides of the same voidness (*suññatā*). He explains that the mind knows or realizes *suññatā* through Dhamma practice, not through knowledge that comes from studying, reading, or learning from others. When ignorance (*avijjā*) and defilements (*kilesa*) are gone, the mind realizes its own true nature as voidness.²⁵³

To describe how to cultivate the void-mind (*chit-wāng*), Buddhadāsa draws several ways of practice from the Buddha’s original teachings. The first way is a practice of preventing the process of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* from taking place. He proposes two methods for this practice. One method is to cut the process off right at the moment of sense-contact (*phassa*) and not to allow the feeling (*vedanā*) of satisfaction or dissatisfaction to arise. But, for people who have never trained in Dhamma, it is extremely difficult to prevent sense-contact from developing into feelings (*vedanā*) because feelings arise almost automatically.²⁵⁴ If the first method fails, then the second method is to be attempted: when a feeling (*vedanā*) of satisfaction or dissatisfaction has already arisen, one must stop it immediately and not allow it to develop “craving (*taṇhā*),” a strong desire or aversion. Buddhadāsa warns that once craving (*taṇhā*) has arisen, there is no hope of preventing the arising of ego-consciousness (“I” and “mine”) and its inevitable consequences, namely various forms of suffering (*dukkha*).²⁵⁵

Buddhadāsa emphasizes that to prevent the arising of such attachment one must develop a mindful-awareness (*sati-paññā*), as found in the following words of the Buddha:

O Bāhiya, you should train yourself thus: whenever you see a form, let there be just the seeing; whenever you hear a sound, let there be just the hearing; when you smell an odor, let there be just the smelling; when you

²⁵¹ See Buddhadāsa, *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree: The Buddha’s Teaching on Voidness*, ed. by Santikaro Bhikkhu (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1994), p. 15. For the cited Pali text, see *MN* I, 251; *SN* IV, 50.

²⁵² See *Ibid.* pp. 59-60

²⁵³ See *Ibid.* pp. 25, 46

²⁵⁴ See *Ibid.* p. 81

²⁵⁵ See *Ibid.* p. 82

taste a flavor, let there be just tasting; when a thought arises, let it be just the arising of thought in mind. In this way you should train yourself.²⁵⁶

Buddhadāsa remarks that Bāhiya sincerely practiced this brief Dhamma, so much so he finally attained *nibbāna*, the complete end of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). He compares this practice to having a cat that kills the rats in our house. Likewise, if we live rightly (*sammā vihareyyuṃ*) in every moment of sense-contact with mindfulness, there is no way for the mental defilements (*kilesa*) to arise.²⁵⁷ Buddhadāsa points out that when ordinary people hear about this kind of practice, they may be afraid of losing their pleasure, for their deluded mind makes them fear *suññatā* and *nibbāna*. He asserts, however, that real pleasure is possible only through this practice of ending all craving (*taṇhā*). In fact, it makes us more active and joyful; it is not the harmful, deceitful, or illusory pleasure of ordinary people.²⁵⁸ In short, to Buddhadāsa, the practice of stopping the process of *Paṭiccasamuppāda* at one of the two stages (*phassa* or *vedanā*) results in seeing clearly that “I” and “mine” is a mere illusion. This is one path of cultivating the void-mind (*chit-wāṅg*) specific to the moment of sense-contact.

For the “ordinary times,”²⁵⁹ according to Buddhadāsa, one should take this opportunity to “study” and “reflect” on how things are void (*suñña*) and how the mind is void (*suñña*).²⁶⁰ He holds that a person who sees that everything is impermanent (*anicca*), unsatisfactory (*dukkha*), and insubstantial (*anatta*) can secure a calm and peaceful daily life. He asserts that such a person can clearly understand the fact that sense objects are mere illusions, and thus withstands the sensuous experience without getting lost in attraction or aversion. To Buddhadāsa, seeing the illusory nature of the pleasant feelings (*sukha-vedanā*) is a very important practice of the void-mind (*chit-wāṅg*) in ordinary times.²⁶¹ He presents another important topic for reflection on during ordinary times: “nothing is worth having or being.”²⁶² He emphasizes that if we habitually or regularly contemplate this topic, we will discover the truth: the more we have or the more we want to be someone, the more suffering (*dukkhā*) follows. He clarifies that this does not mean that we do not need to have anything or to become a

²⁵⁶ Ud I, 10. This is Buddhadāsa’s adapted translation. For a literal translation, See John D. Ireland, trans., *The Udāna and the Itivuttaka: Two Classics from the Pāli Canon* (Kandy: BPS, 1997), p. 21.

²⁵⁷ See Buddhadāsa, *Heartwood of the Bodhi Tree*, pp. 84-5.

²⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 87.

²⁵⁹ By “ordinary times,” Buddhadāsa means occasions when the mind is undisturbed by sense contact: for example, when one is doing some kind of work alone and undisturbed; doing regular daily tasks; or practicing some kind of formal meditation, etc. See Ibid, p. 93.

²⁶⁰ Buddhadāsa uses here the word “study” (*sikkhā*) in the sense of the constant observation and investigation of whatever arises in the mind. He emphasizes that only those familiar with the observation of the mind can really understand Dhamma, but those who merely read books cannot understand it and even go astray. See Ibid. p. 118.

²⁶¹ Ibid. pp. 89-91

²⁶² See Ibid. pp. 93-4

mother or father. We can perfectly enjoy things without clinging to them as “mine”, and we can be a perfect parent without being anxious about becoming: “I am a good parent of my children.” He calls this way of practice “the Dhamma practice of doer-less doing” in daily life.²⁶³

For the practice of formal meditation, Buddhadhāsa thoroughly examines the early Buddhist discourses in the *Suttapiṭaka*, which deal with mental-cultivation (*bhāvanā*).²⁶⁴ Through his careful reading and practicing of those texts, Buddhadhāsa concludes that the Buddha did not teach concentration (*samatha*) and insight (*vipassanā*) as the separate techniques developed in the later tradition. In his opinion, the Buddha taught only the necessary and simple techniques for attaining a calm and peaceful mind, along with the establishment of mindfulness (*sati-paññā*). For people who want a more technical practice, Buddhadhāsa expounds the sixteen steps of “mindfulness with breathing (*ānāpānasati*)” as presented in the *Suttapiṭaka*.²⁶⁵ He emphasizes that we can practice *ānāpānasati* anywhere, at any time; and it is the practice that the Buddha himself recommended as most effective in developing both tranquility (*samādhi*) and insight (*vipassanā*).²⁶⁶

Buddhadāsa is convinced that “natural concentration” is sufficient and appropriate for insightful introspection (*vipassanā*), which leads to liberation (*nibbāna*). To him, the fully concentrated mind in the intensive *samatha* meditation can be misguided by bliss, thus easily clinging to such a happy experience. However, naturally occurring concentration is harmless and suitable for developing the mindfulness (*sati*) and clear comprehension (*sampajañña*) necessary for attaining *nibbāna*.²⁶⁷ He remarks that in the *Suttapiṭaka*, there are numerous references to people who became arahants without engaging in rigorous meditation. For example, the first five disciples were liberated while hearing the Buddha’s discourse on non-self (*anatta*), and the one thousand ascetics were also liberated while hearing the “Fire Sermon.”²⁶⁸ To Buddhadhāsa, these examples clearly show that the liberating insight (*vipassanā-paññā*) can be attained quite naturally through natural concentration.²⁶⁹ He emphasizes that we all experience such natural concentration in our daily life. In other words, every moment we are completely absorbed in doing something, natural concentration is established. If

²⁶³ Ibid. pp. 95-6

²⁶⁴ The most comprehensive discourses on the Buddhist meditation are found in the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* and the *Ānāpānasati Sutta*. See *SN* II, 214; *DN* I, 156; *DN* III, 78; *AN* I, 123; *MN* I, 56-63; *MN* III, 79-88.

²⁶⁵ See Buddhadhāsa, *Mindfulness with Breathing: A Manual for Serious Beginners*, trans. by Santikaro Bhikkhu, rev. edn (Boston: Wisdom Publication, 1997).

²⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 39

²⁶⁷ See Buddhadhāsa, *Handbook for Mankind: Realizing your full potential as a human being*, trans. by Ariyananda Bhikkhu, rev. and ed. by Jess Peter Koffman and others (Bangkok: Amarina Publishing, 2007), pp. 119-20.

²⁶⁸ See *SN* IV, 19-20

²⁶⁹ See Buddhadhāsa, *Handbook for Mankind*, p. 123.

we do not overlook this capacity and apply it to penetrating the impermanent nature of our life, we also can experience *nibbāna* by natural insight.²⁷⁰

Thus, Buddhādāsa presents the natural practice of mindfulness (*sati-paññā*) and the technical practice of *ānāpānasati* as the most appropriate Buddhist paths to attain liberation. He asserts that nobody needs to go to the forest or to renounce the world for those practices; but one must practice them constantly day-by-day, month-by-month, and year-by-year. This way, one can more often experience freedom from suffering and come closer to final *nibbāna*. He holds that only with the insight of “nothing to be clung to” or “nothing worth having or being,” the deluded mind gives way to voidness (*suññatā*). To Buddhādāsa, this insight gradually uncovers the three layers which cover the original void-mind (*chit-wāng*): the outermost covering of instinctive attachment to sense objects; the intermediary covering of attachment to beliefs, views, rules, rituals, or cults; and the innermost covering of attachment to “I” and “mine.”²⁷¹

Thus, the heart of Buddhism is epitomized by Buddhādāsa’s theory of the void-mind (*chit-wāng*), which refers to the individual freedom from “I” and “mine.” To Buddhādāsa, the void-mind (*chit-wāng*) is not only for monks but for lay people as well, who are more exposed to the burden of social relationships and responsibilities. In his view, the more a person cultivates the void-mind (*chit-wāng*), the more he/she is involved in beneficial works for others, understanding and following his/her social nature as a selfless interdependent being. Hence, to him, personal liberation and social well-being cannot be separated; and this is what the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of voidness (*suññatā*) refers to. In other words, this doctrine teaches not total emptiness but the interdependent reality of the world (*idappaccayata*), from which Buddhādāsa draws his ethical-political theory called “Dhammic socialism.” Through this innovative application of the basic Buddhist doctrine to the root problems of the socio-economic political systems of modern society, Buddhādāsa became a source of inspiration for many progressive Buddhist reformists in the rapidly changing society of modern Thailand.

Dhammic Socialism

During the political unrest in the 1970s, thousands of Thai people involved in democratic movements were killed or jailed because they were labeled communists; and many senior monks in Bangkok tacitly supported the ruling authorities. In such a

²⁷⁰ See Ibid. p. 121

²⁷¹ See Buddhādāsa, *Towards Buddha-Dhamma*, condensed and trans. by Nāgasena Bhikkhu, (Chaiya: Dhammadāna Foundation, 2002), pp. 17-24. Here Buddhādāsa rearranges the fourfold clinging (*upādāna*) in the Pali texts: clinging to sensuous pleasure (*kāmuṇḍāna*), to views (*ditṭhupādāna*), to rules and rituals (*sīlabbatupādāna*), and to the self-belief (*attavādupādāna*). See *DN* II, 58; *MN* I, 51; *SN* II, 3.

situation, Buddhādāsa began to proclaim in public that Buddhism is socialist in nature and that Dhammic socialism is the most urgent and beneficial political system for modern Thailand. He was the first and foremost religious figure in Thailand to challenge what he saw as the deceitfulness of liberal democratic capitalism. His Dhammic socialism, however, is different from the materialist socialism developed from Marxist philosophy. It is a socialism based on the Buddhist understanding of nature and society. In other words, it is the “pure” Buddhist theory of politics, derived from Buddhādāsa’s radical thought and praxis, in response to the growing political polarization in modern Thailand. His Dhammic socialism is to be understood as a social dimension of his transformative spirituality, concomitant with his theory of personal liberation (*chit-wāng*). To Buddhādāsa, the best political system must be such that it provides basic conditions for people to practice the non-clinging of the mind and to establish personal and social peace.

Buddhādāsa emphasizes that political and religious goals cannot be separated because both must serve to improve morality (*sīladhamma*) in society. He remarks that people see so much political corruption that they regard politics as a dirty business. However to Buddhādāsa, true politics is a struggle against moral impurity in society. Here the term “morality” (*sīladhamma*) refers not to the “philosophical” but to the “practical” morality, which brings about balance and harmony among all parts of society.²⁷² He explains that the Pali term *sīla* means normalcy, or equilibrium (*pakati*); and anything conducive to this peaceful state is called *sīladhamma*.²⁷³ To him, morality (*sīladhamma*) should aim at enabling individuals to bring their mind and deeds to equilibrium (*pakati*); and at enabling societies to be in *pakati*, to live together in peace and harmony.²⁷⁴

Buddhādāsa derives such an ideal state of moral balance (*sīladhamma*) in society from the peaceful and harmonious state of nature (*dhammajāti*).²⁷⁵ In other words, he draws the norms of ethics and politics from the way things interrelate in nature: from “Is” to “Ought.”²⁷⁶ It does not mean, however, that the natural world contains within itself a normative moral law; it rather means that human beings must see and behave in accordance with the natural law of the universe.²⁷⁷ In order to illustrate the close relationship between nature (*dhammajāti*) and human behavior (*sīladhamma*), Buddhādāsa expounds four meanings of Dhamma:

²⁷² Buddhādāsa, “A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism,” in *Dhammic Socialism*, trans. and ed. by Donald K. Swearer (Bangkok: TIRCD, 1986), p. 80.

²⁷³ See Buddhādāsa, “The Value of Morality,” in *Me and Mine: Selected Essays of Bhikkhu Buddhādāsa*, ed. and intr. by Donald K. Swearer (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1991), p. 159.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* p. 164

²⁷⁵ See *Ibid.* p. 161

²⁷⁶ See S. B. King, “From Is to Ought: Natural Law in Buddhadasa Bhikkhu and Phra Prayudh Payutto,” *Journal of Religious Ethics*, 30/2 (Summer 2002), 275-93 (p. 280).

²⁷⁷ See *Ibid.* 277.

Dhamma means Nature (*dhammajāti*), which can be distinguished in four aspects: Nature itself (*sabhavadhamma*), the Law of Nature (*saccadhamma*), the Duty of living things according to Natural Law (*paṭipattidhamma*), and the results that follow from performing duty according to Natural Law (*paṭivedhadhamma*). All four are known by the single word ‘Dhamma’.²⁷⁸

Nature in its pure state, argues Buddhadāsa, is a perfect example of socialism. He asserts that the entire universe is inherently “socialistic” (*sankhom-niyom* in Thai): nothing can exist independently; everything follows the law of interdependency (*idappaccayatā*).²⁷⁹ He remarks that countless numbers of stars in the sky exist, surviving together because they follow a socialist system in which things do not collide with one another.²⁸⁰ He insists that true socialism must be drawn from such a Dhammic nature of peace and harmony in the cosmos. Hence, his Dhammic socialism is a political system, which seeks genuine peace in the world. To Buddhadāsa, however, the two dominant political systems, liberal democracy and socialist democracy, are based on *adhammic* principles, which constantly engender violent conflicts and mutual destruction.²⁸¹ He points out that liberal democracy upholds the ideal of individual freedom but actually operates under the power of selfish defilements (*kilesa*) of capitalists, whereas socialist democracy upholds the ideal of social equality but has historically shown its brutality under communist authoritarianism.²⁸² Buddhadāsa proposes Dhammic socialism as a truly reliable political system that can save the world from self-destruction, because it promotes the ideal of balance between individual freedom and social benefit, without being entrapped in the false freedom of capitalism and false equality of communism.²⁸³ Furthermore, his Dhammic socialism seeks not only peace in human society but also the natural balance of all living beings.²⁸⁴ To Buddhadāsa, real freedom must be a freedom from selfish desires and real equality must be genuine mutual cooperation for building peace and justice in the world. He is convinced that the fundamental meaning of “socialism” (*sankhom-niyom*) is the ability to live together in harmony just as things exist in nature.

²⁷⁸ Buddhadāsa, *Dharmaghosana Atthanukrom [Dhamma Propagation Book of Meanings]* (Bangkok: Alliance for the Propagation of Buddhism, 1990), p. 67, quoted in Santikaro, “Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu: Life and Society through the Natural Eyes of Voidness,” in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 159.

²⁷⁹ See Buddhadāsa, “A Socialism Capable of Benefiting the World,” in *Dhammic Socialism*, p. 103.

²⁸⁰ See *Ibid.* p. 114

²⁸¹ See *Ibid.* p. 111

²⁸² See Buddhadāsa, “A Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism,” p.81.

²⁸³ See *Ibid.* p. 82

²⁸⁴ See Buddhadāsa, “A Socialism Capable of Benefiting the World,” in *Dhammic Socialism*, p. 105.

Buddhadāsa's Dhammic socialism upholds three basic principles: the common good; a restrained and sharing economy; and respect for life with compassion.²⁸⁵ The first principle refers to a political system that emphasizes the good of the whole before that of the individuals.²⁸⁶ Buddhadāsa remarks that this principle pervades all aspects of life: from an atom, a molecule, a cell to animals, human beings, societies, and the entire cosmos; everything lives in abundance and diversity because each part is working for the benefit of the whole.²⁸⁷ Hence, to Buddhadāsa, the ideal socio-economic political structure is to be a system that follows the universal principle of the common good. He is critical of liberal capitalism, which goes against such a fundamental principle of the universe by promoting selfish and egoistic interests over the wellbeing of society as a whole.²⁸⁸ He does not deny the importance of economic development but criticizes the exploitation of resources and the selfish accumulation of wealth under the capitalist system. He remarks that the Buddhist understanding of a "wealthy person" (*śreṣṭhī*) is quite different from the capitalist concept (*nai thun*): the former shares his wealth with others but the latter does not.²⁸⁹ He points out that the capitalist attitude is completely opposed to how things operate in nature: a harmonious balance based on limiting and controlling unnecessary accumulation or consumption of resources. He claims that natural balance was not threatened in the process of evolution until humans began to hoard more resources than they needed for themselves; and social problems exploded when human intelligence was applied to accumulating wealth, power, and resources.²⁹⁰ In his judgment, liberal democracy has no power to control the capitalist's selfish desire; the situation of humanity is deteriorating in the capitalist society.

Buddhadāsa then proposes a return to a socialism that follows the natural principle of restraint and sharing: humans must be content with what they really need and share the rest with others. This is the second principle of Dhammic socialism. He clarifies that this principle does not prohibit a surplus production. On the contrary, 'people have a right to produce more than they need, and it is even appropriate to do so if the surplus is shared with others.'²⁹¹ He emphasizes that even "those with little to spare have something to share, although they may not realize it."²⁹² To him, the principles of a restrained life and the sharing of wealth is the highest law of nature (Dhamma). Buddhadāsa emphasizes the urgency of this principle by using the

²⁸⁵ See D.K. Swearer, "Introduction: Dhammic Socialism," in *Dhammic Socialism*, pp. 33-4.

²⁸⁶ Santikaro, "Buddhadāsa Bhikkhu: Life and Society through the Natural Eyes of Voidness," in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, p. 166.

²⁸⁷ See Buddhadāsa, "A Socialism Capable of Benefiting the World," pp. 103-4.

²⁸⁸ See Swearer, "Introduction: Dhammic Socialism," p. 32.

²⁸⁹ See Buddhadāsa, "Democratic Socialism," in *Dhammic Socialism*, p. 57.

²⁹⁰ See *Ibid.* pp. 59-60

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* pp. 62-3

²⁹² *Ibid.* 63

paradoxical term “dictatorial” Dhammic socialism. Here the term “dictatorial” does not refer to a political ideology but to an “immediate and effective” act, limiting our egoistic desires as nature does for the harmonious growth of each part.²⁹³ He clarifies that “dictatorship” in the sense of “tyranny” has no place in Dhammic socialism.²⁹⁴ What he promotes is a political system similar to the Buddhist Sangha or the ancient socialistic kingdom ruled by the Buddhist kings (*rāja*) as described in the Pali canon.²⁹⁵ To Buddhādāsa, the ideal ruler (*rāja*) fulfils all of the ten royal virtues (*dasarājadhamma*), which reflect the spirit of Dhammic socialism.²⁹⁶ He holds that a ruler who embodies these ten royal virtues cannot be a tyrant but the best kind of socialist “dictator” in the Dhammic sense.²⁹⁷ He supports the need for non-violent revolution against any ruler who is not faithful to this ideal kingship and wields his/her power for personal gain.²⁹⁸ He emphasizes, however, that violent overthrow is not appropriate because it goes against *avihiṃsā* (non-violence), one of those ten virtues. This means that no political action is to be justified without a measure of *dasarājadhamma*. Hence, Buddhādāsa is critical of Marxist revolutions, because, in his view, they have created nothing but mutual destruction and insane conflict. Their attempts to solve the problems of the world are like “cleaning something muddied with muddy water.”²⁹⁹

The third and last principle of Dhammic socialism is to respect all forms of life and to produce the cooperative social conditions of love and compassion. Buddhādāsa remarks that human beings become so cruel that they are willing to drop a bomb, knowing that it can kill thousands of people. Both capitalist and socialist countries are equal in their brutality.³⁰⁰ He further remarks that their destructive technologies have devastated nature, such that some kinds of plants and animals have become extinct, and even some groups of humans have become extinct. He asserts however, that in a truly human community people act with love and compassion rather than hatred and violence.³⁰¹ To him, each individual is a social unit responsible for promoting peace in the world. He points out that people today blindly believe in the

²⁹³ See Buddhādāsa, “Dictatorial Dhammic Socialism,” pp. 82-3, 86.

²⁹⁴ See Ibid. p. 83

²⁹⁵ See Ibid. pp. 89, 91

²⁹⁶ The ten royal virtues: (1) *dāna* (giving or the will to give); (2) *sīla* (morality in the sense of keeping things as they are); (3) *pariccāga* (liberty in the sense of giving up all inner evils and selfishness); (4) *ajjava* (uprightness or truthfulness); (5) *maddava* (meekness and gentleness toward all citizens); (6) *tapo* (self-control); (7) *akkodha* (freedom from anger); (8) *avihiṃsā* (harmlessness, non-violence, or absence of cruelty); (9) *khanti* (being patient or forbearing); (10) *avirodhana* (absence of obstruction or non-opposition). Ibid. p. 95

²⁹⁷ See Ibid. pp. 90, 97

²⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 97

²⁹⁹ Buddhādāsa, “A Socialism Capable of Benefiting the World,” p. 109

³⁰⁰ See Ibid. p. 111

³⁰¹ Ibid.

power of economics, thinking that economic success will lead to peace and happiness. However, economic success without moral restraint encourages people to struggle for more possessions and destroy others for their own benefit.³⁰² Hence, Buddhādāsa argues that both individuals and governments must cultivate their moral qualities in order to enable economic progress to contribute to world peace.³⁰³

Only committed individuals equipped with spiritual and moral virtues can realize these ideals of Dhammic socialism, according to Buddhādāsa.³⁰⁴ He emphasizes however that such people cannot arise without a proper political system that promotes a peaceful socio-cultural and religious ethos. To Buddhādāsa the ideal political system is Dhammic socialism, in which both the rich and the poor work together for the benefit of the entire society, and whose members are encouraged to cultivate the void-mind (*chit-wāng*) and moral virtues.³⁰⁵ He asserts that in a Dhammic socialist society, people have ample opportunity to learn human values and wisdom, through effective educational systems and peaceful religio-cultural surroundings. Their morality (*sīladhamma*) also applies to a good ecological system, which deals not only with the eradication of material pollution but the purification of all aspects of personal and social life.³⁰⁶ Thus, to Buddhādāsa, Dhammic socialism is the ideal political system for Buddhist countries because it provides a proper environment for people to perform their individual and social duties in accordance with Dhamma. The three principles of Dhammic socialism—the common good, the sharing economy, and the peaceful social environment—are derived from the way the entire universe operates in natural harmony and balance. In short, Buddhādāsa’s Dhammic socialism aims at establishing a society in which personal freedom, social liberation, and ecological harmony, are all interconnected.

Concluding Remarks

Buddhādāsa worked within the two main religio-political traditions in modern Thai history: the absolutist conservatism and the democratic reformism. The former began with its original formulation in the reign of King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) and was revived by military dictators in the mid-twentieth century, and then again by Thaksin Shinawatra in the early 21st century. This tradition upholds the need for a strong and authoritarian state to protect the country from external and domestic threats, maintaining Thai national integrity based on the authority of monarchy and Buddhism.³⁰⁷ By contrast, the advocates of the second tradition argue that the real

³⁰² See Buddhādāsa, “Till the World Is With Peace,” in *Me and Mine*, p. 204.

³⁰³ See *Ibid.*

³⁰⁴ For the list of these nine virtues, see *Ibid.* pp. 204-6.

³⁰⁵ See *Ibid.* p. 206

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.* pp. 206-7

³⁰⁷ See Chris Baker and Pasuk Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge

enemies of Thai people are neither the external nor internal threats, but the very idea of a “strong-state” itself, which in fact ‘absolutizes’ state power. For them, the purpose of the nation-state must be the wellbeing of its various members. Since the revolution of 1932, this tradition has continued in people’s democratic movements, promoting international ideas and values such as socialism, liberal democracy, human rights, a civil society, and so on. Facing the conservative nationalist criticism that such ideas are all “non-Thai,” these progressive groups often try to present their ideas in parallel with new interpretations of Buddhist doctrines.³⁰⁸ Buddhadāsa stood for a middle way, remaining faithfully as a Theravada monk within the Sangha but proposing a sharply different way of doctrinal teachings and practices, from his praxis-oriented Dhammic essentialist perspective. His radical Buddhist reform movement at Suan Mokkh, the Garden of Liberation in the forest, and his constant teachings on socio-political issues, have become the source of inspiration for many democratic activists and socially engaged Buddhists.

As I have shown, Buddhadāsa’s radical orthopraxis derives from his hermeneutic of Dhamma language (*phasa tham*), which he applies to reinterpret the basic Buddhist teachings, to correct the traditional Buddhist practices, and to develop his theories of personal (*chit-wāng*) and socio-political liberation (Dhammic socialism). He recognized that the ideals of Dhammic socialism would be realized only through the people who sincerely commit themselves to genuine world peace, in cooperation with other religions. Hence, he called not only for Buddhist followers but also for people of other faiths, to join his Dhammic essentialist radical orthopraxis to build a just and peaceful world. Seeing a world situation of socio-political and religio-ethnic conflicts, Buddhadāsa made three wishes (*paṇidhāna*) as his life mission; and posted them at the entrance of Suan Mokkh.

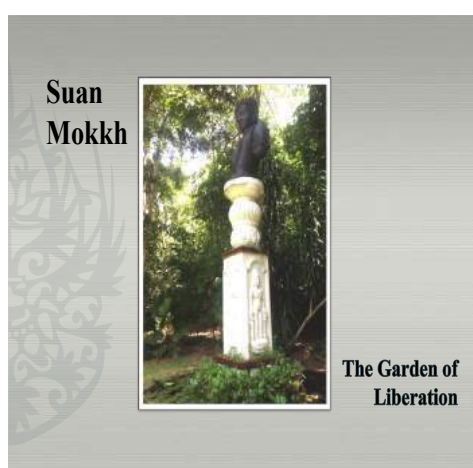
- (1) To help everyone realize the core of their own religion.
- (2) To build mutual understanding between all religions.
- (3) To work together in pulling the world out of materialism.

Buddhadasa is convinced that it is only through liberating praxis that religion can reveal the Truth. To him, although each religion has its own teachings and practices, and there is only one ultimate Truth at the heart of all religions, expressed in different names: God, Dhamma, or Tao. Buddhadāsa argues that these names are mere labels for the same salvific reality—the highest freedom, peace and happiness. In his Dhammic interpretation (*phasa tham*), the core of this ultimate reality is “selflessness,” which he

University Press, 2009), pp.276-7.

³⁰⁸ See Ibid. pp. 277-8

believes is the common spirituality of all religions. He knows, however, that people tend to have a literal understanding (*phasa khon*) of the religious truths, clinging to their own conventional beliefs and views, which often lead to unnecessary disputes, conflicts, and extreme fanaticism. Moreover, people live under the strong influence of materialism, which continuously stimulates their selfish instincts against the core teachings of every religion. Hence, Buddhādāsa strives to help people understand the shared goal of all religions: to bring peace and happiness to the world by promoting the transformative spirituality of selfless love and wisdom, against the modern stream of selfish materialism.³⁰⁹



There has been some criticism that Buddhādāsa's radical theories remain unrealistic and idealistic, since he withdrew in practice from active world-involvement and failed to develop a clear analysis of the monk's role in institutional change, within a Buddhist polity and social order. He is also criticized for not elaborating on how his Dhammic socialism might be implemented concretely with specific socio-political action.³¹⁰ However, we must not forget that Buddhādāsa is neither a theorist of political science nor a professional politician. He is a Buddhist visionary who provokes people to think carefully about who they are and what they are doing as individuals, groups, and nations.³¹¹ What he promotes is the right understanding (*sammā-diṭṭhi*) of one's personal-social situation from the Dhammic perspective, aiming to enable people to engage in responsible actions in various ways. As for himself, Buddhādāsa sought to embody his ideals when building a community, Suan Mokkh, which is quite different from the traditional monasteries or forest meditation centers. Suan Mokkh has served as

³⁰⁹ For more details, see In-gun Kang, S.J., "Buddhist-Christian Dialogue and Action in the Theravada Countries of Modern Asia," pp. 104-13.

³¹⁰ See Louis Gabaude, "Buddhadasa's Contributions As a Human Being, As a Thai, As a Buddhist," in *The Quest for A Just Society*, ed. by Sulak Sivaraksa (Bangkok: TIRCD, 1994), p. 50.

³¹¹ See Swearer, "Introduction: Dhammic Socialism," pp. 40-1.

a center for him and his followers to practice the principles of the void-mind (*chit-wāng*) and Dhammic socialism. Thousands of visitors, staying for short or long periods, have been inspired by the teachings and life examples of Buddhādāsa and his followers at Suan Mokkh.

Santikaro, one of his faithful disciples, argues that Buddhādāsa's Dhammic socialism, and its implementation at Suan Mokkh, provided a middle ground for many Thai people who were struggling between the right and left conflicts during the Cold War period.³¹² He emphasizes that Buddhādāsa did not turn away from anybody who asked for his advice: high ranking government leaders, judges, bureaucrats, soldiers and businessmen were welcomed at his Dhamma talks. At the same time, he gave the same Dhamma training to radical students, Marxist insurgents, social activists and peasants.³¹³ In Santikaro's view, this neutral ground saved many lives during the bloody massacres of the 1970s and stimulated numerous NGOs to develop non-violent action programs. He points out that Dhammic socialism inspired those working in areas of education, rural development, social justice, and environmental movements.³¹⁴ To Santikaro, Buddhādāsa was the single major Buddhist teacher of the time to speak out about social issues and politics.

Therefore, the accusation against Buddhādāsa's conservative practice in the forest or the perceived lack of realistic socio-political involvement is an unfair judgment on what he really did. From the beginning of his residence at Suan Mokkh, he was actively involved in the local social and educational problems. His writings on *Buddhasāsana*³¹⁵ and frequent lectures at the different institutions of the country, stimulated nation-wide discussion about the ideal forms of socio-political change in Thailand. He was not a mere spiritual guru withdrawn in the forest center but an active political debater, as shown by his well-known debates with Kukrit Pramoj, covered by the mass media for three years (1973-76), during the most sensitive period of modern Thai history.³¹⁶ Hence, in fairness, Buddhādāsa strove to develop his spiritual practice into socio-political engagement, although he was never directly involved in any political parties.

It is true that Buddhādāsa's radical orthopraxis is derived from his rather idealistic and utopian political vision. But, as Swearer aptly points out, "the power of

³¹² See Santikaro, "Buddhādāsa Bhikkhu and His Practice of Dhammic Socialism," *Turning Wheel*, (Spring 2006), p. 1. <<http://www.liberationpark.org/arts/tanajcent/tw001.htm>> [accessed 3 November 2009].

³¹³ See Ibid. pp. 2-3

³¹⁴ See Ibid. p. 3

³¹⁵ *Buddhasāsana* [Buddha's teaching] was the quarterly journal published by Buddhādāsa and the Dhammadāna Group in 1933. It was then the only Buddhist magazine published outside Bangkok. With Buddhādāsa's writings on it, *Buddhasāsana* has been one of the most influential journals in Thailand.

³¹⁶ See Baker and Phongpaichit, *A History of Thailand*, pp. 190-1; Jackson, *Buddhādāsa: Theravada Buddhism and Modernist Reform in Thailand*, p. 16.

his vision lies in its very idealistic and utopian character.”³¹⁷ His vision of the personal-social liberation in harmony with nature cannot be completely institutionalized in any society, but for that very reason, it continuously challenges and transforms people’s behavior and political systems to be better than what they are. In fact, his radical orthopraxis has left a long-standing impact on Thai society. His followers are not only a small intellectual elite in the urban middle class any more, but various groups of people who struggle to embody his vision through the Dhamma-based community movements inspired by the example of Suan Mokkh.³¹⁸ Buddhadāsa’s theory and praxis of conserving nature is also to be seen as one of the most significant contributions he made beyond social awareness: his creative insights into the Dhammic balance of nature and society provide a Buddhist agenda for solving the environmental and ecological crises faced by the world today.³¹⁹

However, there are some weaknesses in his Dhammic essentialist theory and praxis. Referring to an ideal socio-religious and political system, Buddhadāsa tends to look naively back at the Buddhist “golden age.” He often describes the ancient societies during the time of King Aśoka, the kings of Sukhothai and Ayutthaya as full of the spirit of Dhammic socialism, with the leaders observing the ten royal virtues and the people faithfully practicing Buddhist moral principles. However, as Puntarigvivat points out in his doctoral thesis, Buddhadāsa forgets that those societies also contained various forms of social oppression such as slavery, an arbitrary legal system, and many assassinations in the recurring power struggles for the throne.³²⁰ Puntarigvivat also argues that Buddhadāsa’s approach towards the socio-economic problems of modern society is too individualistic. In his view, Buddhadāsa regards the capitalists’ greed as the main cause of scarcity and poverty, and so, he naively believes that modern socio-economic problems could be solved by the personal practice of self-restraint and sharing (*dāna*).³²¹ Hence, to Puntarigvivat, Buddhadāsa presents a powerful theory of psychological liberation, but fails to address the adequate social liberation. That is, the systematic struggle against the suffering of Thai people under the structural injustice caused by the global market economy.³²²

Puntarigvivat is right when he says that Buddhadāsa’s retrospective political theory is inadequate to provide a concrete scheme for structural change in the contemporary globalized society. In his Dhammic socialism, Buddhadāsa does emphasize the need for structural change in the socio-political system of the modern

³¹⁷ D. K. Swearer, “Three Legacies of Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa,” in *The Quest for A Just Society*, p. 19.

³¹⁸ See Ibid. pp. 13-4

³¹⁹ See Ibid. pp. 14-8

³²⁰ See Puntarigvivat, “Bhikkhu Buddhadāsa’s Dhammic Socialism in Dialogue with Latin American Liberation Theology,” unpublished PhD dissertation (Temple University, August 1994), p. 162.

³²¹ See Ibid. pp. 102-3

³²² See Ibid. pp. xiv-xvi, 195-216

world, but his view remains an abstract and utopian Buddhist guideline for a new political philosophy. As argued above however, Buddhadāsa is not a political theorist but a Buddhist visionary who calls for people to develop a more precise liberating theory and praxis according to their own situation. Puntarigivat's attempt to construct a "new Dhammic socialism" against the neo-liberalist global market economy is a good example. In his thesis, Puntarigivat strives to make the principles of Dhammic socialism work in the context of the Thai people's struggle for socio-economic justice in solidarity with the poor and the oppressed, suggesting that Buddhist activists must learn from Latin American liberation theologians about the structural dimension of liberating praxis; especially, their proactive base community movements.³²³ In fact, Buddhadāsa's greatest social impact lies in the ever-growing number of grassroots Buddhist communities, which are actively engaged in local socio-economic, religio-cultural, and environmental issues. It is clear that his radical vision and thought will be continuously actualized through these grassroots communities, and his critical followers, such as Puntarigivat, will develop a more adequate Buddhist political philosophy for the structural transformation of the unjust global socio-economic political system.

Buddhadāsa's practical theories of twofold liberation (*chit-wāng*; Dhammic socialism) and his humanistic vision for world peace not only have made a strong impact on the Buddhist reform movements in the changing society of modern Thailand, but also have significant implications for the contemporary needs of a transformative spirituality in the globalized capitalist world. His radical orthopraxis stands for the dynamic integration of the forest monk tradition and socially engaged Buddhism, from his praxis-oriented Dhammic essentialist perspective. In other words, it is a radical orthopraxis that promotes at once a spiritual detachment and social involvement. It is a significant Buddhist model of the liberative spirituality, which sheds light on our search for Buddhist-Christian dialogue and action in response to the contemporary problems of socio-economic injustice, religio-political conflicts, and environmental crises. However, his condescending view of the popular forms of religio-cultural practices and his Dhammic inclusivist view of religions must be complemented by a more realistic pluralism. It is at this juncture that Pieris' integrationist dialogical approach to culture and religion can be brought into a creative and critical dialogue with Buddhadāsa. Since such a comparative work goes beyond the scope of this paper, I humbly ask readers to refer to the second and third parts of my doctoral thesis. Let me conclude this paper with the following words of Buddhadāsa: "The essence of religion is always its practice. Knowledge is only a preparation for practice. [...] There can be no separation of theory and practice in true religion."³²⁴

³²³ See Ibid. pp. 222-3.

³²⁴ Buddhadāsa, "Democratic Socialism," p. 48.

Abbreviations

- AN:* *Aṅguttara Nikāya* (London: PTS, 1885-1990)
BPS: Buddhist Publication Society
DN: *Dīgha Nikāya* (London: PTS, 1890-1911)
JCBSSL: *Journal of the Centre for Buddhist Studies*, Sri Lanka
MN: *Majjhima Nikāya* (London: PTS, 1976)
SN: *Sṃyutta Nikāya* (London: PTS, 1917-1930)
PTS: Pāli Text Society
Ud: *Udāna* (London: PTS, 1948)

The Dilemma of the “Supreme” Zen Meditation Method in Korea and Rethinking the Zen Master Seungsahn

By

Yong Un Choe

Abstract

This article not only investigates the circumstances surrounding the Kanhwa Sŏn meditation, which is the so called “supreme” Zen meditation method in South Korea, but it also provides suggestions for its future successful outcome. The Vipassanā meditation has been amplifying its impact in South Korea since the early 1990s, and besides, a considerable section of lay Buddhists are still primarily involved with Buddha-recitation while meditating. However, the biggest threat to Kanhwa Sŏn is observed to arise within the Korean *sangha*, which, in the course of its extended history served as its protector. Many Korean monks have owned up to the hardships encountered while performing the Kanhwa Sŏn meditation, wherein they failed to experience much progress. Kanhwa Sŏn is indeed in a state of dilemma. In Korean Buddhism, awakening has long been regarded as something primarily associated with monastics, a fact that caused lay Buddhists to adopt a passive attitude towards it. Now however is the time to disperse the spirit of ‘democratization of Zen’ within their *sangha*. Moreover the Chogye Order needs not just to lessen the tendency of gender separation or the monks/laity status of members, but also to renew the mode of practice of Kanhwa Sŏn. Seungsahn’s achievement, the Kwan Um School of Zen, could serve as a good reference for the Korean Buddhist community.

I. Introduction

Virtually a millennium has elapsed since Pojo Chinul (普照知訥, 1158~1210) introduced the Kanhwa Sŏn³²⁵ 看話禪 (Ch. Kanhua Chan) meditation to Korea during the Koryŏ dynasty (918~1392), a meditation created by Tahui Tsungkao (大慧宗杲, 1089~1163) of the Sung dynasty (960~1279) in China. The original practice of Kanhwa Sŏn has been better preserved in South Korea rather than in China, a fact in which the Chogye Order³²⁶ (Kr. Chogyejong 曹溪宗) takes great pride. Moreover, Kanhwa Sŏn appears to have sustained its reputation until now, thereby acquiring the status of the “supreme” Sŏn 禪 (Jp. Zen) meditational method of South Korea.

Recently however the status of Kanhwa Sŏn has been observed to be fluctuating. It has ceased to acquire the animated support of lay Buddhists in South Korea, and even numerous monastics have expressed feelings of strain in its practice. Some even complain about having experienced excessive difficulty in noting any

325 In English, Kanhwa Sŏn is expressed as a Critical Phrase Meditation or Keyword Meditation.

326 It is the name of the biggest and the most influential Buddhist monastic order in South Korea.

progress within them through its practice, let alone awakening (Kim 2011b, 196).

Since the dawn of the 21st century however the Chogye Order has undertaken a variety of efforts to propagate Kanhwa Sōn in South Korea, and yet, a large section of the lay Buddhists in South Korea nowadays seem attracted to the Vipassanā meditation, and besides Buddha-recitation still appears to command considerable support among Korean Buddhists.

Regarding the situation surrounding Kanhwa Sōn in Korean Buddhism, the following query arose within me: Is it possible for Kanhwa Sōn to retain the same reputation and influence it currently has in South Korea? Given the urgency of the situation, is it not vital for Korean Buddhists to revise their recognition and take appropriate steps to promote the status of Kanhwa Sōn in an alternate manner from what they have been doing so far?

The purpose of this research is not limited to the Chogye Order, but is applicable to all Buddhist orders the world over that are intent on amending their methods of meditation. In this article, based on an awareness of the issues involved, I initially introduce the principle of Kanhwa Sōn along with its brief history in the Korean peninsula, then proceed to probe the transformation of the current situation regarding the practice of Kanhwa Sōn in South Korea, and finally suggest a philosophy for Korean Buddhism as a reference regarding the evolution and expansion of Kanhwa Sōn. I finally conclude by introducing a key illustration concerning the adaptation of Zen meditation methods to the new circumstances that had arisen within Korean Buddhism, and concerning which not much light has been shed upon until now in South Korea, namely, the Zen Master Seungsahn Haengwon (嵩山行願, 1927~2004) and the Kwan Um School of Zen.

II. What is Kanhwa Sōn Meditation?

1. The Introduction of Kanhwa Sōn to Korea

Kanhwa Sōn, a Zen meditational method created by Tahui Tsungkao (hereafter Tahui), Zen master of the Sung Dynasty in mid 12th century China, was initially introduced to Korea in the early 13th century by Pojo Chinul (hereafter Chinul), a national Zen master of the Koryo dynasty in Korea. While Chinul resided at the Hermitage of Sangmuju 上無住庵 in Mount Chiri 智異山, he happened on an occasion to peruse the *Tahui Yulu* 大慧語錄,³²⁷ that is, quotations from the Zen master Tahui, and this constituted a turning point in his personal pilgrimage towards awakening. Chinul's encounter with the book also proved a milestone in the development of meditation methods in Korean Buddhism, and his epigraphy aptly describes the situation of that time in the following manner:

327 Its full name is Tahui P'uchüeh ch'anshih yulu 大慧普覺禪師語錄.

It has been 10 years since I came here from the Bomun 普門 temple. I have not wasted any time. I have been obtaining truth and practicing it diligently. It seems as though I have been faced with an enemy at the same place, because there was something heavy upon my chest, crushing my emotions and views. While dwelling in Mount Jiri, I found *Sŏn Master Taihui P'uchüeh Yulu* 大慧普覺禪師語錄, who said: “Sŏn neither exists at a quiet place, nor a noisy place, nor a place where routine actions prevail, nor a place where logic discriminates. However, it is of primary importance to meditate without, expelling a quiet place, a noisy place, a place where routine actions accede and a place where logic discriminates.” At that time, my eyes were suddenly opened, understanding that everything is as household affairs, with which I was united. With this new feeling nothing blocked my chest any longer, nor felt I that I was dwelling together with an enemy. Thus, I abruptly felt comfortable and joyful. Because of this incident, I was respected by sentient beings due to this raised understanding about wisdom. (Kim 1989, 420)³²⁸

Kanhwa Sŏn played a key role in unlocking the gate for the final awakening of Chinul. He designated Kanhwa Sŏn as being the most effective of the meditational methods he had experienced. After his death, Pojo Chinul passed on this message to his successor Chin'gak Hyesim (眞覺慧謙, 1178-1234), who was also a national Zen master. Chin'gak Hyesim played a crucial role in propagating the method in the dynasty by writing numerous Zen books.³²⁹

2. The Principle of Kanhwa Sŏn

It is perhaps necessary as an introduction to briefly investigate the principle of Kanhwa Sŏn. Starting with its literal significance, it may be simply described as the “Sŏn meditation method of seeing a *hwadu* 話頭” since kan 看 just means ‘seeing’. When it comes to *hwadu*, hwa 話 means word and du 頭 is just a suffix. Yet, ‘seeing’ here does not mean merely looking at something simple as in our daily lives, but rather looking at *hwadu* steadfastly enough to reach the stage of consistent equivalence while awakening or sleeping (Kr. *ohm'ae ir'yŏ* 寤寐一如). Hence, Korean practitioners frequently use the expression, “raise a *hwadu*” (Kr. *hwadu rül düld'a*).

In many cases, Kanhwa Sŏn is identified with Kung'an Sŏn 公案禪 (Jp. *Kōan Zen*). Strict analysis however reveals that Kanhwa Sŏn differs from Kung'an Sŏn. Even

328 This is my own translation of the relevant part of his epigraphy written in classical Chinese. The full name of his epigraphy is “Puril Pojo Kuksa P'imyŏng,” which is contained in *Pojo Chŏnsŏ* 普照全書 (The Collected Works of Pojo Chinul).

329 Sŏnmoon Yŏmsong Jip 禪門拈頌集 and Shimyo 心要 is considered as his magnum opus.

though a *hwadu* (“critical phrase”) is selected within a *kung’an*,³³⁰ meditating with a *hwadu* differs from meditating with a *kung’an*. Instead of meditating with a *kung’an* by reflecting on its entire meaning, Tahui tried to create a new meditational method wherein practitioners merely focus on observing a *hwadu* without considering any meaning of it (Buswell 1987, 347). As an expression of his intention of separating from the philosophy of his teacher, Yüanwu Koch’in 圓悟克勤 (1063~1135), he burned the xylograph of *P’iyenlu*, 碧巖錄 the magnum opus of his teacher (T 48.1036b). In this sense, the trait of *hwadu* is by no means normal. Judging from the *hwadu* ‘*mu*’ 無 (Ch. *wu*) that Tahui most frequently used, its uniqueness is easily revealed.

A monk asked Master Chaochou, “Does a dog have the Buddha’s nature?” Master Chaochou answered, “No.” This one word is the sword that breaks down the question regarding life and death (T 48.292c).

In this dialogue Master Chaochou's answering “No” creates a significant impact on the practitioners since it totally contravenes the basic doctrine of Mahāyāna Buddhism, namely that the Buddha-nature exists in all sentient beings (Kr. *ilch’ae ch’ungsang shiryub’ulsōng* 一切衆生, 悉有佛性). In the Kanhwa Sōn meditation, it is required of practitioners to accumulate as much confusion and perplexity as possible. When ordinary people face a *hwadu* for the first time they grow puzzled, the state of which is called *ūijōng* 疑情 (Ch. *iching*) in Linji school terms. Eventually however the main purpose of investigating a *hwadu* is to build the *ūijōng*. When focusing on the word, “*mu*,” people can attain an introspective focus, which makes them head for the source of awakening. This process is called ‘introspect the mind counter-illuminating’ (Kr. *h’oegwang banjo* 廻光返照). Once practitioners recover the inner source of their minds, they come to realize what Master Chaochou’s answer means, thereby realizing the state of awakening.

III. The Circumstances Surrounding Kanhwa Sōn in South Korea

1. The Rise of Vipassanā Meditation

At the beginning of the 21st century, the Chogye Order commenced a variety of efforts to raise public awareness of the Kanhwa Sōn meditation method in South Korea. According to Misan, with increasing global interest in Buddhist meditation, the Chogye Order started reexamining the technical structure of Kanhwa Sōn in the late 1990s (Misan 2007, 250), and this was due to the critique within the order that the basis of Kanhwa Sōn as the main meditation method in South Korea was wavering. This

330 It is commonly translated as “public cases.”

movement was triggered by the Venerable Zen master Sō'ong,³³¹ who declared the necessity of resettlement of Kanhwa Sōn in the Pakyang temple to Buddhist scholars and meditation practitioners in 1998, and since then, leaders of the Chogye Order have started seeking practical means of resettling Buddhist meditation systems in South Korea (Misan 2007, 250).

A major reason for the status of Kanhwa Sōn wavering in South Korea was the rise of Vipassanā meditation. Vipassanā was practiced by certain Korean Buddhist monks and lay practitioners, who in turn had acquired it from Asian countries such as Thailand or Myanmar in the early 1990s, and since then its popularity had expanded significantly in South Korea, a fact that eventually proved a matter of concern for the Chogye Order.

Although there appears to be a degree of mutual opposition between these two meditational methods yet I have no desire to dwell on that issue as it diverges from the main thrust of this article. The dilemma for the Chogye Order is that the practitioners of Kanhwa Sōn failed to expand in terms of number as do those of Vipassanā owing to difficulties in the meditational methods employed, even for monastics. Joo describes the situation as follows:³³²

Even after many years of effort, these practitioners confessed to experiencing no significant progress in their practice, let alone any breakthroughs. Their personal frustration with Kanhwa Sōn eventually led them in search of an “alternate” meditation method (Joo, 2011, 625)

Books played a decisive role in diffusing Vipassanā meditation in South Korea, and as domestic appeal in the subject began to mount a variety of books by American teachers as well as South Asian monastics started to make an appearance in bookstores (Joo, 2011, 624), and likewise the translation of the Nikāyas from Pāli to Korean intensified its impact. From the early 21st century onwards scholars and monastics who had studied Theravāda Buddhism abroad began introducing books after translating the Nikāyas from Pāli to Korean, such as Dr. Jōn J'aesōng, president of Korea Pāli Text Society and two monastics, namely Kangm'uk and T'aerim, who launched the Center for Early Buddhist Scriptural Studies. While underscoring the fact that the Pāli texts contained original meditation teachings of Śākyamuni Buddha, they further reinforced the allure of Vipassanā meditation.

331 He was one of the most revered Zen masters in South Korea, having been the 5th Supreme Patriarch of the Chogye Order between 1974 and 1980.

332 He is not only a Buddhist scholar teaching in the US, but also a Korean monk practicing Kanhwa Sōn himself. It is worth noting that his analysis is based on his personal practicing experience in the Chogye Order as well as his scholarship.

Other than the factors mentioned above, the inherent merits of the Vipassanā meditation also played a pivotal role in its dispersion in South Korea. One of the merits of Vipassanā is the fact that it enables easy approach for a practitioner, since it involves awareness of changes in their bodies. On the contrary, Kanhwa Sōn practitioners are obliged to be equipped with a potent religious question concerning a *hwadu*, something that is not easily accessible, and some practitioners experience hardships due to the fact they cannot acquire questions despite having received a *hwadu* from their Zen master. The reason why the MBSR (Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction) program, which has the same methodological basis as Vipassanā, may be dispersed widely in the West, is due to the fact that it is composed of activities such as observing the occurrences within their bodies, without being bound by religious concepts.

2. Prevalence of Buddha-recitation (Buddhānussaati) in Korean Buddhism

Although to overemphasize the significance of Kanhwa Sōn in the history of Korean Buddhism is doubtless an impossibility, yet what prevails most among lay Buddhists in South Korea is not Kanhwa Sōn but Buddha-recitation. One may easily assert that in the history of Korean Buddhism meditation with Kanhwa Sōn was termed the Difficult Way (Kr. *Nanhaengdo* 難行道), while Buddha-recitation was the Easy Way (Kr. *Yihaengdo* 易行道), owing to the fact that it is far more difficult for lay Buddhists to practice Kanhwa Sōn than Buddha-recitation.

On the other hand however, in the case of Buddha-recitation, many lay Buddhists have been drawn by it due to its simplicity and effects. Since Buddhist orders linked to Pure Land Buddhism practice Buddha-recitation as their characteristic method, one might consider it natural on their part to stress its worth. Yet, what is remarkable here is that even monks of the Chogye Order who insist on their identity as a Zen Buddhist order, tend to accentuate the gravity and value of Buddha-recitation.

It was due to efforts of highly acclaimed monks who had underscored its noteworthiness that Buddha-recitation came to play a strategic role in the spread of Korean Buddhism. For example Wonhyo (元曉, 617~686) who is viewed as one of the most influential figures in the history of Korean Buddhism, created a method of practice for Buddha-recitation and assisted lay Buddhists in using it effortlessly, while Wonmyo Yose (圓妙了世, 1163~1245) who was a contemporary of Chinul, added a method of practice for Buddha-recitation based on the Tientai philosophy.

In this fashion, a variety of new endeavors linked to Buddha-recitation pioneered a new meditation method called 'Buddha-recitation Zen' (Kr. *Yōmbulsōn* 念佛禪). Zen Buddhism targeted awakening on the basis of one's own efforts, whereas Pure Land Buddhism pursued rebirth in the land of Sukhavati by relying on Amitabha Buddha's desire for Salvation. These two concepts that were generated within the same religious tradition, have wholly dissimilar views of each other. Nevertheless however,

the mutual encounter of these extremes gave rise to a new method of meditation, namely Buddha-recitation Zen.

In Korean Buddhist history it was T'aego Powoo (太古普愚, 1301~1382) who united Kanhwa Sŏn and Buddha-recitation in a specific way of practice. On the basis of the fact that Chinul had embraced diverse ways of Zen philosophy, Buddha-recitation etc., T'aego Powoo progressed methodologically and combined the recitation of Amitabha Buddha with Kanhwa Sŏn as a way of practicing Zen (T'aego 680a), thereby asserting the value of the Pure Land as Mind-only (Kr. *Yushim Jŏngto* 唯心淨土), and denying the existence of the land of Sukhavati (Kr. *Sŏbang Jŏngto* 西方淨土).³³³ That is, he converted Buddha-recitation into a type of Kanhwa Sŏn practice, not by reciting Amitabha Buddha in the land of Sukhavati, but by reciting Amitabha Buddha in one's self-nature (Kr. *J'asŏng Mita* 自性彌陀).

While Buddha-recitation practice has been widespread in Korean Buddhism, Buddha-recitation Zen has a much smaller number of followers. However, it is a fascinating case of a combination formed based on the love for Buddha-recitation, in the Kanhwa Sŏn-centered tradition.

IV. For the Future of Kanhwa Sŏn in South Korea

1. Democratization of Awakening

In Korean Buddhism, awakening has been regarded as occurring mainly for monastics, and besides not all monastics attain awakening. It is believed that merely a small number experience awakening by practicing Kanhwa Sŏn, because awakening is viewed as a far-off realm. For this reason, lay Buddhists tend to find it difficult to practice Kanhwa Sŏn and prefer rather to have a bystander's point of view.

In addition, Dharma talks by highly respected monks who claim to have attained awakening, are frequently filled with vocabulary hard for common people to understand. In Zen Buddhism, it has been recognized that transmitting Dharma is a realm only for the awakened, since Gautama Buddha communicated the Dharma to his disciple Kaśyapa via a special method of esoteric transmission (Kr. *Kyow'oe Byŏljŏn* 教外別傳), or by the so called transmission of mind through mind (Kr. *Yishim Jŏnshim* 以心傳心). Hence, some Buddhist scholars try to explore the "rhetoric" hidden in Dharma talks.³³⁴

If so, is attaining awakening, which is greatly emphasized in Korean Zen Buddhism, a realm too hard to reach? However, going back to the period of Gautama Buddha, the attainment of Arhats was not as difficult as what has recently come to be

333 In the history of Korean Buddhism, the hermeneutic approach to the Pure Land is divided into two: the perspective of the Pure Land of Mind-only (Kr. *Yushim Jŏngto* 唯心淨土) and the perspective of denying the existence of the land of Sukhavati (Kr. *Sŏbang Jŏngto* 西方淨土).

334 For more information, see Faure, 1991.

perceived in Korean Buddhism. For example, in the time of Gautama Buddha, Moggallāna, Sāriputta and their approximately two hundred and fifty followers became Arhats, shortly after they had entered Buddha's order (Schumann 1989, 95).

At this stage, I would like to introduce the concept of 'democratization of awakening' to Korean Buddhism, and especially to the Chogye Order. Aware of the harmful effects of the caste system in his days, the Buddha accepted everyone, regardless of their position within the caste system. This attitude was the embodiment of his philosophy, namely that the gate of awakening is open to everyone, and this became the philosophical basis that made Buddhism a world religion.

In the similar way, it was 'democratization of Zen' that Tahui emphasized in proposing a new method of Zen (Choe 2010, 24). He desired to produce a Zen method different from that of Wentzu Chan (文字禪), which was too scholarly for ordinary Buddhists to pursue and which was mainly associated with Sung scholars (Buswell 1987, 345). Also, he desired to create a Zen method that differed from Mochao Chan (默照禪), wherein demerit was to make people pursue only self-satisfaction evading their real lives. That is to say, his intention of creating Kanhwa Sōn was linked to the spirit of democratization of Zen. His spirit is well expressed in the following quotation.

“If there are any specific people destined to obtain awakening and a special Dharma to enable people to achieve awakening, this is an evil way, deviating from the Right Way 道. ... Just swear to every Buddha: Please let me return the immense favor of yours by succeeding to the Dharma lineage, realizing the right wisdom, forgetting life and death under a word of a kalyamitra, depending upon every Buddha's benevolence and power without retrogression. If you continue to do this for a long time, there is no reason not to be awakened.” (T 47.916c)³³⁵

Hence, it is necessary that the notion wherein the gate of awakening is opened to everyone is prevalent in Korean Buddhism. That is, both monastics and lay Buddhists need to recognize the fact that the realm of awakening is not too sacred for lay Buddhists to reach. Nonetheless however, it is worth noting that according to the *Sutta-nipāta*, Gautama Buddha taught that monastics in a *sangha* have advantages over those who live with families, because monastics can devote their entire energy to the practice (Sök 1993, 59).

2. Rethinking the Zen Master Seungsahn

As mentioned earlier, since the beginning of the 21st century the Chogye Order has striven to propagate Kanhwa Sōn worldwide. Nevertheless I say the outcome

335 This is my own translation of the relevant part written in classical Chinese.

has not been satisfactory, the reason being that the Chogye Order has experienced great hardship in the popularizing of Kanhwa Sŏn even in their homeland, not to mention globally. Yet, I wish to declare that they have not noticed an important achievement generated within their *sangha*: namely the Zen Master Seungsahn Haengwon (hereafter Seungsahn), and the Kwan Um School of Zen founded by him.

Beginning with the establishment of Hongbŏpwon (弘法院)³³⁶ in Japan back in 1966, Seungsahn achieved the great result of teaching over 50,000 disciples, by founding about 120 Zen centers in 32 countries for 35 years (Jŏngd'ae 2000, 25). Since 1983, the international community of Hongbŏpwon has been renamed the Kwan Um School of Zen (觀音禪宗).³³⁷ Many of his foreign disciples have visited South Korea, in order to learn Korean Buddhism and practice Buddhist meditation, and after his death, as many as 500 foreign disciples participated in his cremation ceremony that was held in the Sudŏksa temple at Yesan, South Korea, on December 4, 2004 (Hŏ 2004, A26). As is well known in the Korean Buddhist community, he is regarded as one of 4 living Buddhas in the world, the others being the Dalai Lama, Thích Nhất Hạnh, and Maha Ghosananda.

Despite his efforts to propagate Korean Buddhism on a global scale Seungsahn's contribution has been undervalued in Korean Buddhism, one of the reasons for this being that many Korean Buddhist monks and scholars believe he introduced the practice of the Japanese Rinzai sect, when he commenced teaching Zen meditation in the Kwan Um School of Zen in the United States.³³⁸ He named the system "Ten Gates," and the name subsequently changed to "Twelve Gates." The Kwan Um School of Zen still maintains the same practice in their Zen centers around the world.

Korean Buddhism takes great pride in the success of the original form of the Kanhwa Sŏn tradition, and yet the receiving of a Japanese meditational method is viewed negatively. Additionally, Seungsahn's endeavors to introduce a Japanese meditational method to the Korean Buddhist community created a feeling of uneasiness due to the brutal acts of Japanese imperialism during the Japanese colonial period, as well as for their having demolished the Korean Buddhist tradition by seeking to Japanize it by coercion.

Seungsahn himself displayed significant anti-Japanese sentiments, and was accordingly incarcerated for his participation in the Korean independence movement during his youth. Nevertheless he introduced the Japanese meditational method by incorporating characteristics of Korean Buddhism, namely inclusiveness and flexibility, and hence Korean Buddhists need to judge his behavior from a positive standpoint.

336 It is the name of his Zen center of which the literal meaning is propagating Buddha's teaching widely.

337 <http://www.kwanumzen.org/about-us>

338 For more information about the comparison between 'Ten Gates' and the Japanese Rinzai School's practice system, see Choe, 2012.

One of the six principles of the Buddhist philosophy that Takakusu Junjiro (高楠順次郎) analyzed is “the Principle of Reciprocal Identification” (Takakusu 1975, 57). According to him, Mahayana Buddhism displays a strong tendency of identifying reciprocally adversarial concepts. Korean Buddhism claims for itself this principle of reciprocal identification in the Mahayana tradition. If so, the behavior of Seungsahn in fulfilling one of the essentials of the Mahayana tradition, could be regarded as a proper approach.

In addition, Seungsahn took an innovative step whereby the structure of the Kwan Um School of Zen was divided into four levels, regardless of any separation based on gender or the monks/laity status of its members. This was an effort to remove discrimination by way of gender and status, which could be viewed as an endeavor to adapt Buddhism to the West. However, as his achievement was similar to what Sanbo Kyodan (三宝教団) had attempted prior to Seungsahn while in the process of propagating Zen in the West; it was not something monopolized by him. Nevertheless, his achievement is meaningful in the sense that a *sangha* based on Korean Buddhism attempted destroying discrimination by way of gender and monk/laity status, something never attempted in Korea prior to Seungsahn.

IV. Conclusion

On September 15, 2011, the Korean Zen master Jinje (b.1934) delivered a Dharma talk at the World Kanhwa Sŏn ceremony held at Riverside Church in New York, and before a crowd of 2000 he declared that Kanhwa Sŏn, the core of the spiritual culture of the East, is a wonderful meditation method that makes people awaken their true self, transcending all religions and ideologies of the world, which is a step in promoting world peace (Vigeland and Robbins 2011, 1). Jinje, the 13th Supreme Patriarch of the Chogyŏ Order³³⁹ also intended to hold the World Kanhwa Sŏn *Mucha* (無遮)³⁴⁰ Buddhist ceremony on May 16, 2015 at Kwanghwamoon square located at the center of Seoul, inviting 300 monks and religious leaders from abroad. On that day a large number of Korean Buddhists were scheduled to gather. As the leading Buddhist leader in South Korea he is doing his best to propagate Kanhwa Sŏn in the world.

One nonetheless gets the impression that circumstances surrounding Kanhwa Sŏn in Korean Buddhism today are not positive. Vipassanā meditation has been expanding its realm since the beginning of the 21st century, and besides a considerable number of lay Buddhists have been meditating mainly using techniques of

339 He became the 13th Supreme atriarch of the Chogyŏ Order on March 2012.

340 The literal meaning of Mucha (無遮) is “there is no discrimination.” The Mucha Buddhist ceremony originated at the time of Ashoka the Great, who invited all people without any discrimination based on caste, gender and so on, providing Dharma talks by monks, property, and food. Thenceforth in China and Korea many emperors or kings hosted similar Buddhist ceremonies. See Kim (2011a, 686).

Buddha-recitation. However, these may not prove to be the principal challenge for Kanhwa Sŏn, since the biggest challenge is generated from within the Korean *sangha* that has been protecting Kanhwa Sŏn practice until today. Many Korean monks who have been practicing the methods of Kanhwa Sŏn have begun to express the hardships they have experienced, and some even criticize the fact that they have had to confront such difficulties without making any progress. This reveals that it is indeed a period of the crisis for Kanhwa Sŏn.

Nevertheless however, it is hard to come across any other country where the nationwide practice of Kanhwa Sŏn has been continuously progressing throughout the entire Buddhist community, for close to a thousand years. Since it is such a well-preserved tradition, its future is not likely to be negative provided necessary alterations are carried out. According to Nishimura Eshin (西村惠信) it is only the school of Hakuin Ekaku (白隠慧鶴, 1685~1768) that has seen prosperity in the history of the Japanese Rinzai school, the reason for which was the “Japanese transformation” carried out under his leadership (Nishimura 2006, 129-130).

Hence, first the Korean Buddhist community and especially the Chogye Order needs to expand the spirit of ‘democratization of Zen’ within their *sangha*, which was Tahui’s philosophical basis at the time of creating Kanhwa Sŏn, and second, the Chogye Order too needs to accept the laity with a more accommodating attitude, as for example by overcoming the tendency of separating members in terms of gender or on the basis of whether they belong to the community of monks or laity. Third, it is necessary to enhance the method of practice adopted by Kanhwa Sŏn, and for all this Seungsahn’s endeavor within the Kwan Um School of Zen could prove a good standard of reference.

References

Buswell, Robert E. Jr. 1987. "Short-cut Approach of K'an-hua Meditation," in *Sudden and Gradual: Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory, 321-377. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press.

Ch'anlin b'äoxùn (禪林寶訓), *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 48.

Choe, Yong Un. 2010. “Pojo Chinul ūi kanhwasŏnkwan e n'aechaedyŏn munj'aejŏm yŏnku” [A Study on the problem in Pojo Chinul (普照知訥)'s perspective of Kanhwa Seon (看話禪)]. *Han'kuk Sŏnhak* [Journal of Korean Seon Studies] vol. 26: 11-44.

_____. 2012. “Seungsahn Haengwon ūi Sŏn s'asang kwa suh'aengnon” [Master Seungsahn's Seon Thought and Practice Theory]. *Pulkyo Hakbo* [Journal of Buddhist Studies].

Faure, Bernard. 1991. *The Rhetoric of Immediacy: A Cultural Critique of Chan/Zen Buddhism*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hö, Munmyöng. 2004. “Künsünim Karūchim onnuri e: Seungsahn sūnim T’abisik” [The Teachings of the Revered Monastic is everywhere: the Cremation Ceremony of Zen Master Seungsahn] *Tonga Ilbo*, Dec. 6.

Joo, Ryan Bongseok. 2011. “Countercurrents from the West: ‘Blue-Eyed’ Zen Masters, Vipassanā Meditation, and Buddhist Psychotherapy in Contemporary Korea” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 79, No. 3, 614-638.

Jöngd’ae, 2000. “Chuksa: Syegye e Han’guk Sön ūl jönhan Seungsahn künsünim ūi 35 nyönk’an ūi j’ach’ui,” [Congratulatory Message: The trace of Zen Master Seungsahn for 35 years during which propagated the Korean Zen in the world] *Syegye Ilhwa 1-Kanün kotm’ada künsünim ūi usüm*, Seoul: Pulkyo Chuchusa.

Kim, K’unsoo. 1989, “Süngpyöngboo Chogyesan Susönsa Puril Pojo K’uksa P’imyöng Pyöngsö” [The Epigraphy of the National Zen Master Pojo Chinul] in *Pojo chönsö* 普照全書, ed. Pojo sasang yöngwön, Seoul: Puril Ch’ulp’ansa.

Kim, Keelsang., ed. 2011a, *Pulgyo T’aesajön* [The Encyclopedia of Buddhism], Seoul: Puljisa.

Kim, Nami. 2011b, “Kk’aedarüm kwa Yölban ūi sangkwan kwan’gye?” [The Relation between Awakening and Nirvana] *Pulgyo P’yöngnon* 46, 195-213.

Misan. 2007. “Kanhwa Sön kuj’ehwa ūi jönm’ang kwa kwaje-Kanhwa Sön kuj’ehwa wih’ae muössöl öttötke halköshinka?” [The Prospect and Task of Globalizing Kanhwa Sön-What and How are we Supposed to do?] *Kanhwa Sön Suh’aeing ūi Söngchal kwa Kwaje*, Seoul: Chogyejong Chulpansa.

Nishimura, Eshin. 2006. “Ilbon Kanhwa Sön ūi jöntong kwa pönyong” [The Tradition and Transformation of Japanese Kanhwa Sön], *Pojo Sasang*, Vol. 25, Seoul: Pojosasang Yönkuwon, 105-152.

Takakusu, Junjirō. 1975. *The Essentials of Buddhist Philosophy*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers Private Limited.

Schumann, H.W. 1989. *The Historical Buddha*, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers

Sök, Jihyun trans. 1993. *Sutta-nipāta*, Seoul: Minjoksa.

Taihui P'uchüeh ch'anshih yulu (大慧普覺禪師語錄), *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 47.

T'aego Ŏrok (太古語錄), *Han'guk Pulgyo Jōnsō*, 6.

Vigeland, Finn and Robbins, Quinton. 2011. "South Korean Buddha visits Riverside Church" *Columbia Daily Spectator*, Sep. 16.

Wuwenk'uan (無門關), *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 48.

An Inculturation of Faith in Practice: The Thai Catholic Use of Royal Words

By

Wajira Nampet, SJ

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is partly to reflect upon the author having become a Thai Catholic, after having led the life of a Buddhist for over 25 years. In particular, it is a reflection by the author on the period before his conversion to Catholicism, with regard to prayers and the Holy Scriptures. It was an article by a missionary to Thailand that inspired this reflection, an article that contained the following words: *Using royal words to address the Christian God in prayers and to include them in the Bible as well as religious literature, would have created a distance between God and the people.* Hence, this paper primarily intends to show that using “Thai royal words” in such religious contexts in the same manner that Thai Buddhists and Hindus utilize and enjoy them in their religious literature, is one of the means by which culture has played a suitable role in expressing deep faith in God by the Thai Catholics, in terms of reverence, adoration, devotion, intimate relationship and love. The Catholic use of royal words originated in the Royal Kingdom of Thailand, where they were merely used with reference to kings, Hindu Gods and the Lord Buddha. Catholics used them to address the Christian God in the Holy Scriptures and Prayers.

Scheme and Structure of the Paper, Reflection and Presentation:

A qualitative research method of content analysis was employed, and in reflection, the Thai historical-cultural background that consists of three mutually related points was analyzed, as follows:

First, the history of Thailand in brief, the development of the Thai monarchy, and concept of Thai kingship (which were adapted and adopted from Hindu gods);

Second, the cultural background in connection with a general concept of using royal words and its application in the cultural and religious context;

Third, the history of the Catholic Church in Thailand and adaptation of royal words in prayers and religious literature, to address God;

Finally, a presentation of both the positive and negative aspects arising from the usage of these royal words and the pastoral perspectives was carried out, and this serves as the concluding section of the paper.

I. A Brief History of the Kingdom of Thailand, Development of the Thai Monarchy, and Concept of Thai Kingship

The history of the kingdom of Thailand or Siam as the nation was called until

the 1940s, falls into four distinct periods:

First, the *Dvaravati* period that lasted from the 6th to 13th century, dealt with the Thais who had gradually migrated from southern China into the fertile Chao Phraya river basin.

Second, the *Sukhothai* period, which emerged as a beginning of the nation from the 13th and 14th centuries, when the Thais rejected the authority of the Khmer empire centered in Angkor (present-day Cambodia).

Third, the *Ayutthaya* period (14th to 18th century). This was when Thailand rose to become the central kingdom of Southeast Asia.

Fourth, the *Bangkok* period, (from the mid-18th century to the present). Here the Thais, arising from their devastated kingdom rebuilt their country into a modern state.

Development of the Thai Monarchy and the Concept of Thai Kingship

The Buddhist ideal of kingship after the Indian Emperor *Asoka* inspired many Southeast Asian monarchs. This emperor, who was considered the ideal Buddhist monarch, sent missionaries to the surrounding regions during his reign in the 3rd century B.C.

Briefly, the ideal Buddhist monarch is a *King of Righteousness* who abides by the ten kingly virtues of piety, liberality, charity, freedom from anger, mercy, patience, rectitude, mildness, devotion, and freedom from enmity.³⁴¹

Since the establishment of Sukhothai, the Thai monarchs have directed the development of the Thai nation with a firm yet benign hand. Formerly a Thai monarch was known as a *Lord of Life*, for they wielded absolute power. The Sukhothai kings observed exclusively the formalized Buddhist science of kingship, and they were both paternal and accessible to their people.

During the Ayutthaya period (1350-1767), the Thai kings adopted the practice of divine kingship. The *Ayutthaya* kings embraced the Brahman concept of divine kingship to increase to a highly structured and distinguished position in terms of ritual, way of living, language and other elements. Thus, the Ayutthaya kings on coronation were invested with the trappings and ceremonies of Brahmanic rituals, and retitled with the names of Hindu gods. For example, *Ramathibodi*, the founder of Ayutthaya derived his name from *Rama*, the re-incarnation of the Hindu God *Vishnu* and the hero of the Indian epic *Ramayana*. Likewise, kings of the Bangkok period were all named after the God Vishnu, as Rama.³⁴² *King Ramathibodi* specifically invited eight Brahmans from the Hindu holy city of *Benares* (present-day Varanasi) to preside over and legitimize his coronation, and their descendants still consist of Brahmans who conduct ceremonies in

³⁴¹ These kingly virtues are considered as partly qualities of the Christian God.

³⁴² This idea has led Thai Catholics to compare him to Jesus Christ, the incarnation of God the Son.

the Thai royal court until the present day.

Gradually, the lives of the Ayutthaya kings assumed supernatural eminence. Universally they were viewed as being without equals and residing above the law, authentic strongmen who held the power of life and death over their subjects. The Ayutthaya kings appointed all officials, owned all lands and their contents, including the people. Their unique positions were sustained by the elaborate court etiquette, language (royal words), ceremonies, and protocol, with which they surrounded themselves. The individuals themselves were considered as literally sacred. Commoners were forbidden to look upon them, touch them, or even mention their names in public.³⁴³ They ruled through a rigid hierarchy of intermediary courtiers, chamberlains, ministers, and court officials. Being a law unto themselves, the great Ayutthaya kings were powerful leaders who led the country as innovators, warriors, statesmen, and scholars.

During the Bangkok period, the revolution of 1932 ended absolute monarchy and curtailed the political power of kings, but the revolution, however, did not in any way reduce the respect of the people towards them, nor downgrade their role to that of mere figureheads. The monarchy is now as much a cohesive force as it ever was. It is not easy for foreigners to understand the full extent of the Thai people's respect for the royal family, since there is no real parallel elsewhere in the world. There are of course other constitutional monarchs, but none of them function in the same way as in Thailand, where the king is still a shaper of national welfare and one who continues to exercise a strong guiding influence in real and positive terms.

The present monarch, *King Bhumibol* or *King Rama IX*, works tirelessly for the on-going prosperity of his people. While the King sets the model of an enlightened constitutional monarch, he also reigns as Head of State, Upholder of Religions, and Head of the Armed Forces. In consequence a certain amount of the old royal ceremonial persists along with a remarkable degree of the same public prestige as enjoyed under the rule of absolute royal power. The King is popularly held to be sacred and nonviolent. His portrait is commonly seen in homes, offices, schools, and public buildings, and many royal state occasions still draw enormous public interest. The King of Thailand has enabled the symbol and the person to be uniquely combined within the role of monarch.

II. Cultural Background: The Nature and Development of Royal Words in the Thai Language and Application of Royal Words in the Cultural and Religious Context

The Nature and Development of Royal Words in the Thai language

1. The General Concept of the Thai Language

³⁴³ It is, in some ways similar to the concept of the Jewish God.

The Thai language as spoken by the people of Thailand in its original structure, is to a certain extent comparable to Chinese. Fundamentally the language is monosyllabic in its formation of words. The Thais later absorbed polysyllabic *Sanskrit* (the classical language of the Indian Hindu) and *Pali* words, when *Brahmanism* and *Theravada Buddhism* exerted their shaping influences. In adopting Pali, Sanskrit, and Khmer words, the Thais enriched themselves with many expressions of these words in their varied shades of meaning and conception. Generally speaking, the Thai spoken grammar is simple. The basic structure of Thai sentences is *subject-verb-object*, with adjectives following nouns. In many cases verbs can be changed into nouns with the use of a prefix. Each Thai word is complete inasmuch as there are no Thai suffixes, genders, articles, declensions or plurals, and standard auxiliaries indicate tenses.

Written Thai employs an alphabet of 44 consonants and 32 vowels that combine to form syllabic sounds. The sounds are combined with five different tones to fashion a melodious and complex language. Because of a richly diverse origin, there are seventeen ways of saying *I*, as for example, *kha-phra-chao*, *chan*, *phom*, *ku*, *attama*, etc., and nineteen ways of saying *You*, such as *than*, *khun*, *mueng*, *thoe*, etc.

2. The Nature and Development of Royal Words

No sooner had royal words developed, than the Thai kings adopted the practice of divine kingship during the Ayutthaya period. Along the line of developing the kingship, hierarchy, which classified the status of people in Thai society, had been automatically created. The unique positions in each class were sustained by their way of living, language, custom, and other factors. The said four classes are the *Royalty*, *Ecclesiastics*, *Royal Officials*, and *Lay People*. In terms of language, different classes use different pronouns, different qualifying nouns, and verbs, because Thai pronominal structure illustrates rank and intimacy. In effect, there are four different languages, namely the royal language, ecclesiastical language, the language of high-ranking royal officials, and the vernacular for commoners (including an earthly pungent slang and a polite everyday usage). In fact, within each of the four languages there are still over 10 usages adopted in each class, depending on rank or position. (See Table 1):

Table 1: A Comparison of Thai Words

English	Royal Words	Ecclesiastic	Royal Official	Vernacular
I	<i>Kha-phra-phut-tha-chao</i>	<i>At-ta-ma</i>	<i>Kra-phom</i>	<i>Chan, Phom</i>
You	<i>Pha-phra-bat</i>	<i>Phra-khun-chao</i>	<i>Than</i>	<i>Khun, Thoe</i>
Die	<i>Sadet-sawan-na-khot</i>	<i>Mo-ra-na-phap</i>	<i>Thung-kae-kam</i>	<i>Tai</i>
To Eat	<i>Sa-woey</i>	<i>Chan</i>	<i>Rap-pra-than</i>	<i>Than, Kin</i>
Chair	<i>Phra-thi-nang</i>	<i>At-sa-na</i>	<i>Thaen, Thi-nang</i>	<i>Kao-i</i>

The most atypical of the four languages is the royal language, *ra-cha-sap*. Royalty use special words for ordinary actions and parts of the body, such as “eat” (*sa-woey*), “walk” (*dam-noen*), “sleep” (*ban-thom*), “hand” (*phra-hat*), “hair” (*phra-ke-sa*), “feet” (*phra-bat*), and so on. These words are mainly of Khmer, Sanskrit, and Pali origin. Of the rest, a fair number are Thai words that have been coined so as to differentiate them from ordinary words. For instance, to convert a common word into a royal word, a prefix *Phra* is added in the case of nouns, and a prefix *Song* in the case of verbs. Hence, *Kao-i* (chair) becomes *Phra-kao-i* as a royal word and *Wing* (to run) becomes *Song-wing* as a royal word. This is one among the various rules for the usage of royal words.

Application of Royal Words in the Cultural and Religious Context

1. The Royal Words in Thai Culture and Religion

Classical Thai for the most part originated in or under the patronage of the Royal court. Classical culture is reflected in classical poetry, literature, drama, painting, sculpture, and architecture. Early literature primarily concerned religion (Hinduism and Buddhism), and until 1850 it was in verse form.

- a) Hinduism: Here the most important Thai literary work is the *Ramakien*, a uniquely Thai version of the Hindu epic *Ramayana*, which was also a source of inspiration for classical dramatists and painters. Here Indian poetic styles provided patterns for Thai verse, which was written exclusively by the aristocracy or royalty.
- b) Buddhism: Here royal words were used in all Thai poetry and literature, even in religious literature such as the *Maha Chat Kham Thet*, the story of the Lord Buddha in His last but one birth on earth before He attained Buddhahood.
- c) Thai Culture: Both classic and folk dramas staged stories drawn from Thai written literature, which enabled the royal words to be widely comprehended by all classes of people.

Hence, Thai literature and dramas indirectly conveyed the lifestyle of the royalty to the people, and the stories inspired people to love, respect and honor the king through the themes themselves. It may hence be said that royal words are not foreign to the Thais.

2. The Royal Words in the Thai Way of Living

In the Thai way of life, the structural principle represented in microcosmic scale in the house and village can be seen extendedly up to its full complexity in the organization of the nation at large. Once more, the factor of superiority, age, status or achievement prevails over all else as the criterion for respect, which is shown by means of language. The royal language is the means to express the unique relationship between the king and his subjects in Thai culture.

Above all, respect for His Majesty King Bhumibol the present king is evident in photographs hanging in schools and offices, where one finds short sentences or verses in the royal idiom expressing loyalty to the king, for instance *Song-phra-chaleoen* (Long live the King). Even in motion picture theaters the king's picture is projected on to the screen, in accompaniment to the Royal Anthem that is composed in royal words. Furthermore the king is the head of the Thai national family, and one of the traditional names for the monarch is in fact, *Po-Mueang* or *Father of the Nation*.

There is probably no western equivalent for the respect Thais feel for their king. Many villagers for instance who have received gifts from the hands of the king, regard this as the singular event of their lives. When they speak to the king or make conversation regarding the king, they use suitable royal words. Thai affection has in large part been inspired by the king's involvement with his people, a concern evidenced by the multitude of projects he has initiated on their behalf during his more than 60 years of rule. It has also been heightened by his increasing personal contact with them. Devoting himself to public service, King Rama IX (*King Bhumibol*), has brought the monarchy to full circle, making himself accessible to his subjects. King Bhumibol is traditionally revered as the symbol of the universe on which ideal *Buddhist kingship* is modeled, and is recognized as Thailand's moral leader. Throughout Thai history and especially during the Bangkok period, Thai kings (such as those from Rama I to Rama IX) have wholly revealed their *Chakravatin* ideal to the people. Hence the relationship between the Thai king and his subjects is part of the Thai way of living, of which, one of the various means of expression lies in the usage of royal words.³⁴⁴

III. A Brief History of the Catholic Church in Thailand and Adaptation of Royal Words in Holy Scriptures and Prayers Addressed to God.

History of the Catholic Church in Thailand

Portuguese and Spanish missionaries of the Dominican, Franciscan, and Jesuit religious orders introduced Christianity into Thailand in the 16th and 17th centuries, and the growth of the mission was evident during the reign of *King Narai* (1655-1688) of the Ayutthaya period, who opened the country to foreigners and granted all liberty to the missionaries to preach the gospel. This policy of *King Narai* was to counterbalance the influence of those countries, because the period of maritime discovery was also a period of colonization.

According to the Thais, the object of the foreigners in coming to Thailand was to make profit and acquire the benefits of trading, and perhaps also colonize Thailand and make it part of their empire. Hence, the Thais did not trust the foreigners, and this

³⁴⁴This relationship is in the same manner as that of Yahweh and the Israelites.

attitude was generalized and extended to missionaries as well. Moreover, the revolution of 1688 and the persecution in the time of *King Phra Phetracha* (1688 -1703) were events not really suited or benign for evangelization. Due to his opposition to the French the king persecuted Christians, and when the second persecution occurred during the reign of *King Thay Sra* (1709-1733), missionaries were prohibited from leaving the capital and barred from using Thai and Pali in teaching religion. Also, evangelization of Thais was forbidden, and debate or criticism of Buddhism in order to spread the Good News was prohibited. These were the king's orders, and they were recorded on a stone placed in front of St. Joseph's Church in Ayutthaya.

Nonetheless, in 1767, Christianity was affected once more by the invasion of Burma and fall of Ayutthaya, and consequently St. Joseph's Church was burned down and many Christians led away to Burma. However, during the Bangkok period the state of the mission recovered. Catholic missionaries were able to enjoy once again a good rapport with the nation, and some who earlier had been obliged to depart from the country, returned once more during Bangkok period.

In 1848, during the reign of *King Rama II (King Buddha Loetla Nabhalai)* of Bangkok, links between Buddhists and Catholics were seriously ruptured, because a certain bishop published a book entitled *Putcha Wisatchana* (Questions and Answers), which sharply criticized Buddhism. The government ordered a halt to the distribution of the books and warned missionaries of detention if they did not comply.

However, in 1856, during the reign of *King Rama IV (King Mongkut)*, a treaty was established with France which granted freedom to the Thais to follow the religion of their choice, as well as to the missionaries to preach, construct a seminary, found schools and hospitals, and the facility to travel within the country. This provided the missionaries with great zeal and enthusiasm to propagate Catholicism, because since the Ayutthayan period until this time, no such freedom had been granted. During the reign of *King Rama IV (King Mongkut)*, his ingenious diplomacy ensured the fact that Thailand alone remained independent, while neighboring countries were feebly toppled by the powerful tides of 19th century colonialism.

King Rama V (King Chulalongkorn) also braced Thailand's singular autonomy by initiating social reforms imperative for robust modernization. Hence, the aspirations of Thailand to proceed along the course of progress and modern civilization enabled the Bishop of Bangkok to realize that the mission should offer assistance and cooperation. Consequently, he inspired responses in the fields of education and health care, as well as in the use of the printing press for missionary work. Since then, the Catholic Church's mission has been mounting rapidly in a variety of ways. When describing the Church to outsiders, both clergy and lay leaders begin by stressing the fact that their members are a minority. Even though there were merely around 292,000 Catholics (in 2013), which represents 0.46% of the total population of Thailand, as a minority group Catholics do

not manifest signs of inferiority. Rather, they are vigorous and project an influence over society that transcends their numbers.

Over 90% of Thailand's population is Buddhist in varying degrees. The Thais tend to identify nationhood with Buddhism, namely, one country, one religion, and one king. However, with regard to Buddhism, the Catholic Church has resisted attempts to inculturate. They view as Buddhist any Thai culture motif or aspect that Christians may desire to integrate, in expressing their faith. Sadly however, the Catholics were accused of stealing from Buddhism in a bid to win followers, in terms of adopting and adapting Thai traditions and customs in certain Christian religious practices. This attitude forced the Church to postpone efforts towards further *inculturation* of the Christian faith.

Inculturation of Faith in Practice: Adaptation of Royal Words in Religious Literature and Prayers to Address God

1. Characteristics of Royal Words Used in the Thai Sense

There are certain key aspects taken from an analysis of the Thai historical and cultural background that reveal the unique features of royal words used in a Thai sense, in terms of the relationship between the addressee and addressers.

a.) Throughout the history of Thailand, Thai kings adopted the ideal Buddhist monarch *Chakravatin*, a king of righteousness who abided by the ten royal virtues (as mentioned earlier in section I), and the ideas of divine kingship which made Thai kings become sacred and incarnated from God, to rule their earthly kingdom. These ideas encouraged their subjects to grant totally submissive respect to their kings. Their loyalty was deeply rooted in the hearts of the Thai people by the protection experienced by the kings' rule over their kingdom, for their prosperity, peace, and happiness, which had been granted to them by their kings for over 700 years. Royal words were thus introduced for use with regard to the kings because of their uniqueness in this aspect. Besides, Thai kings were also viewed as almighty, because the lives of the people and fates were absolutely in their hands, but at the same time they were regarded as being so kind and moral that they served as models for holy men according to the five Buddhist precepts as stated earlier.

b.) During the Sukhothai period Thai Kings ruled their people as heads of families using a father-child association, and this unique feature which is practiced even in the present day, reveres the king as the *Father of the Nation*. This father-child relationship has been concretized by the king's personal contact with his people. Thus the Thai people love their kings, and it is a love not motivated by authority but from their heart. Hence, using royal words with reference to kings reveals the inner or deeper devotion as between a father and children, in terms of love, reverence, honor, and gratitude.

2. Adoption of Royal words in the Thai Catholic Church

Thai Catholics have doubtless personally experienced life as subjects of the Thai king, and it cannot be denied that such a bond between the king and the people is something unique in their lives. At the same time though, they have acquired a religious experience of who God is, and the affinity between God and themselves. Interestingly, the qualities of a king as a person of righteousness, a Buddhist *Chakravatin* monarch, and as *Rama* (a Hindu God), are partly those of the Christian God. Also, Thai Catholics refer to these kingly qualities in order to visualize or evoke God through their deep faith in personal prayers (conversations with God) and religious literature, such as Holy Scripture and formulated prayers, so as to keep in close touch with God. Accordingly, in addressing God royal words are spontaneously and intuitively elicited from their hearts either consciously or subconsciously as personal prayers, and hence it appears to them that such words are better suited for prayer than others. Hence, Bibles, religious material, and prayers use royal words, wherever or whenever they refer to God.

In the Gospel, however, Jesus' use of the very intimate non-royal word *Abba* for God (Mt. 14:36), was advocated for use in addressing God in personal relationships. For the non-Thai, this aspect may lead some to get the idea that using royal words could create a distance between God and the people. This may be true in the case of non-Thai cultures, but as explained in earlier sections, royal words are essential expressions of the unique relationship the Thais have to their king (namely the relationship of a father to his children). Thus, *Abba* (Dad) and *Phra-bi-da* (*Almighty Father*) for instance, convey the same filial connotation for Thai Catholics, since the father-child bond is hidden or concealed in the expression of royal words.

3. Examples of the use of Royal Words in Religious Literature and Prayer

This section presents excerpts from the Holy Scriptures and three well-known prayers, namely the *Lord's Prayer*, *Hail, Mary*, and *Come Holy Spirit*, in order to illustrate the use of royal words in religious contexts.

As explicitly stated in an earlier section there are characteristically three types of Thai royal words, namely:

- (a) Some distinguished words of Pali, Sanskrit, and ancient Khmer origin that generally have a prefix *Phra* (a particle used for Thai royals and noble titles) for noun terms.
- (b) Common Thai words or words having some Sanskrit origin that can be converted into regal terms by adding a specific prefix (as for example by adding *Song* to signify a royal action to any verb, or *Phra* to make regal any noun or pronoun).
- (c) Some particular nouns among the royal words, which by adding the prefix *Song* become royal verbalized terms.

3.1 Excerpts from the Holy Scriptures: Genesis, Psalms and the Gospel of Matthew

The following twelve examples are excerpts of certain verses from the Book of Genesis, the Psalms, and the Gospel of Matthew, which demonstrate how the Thai Catholic Church utilizes royal words in the Holy Scriptures. The selected royal words are underlined in the English version, while they are italicized and accompanied by phonetic pronunciations in parenthesis in the case of the Thai version, and concise explanations of those words are accordingly provided.

(1) Gen. 1:1– In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

ในเริ่มแรกนั้น(พระเจ้า(Phra-Chao)(ทรงเนรมิต(Song-ne-ra-mit)(สร้างฟ้าสวรรค์(และแผ่นดินโลก”

Explanation:

พระเจ้า (*Phra-Chao*) literally means god. It is a combination of a prefix *Phra* and a common noun *Chao* (*lord, master, superior, royal*). This term can be used as a prefix *Phrachao*, if added to any royal title or name, it is to signify the highest rank or noble title, namely the king, queen, or the king’s children who were only born of the queen.

ทรงเนรมิต (*Song-ne-ra-mit*) literally means *to create by a supernatural power or magic*. This word is exclusively used for a creative act of a god or goddess. It is composed of a prefix *Song* and a Sanskrit origin word *Neramit* (*to create or change by magic; to transform something by magic*).

(2) Genesis 2:16: And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat...”

และพระเยโฮวาห์พระเจ้า(Phra-Yehowa-Phra-choa)(ทรงมีพระดำรัสสั่ง(Song-mi-Phra-damrat-sang)(มนุษย์นั้นว่า(“จากบรรดาต้นไม้ทุกอย่าง(ในส่วนเจ้ากินได้ทั้งหมด...”

Explanation:

พระเยโฮวาห์พระเจ้า (*Phra-Yehowa-Phra-choa*) is a proper name of the Jewish and Christian God from the Old Testament, *Yahweh*. It literally means *the Lord God*.

ทรงมีพระดำรัสสั่ง (*Song-mi-Phra-damrat-sang*) is by itself a compound royal word, which refers to a royal act of verbally commanding. *Phra Damrat* (a noun of Sanskrit origin) means *a spoken word*; *Sang* means *to command or order*.

(3) Psalm 141:1 I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

ข้าแต่พระเยโฮวาห์(ข้าพระองค์(Kha-phra-ong)ร้องทูลต่อ(Rong-thun-to)

พระองค์ (Phra-ong) (ขอทรงรับตอบ) ข้าพระองค์ (Kha-phra-ong)
ขอทรงเงี่ยพระกรรณ (Song-ngea-Phra-kan) (สดับเสียงข้าพระองค์)
เมื่อข้าพระองค์ร้องทูลต่อ (Rong-thun-to) (พระองค์ (Phra-ong).

Explanation:

ข้าพระองค์ (Kha-phra-ong) literally means *(I am) a servant of your majesty*. It refers to a first person *I* that is used when addressing or speaking to a second or third person who is the king, queen or a high-ranking member of the royalty.

พระองค์ (Phra-ong) literally means *Your majesty*, which is composed of a prefix *Phra* and a royal term *Ong (body)*, referring to the second or third person of the royals.

ร้องทูลต่อ (Rong-thun-to) is used when a commoner or a person who is of a lower rank in the royal line makes a request or begs a favor from the king or queen.

ทรงเงี่ยพระกรรณ (Song-ngea-Phra-kan) is by itself a compound royal term (verb). It literally means *to pay attention or listen carefully*. *Phra-Kan* refers to *royal ears* (with a Sanskrit origin).

(4) Mt. 1:1 Roll of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham

หนังสือลำดับพระวงศ์ (Phra-wong) ของ พระเยซูคริสตเจ้า (Phra-Yesu-Khrit) โอรส (O-rod) ของกษัตริย์ดาวิด (ผู้ทรงสืบตระกูล (Song-suep-trakun) มาจากอับราฮัม

Explanations:

พระวงศ์ (Phra-wong) literally means *royal family or a genealogy of the royalty*. It is a word made regal derived by adding a royal noun-prefix *Phra* to a common noun *family (Wong)*.

พระเยซูคริสตเจ้า (Phra-Yesu-Khrit) or *Pra-Yesu* refers to *Jesus Christ*. When a noun-prefix *Phra* is added to a person's name, that person becomes royal or holy, that is, a king, a queen, a prince or a princess, Rama, etc.

โอรส (O-rod) is a Sanskrit word, which means a *son of a royal* as a noun, and *to be a son of* as a verb. In fact, the prefix *Phra* is usually added to this term, *Phra-O-rod (a royal son)*.

ทรงสืบตระกูล (Song-suep-trakun) means *to be an heir of the royalty*. It is a word made regal, derived from a combination of a royal verb prefix (*Song*) and a common verb *to success (suep-trakun)*.

(5) Mt. 1:16 And Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ.

ยาโคบเป็นบิดาของโยเซฟ (พระสวามี (Phra-sa-wa-mi) ของ พระนางมารีย์

(Phra-nang-Ma-ri)(พระเยซูเจ้าที่ ขาน พระนาม (Khan-Phra-nam)ว่า
"พระคริสตเจ้า") ก็(ประสูติ((Pra-sut) จากพระนางมารีย์ผู้นี้"

Explanation:

พระสวามี (*Phra-sa-wa-mi*) is a *royal husband* composed of a prefix *Phra* and a Sanskrit word for husband (*sa-wa-mi*).

พระนาม (*Phra-nam*) means a *royal name* (a prefix *Phra* added to a common word *Nam* (name). *Khan-Phra-nam* is to be called so and so...

ทรงประสูติ (*Song-pra-sut*) or **ประสูติ** (*Pra-sut*) refers to *being born* which is a combination of *Song* a verb prefix that has been made regal, and a Sanskrit term *Pra-sut* (*be born*). *Pra-sut* is in fact a royal word by itself, but when *Song* is added, it is to signify a hierarchy (a higher rank or title).

(6) Mt. 3: 16 And when Jesus had been baptized he at once came up from the water, and suddenly the heavens opened and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming down on him.

เมื่อพระเยซูเจ้าทรงรับ(*Song-rup*) พิธีล้างแล้ว(เสด็จ (*Sa-det*) ขึ้นจากน้ำ(ท้นไถ่นั้นท้องฟ้าเปิดออก(พระองค์(*Phra-ong*) ทรงเห็น (*Song-hen*) พระจิต (*Phra-chit*) ของ (*Khong*) พระเจ้า (*Phra-chao*) เสด็จ (*Sa-det*) ลงมา เหนือ(พระองค์ (*Phra-ong*) ดุจนกพิราบ

Explanation:

ทรงรับ (*Song-rup*) means *to receive; to get or accept something from someone*. In this context, it refers to *receive (baptism)*.

เสด็จ (*Sa-det*) is a royal word by itself. It is an ancient Khmer verb, which means *to proceed; to go or come; to descend; to move forwards*. It can be a royal pronoun that refers to the second or third person who is of a higher rank of the royal family, directly related to the king due to an official duty, or a favorite, and thus has been granted a title of *Somdet* (like Duke or Duchess).

พระองค์ (*Phra-ong*) means *Your Majesty*. It is composed of a prefix *Phra* and *Ong* (*body*), referring to the second or third person in royal words.

ทรงเห็น (*Song-hen*) means *to see* (a combination of a prefix *Song* and a common verb *hen* (*to see*)).

พระจิต (*Phra-Chit*) literally means *royal heart or spirit or mind*. **พระจิต ของ พระเจ้า** (*Phra-Chit-Khong-Phra-chao*) thus means *god's mind, spirit or soul* in general. It exclusively refers to the Holy Spirit in this context. Also see (1).

(7) Mt. 4:18-19 As he was walking by the Lake of Galilee he saw two brothers, Simon, who was called Peter, and his brother Andrew; they were making a cast into the lake with their net, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, 'Come after me and I will

make you fishers of people.’

ขณะที่ทรงดำเนิน (*Song-dam-noen*) ไปตามชายฝั่งทะเลสาบกาลิลี(**พระองค์** (*Phra-ong*) **ทอดพระเนตร** (*Thot-phra-net*)(เห็นพี่น้องสองคน(**คือซีโมนที่เรียกว่าเปโตร**(กับอันดรูว์น้องชายกำลังทอดแหอยู่ในทะเลสาบ(**เพราะเขาเป็นชาวประมง**(**พระองค์** (*ทรัส* (*Trat*)’ **แก่เขาว่า**(‘**จงตามเรามาเถิด**(**เราจะทำให้ท่านเป็นชาวประมงหามนุษย์** ’ ”

Explanation:

ทรงดำเนิน (*Song-dam-noen*) refers to *walk or go*. *Dam-noen* is an ancient Khmer term.

พระองค์ (*Phra-ong*) refers to a royal person who will perform a particular action (here it is the third person). Also see (6).

ทอดพระเนตร (*Thot-phra-net*) means *to see or look at something*. It is a royal term by itself. *Phra-net* is a royal eye. *Net (eye)* is a Sanskrit term.

ทรัส (*Trat*) is an ancient Khmer verb, which means *to speak or say*. This is a royal term by its origin.

(8) Mt. 7:21 “It is not anyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

มิใช่ทุกคนที่กล่าวแก่เราว่า ("**พระเจ้าข้า** (*Phra-chao-kha*) **พระเจ้าข้า**") **จะเข้าอาณาจักรสวรรค์**(**แต่ผู้ที่ปฏิบัติตาม**(**พระประสงค์** (*Phra-pra-song*) **ของพระบิดา**(*Phra-Bida*) **ของเรา ผู้ทรงสถิต**(*Song-sathit*) **ในสวรรค์นั้นแหละจะเข้าได้**

Explanation:

พระเจ้าข้า (*Phra-chao-kha*) is an acclamation to call upon or call to attention, and an affirmative answer of *yes* to a royal person.

พระประสงค์ (*Phra-pra-song*) refers to a wish or desire of the higher rank of the royals.

พระบิดา (*Phra-Bida*) literally means a royal father, which is composed of a prefix *Phra* and a respectful term *Bida* (father). In this context, it refers to *God, the Father*.

ทรงสถิต (*Song-sathit*) is a royal word by itself. *Song-sathit* (*to live in the upper regions or spiritual dwelling*). It refers thereby to royal actions, existence or presence in the highest place in heaven after death, or the place where gods exist. If to be present or live in a palace, *Song-prathap* (*to live, to stay*) is used.

(9) Mt. 14:19: He gave orders that the people were to sit down on the grass; then he took the five loaves and the two fish, raised his eyes to heaven and said the blessing. And breaking the loaves he handed them to his disciples, who gave them to the crowds.

พระองค์ (*Phra-ong*)(**ทรงสั่ง** (*Song-sang*)(**ให้ประชาชนนั่งลงบนพื้นหญ้า**(**ทรงรับ**

(*Song-rup*)(*ขนมปังห้าก้อนกับปลาสองตัวขึ้นมา(ทรงแหงน((*Song ngaen*)(*พระพักตร์* / (*Phra-phak*) ขึ้นมองท้องฟ้า(ทรงกล่าวถวาย((*Song-klao-thawai*)(*พระพร* ((*Phra-phon*) ทรงบี((*Song-bi*)(*ขนมปังส่งให้(บรรดาศิษย์(ไปแจกแก่ประชาชน*”*

Explanation:

พระองค์ (*Phra-ong*). Also see (6 & 7)

ทรงสั่ง (*Song-sang*) refers to a command or an order of the royals. The full term can be *Song-rup-sang* (to order, command and direct).

ทรงรับ (*Song-rup*). Also see (6)

ทรงแหงน (*Song ngaen*)(**พระพักตร์** (*Phra-phak*) is a royal movement of the head upward or face upward in order to look up or see something from above. *Song-Ngaen* means *to see something up there*, *Pra-phak* (face) is by itself a royal term of Sanskrit origin.”

ทรงกล่าวถวาย (*Song-klao-thawai*) **พระพร** (*Phra-phon*) refers to *humbly and honorably making words (klao-thawai) of praise or blessing (phra-phon) of a royal to another royal.*

ทรงบี (*Song-bi*) literally means *to break into small pieces.*

(10) Mt. 16:21 From then onwards Jesus began to make it clear to his disciples that he was destined to go to Jerusalem and suffer grievously at the hands of the elders and chief priests and scribes and to be put to death and to be raised up on the third day.

ตั้งแต่นั้นมา(พระเยซูเจ้าทรงเริ่ม((*Song-roem*) แจกแก่บรรดาศิษย์ว่า(**พระองค์ / (*Phra-ong*)(**จะต้อง(เสด็จ((*Sa-det*)****

ไปกรุงเยรูซาเล็มเพื่อรับการทรมานอย่างมากจากบรรดาผู้อาวุโส(มหาสมณะและธรรมอาจารย์(จะถูกประหารชีวิต(แต่จะทรงกลับคืน((*Song-klap-khuen*) **พระชนม์ชีพ (*Phra-chon-chip*)(**ในวันี่สาม**”**

Explanation:

ทรงเริ่ม (*Song-roem*) refers to *taking an initiation of doing something, beginning or start.* It is a combination of a prefix *Phra* and a common verb *Roem* (*to start; to begin*).

พระองค์ (*Phra-ong*) and(**เสด็จ** (*Sa-det*). Also see (6).

ทรงกลับคืน (*Song-klap-khuen*) refers to *returning from some state or place, turning back to an original physical position.* It is composed of a prefix *Song* and a common verb *Klap-khuen* (*to return, become, go back to, or come back from*).

พระชนม์ชีพ (*Phra-chon-chip*) refers to the royal life. It is a royal term by itself with a Sanskrit origin. **ทรงกลับคืน** (*Song-klap-khuen*) **พระชนม์ชีพ** (*Phra-chon-chip*) means *to come back to life from death*, while *Song-Sin* (*to end*)-*Phra-chon-chip* (*life*) literally refers to a state of death. Also see (11).

(11) Mt. 27:50: But Jesus, again crying out in a loud voice, yielded up his spirit.

แต่พระเยซูเจ้า(ทรงเปล่งเสียง((Song-pleng-siang) ดังอีกครั้ง(แล้ว(สิ้นพระชนม์
(Sin-phra-chon)

Explanation:

ทรงเปล่งเสียง (Song-pleng-siang) literally means *to utter out loud*. It is composed of a prefix *Song* and a common verb *Pleng-siang* (*to utter in a loud voice*).

สิ้นพระชนม์ (Sin-phra-chon) is a royal term which means *being dead*. Actually, the full term is *Song-Sin (to end)-Phra-chon-chip*. Also see (10).

(12) Mt. 28:18-19 Jesus came up and spoke to them. He said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, make disciples of all nations; baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.”

พระเยซูเจ้าเสด็จ((Sa-det)(เข้ามาใกล้(ตรัส((Trat)(แก่เขาทั้งหลายว่า(
พระเจ้าทรงมอบ((Song-mop)

อำนาจอาชญาสิทธิ์ทั้งหมดในสวรรค์และบนแผ่นดินให้แก่เรา(เพราะฉะนั้น(

ท่านทั้งหลายจงไปสั่งสอน(นานาชาติ(ให้มาเป็น(ศิษย์ของเรา(

ทำพิธีล้างบาปให้เขา(เดชะ((De-cha)(พระนาม((Phra-nam)(พระบิดา((Phra-bida)(
พระบุตร((Phra-but)(และพระจิต((Phra-chit)

Explanation:

เสด็จ (Sa-det) Also see (6) and **ตรัส** (Trat), Also See (7).

ทรงมอบ (Song-mop) literally means *to give; entrust; bestow; delegate; or grant*. It is a combination of a prefix *Song* and a common verb *Mop* (*to give or entrust*).

เดชะ (De-cha) is a preceding term to salute, welcome or greet a royal before addressing the words. Also, it refers to the expression: *May it please Your Majesty*. It is somehow like *Hail* in English. *De-Cha* literally means *power; mighty, authority or supremacy*.

พระนาม (Phra-nam). Also see (5).

พระบิดา (Phra-bida) refers to *God the Father*. Also see (8).

พระบุตร (Phra-but) literally means *a son of the king*. It is composed of a prefix *Phra* and an honorable term *But* (*son*). In this context, it refers to *God the Son, Jesus Christ*.

พระจิต (Phra-chit) refers to *the Holy Spirit* in this context. Also see (6).

3.2 Three Popular Prayers: The Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary, and Come Holy Spirit

The following three prayers are frequently used in the Catholic Church both officially and privately. The selected royal words are underlined in the Thai version and phonetic pronunciations. The succinct explanations of those key words are provided in accordance with the number given to the line of the verses.

a) **The Lord's Prayer (Kha-Tae-Phra-Bida)**

The English Version (Klein, 2000):

*Our Father who art in heaven,
Hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come,
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us,
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen.*

The following is the Thai version in the Thai script (using an official Roman Catholic version of Prayer, 1978):

- (1) ข้าแต่พระบิดาของข้าพเจ้าทั้งหลาย(พระองค์(สถิตในสวรรค์
- (2) พระนาม(พระองค์จงเป็นที่สักการะ("
- (3) พระอาณาจักรจงมาถึง"
- (4) ขอให้ทุกสิ่ง(เป็นไปตามน้ำพระทัยในแผ่นดินเหมือนในสวรรค์"
- (5) ขอประทาน(อาหารประจำวันแก่ข้าพเจ้าทั้งหลายในวันนี้"
- (6) โปรดยกโทษแก่(ข้าพเจ้า"
- (7) เหมือนข้าพเจ้ายกให้ผู้อื่น"
- (8) อย่าปล่อยให้(ข้าพเจ้าถูกประจญ"
- (9) แต่โปรดช่วยให้พ้นภัย(อาแมน"

Phonetic Transcription (Using the Royal Thai general system of transcription of the Thai Royal Institute):

*Khatae phrabida khong khaphrachao thang lai phra-ong sathit nai sawan
Phranam phra-ong chong pen thi sakkara
Phra-anachak chong ma thung
Kho hai thuk sing pen pai tam namphathai nai phandin muean nai sawan
Kho prathan a-han prachamwan kae khaphrachao thang lai nai wann
Prod yokthot khaphrachao
muan khaphrachao yok hai phu-uen
Ya ploi hai khaphrachao thuk phachon
Tae prod chuai hai phon phai Amen*

Explanation:

- (1) *Phra-bi-da (God, the Father)*: *Phra* is a prefix added to any common Thai word (noun), or Pali or Sanskrit word, to innovate a royal word. *Phra* is also a noun

referring to the Lord Buddha, or a royal name in brief.

Kha-phra-chao, an abbreviation of *kha-phra-phut-tha-chao*, which literally means *a servant of Lord Buddha* is used for an addresser who refers to self when he or she addresses the king or gods.

Thus, *Our Father* is a combination of terms derived from *Phrabida* (*God, the Father*) *khong* (*of*) *Khaphrachao* (*I*) *thang lai* (*all of* – an adverbial plural collection suffix).

Phra-ong (*Your majesty*) is composed of a prefix *Phra* and *Ong* (*body*), referring to the second or third person in the royal words.

Sa-thit (*to live in the upper regions or spiritual dwelling*) refers to royal actions or presence in the highest place like a palace or heaven.

Sa-wan (*heaven, paradise*) is a Sanskrit word, referring to the place where gods, angels, deceased kings, and holy men or women live.

(2) *Phra-nam* means *royal name*, composed of *Phra*, and *Nam* (*name*).

Sak-ka-ra (*to pay homage to; to worship*) is used for the king and sacred things or persons.

(3) *Phra-a-na-chak* literally means *a royal kingdom*.

(4) *Nam-pha-thai* means *royal will* while *pha-thai* literally refers to the *royal heart* and thus *Nam-pha-thai* refers to *royal disposition, sympathy, kindness, and clemency*.

(5) *Pra-than* (*to give, confer; to bestow*) with a word *kho* (*to beg, plead or beseech*) refers to humbly asking the king to grant the petitioners what they lack or need, but without any obligation towards them.

b) The Hail, Mary (*Wantha Maria*)

The English version (Klein, 2000):

Hail, Mary, full of grace

The Lord is with thee

Blessed art thou amongst women,

and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.

Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners,

now and at the hour of our death. Amen.

The Thai version with Thai script (A version of Bishop Louis Chorin):

(1) **วันทามาริอา(เปี่ยมด้วย(พระพรขทาน("**

พระเจ้า((พระสวามี)(สถิตกับท่าน"

(2) **ผู้มีบุญกว่าหญิงใดๆ"**

และพระเยซู(โอรส(ของท่าน(ทรงบุญนิกหนา"

(3) **สันตะมาริอา(มารดาพระเจ้า"**

โปรดภาวนาเพื่อเราคนบาป("

บัดนี้และเมื่อจะตาย(อาแมน”

Phonetic Transcription (Using the Royal Thai general system of transcription of the Thai Royal Institute):

(1) *Wantha Maria piam duai phra-hatsathan*

Phrachao (Phra-sawami) sathit kap than

(2) *Phu mi bun kwa ying dai dai*

lae Phra Yesu o-rod khong than mi bun nakna

(3) *Santa Maria Phra-manda khong Phra-chao*

Prod phawana phuea rao khon bap

Bat ni lae muea cha tai Amen

Explanation:

Mary is the Mother of God, of Jesus Christ. For Thais the royal words addressed to her are known as *Phra-Nang-Maria*.

(1) *Wan-tha* (to salute, to greet) is used for the king, queen, or a sacred object, or person.

Phra-hat-sa-than is a combination of the prefix *Phra* and *Hatsathan* (grace), which literally means *a royal gift of gladness and rejoicing*. In fact, the word *Phrahatsathan* is innovated by the Catholic Church based on the rules applied for royal usage.

Phra-sa-wa-mi generally means in Thai usage, *royal husband*. As a matter of fact, based on the root of the word in Pali and from Hinduism, it refers to *lord, master, owner, supremacy*, etc. Originally, Bishop Louis-August Chorin, Vicar Apostolic of Bangkok (1947-1965) who composed this version intentionally translated it from the word *Dominus and Lord* in the sense of *God the Father* and not *God the Son*. To avoid misconception the word *Phra-chao* (God) is popularly replaced and widely used instead.

(2) *Phra-Ye-su* refers to the name of Jesus in Thai. A prefix *Phra* is added to make royal a person's name. *O-rod* and *Phra-o-rod* both mean royal son. The former is used in this prayer.

(3) *Phra-man-da*, which literally means *the mother of the king or the queen or of the royal children*, is a combination of *Phra* and *Man-da* (mother).

This prayer does not apply a royal word to Mary's name, *Phra-nang Maria*. *Phra-nang* is a royal title placed before female names, and it refers to the queen or a high-ranking princess. There is a reason, however, to omit the royal title of Mary in this prayer. The words *Wantha* and *Santa* which precede Mary's name indicate an equivalent status if they refer to Mary as a holy person in a religious sense.

c) **Come, Holy Spirit (Choen Sadet Ma Phrachitchao)**

The English Version (Klein, 2000):

- (1) *Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful*
- (2) *And kindle in them the fire of your love.*
- (3) *Send forth your Spirit, and they shall be created.*
- (4) *And you shall renew the face of the earth.*
- (5) *O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful,*
- (6) *Grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy*
- (7) *His consolations through Christ, Our Lord. Amen.*

The Thai version with Thai script (using an official Roman Catholic Prayer version of 1978):

- (1) **เชิญ(เสด็จมา) พระจิตเจ้าข้า เชิญมาสถิตในดวงใจสัตบุรุษ**
- (2) **และบันดาลให้เราร้อนด้วยความรักต่อพระองค์**
- (3) **โปรดส่งพระจิตของพระองค์ และสรรพสิ่งจะอุบัติขึ้นมา**
- (4) **แล้วพระองค์จะนิรมิตแผ่นดินขึ้นใหม่”**
- (5) **ข้าแต่พระเป็นเจ้า พระองค์(ทรง)สอนใจสัตบุรุษ ด้วยความสว่างของพระจิต**
- (6) **ขอให้เราซาบซึ้งในความเที่ยงตรงด้วยพระจิตนั้น**
- (7) **และให้ได้รับความบรรเทาจากพระองค์เสมอ เดชะพระคริสตเจ้า อาแมน**

Phonetic Transcription (Using the Royal Thai general system of transcription of the Thai Royal Institute):

- (1) *Choen sadet ma Phrachitchao kha choen ma sathit nai duang chai sattaburut*
- (2) *lae bandan hai raoron duai khwam rak to phra-ong.*
- (3) *Prod song Phrachit khong phra-ong lae sapphasing cha u-bat khuen ma*
- (4) *Laeo phra-ong cha nimit phandin khuen mai*
- (5) *Khatae Phrachao phra-ong (song) son chai sattabutut duai khwam sawang khong Phrachit.*
- (6) *Prod hai rao sap sueng nai khwam thiang trong duai Phrachit nan.*
- (7) *lae hai dai rup khwam banthao chak phra-ong samoe Amen*

Explanation:

- (1) *Sa-det* (to go, to come, to proceed) is a term referring to a king proceeding. *Phra-chit-chao* (the Holy Spirit) is composed of *Phrachit* (royal heart or spirit) and word *Chao* (a suffix added to a certain name or noun so that it refers to royalty, prince, or lord), which the Catholics innovated for the special purpose of referring to the *Holy Spirit* by using the rules of creating a royal word.
- (2) *Ban-dan* (to ordain, to predestine, to destine) is used by the one who has power

and authority such as God, a king, queen, prince, etc. to perform an act, as for instance creation. Note that this word was added in the Thai version only.

(3) *U-bat* (to occur, to happen) is a word that refers to a divine or kingly act in a process or the result of action(s) as such.

(4) *Ni-mit* or *Ne-ra-mit* (to create) is an exclusive word for God's power, used in literature.

(5) *Song-son* (to teach, to instruct) is combined with *Song*, a prefix to make royal a common verb and *Son* (to instruct). In royal words, a prefix *Song* is always added to the main verb in order to indicate a royal action. But, in this prayer, *Song* was omitted.

Also, this Prayer to the Holy Spirit uses royal words, but not every word because the rhyming of the prayer needs to be preserved. Even though this prayer does not apply royal words in some places, the nuances still refer to God or a king because they are used only in literature, as for instance, *choen ma sathit*, which literally means *please come to exist*, while *choen ma song sathit*, a royal word, conveys the same meaning. Even without the word *Song* the former is never used in ordinary language, and thus it is exclusively used for God.

Conclusion:

In the concluding section of this paper three viewpoints are presented, namely the advantage aspect, the disadvantage aspect, and the pastoral perspective, arising from the use of the royal words in prayers.

The Advantage Aspect

The royal language used in Thai culture has been one of the unique means of communication between the king and his subjects throughout Thai history since the 12th century. The language itself is the official but at the same time sentimental expression of an interior and deeper relationship of the addressor to the addressee, in terms of respect, loyalty, love, paternal nature, and gratitude. This language cannot be used to address people other than the royalty.

Furthermore, the king being the center of unity of the royal kingdom of the Thai people, using common language to address him is unacceptable to Thais because it is against their true feelings and perception regarding Thai kingship. Additionally, the concepts of gods from Hindu literature, as for example the *Ramayana*, and the history of the Lord Buddha, as for example the *Theppachoa* or *Theppayada* (lit. heavenly gods) are not foreign to Thai people. Those gods are also considered as royalty. Since Royal terms are fitted to and attributed to such beings, Thai Catholics would find it complex and vexing to use common language in addressing God, that is, using words other than those that are royal.

Moreover, since God is a Supreme and Divine Being who is most revered and almighty, such words would be fitting to Him as well. Thai royal words are imbued with meaning, much more than lesser words. Hence they are best suited to address God in the Thai Catholic faith, especially in prayers. Thus when Jesus referred to God as *Abba*, what He said did not in effect differ from the word *Phrabida* in the Thai royal language.

The Disadvantage Aspect

Royal words naturally tend to make sentences long. For example, saying *God walks*, in everyday Thai is *Phrachao doen*, while in the royal language it is *Phrachao sung sadet phraratchadamnoen*. A single word may be composed of at least five to ten syllables, if we do not abbreviate any word. Another hurdle in using words of royalty is in the similarity of sound, which could result in incorrect communication. For instance, *Phra-ong* (your majesty) and *Kha-phra-ong* (*I* or literally *a servant of your majesty*) can confuse listeners. Besides, to use royal language correctly one needs also to have a good education, because there are many rules of usage and grammatical viewpoints.

The Pastoral Perspective

Thai grammar is partly adapted from Sanskrit and Pali, which for many Thais are still difficult to learn and use properly, even for the educated. Usage of the royal language is similarly even more complex. In the literature of the Catholic Church, even though royal words are widely used to address God in the Holy Scriptures and religious literature, mistakes often occur and have evidently been found regarding proper usage of grammar and patterns. For example, though it is unnecessary to prefix some of the royal verbs, yet this is generally done for non-royal verbs, with *Song*, and also certain royal nouns with *Phra*, in order to convert them into royal words. The rules of *Rachasap* (royal terms) must be followed strictly and carefully, as otherwise they may become redundant, and in some cases may even be offensive towards the dignity of the reigning monarch or state.

Moreover, since the origin of the royal language is derived from the Buddhist concept of monarch and Hindu ideas of divine-kingship, some of the royal words are not suitable for God in the Catholic faith. For instance, the word *Kha-phra-chao* is an abbreviation of *Kha-phra-phut-tha-chao*, which literally means *a servant of Lord Buddha*. This word however is used in the *Lord's Prayer*, which is indeed a grave error, since for Catholics God is not the Lord Buddha. However, if the Catholic Church was more aware of such issues as cited above, Thai Catholics would understand and benefit from using words of royalty in prayers and religious literature, just as Thai Buddhists do with regard to their religion (whether from Buddhism or Hinduism).

In conclusion, using royal words to address God in the Thai Catholic Church, especially in prayers and in the Holy Scriptures, is an example illustrating the fact that

faith is embodied and expressed in and through culture. This aspect should be analyzed systemically and in detail to affirm the fact that the Catholic faith can be propagated very well in Thai society, which is rooted in Buddhism and partly Hinduism. What is more, to perceive and appreciate the values of Thai culture and apply them wisely in the Catholic Church would indeed serve as an advantage with regard to Inculturation, which is emphasized in the documents of the Second Vatican Council.

References

Books:

1. Catholic Biblical Association of America. (1970). *The new American bible*. New York: Catholic Book Publication.
2. Chumsriphan, Surachai. (1990). *The Great Role of Jean-Louis Vey, apostolic Vicar of Siam (1875-1909), in the Church History of Thailand during the Reformation Period of King Rama V, the Great (1868-1910)*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Rome.
3. Hoskin, John. (1987). *A guide to Thailand: The Kingdom of Siam*. Bangkok: Asia Books.
4. Klein, Peter. (2000). *The Catholic source book: A comprehensive collection of information about the Catholic Church* (3rd ed.). Orlando: Brown-Roa.
5. Manuel, Augusto L. (1994). Thailand: Small church big mission. *World Mission*, April-May: 22-34.
6. Rajadhon, Phya Anuman. (1963). *Essay on Thai folklore*. Bangkok: Duang Kamol.
7. The Office of the Prime Minister. (1979). *Thailand into the 80's*. Bangkok: Author.
8. The Office of the Prime Minister. (1990). *Thailand in brief*. Bangkok: Thai Wattana Panich.
9. The Thai Royal Institute. (1989). *Royal Thai general system of transcription*. In an official publication of the Thai Royal Institute, January 11, 1989: Bangkok: Author.

Websites:

1. Bangkok Archdiocese. (2014, December 25). *General Knowledge about the Gospels: the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*. Retrieved from <http://www.catholic.or.th/archive/gospels/matthew/> Catholic Online. (2014, December 25). *Bibles: New Testament (Matthew)*. Retrieved from <http://www.catholic.org/bible/>

2. Pope, Philip. (2014, December 25) *Thai Bible King James Version*. Retrieved from <http://www.thaipope.org/webdual/index.htm>

Contemporary Buddhist Social and Political Activism in Asia

By

Noel Sheth, SJ

This article depicts various contemporary forms of Buddhist social and political activism in Asian countries. While tracing the roots of this modern Buddhist social and political activism to traditional Buddhism, the article also shows how traditional Buddhist doctrines have been applied or reinterpreted in order to bring about social transformation. We conclude with a short analysis of the similarities and differences of perspectives among the various forms of Buddhist activism and also make a brief comparison with Christian activism.

Contemporary Buddhist activism for social justice in Asia arose in response to colonialism, war, social injustice and poverty (King 1996b: 401). We shall make a quick tour, starting with predominantly Theravāda countries and then moving on to countries where Mahāyāna is more prevalent. In each activist's case, I will discuss two aspects: (a) the individual's social activism, (b) the Buddhist background or principles harnessed by that activist and/or the reinterpretation of some traditional Buddhist doctrines.

I. INDIA

Let me start with India, where Buddhism originated. Here I shall concentrate on Dr. Ambedkar (1891-1956).

(i) Social Activism

As a child Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar experienced many humiliations of the rigid caste system: he was thrashed for drinking water from a public water source, the village barber refused to cut his hair, and in school the teachers did not want to be polluted by coming in contact with his notebooks or his person, so that water was poured into his mouth without touching him (Keer 1971: 12-15). In spite of all odds, Ambedkar rose to become a highly accomplished person, earning a doctorate from Columbia University, New York, and another doctorate from the University of London. Later in his life he started and edited newspapers, founded and taught in colleges, and held high offices. And yet he was frequently subjected to ill-treatment by caste Hindus: he was evicted from his rented house, beaten up and received death threats. He realized that the only way for low-castes and outcastes to better their lot was a mass movement of social revolution (Queen 1996: 49).

Ambedkar emphasized that, according to the Buddha, “worth and not birth was the measure of man” (Ambedkar 1992: 306, [III.IV.2.5]). He launched a scathing attack against the caste system that dehumanized the depressed classes, who were called untouchables. He strongly disagreed with Gandhi on the subject of class and caste

(Ambedkar 1989: 15-17, 27-96). Although he felt that inter-caste marriage was an effective way of abolishing caste, he thought that this would not take place unless the authority of the Hindu sacred texts is itself questioned and denied for it was these sacred texts that taught the caste system (Ambedkar 1989: 67-69). He wanted that the so-called untouchables be treated with equal human dignity as anyone else. He led various types of mass marches to gain access to drinking water from wells that were prohibited to untouchables, and to gain entry into temples, which were out of bounds to them. He held mass meetings to conscientize them, started and edited newspapers to promote their cause and founded colleges for their education. He even founded a political party (Namishray 2003: 115-118). When he became a Buddhist in 1956, in a period of thirty-six hours half a million people had converted to Buddhism under his leadership (Queen 1996: 54-55).

To his followers, Ambedkar is a Second Manu and a Bodhisattva³⁴⁵ (Queen 1996: 46), whose memory is kept alive with the celebration of his *jayanti* and whose death is referred to as a *parinibbāna*. In 1990, Ambedkar was posthumously awarded the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award.

(ii) Buddhist Background and Reinterpretation

There is ample support in the Pāli Buddhist Scripture for Ambedkar's criticism of the caste system. The Buddha challenged the caste claims of Brahmins, proposed arguments against the caste system and asserted that all humans were equal. He gave an ethical reinterpretation of the caste system: a Brahmin is anyone who is wise and virtuous; an outcaste is anyone who is wicked (Sheth 1982: 23-26).

On the other hand, Ambedkar either does not accept some of the traditional teachings of Buddhism or reinterprets them. He wonders whether the formulation of the Four Noble Truths, one of the cardinal doctrines of Buddhism, is a later addition by the monks and not part of the Buddha's original teaching. He thinks that these noble truths are pessimistic and do not offer hope to human beings, for everything is sorrow. In his judgment "this formula cuts at the root of Buddhism" and constitutes "a great stumbling block in the way of non-Buddhists accepting the gospel of Buddhism" (Ambedkar 1992: Introduction). In his presentation of the Buddha's First Sermon, Ambedkar narrates that the Buddha declares that the kernel of the Buddhist religion (*dhamma*) is human beings, and the relation of human beings to other human beings in their life on earth. And this was the Buddha's first postulate [= truth] (Ambedkar 1992: 121 [II.II.2.15-16]). This is very different from the traditional scriptural formulation of the first noble truth, which states that there is suffering. Traditionally, the second noble truth states that the cause or condition of suffering is ignorance and craving, but for

³⁴⁵ On Bodhisattva see Sheth 2010: 183-187.

Ambedkar, the second postulate affirms that there is suffering and poverty among humans and the removal of this suffering is the only goal of Buddhism; nothing else is Buddhism (*dhamma*) (Ambedkar 1992: 121 [II.II.2.17]); he asserts that, according to the Buddha, the root-cause of all suffering in the world is the continuous “conflict between classes” (Ambedkar 1992: 57-58 [I.II.6.8]). In another passage Ambedkar mentions greed as the cause of lack of contentment, that is, suffering, but he quickly gives it a social twist by asserting that the Buddha condemned craving because it results in “blows and wounds, strife, contradiction and retorts; quarrelling, slander and lies. That this is the correct analysis of class struggle there can be no doubt. That is why the Buddha insisted upon the control of greed and craving.” (Ambedkar 1992: 239-240 [III.III.4.7-14]).

Similarly, Ambedkar rejected the Buddhist theory of rebirth, in the sense of ‘transmigration’, that is, just as a light from one lamp does not transmigrate when another lamp is lit or a verse does not transmigrate from a teacher to a student who is taught that verse, so too there is no rebirth in the sense of transmigration. Ambedkar found it contradictory that Buddhism did not believe in a soul, and yet believed in *karman* (results of past deeds) and rebirth (Ambedkar 1992: Introduction). According to him, the Buddha believed in the rebirth of the four material elements of which the body is composed, namely, earth, water, fire and air. However, since these elements that are reborn are not necessarily from the same dead body (Ambedkar 1992: 330 [IV.II. 2. 7-14]), it was “most improbable” that the Buddha believed in the rebirth of the same sentient being (Ambedkar 1992: 333 [IV.II.3.2-5]). Furthermore, the Buddha’s understanding of the law of *karman* was quite different from that of Hinduism, not only because Buddhism denied the existence of the soul, but also because for the Buddha *karman* had its effect only on the present life, and not on future life. The Buddha did not teach such a doctrine of *karman* having an effect on future life; it was introduced into Buddhism later on by someone who wanted to make Buddhism similar to Hinduism. Another, and more pernicious, reason for this “inhuman and absurd doctrine” was “to enable the state or the society to escape responsibility for the condition of the poor and the lowly.” (Ambedkar 1992: 337-344; 348-349 [IV.II.II.1 – IV.II.II.3; IV.II.IV.1-29]).³⁴⁶ In other words, for Ambedkar, the theory of *karman* and rebirth was invented in order to attribute the cause of the suffering of the untouchables and the poor to misdeeds in their past lives; however, the real reason for their suffering was due to the exploitation by so-called higher castes through an unjust social system.

The eight-fold path is interpreted not so much as leading to spiritual liberation (*nibbāna*), but as the road “to remove all injustice and inhumanity that man does to

³⁴⁶ See esp. pp. 337-338 [IV.II.II.1.8-23]; pp. 338, 340-341 [IV.II.II.2.3, 23-24, 29-32]; pp. 343-344 [IV.II.II.3.15-23]; pp. 348-349 [IV.II.IV.1-29].

man.” Charity (*dāna*) is meant to “remove the suffering of the needy and the poor and to promote general good”; compassion (*karuṇā*) aims at “the relief of poverty and suffering wherever it exists” (Ambedkar 1992: 129 [II.II.6.5-6]). Thus Ambedkar reinterprets these traditional spiritual practices in terms of social justice.

II. SRI LANKA

Here I shall concentrate on the Sarvodaya Śramadāna Movement of Dr. Ariyaratne (born 1931)

(i) Social Activism

For Dr. Ahangamage Tudor Ariyaratne, Sarvodaya means the “awakening of all.” He interpreted it as an interdependent awakening of the individual and society: “I cannot awaken myself unless I help awaken others. Others cannot awaken unless I do.” (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 6: 3). He understood this dual awakening to be all-encompassing: the awakening of human personalities, families, villages, cities, nations and the world community in six areas, namely, spiritual, moral, cultural, social, economic and political spheres (Ariyaratne 1999: vol.6: 97).³⁴⁷ Śramadāna is donation of labor. In practice this meant voluntary service in work camps in villages for the uplift of all. By 1985 his Sarvodaya Movement was working in 8000 villages (Bond 1996: 136). Some years later he announced that his movement had implemented various programs in 11,300 villages out of an estimated 25000 villages in Sri Lanka (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 7: 18).

Ariyaratne’s Sarvodaya caters to ten fundamental needs of society: a pure and attractive environment, sufficient supply of pure water, basic requirements of clothing, an adequate diet, simple residential facilities, basic health services, communication infrastructure, fuel and other energy needs, a comprehensive education for daily living, cultural and spiritual development (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 2: 115-116). In every village Sarvodaya tries to set up six groups: pre-school toddlers, school children, mothers, youth, farmers, and the elderly. Each of these groups is conscientized and helped to participate in varying degrees in a holistic and all-round development of the village (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 43-49).

Sarvodaya also played an important role as peace builder in the severe ethnic conflicts of Sri Lanka. It analyzed the causes of the conflicts, worked out comprehensive programs to resolve the problems in a humane manner, encouraged Sinhalese and Tamilians to work together as volunteers in each other’s villages, organized peace meditations, peace camps, peace pilgrimages and marches, and peace

³⁴⁷ Both Gandhi’s and Ariyaratne’s Sarvodaya work for the wellbeing of all and are thus involved in society. But their worldviews are different. Gandhian Hindu Sarvodaya is concerned with realizing one’s true Self through working for the welfare of all, while Ariyaratne’s Buddhist Sarvodaya is an expression of one’s Non-Self (Kantowski, cited by Bond 1996: 125).

meetings and conferences, initiated ways and means for the return and rehabilitation of refugees, and for both the militants and the armed forces to lay down their arms and return to civilian life, through techniques of inner transformation (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 94-100, 103-104). Although Sarvodaya was a Buddhist movement, it was open to others: Tamilians too played important leadership roles in Sarvodaya peace initiatives. Tamilians who collaborated with Sarvodaya looked upon it not so much as a Sinhalese Buddhist organization, but a Sri Lankan association. In 1994 Ariyaratne met leaders of the LTTE, in an attempt to bring about reconciliation and peace (Bond 1996: 136-137).

As a consequence of such peace initiatives, Ariyaratne met with stiff opposition from the Government of Premadasa: there were interrogations by the National Intelligence Bureau, their radio program was blocked and TV and radio coverage of their activities was banned, government newspapers spread slanderous news about Sarvodaya and made false accusations against it. He and his family received anonymous death threats, and there were many other ways in which the family and Sarvodaya were targeted. Besides engaging in non-violent direct action, Sarvodaya decided to form a political party to challenge the government (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 6: 146-150).

Ariyaratne has received many awards. These include the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership, Philippines 1969; the King Baudouin Award for International Development, Belgium, 1982; the Feinsein World Hunger Award, United States, 1986; the Niwano Peace Prize, Japan 1991 (Bond 1996: 135); the Jannalal Bajaj International Award for Promoting Gandhian Values outside India, India, 1990; the August Forel Award for promoting temperance, Denmark 1990; the Gandhi Prize, India, 1996; Hubert H. Humphrey Award, USA, 1996; the Vishwa Prasadini Award from the Prime Minister, Sri Lanka, 1996.

(ii) Buddhist Background and Reinterpretation

On the one hand, there is support for the social service of Sarvodaya in the Buddhist Pāli Scripture, where certain *suttas* (sermons, discourses or dialogues) deal with social responsibilities and socio-economic affairs. Ariyaratne himself refers to some of these *suttas*, such as the *Karaṇiya-metta-sutta*, which speaks of practicing loving friendship towards all beings (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 91; vol. 6: 69). Similarly, he points out that the *Sigālovāda-sutta* mentions one's duties towards others. The *Jātaka* Birth Stories bring out the importance of selfless service as a means to attain liberation (Bond 1996: 125). The Buddha also spoke of proper economic production, the protection of the environment and resources, and a friendly milieu and lifestyle that promotes economic welfare and well-being (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 89). The *Cakkavattasihanāda-sutta*, the *Kūṭadanta-sutta*, and the *Aggañña-sutta* spelled out economic and state-sponsored measures for peace and prosperity (Ariyaratne 1999: vol.

7: 30-31).

However, Ariyaratne also reinterprets traditional teachings in terms of social action in the world. The four noble truths are given a social orientation. The first truth “there is suffering” is interpreted to refer to a decadent village, where poverty, illness, injustice and inequality are prevalent. In some villages there may be destruction of life and property, armed conflict, life in refugee camps and separation from loved ones. There may be water scarcity, poor health care, and lack of sanitation, electricity, and communication facilities. The second truth “the arising of suffering,” which is primarily due to ignorance and desire, leads one to become aware of the causes of this sorry state of affairs in the village, namely, selfishness, greed, competition, hatred, destructive action, disunity, etc. The third truth “cessation of suffering,” which traditionally refers to ultimate liberation (*nibbāna*), includes also the liberation of the villages from their sufferings and miseries and bringing about equality, sharing and cooperation, love and freedom. The means of solving the problem is in the fourth truth “the path leading to the cessation of suffering”, which is the Eight-fold Path. This Eight-fold path is also given a social focus. Unlike in the case of monks, for the laypeople this path has to be followed in their daily life in the world and should include both individual and social awakening, using the Sarvodaya concepts and organized action, particularly through donation of labor (*śramadāna*) in village work camps that transform the village, as described above (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 3: 42-43; vol. 4: 100-101, 126-128).

Traditionally the four Brahma-vihāras (Sublime States) of loving kindness (*mettā*), compassion (*karuṇā*), sympathetic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā*) were reached by withdrawing from the world and through the practice of meditation (Sheth 2003: 90-92). Sarvodaya, on the other hand, made explicit the implied meaning in them, and applied them in the social context. *Mettā* is cultivating loving thoughts of kindness towards others; it is the motivation for the action that is expected to follow. This takes place in the form of compassionate action (*karuṇā*). *Muditā* is the joy that results from making those in need happy. And *upekkhā* or equanimity is the attitude of detachment from plaudits or censure or from benefits or disadvantages in one’s service of others, and this is done with the Buddhist spirit of non-violence, where one confronts the evil deeds and not the evil-doer: one loves the poor and the deprived, but does not bear ill-will towards the perpetrator of evil. All this leads to personal as well as social awakening (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 1: 122-123; vol. 2: 49-51; vol. 3: 43-44, 64; vol. 6: 69).

The Buddhist virtue of *dāna* (giving), is interpreted as *śramadāna*, the donating of one’s labor, energy and time in the work camp, where one also shares one’s, motivation, knowledge, culture, skills, power, and spiritual and temporal resources (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 3: 44; vol. 6: 51). The Buddha’s teaching of no-self and conquering selfishness leads one to practice selfless service towards others without any

discrimination of class, caste or creed (Ariyaratne 1999: vol. 4: 90).

III. Thailand

I pay attention to Sulak Sivaraksa (born in 1933)

(i) Social Activism

Sulak Sivaraksa has been a prolific writer and many of his publications as well as the journals that he started conscientize people on social justice and human rights' issues. He does not advocate a violent approach but demands justice, and is frank and outspoken in his criticism of the government, the military, multi-national corporations, Thai society, as well as some individuals and organizations. He is against development that is based on consumerism, and advocates development that is rooted in traditional Buddhist values of Thailand. He is thus against American and Western influence in Thailand, which he prefers to call by its traditional name of Siam. He even dresses in traditional Siamese attire.

Sivaraksa founded a number of social welfare organizations or voluntary Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), in which people work with dedication for the uplift of the poor both in the villages and the cities. Inspired by spiritual principles, they reach out to those in need – exploited men, women and children – and help them, through non-violent means, to regain their human dignity and stand on their own feet. They also pay attention to ecology and the environment: they work for integral and sustainable development. What is particularly notable is that he also engages in interreligious dialogue and cooperative interreligious social action.

Sivarkasa's speeches, writings and activism have got him into frequent trouble. He has been arrested and jailed several times, had to go into exile twice and has been accused of defaming the Thai king and high officials of the military. He became, in his own words, "a controversial Siamese" (Swearer 1996: 196-211, 221-223).

Sivaraksa's awards include the Right Livelihood Award, Sweden, 1995; the Niwano Peace Prize, Japan, 2011; and the Millennium Gandhi Award, India, 2011.

(ii) Buddhist Background and Reinterpretation

For Sulak Sivaraksa, Buddhism does not concentrate merely on individual welfare and liberation, but it is also intrinsically concerned with social and political issues in order to transform society. This is the teaching of the Buddha in the Theravada scripture. The doctrine of no-self or interdependence logically points to both individual as well as social transformation: the two are interrelated and intertwined. (Sivaraksa, 1992a: 65-67). Buddhist doctrine has to become alive and must be applied to the contemporary social situation. The four scenes of the old man, sick man, dead man and

a wandering mendicant that the Buddha saw should help us to become aware of suffering in the modern world, for example, in Bhopal and Chernobyl, and it should move us to take effective steps to remove such terrible destruction of human life and the environment (Sivaraksa, 1988b: 9).

Sivaraksa reinterprets the traditional *Pañcasīla* or the Five Moral Precepts, giving them a social focus in the contemporary world:

(1) The first precept, abstention from destroying life, applies not only to killing humans, abortion and euthanasia. It has a much more extensive application to other forms of such abstention. Implementing measures to curb the mass breeding of animals for human consumption “would be doubly compassionate, not only toward the animals but also toward the humans who need the grains set aside for livestock”. Discriminative economic and power systems result in global hunger and malnutrition by preventing food from reaching where it is sorely needed. The sale of arms by “merchants of death” wreaks untold havoc. The dumping of chemical and nuclear waste and the use of harmful insecticides lead to ecological problems that also boomerang on human society. The first precept also includes abstention from opulent living and wasteful consumption while others are dying of hunger. Deforestation and surplus consumption have their effects also on life and peoples in different parts of the world.

(2) The precept to abstain from stealing includes also the implicit theft involved in an unjust economic system, which deprives people from meaningful jobs. Voluntary simplicity is laudable, but one has to also take pains to overthrow the structures that coerce others to live in involuntary poverty. One has to distinguish between just and unjust marketing and consumption and the use and abuse of natural resources. Some of the methods used by multinational corporations and banks constitute forms of stealing.

(3) Abstention from sexual misconduct also includes male domination and exploitation of women in various forms, such as questionable means of birth control such as abortion, female infanticide and the treatment of women as objects – which results in rape, pornography and prostitution. He mentions the international sex trade in Thailand, “where there may now be more prostitutes than monks”. Such collective *karman* of male domination inhibits men from achieving spiritual liberation and prevents the potentialities of women from blossoming.

(4) Abstaining from false speech has applications not only on the individual level but also in the public domain. It extends also to consumerist commercial advertising, political propaganda with ulterior motives, and distorted news under the guise of protecting national security and promoting modern cultural fads in opposition to important values in indigenous cultures. Such an expanded interpretation of this precept is also a wider application of the Buddhist Right View, so that truth will prevail over falsehood. Buddhism also teaches that ultimate truth may be beyond words and

concepts. This humble realization can help us to get rid of our dogmatism (see Sheth, 1988: 47, 49-52), racial prejudices and nationalistic attitudes.

(5) The fifth precept of abstaining from alcohol has to be extended to all types of intoxicants such as drugs and tobacco. The social implications of this precept should prompt us to become aware of social injustice when Third World farmers are forced by the economic system to cultivate heroin, tobacco, cocoa and coffee because the economic system makes it impossible for them to grow rice or vegetables profitably. On top of this, unscrupulous multinationals flood the Third World countries with loads of cigarettes, enticing people into the habit of smoking, through attractive advertisements. Pseudo-political thugs and private armies of politicians have acted as middlemen in different countries like Vietnam, Myanmar, and Latin America. Full-scale wars have been waged by governments, such as the Opium War with China by the British. The use of the American military to fight the so-called “war on drugs” is merely cosmetic because it attacks only the symptoms and not the root-causes of drug intake such as the despair that is generated by unemployment and unequal distribution of wealth. Preaching against intoxicants is ineffective, if we are not proactive and do not attempt to transform society with Buddhist and human values (Sivaraksa 1988a: 64-68; 1992a: 42-43, 71-79; 1992b: 129-133).

Similarly, the four Brahma-vihāras or Sublime States which are traditionally meant for one’s own spiritual development by sending forth vibrations of loving kindness, compassion, etc. to others and even suffusing the world with such feelings, is reinterpreted in the form of social action: (1) *Mettā* (loving friendship) connotes reaching out to others by concretely sharing one’s joy with them. (2) *Karuṇā* (compassion) involves empathizing with the sufferings of others and trying to remedy matters by bringing about greater equality between the affluent and the destitute, and the mighty and the weak. (3) *Muditā* (joy) implies giving up enmity and becoming one with the joy and sorrow of others. (4) *Upekkhā* (equanimity) means not being swayed by success or failure, gain or loss, etc. Such indifference helps us identify with others fully (Swearer 1996: 219).

Sivaraksa’s social activism is not based on secular or non-religious principles; on the contrary it is based on awareness and inner transformation. For him mere social activism does not bring about inner change; in fact personal transformation comes first or should at least be simultaneous with social involvement. Real social change takes place only when it is inspired by religious or inner transformation. Social justice and religiosity go hand in hand: “Religion is at the heart of social change, and social change is the essence of religion” (Sivaraksa 1992a: 59-61).

In conclusion, the essence of Buddhism, for Sivaraksa is selflessness, and not in venerating the Buddha or involvement in religious rituals. Growing in mindfulness and awareness, one becomes more selfless, “so that friendship will be possible and

exploitation impossible”. Religious experience boils down to selflessness. (Sivarkasa, 1988a: 186; 1992a: 61). Understanding selflessness as non-exploitation, he reinterprets *dāna* (giving) as “training in non-exploitation”, *sīla* (morality) as “understanding the consequences of exploitative action” and *bhāvanā* (meditation) as a self-awareness that helps us to realize whether we are being exploitative. Selflessness enables us to be empathetic and non-exploitative towards others. (Swearer 1996: 216).

We now move on to countries where Mahāyāna is the predominant form of Buddhism. We start with Vietnam.

IV. VIETNAM

Here we pay attention to Thich Naht Hahn of South Vietnam (born in 1926).

(i) Social Action

Thich Nhat Hahn is a celebrated monk, who was influenced by both the Theravāda and Mahayana traditions in Vietnam, but he leaned more towards Zen, which is one form of Mahāyāna. He is said to have coined the term “engaged Buddhism” to refer to non-violent Buddhist activism for social service and justice. Through poems, articles and books he tried to promote social justice, and peace activism. Both the governments of North and South Vietnam turned against him because he pricked their consciences. He established various institutions and organizations to work for relief services of various kinds, such as rendering medical service, rebuilding war ravaged villages and resettling refugees. He also founded the Tiep Hien Order, whose members are monks, nuns and laypeople; one of the tasks of the Order is to be involved in active social service. In 1966 he went abroad on a peace mission. He was advised not to return to Vietnam due to danger to his life, and so lives in exile, now in Paris. While living abroad, he had mobilized assistance to the fleeing Vietnamese boat people, and he continues to write as well as inspire people to come to the aid of the poor and refugees (King1996a: 321-325).

Thich Nhat Hahn points out that Buddhist non-violent resistance in Vietnam did not look on the perpetrators of inhuman violence as enemies; it was aimed at the annihilation of fanatic inhumanity, which is the real enemy of humankind. Such non-violent action rejects both rabid communism as well as extreme anti-communism; it emphasizes an unprejudiced attitude of rapprochement. It is the force of love that moves people to non-violent struggle. They try to avoid rage, craving and panic, which lead to blind and dangerous reactions; instead, they cultivate awareness, which generates the force of love. He accepts that it is impossible to have absolutely non-violent action, but the intention is to avoid violence as much as possible. He listed various forms of non-violent action undertaken during the war in Vietnam:

1. Family altars were placed in front of American tanks to prevent them from advancing

further. These family altars were a most precious symbol of the spiritual and traditional values of the Vietnamese Buddhists. This demonstrated their will to resist the foreign and violently inhuman onslaught with that which was most valuable and dear to their hearts.

2. Monks sat calmly in front of the tanks, women and children raised their empty hands against those who wielded clubs and threw grenades.

3. Thousands of Vietnamese went on fasts and hunger strikes against the war. These actions helped them to pray in love, purify their motives and increase their will-power. The hundred-day fast of the monk Thich Tri Quang moved millions of people.

4. Anti-war articles, poems and songs were composed and were read, recited and sung in the classrooms as well as the streets.

5. People resorted to strikes and returned business licenses. Academic officials and professors resigned en masse, and students boycotted classes and became conscientious objectors to the war. Some people rejected American aid and did not take part in the war.

6. The non-violent Buddhist movement cooperated with all people of goodwill, whether these were Cao-Dai, Hoa Hao³⁴⁸ or Catholics, or members of the National Liberation Front or even in the Saigon government. Similarly it worked with humanist and pacifist movements, especially the American anti-war movement, the American Civil Rights movement and of course the Overseas Vietnamese Buddhist Association.

7. The most extreme and powerful means was self-immolation by monks, nuns and laypeople and some maimed themselves, for example, by cutting off one's hand. This was not an act of violent protest, but this infliction of suffering on oneself enkindled the light of compassion and the fire of awakening in the hearts of people (Nhat Hahn 1970: 24-25). This is not suicide, which is an act of self-destruction due to being incapable of coping with life; rather, it is a constructive act in which one sacrifices one's life for the sake of the suffering Vietnamese people; it is not intended to destroy the tyrants but to touch their hearts and change their policies, and to draw the attention of the world to the dire plight of the Vietnamese in a serious and telling manner (Nhat Hahn 1967: 118-119).³⁴⁹

Thich Nhat Hahn was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1967. He was the recipient of the Courage of Conscience Award, U.S.A. 1991; and the Doshi Family Bridgebuilder Award, U.S.A. 2007.

³⁴⁸ These are modern Vietnamese religions founded in 1926 and 1939 respectively.

³⁴⁹ Some citizens of the U.S., especially young people, also immolated themselves in the U.S. as an outcry against the war in Vietnam or because they were grief-stricken by the war (Berrigan and Naht Hahn 1975: 59, 62).

(ii) The Buddhist Background and Reinterpretation

The four noble truths are not meant merely for one's own growth in spirituality: we should not only liberate ourselves, but also others. We are interlinked with all other beings. "When a village is being bombed and children and adults are suffering from wounds and death, can a Buddhist sit still in his unbombed temple? Truly, if he has wisdom and compassion, he will be able to practice Buddhism while helping other people." (Nhat Hahn 1987: 34-35). We see here how Thich Nhat Hahn combines the four noble truths with the Buddhist understanding of interconnectivity.

One of the steps in the Eightfold Path is Right Occupation. One has to avoid jobs that harm human beings or nature. Modern farming often uses chemical pesticides, which poison the environment. Weapons, including nuclear ones, are often sold to Third World countries, which need food, not armaments. But the cause of these problems is not one-sided. It is not just the modern farmers or the arms dealers, but it is also the consumers, economists and politicians who are irresponsible. "Individual *karma* cannot be detached from collective *karma*." Bringing the arms race to a standstill will save enough money to eradicate hunger, poverty and many diseases (Nhat Hahn 1987: 51-55).

One of the important theories of Buddhism is the doctrine of Dependent Co-production (Pāli *paṭicca-saṃuppāda*; Sanskrit *pratītya-samutpāda*). In a nutshell, the doctrine of Dependent or Conditioned Co-production, states that no being or event arises without a conditioning factor: this (resulting) being or event is because that (preceding) being or event is; this (resulting) being or event is not because that (preceding) being or event is not. Thich Nhat Hahn applies this principle by paying attention to attenuating circumstances and thus becoming more understanding and forgiving. He did not bear any hatred towards the Catholic Diem regime that persecuted him, nor to the communist Viet Cong or the American soldiers who attacked Vietnam. He could find excuses for the atrocities perpetrated by American soldiers in Vietnam, attributing these to their hard life in the swamps and jungles infested by mosquitoes and other insects, and to their being in constant danger of death.

Another principle on which Thich Nhat Hanh relies is the Mahāyāna doctrine of the oneness of all reality, which he interprets in practical life as an attitude of "inter-being", of identifying oneself with the other. He identifies himself with the twelve-year old girl who jumped into the sea after being raped, and with the pirate who raped her: he identifies with both the victim and perpetrator (Sheth 2003: 88-89, and refs. given there). As he emphasizes, our enemies are not human beings; "they are intolerance, fanaticism, dictatorship, cupidity, hatred and discrimination which lie within the heart of man" (Nhat Hahn 1967: 119).

With regard to self-immolation, it should be pointed out that, unlike Jainism,

Buddhism is generally against religious suicide³⁵⁰ and self-mutilation (Sheth, 2012: 73-74), but there are exceptions both in Theravada as well as in Mahāyāna. The Theravāda *Jātaka* tales relate several instances of religious suicide in some of the previous lives of Gautama Buddha. The *Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, the most important and well-known Mahāyāna Scriptural text and often referred to briefly as the Lotus Sutra, extols the case of the Bodhisattva Bhaiṣajyarāja, who previously, as the Bodhisattva Sarvasattvapriyadarśana, burnt his own body as an act of honor (*pūjā*) accorded to the Buddha Candrasūryavimalaprabhāsaśri and to the Lotus Sutra. It also mentions that youth who burn some part of their body at the relic chambers of the Buddhas gain immense merit (*Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra*, ch. 22, pp. 237, 240). Such examples are adduced in order to justify exceptional cases of heroic, altruistic and sublime self-sacrifice of one's life. For Thich Nhat Hahn self-immolation is neither good nor bad. It transcends the question whether self-immolation is good strategy in peace activism. But we must make an effort to put ourselves in the shoes of the immolators and try to see things with their eyes. They intend to enkindle the awareness of people and awaken them (Nhat Hahn 1975: 62).

We had begun our social justice trip in India. Even though we now move on to Tibet, yet, in consonance with the cyclic worldview of Buddhism, we actually return to India: the reason is that the Dalai Lama has established a Tibetan Government in Exile in India.

V. TIBET

The most well known Tibetan is His Holiness, the Dalai Lama (born 1935).

(i) Social Activism

The present Dalai Lama was born on 6th July 1935 and was enthroned as the reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama on 22nd February 1940. In 1950 he took full charge as Head of the State of Tibet. In 1959, he escaped to India, where he was given political asylum. He set up a Tibetan Government in Exile and has gradually introduced increasing democratization in the government. He also set up different bodies to preserve and promote Tibetan culture, education, etc. In his many visits to various countries in the world, he has not only spoken about spiritual values and social concern, but has also been an ardent spokesperson for Tibet, asking for independence from China through non-violent means, that is, through dialogue. At different times and places he has made various proposals to the Government of China (Cabezón 1996: 297-298).

³⁵⁰ Religious Suicide is different from ordinary suicide, in which one cannot cope with the difficulties of life. The motives and purposes are different in these two types of suicide.

The Dalai Lama's most well-known proposal is the Five Point Peace Plan: (1) Transformation of the whole of Tibet into a zone of *ahimsa* or non-violence; (2) Abandonment of China's population transfer policy; (3) Respect for the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and democratic freedoms; (4) Restoration and protection of Tibet's natural environment; (5) Commencement of earnest negotiations on the future of Tibet and of the relations between the Tibetan and Chinese peoples (Dalai Lama 1990: 23).

In the process of making his Government more democratic, the Dalai Lama had already introduced the office of an elected Prime Minister, to function under him. On 10th March 2011 the Dalai Lama announced that he would relinquish his role of political leadership of the Tibetan Government in Exile. On 8th August 2011, the newly elected Prime Minister, Lobsang Sangay, took charge not only as Prime Minister but as the secular head of the Tibetan Government in Exile, replacing the Dalai Lama, who continues as a Spiritual Head of Tibet.

In 1989 the Dalai Lama was awarded the Noble Peace Prize in recognition of his indefatigable commitment to the peaceful and non-violent struggle for Tibetan independence. His many other awards include the Ben Gurion Negev Award, Israel, 2006; the Ahimsa Award, UK, 2007; the Mahatma Gandhi International Award for Reconciliation and Peace, South Africa, 2011; and the Templeton Prize, U.S.A., 2012. In fact he has received scores of other awards, honorary doctorates and prizes. Yet, in his humility, he often refers to himself as a simple monk (e.g., Dalai Lama 1990: 16, 20; 1994: Foreword; 2005: 34).

(ii) The Buddhist Background and Reinterpretation

Firstly, the Dalai Lama points out that we share the same human nature and are therefore all equal. Other things, such as the color of one's skin, different languages, cultures and religions, education, race, country, ideology, rich or poor status, etc. are secondary. The primary thing is that we are all human beings. We are all looking for happiness and want to get rid of suffering. This basic humanness makes us realize that we are sisters and brothers, loving and compassionate towards one another (Dalai Lama 1990: 15-16, 52-53, 96, 122). This commonality of being human is rooted in the Mahāyāna doctrine that we all have the same Buddha nature; we are all one in ultimate non-dualism.

Secondly, he speaks of the Mahāyāna doctrine of interdependence spelled out by Dependent Co-Production (*pratītyasamutpāda*) (Dalai Lama 2005: 106-121). But he makes a practical application of this doctrine to the modern world as a means of resolving contemporary problems in society. He shows how things in modern society are all the more interdependent. Whatever happens elsewhere, whether good or bad,

affects us too. For instance we and our plants and animals are severely affected by a nuclear accident that has occurred far away from where we are. Whether it is war or peace, ecological harm or enhancement, human rights, freedom and other values – these cannot be dealt with in isolation, but through cooperation, since they are interconnected in various ways (Dalai Lama 1990: 17, 53).

The Dalai Lama brings out the implications of the oneness of humanity and the interrelatedness of all things, namely, universal responsibility for the wellbeing of humans, of the environment, and of our planet. We are all brothers and sisters of the one human family, and so should be concerned to alleviate the suffering of others and work for their welfare. In fact, because we need one another, since we are interdependent, we need to cultivate universal responsibility to solve our problems together, and to bring peace accompanied by justice. We have the responsibility to strengthen the weaker members of the human family as well as to care for the environment, which we have exploited and, as a result, have been badly affected ourselves. We need a balanced, integrated relationship with the human family as well as nature (Dalai Lama 1990: 19, 58, 113-117). This universal responsibility also benefits ourselves; in fact it is we who are the main beneficiaries of the practice of altruism and compassion (Dalai Lama 1990: 58; 2005: 33-34). Even though he himself is a monk, he emphasizes the importance of involvement in society. One may withdraw oneself from society for certain periods of time for concentrated meditation, but most people should practice their religiosity, not in isolation, but in the midst of human society. What is important is detachment from the world, not withdrawal from society. For him, Buddhism teaches service to others and, for this, one must be involved in society (Dalai Lama 1990: 97-99).

Thirdly, the Dalai Lama advocates non-violence, kindness and compassion. Violence only aggravates problems. On the other hand, a non-violent attitude enables a respectful exchange of views, sharing of feelings and discussion of rights. Such a dialogical approach is helpful in finding solutions to problems (Dalai Lama 2005: 28-29). Anger and hatred only worsen problems: violence breeds violence. Anger leads to a loss of sane judgment, one of the best human qualities. Contrariwise, a patient and tolerant attitude brings peace to both parties (Dalai Lama 1988a: 5-6). Compassion is not the same as pity, which implies downgrading the person pitied; compassion looks on the other with respect. It has to be cultivated by being in the right atmosphere, through awareness and affectionate kindness. The intimacy between friends is often more akin to attachment than to genuine compassion, which should be impartial. (Dalai Lama 2005: 21-27). Hence there are different degrees of compassion; the highest level is rooted in completely altruistic motives (Dalai Lama 1990: 119-122). All this is based on the Scriptures and tradition of Buddhism (Sheth 2006: 815-820). But the Dalai Lama points out that compassion is not just Buddhist or merely pertaining to the realm of religion. Love and compassion are necessary for our very survival. Religion may be a luxury: we

can make do without religion, but we cannot manage without love and compassion (Dalai Lama 1990: 123). It should be noted that the Dalai Lama himself is believed to be an indirect incarnation of the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, or Chenrezig in Tibetan, the most compassionate Bodhisattva.

A corollary of this attitude of non-violence, kindness and compassion is the love of enemies. In his Nobel Peace Prize Lecture, in speaking of the atrocities committed by the Chinese against Tibetans, and their country and culture, he said that he did not speak with a heart filled with hatred or anger against the Chinese, for he added, they too were human beings striving for happiness and were entitled to compassion. Elsewhere he also points out that enemies are valuable because they help us to advance in spiritual qualities such as forbearance and mental fortitude. He admits that had he stayed in Lhasa he might have been isolated and conservative. So he is indebted to the Chinese since his exile helped broaden his perspectives. He felt very sad that Tibetans were infuriated against the Chinese and took part in burning Chinese vehicles (Dalai Lama 1990: 16, 105-106, 133). His purpose in narrating the trials and tribulations of the Tibetan people was not out of vindictiveness or hostility towards the Chinese, but in order to inform the public. He also felt that many well-meaning Chinese were simply not aware of what was going on in Tibet (Dalai Lama 1994: 261). He admits, however, that when people exploit the sincerity of a person, it may be necessary to retort. However, although on the surface level an apt reaction is resorted to, there should be an underlying spirit of forbearance, compassion and tolerance, without bearing any ill feelings (Dalai Lama 1988b: 32). Our real enemies are not outside us but inside us, for example, arrogance, wrath and envy, and we have to wage a war against these internal foes (Dalai Lama 1990: 95).

Fifthly, the Dalai Lama is convinced that, in the end, truth and non-violent determination will prevail over despotism, war, materialism, wealth and indoctrination. The loud voices of the Chinese are losing credibility and the feeble voices of the Tibetans are gaining credibility. It is a gradual process, but in the end it will be more efficacious because the truth will never cease to be the truth (Dalai Lama 1990: 26, 130-131).

Sixthly, for the Dalai Lama, in the final analysis, social transformation and lasting peace will only be possible through inner transformation and control of the mind. Our internal development lags far behind our external progress. All actions flow from the mind; hence mind-control is vital. It does not necessarily mean that all have to immerse themselves in deep meditation, but basic attitudes of the unity of the human race, respect for the rights of others, control of one's anger, altruistic concern for the welfare of others, etc. have to be developed within oneself. Individual peace of mind leads to peace in the family, in the nation and the world. But all this begins with self-transformation. Even though this is difficult and takes time, there is no other

alternative to bringing about enduring peace in the world (Dalai Lama 1990: 54-58, 90, 103-104). World peace cannot be achieved without realizing that we are all sisters and brothers, without cultivating kindness and compassion. But this is not possible without inner transformation (Dalai Lama 1988b: 47).

CONCLUSION

Some of the Buddhist social activists are prophetic and openly and strongly denounce both institutions as well as persons. Some others emphasize love, love even of one's enemies. Some like the Dalai Lama are more traditional, while Ambedkar is the least traditional. But all are concerned with alleviating suffering; all adopt non-violent means, and concentrate on the needs primarily of the laity, focusing on the virtues of selflessness, compassion and love. They propagate a paradigm shift from a traditional other-worldly concept of liberation to a this-worldly liberation, or rather, blend the two in varying degrees, keeping a healthy balance between the spiritual and material. This approach is actually supported to some extent by the original sources or Scriptures. The religious and the secular are not watertight compartments, but influence and strengthen each other.

Both Buddhist and Christian Liberation movements emphasize orthopraxis, rather than orthodoxy: the stress is on action and less on abstract speculation. However, Christian liberation movements are critical of the Church, while Buddhism is less inclined to internal criticism; the former are often linked with a political ideology or a particular form of economic analysis, but this is not the case with Buddhism (King 1996b: 406-434; Cabezón 1996: 309-314).

On a more metaphysical plane, in Christianity the person has intrinsic worth: the person is a child of God, with an immortal soul. But in Theravāda each one is just a series of discreet momentary aggregates but still is an object of compassion. In Mahāyāna the person does not exist even for one moment and yet the ideal is to delay one's salvation for the sake of persons who do not really exist. Hence the motivation for social concern differs not only between Buddhism and Christianity, but also between the two Buddhist traditions of Theravāda and Mahāyāna. Although traditionally Christianity has shown greater social concern than Buddhism, yet it has been more violent and intolerant than Buddhism (Sheth 2006: 820-824).

Let me end with the inspiring words of the Dalai Lama at the end of his Nobel Peace Prize Acceptance Speech: "I pray for all of us, oppressor and friend, that together we succeed in building a better world through human understanding and love, and that in doing so we may reduce the pain and suffering of all sentient beings."

References

Ambedkar, B. R., 1989: *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, comp. by Vasant Moon, vol. 1, Bombay: Education Department 1974; Bombay: Education Department, Government of Maharashtra, for Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Committee, Reprinted.

Ambedkar, B. R., 1992: *The Buddha and His Dhamma*, vol. 11 of *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar: Writings and Speeches*, comp. by Vasant Moon, Bombay: Siddharth College Publication, 1957: 5th ed., Bombay: Education Department, Govt. of Maharashtra, for Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Source Material Committee, Reprinted.

Ariyaratne, A. T., 1999: *Collected Works*, ed. by Nandasena Ratnapala (vols. 1-3, 6-7), B. A. Tennyson Perera (vol. 4) and Jehan Perera (vol. 5), 2nd ed., 7 vols., Ratmalana, Sri Lanka: Sarvodaya Vishva Lekha.

Berrigan, Daniel, and Nhat Hahn, Thich, 1975: *The Raft Is Not the Shore: Conversations toward a Buddhist-Christian Awareness*, Boston: Beacon Press.

Bond, George D., 1996: "A. T. Ariyaratne and the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement in Sri Lanka", in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 121-146.

Cabezón, José Ignacio, 1996: "Buddhist Principles in the Tibetan Liberation Movement", in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 295-320.

Dalai Lama] Gyatso, Tenzin, the XIVth Dalai Lama, 1988a: "Hope for the Future", in *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, ed. by Fred Eppsteiner, rev. 2nd ed., Berkeley: Parallax Press and Buddhist Peace Fellowship, pp. 3-8.

Dalai Lama 1988b: *H. H. the Dalai Lama: The Bodhgaya Interviews*, ed. by José Ignacio Cabezón, Ithaca, N.Y.: Snow Lion Publications.

Dalai Lama, 1990: *The Dalai Lama: A Policy of Kindness: An Anthology of Writings By and About the Dalai Lama*, comp. and ed. by Sidney Piburn, with a Foreword by Claiborne Pell, Ithaca, NY: Snow Lion Publications.

Dalai Lama, 1994: *Freedom in Exile: The Autobiography of the Dalai Lama*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1990; New Delhi: Rupa Paperback, 1991; 12th impression.

Dalai Lama, 2005: *The Essential Dalai Lama: His Important Teachings*, ed. by Rajiv Mehrotra, New York: Viking (Penguin Group).

Keer, Dhananjay, 1971: *Dr. Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, 3rd ed., Bombay: Popular Prakashan.

King, Sallie, B, 1996a: "Thich Nhat Hahn and the Unified Buddhist Church of Vietnam:

Nondualism in Action”, in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 321-363.

King, Sallie, B, 1996b: “Conclusion: Buddhist Social Activism”, in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, Albany: State University of New York Press.

Namishray, Mohan Dass, 2003: *Caste and Race: Comparative Study of B.R. Ambedkar and Martin Luther King*, Jaipur and New Delhi: Rawat Publications, in association with Motilal Bhimraj Charity Trust.

Nhat Hahn, Thich, 1967: *Vietnam: The Lotus in the Sea of Fire. The Buddhist Story*, with a Foreword by Thomas Merton and an Afterword by Alfred Hassler, London: SCM Press.

Nhat Hahn, Thich, 1970: “Love in Action: The Non-Violent Struggle for Peace in Vietnam”, in *Fellowship: The Magazine of the Fellowship of Reconciliation*, 36:1 (January 1970): 23-25.

Nhat, Hahn, Thich, 1987: “Interbeing: Commentaries on the Tiep Hien Precepts, ed. with Introduction by Fred Eppsteiner, Berkeley: Parallax Press.

Queen, Christopher, S., 1996: “Dr. Ambedkar and the Hermeneutics of Buddhist Liberation”, in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 45-71.

Saddharmapuṇḍarīkasūtra, ed. by P. L. Vaidya, Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, no. 6, Darbhanga: Mithila Institute, 1960.

Sheth, Noel, S.J., 1982: “The Buddha’s Attitude to Caste”, *Negations* 1:4 (October-December 1982): 23-26.

Sheth, Noel, S.J., 1988: “Buddhism and Communalism”, *Religion and Society* 35:4 (December 1988): 44-66.

Sheth, Noel, S.J., 2003: “The Buddhist Understanding of Forgiveness and Reconciliation”, *Jnanadeepa: Pune Journal of Religious Studies* 6:2 (July 2003): 78-102.

Sheth, Noel, S.J., 2006: “Christian and Buddhist Altruistic Love”, *Gregorianum* 87:4 (2006): 810-826.

Sheth, Noel, S.J., 2010: “Bodhisattva”, in *ACPI [Association of Christian Philosophers of India] Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, 2 vols. ed. by Johnson J. Puthenpurackal, Bangalore: Asian Trading Corporation, 2 vols., vol. 1: pp. 183-187.

Sheth, Noel, S.J., 2012: “Nonviolence and Violence in Buddhism”, in *Terrorism, Religion, and Global Peace: From Concepts to Praxis*, ed. by Karikottuchira Kuriakose,

- Gorgias Précis Portfolios 10, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2012, pp. 53-91.
- Sivaraksa, S., 1988a: *A Socially Engaged Buddhism*, with a Foreword by Prawase Wasi, Bangkok: Thai Inter-Religious Commission for Development.
- Sivaraksa, Sulak, 1988b: “Buddhism in a World of Change: Politics Must Be Related to Religion”, in *The Path of Compassion: Writings on Socially Engaged Buddhism*, ed. by Fred Eppsteiner, rev. 2nd ed., Berkeley: Parallax Press and Buddhist Peace Fellowship, pp. 9-18.
- Sivaraksa, Sulak, 1992a: *Seeds of Peace: A Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society*, ed. by Tom Ginsburg, with a Foreword by the Dalai Lama and a Preface by Thich Nhat Hahn, Berkeley: Parallax Press.
- Sivaraksa, Sulak, 1992b: “Buddhism and Contemporary International Trends”, in *Inner Peace, World Peace: Essays on Buddhism and Nonviolence*, ed. by Kenneth Kraft, SUNY Series in Buddhist Studies, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 127-137.
- Swearer, Donald K., 1996: “Sulak Sivaraksa’s Buddhist Vision for Renewing Society”, in *Engaged Buddhism: Buddhist Liberation Movements in Asia*, ed. by Christopher S. Queen and Sallie B. King, Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 195-235.

Nirvana, as the Unconditioned Dharma, according to the Sarvastivada School and their Controversies

By

Paulus Agung Wijayanto, SJ

1. Introduction: Background, Scope, Limitation, and Purpose

Immediately after attaining enlightenment, the first sermon preached by the Buddha was on the Four Noble Truths, namely that all sentient beings are subject to suffering, and concerning the origination of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path leading to this cessation. The cessation of suffering is what we call Nirvana, and hence Nirvana would be the “summum bonum” of those who follow the Buddha’s path.

In the history of Buddhism, Nirvana has become an endless topic of discussion. Since it is impossible to describe all the views that were presented, this brief paper will describe merely the key concepts concerning Nirvana as elucidated by the Sarvastivada School, as real existence and as *pratisamkhya-nirodha*. The first concept concerns the ontological status of Nirvana, and the second is about Nirvana as an acquired reality at the final moment of enlightenment, as the result of the cessation of all defilement.

The Sarvastivada concept of Nirvana is not free from controversy. Hence, this paper will try to present the questions or problems that have been raised with reference to the concept, especially by the Sautrantika School. It is intriguing to read not merely the response of the Sarvastivada School to the problems that were raised, but also the discussion centered on the “core issue” that has been broached by scholars, based on two propositions of Sarvastivada.

I trust this brief essay will serve as an introductory step to enter into the heart of the teachings of the Buddha.

2. Nirvana is Real Existence

2.1. The Ontological status of Nirvana as the Unconditioned Dharmas

According to Sarvastivada teaching, there are 75 Dharmas, which can be classified into five groups, namely rupa (matter, 11), citta (mind, 1), caitasika dharmah (mental concomitants, 46), cittaviprayukta samskara dharmah (conditionings disjoined from thought, 14) and asamskrta dharmah (unconditioned dharmas, 3).

Unlike the Theravada School which holds that the unconditioned dharma is just one, the Sarvastivada school holds that there are three dharmas of the asamskrta dharmah group, namely:

1. Pratisamkhya-nirodha (cessation through discrimination)
2. Apratisamkhya-nirodha (cessation independent of discrimination)

3. Akasa (space). The first two of the asamskrta dharmah are pluralistic.³⁵¹

The school firmly upholds the fact that all dharmas are real, eternal and imperishable in their substantial and noumenal character (dharma svabhava), and for this reason the school bears the name “Sarvastivada,” (all exists). For Sarvastivadins, although all dharmas are subject to the law of causation (pratityasamutpada), yet the causal efficacy operates only on the level of aggregates or compounds of dharmas, and not on the level of the ultimate dharmas or atoms.³⁵²

“The atoms, however, are never found in their free, uncompounded state, but are always combined in various proportions.”³⁵³ The compounds are subject to constant flux. Every moment their characteristics or attributes are changed, but they still remain uniform and unaffected substantially. “AKB states that asamskrta are not subsumable under the skandha taxonomy, since ‘skandha’ means a heap (rasi).”³⁵⁴ On the contrary, the ontologically real unconditioned dharmahs transcend arising and ceasing,³⁵⁵ they are eternal, uniform, and unalterable.

For the Sarvastivadins, Nirvana as an unconditioned dharma is a really existing entity, immutable, and remaining uniform and unmodified through all time (past, present, and future). Although they are beyond the dimensions of space and time, yet they are individually distinct and exist as a plurality of real entities. Just like future samskrta-dharmas, the asamskrta dharmas do not have the function of both grasping and giving a fruit (phara-grahana/phala-aksepa and phala-dana). On the contrary, these two functions operate in the past and present samskrta-dharmas. Stcherbatsky deals with this proposition under the heading of “the double character of the absolute.”³⁵⁶

2.2. How can Nirvana be real?

Since the Sautrantika School holds the position that there is no place for an uncaused category, this school therefore charges that the Sarvastivada thinkers have proposed an intellectual fiction, or an irrational imagination. The unconditioned dharmas do not exist for the Sautrantikas, nor do they have any reality or entity. Nirvana is only a concept (prajnapti) of the absolute absence of dukkha, and it does not have any objective reference.³⁵⁷ Satkari Mookerjee even stated that for this reason the Sautrantika

³⁵¹ *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004), Bhikku KL Dhammajoti, Sri Lanka: Centre for Buddhist Studies. P. 366

³⁵² *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997) Satkari Mookerjee, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, p. 244.

³⁵³ *Ibid.* p. 244

³⁵⁴ *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004). P.368

³⁵⁵ *Ibid.* p. 366

³⁵⁶ *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana: With Sanskrit Text of Madhamaka-karika.* (2003). Theodore Stcherbatsky, Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers. Pp.30-31

³⁵⁷ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997) p. 244. See also: *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004), p. 367.

group had condemned the Sarvastivadas into the level of a heresy.³⁵⁸

According to the Ven. Bhikkhu KL. Dhammajoti, within the Sarvastivada School, there are actually various opinions regarding the ontological existence of the unconditioned dharmas. The earliest Sarvastivada thinkers do not deal with their ontological status, and even JPS, the main canonical text, does not mention “akasa” as an unconditioned dharma. The MVS denotes various contradictory positions of acaryas regarding the ontological status of the asamskrta dharmah.

Maintaining that Nirvana or pratisamkhyā-nirodha is a real entity or real force, Sarvastivada had to present proof of the existence of Nirvana. According to the Ven. KL Dhammajoti, there are nine main Sarvastivada arguments for the reality of Nirvana.³⁵⁹ Three of them rely on the statement of the sutra (A, C, and G). Four proofs are based on the real experience of the Arya, those who have passed into a very advanced stage of spiritual practices (B, F, H, and I), and two are derived from logic or “philosophical” interpretation (D and E). The following are the summaries of the proofs of the existence of Nirvana offered by Sarvastivada, as presented by the Ven. Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti.³⁶⁰

- A) The existence of Nirvana is based on scriptural statement. In the sutra, asamskrta is mentioned in plural form as among all the dharmas. Since Nirvana(s) have the nature of dharma, hence Nirvana certainly exists as a reality.
- B) Those who are in a very advanced stage of spiritual practice can realize the true essential nature and functions of Nirvana. The existence of Nirvana can be perceived as a series, and is empirically observable by them. Their real experiences prove the existence of Nirvana.
- C) Based on the explicit statement of the sutra that “there is the unborn...”, the Sarvastivadins prove the existence of Nirvana. Otherwise, according to them, the Buddha would say that, “there is the discontinuity of the born.”
- D) For the Sarvastivadins, the samskara, a relatively real entity, cannot be the basis to serve the existence of Nirvana, since the latter is the opposed nature of the former ones. Furthermore, the real entity of Nirvana is an entity in itself. It is not derived from another relatively real basis. It is just as though the existence of past and future are not derived from the real present of dharma.
- E) Sarvastivada points out the danger of the consequence of *mithadrsti* and *samyak-drsti* being mutually accomplishing, if people argue that Nirvana is unreal, based on the reason that knowledge (jnana) necessarily has an object, and prajna has the name as its object. Their logic will lead to the fact that those who consider

³⁵⁸ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997), p. 245

³⁵⁹ *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004), pp. 371-375

³⁶⁰ *Ibid.* pp. 371-375.

- Nirvana as devoid, would never concede that name is a non-reality; and those who consider Nirvana as real, would never concede that name itself is Nirvana.
- F) Nirvana is real since it can give rise to the receptive being, “sense” of delight in it, and “sense” of disgust in samsara.
 - G) Although *Arya-marga* is devoid of the burning heat of defilement, yet it is included in the twelve *Ayatanas*. Therefore, for the Sarvastivadin, the argument of the unreality of Nirvana cannot be based on the Buddha’s statement that, “all dharma are comprised in the twelve *Ayatanas*.”
 - H) *Pratisamkhya-nirodha* is real force, since it prevents the re-arising of the defilement. This reality distinguishes the experience of the Arhat from that of the Saiksa. Hence, Nirvana is not merely a concept.
 - I) One of the Four Noble Truths is Nirvana. It will cause great confusion if Nirvana were non-existent, since an Arya can see all of them and says: “This (nirvana) is the cessation of dukkha.” The word “this” refers to an existent reality.

3.Nirvana is Pratisamkhya-Nirodha

3.1.The Summum Bonum of Buddhist Practice

The goal of all Buddhist practice actually is *pratisamkhya-nirodha*, which is also called Nirvana.³⁶¹ *Pratisamkhya-nirodha* is nothing but a disjunction (*visamyoga*) from the *asravas* and *klesas* (passions and impurities “with outflow”) *dharmas*.³⁶² It is attained through a process of discrimination or transcendental knowledge (*pratisamkhyana*),³⁶³ which is a specific pure *prajna*.³⁶⁴ “It is called *nirodha* dependent upon *pratisankha* (*prajna*) or the highest knowledge of truth.”³⁶⁵ Nirvana as “an ontologically real force” or positive quality,³⁶⁶ acts to ensure that the “*prapti*” of the impure is completely abandoned and will not be able to arise any longer, and the *dukkha* could no longer be produced.³⁶⁷ “Nirvana is necessary to ensure the non-emergence of the *klesas* by the perpetual removal of the causes and conditions of the same, pre-eminently of *avidya* (nescience).”³⁶⁸

As an unconditioned *dharma*, Nirvana does not consist of causes or conditions, nor does it have fruits (*saphala*). However, based on the sutra tradition, Nirvana can be called “fruit of disjunction (*visamyoga-phala*), without implying that it is causally produced. Nirvana can also be considered a “condition qua object”

³⁶¹ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997), p. 246

³⁶² *Ibid.* p. 245

³⁶³ *Ibid.* p. 245

³⁶⁴ *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004), p. 368

³⁶⁵ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997) pp. 245-246

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* P.246

³⁶⁷ *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004). P. 371

³⁶⁸ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997) p. 246

(alambana-pratyaya).³⁶⁹

Sarvastivada formulated the fact that “the way of establishing causes and effects among the samskrta is not applicable in the case of the asamskrta.” In other words, Nirvana is a cause that is without an effect, and an effect that is without a cause.”³⁷⁰

Nirvana is explained in 4 senses, namely:

- 1) The absolute exit (nir) from all gati (vana).
- 2) The absolute absence (nir) of karma and of defilements – bad smell (durgandha-vana) and impurities.
- 3) The absolute exit (nir) from all the forests (vana) of skandhas with their three fires and three characteristics.
- 4) The non (nir)-weaving (vana) of the fabric (vipaka-phala) of samsaric existence.³⁷¹

The MVS adds two sense notions of Nirvana, that is, “without further existence, freedom from bondage” and “transcendence of all samsaric sufferings.”³⁷²

In the context of spiritual progress, a clear distinction must be made between the quality of abandonment or disjunction attained by a Saiksa (trainee) and an Arhat. Nirvana is the final moment of enlightenment, as the result of which all defilements, dukkhas, totally cease, and samsaric existence is totally transcended.³⁷³ It is the perfect attainment of Arhats in passing through all of their spiritual paths. The disjunction from the defilements of the trainee cannot be called sopadhi-sesa-nirvana-dhatu or nirupadhi-sesa-nirvana-dhatu. For this reason, Nirvana is considered the summum bonum of Buddhist practice.³⁷⁴

3.2. Is Nirvana a common or non-common entity? How does one know? And...?

Since Sarvastivada holds that spiritual liberation is a gradual process, dependent on the gradual abandoning of defilements, hence Pratisamkhya-nirodha or Nirvana for this school, is not just single. The amount of Nirvana is in ratio to that of the conjoined entities³⁷⁵ or the objects of junction (samyogavastu).³⁷⁶ This proposition not only implies that all sentient beings realize a common nirodha corresponding to the particular defilement, but also raises many important problems.

The first group of problems are as follows: “When sentient beings realize pratisamkhya-nirodha, do they together realize a common one or do they individually

³⁶⁹ *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004), p. 370

³⁷⁰ *Ibid.* P.370

³⁷¹ *Ibid.* P. 368

³⁷² *Ibid.* P. 368

³⁷³ *Ibid.* P. 368

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* P. 369. See also: *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*. (1997) p. 246

³⁷⁵ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997) p. 246

³⁷⁶ *Sarvastivada Abhidharma* (2004). p. 375

realize a different (that is to say, identical but distinct) one in each case?” If it is identical or common, why is Nirvana said to be a unique dharma? But if each sentient being realizes a different nirodha, how come the sutra states that the liberation (visamyoga)³⁷⁷ of the tathagata and of the others are not different?³⁷⁸

With reference to this problem, the Sarvastivadin answers that, “When sentient beings realize pratisamkhyā-nirodha, they realize a common one.” It is due to visamyoga-prāpti, which arises separately in the series of each individual, that causes Nirvana to be declared as non-common. In fact, Nirvana is common as an entity.³⁷⁹

The idea of prāpti forces the Sarvastivadins to provide further explanations regarding the contradiction between the fact that Nirvana is a phala, and that Nirvana is not causally produced by the spiritual path. Concerning this problem, Saṃghabhadra said, “Pratisamkhyā-nirodha is not a phala produced by the path (anātārya-mārga). It is a phala realized by virtue of it (the path).”³⁸⁰ According to Vasubandhu, “It can only be realized by the self-experience of a perfect man.”³⁸¹ Nirvana is an everlasting existence, uncaused, unproductive by itself, and freed from impurities and imperfections of phenomenal life.³⁸²

Sautrāntika raises other problems that have a relationship to the existence of prāpti, namely “What cause is there to ensure that a specific prāpti is linked to a specific nirodha? What ensures that one acquires a particular pratisamkhyā-nirodha and not another one? Answering these questions, Saṃghabhadra said, “By the power of one mārga, the defilements are ceased en bloc, and the disjunction is acquired en bloc.” A similar answer is provided for the question, “What specifying cause is there to enable us to say this (the pratisamkhyā-nirodha) of rāga, this of dveṣa, etc.?”³⁸³

Finally, according to Satkāri Mookerjee there are two propositions of Sarvastivāda that imply a serious problem. These are:

- 1) “The imperishable and uniform existence of realities in their noumenal state”
- 2) “Nirvana does connote the annihilation or extinction of the being of any of the categories, as it means that there is only an absolute dissociation and disjunction of the elements (dharmah) from one another.”³⁸⁴

The first proposition draws the consequence that “the mind or intellect (manas) being one of the elements of existence, must be set down as an eternal verity so

³⁷⁷ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997), p. 246

³⁷⁸ *Sarvastivāda Abhidharma*, (2004), p. 375

³⁷⁹ *Ibid.* P. 375

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.* P. 376

³⁸¹ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997), p. 246

³⁸² *Ibid.* p. 247

³⁸³ *Sarvastivāda Abhidharma*, (2004), pp. 376-377

³⁸⁴ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997), p. 250

far as its noumenal aspect is concerned.”³⁸⁵ The second proposition carries the consequence of “all the manifestations of imperfect life, which were due to the association of these elements in the state of samsara.”³⁸⁶ These two propositions therefore raise a relevant question, namely: “What part does the mind-category (manodhatu) play in Nirvana?”³⁸⁷

Although the Sarvastivadins deny that the mind exists as extinction in the sense of absolute cessation of being, yet there is still a crux problem that needs to be answered, namely: “Does consciousness exist in Nirvana?”³⁸⁸ For Stcherbatsky, consciousness does not exist in Nirvana.³⁸⁹ Satkari Mookerjee follows the position of Yasomitra’s comment, namely, “the mind does not cease to exist, though the possibility of future thought-activity is brought to an end.”³⁹⁰ La Valee Poussin maintains, “We must confess our inability to understand how this conception can be fitted into the metaphysical scheme of the Vaibhasikas, who like the Sankhyas deny absolute extinction of any element of existence.”³⁹¹

4. Conclusion

Nirvana as the unconditioned dharmah according to Sarvastivada is ontologically real existence. Nirvana is not merely an intellectual fiction, since as real force, Nirvana is also to ensure, by prapti, that all defilements will not arise in the highest stage, Arya Marga, of Buddhist practice. Thus for Sarvastivada, Nirvana is also praktisamkhya-nirodha, the summum bonum of Buddhist practice.

Although the idea of Nirvana as presented by Sarvastivada has evoked many views pro and contra, it certainly has a special place in the history of Buddhism and invites further research for the development of Buddhist thought.

³⁸⁵ Ibid. P.250

³⁸⁶ Ibid. P.250

³⁸⁷ Ibid. P.250

³⁸⁸ Ibid. P.250

³⁸⁹ *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana*, pp. 31-33

³⁹⁰ *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997), p. 253

³⁹¹ Ibid. P.253

References:

- Bhikkhu KL Dhammajoti, *Sarvastivada Abhidharma*, (2004), Sri Lanka: Centre for Buddhist Studies.
- *Entrance into the Supreme Doctrine: Skandhila's Abhidharmavatara* (1998). Sri Lanka: Post Graduate Institute of Pali & Buddhist Studies, University of Kelaniya.
- *Abhidharma Doctrine and Controversy on Perception*, (2004), Sri Lanka: Centre For Buddhist Studies .
- Mookerjee, S., *The Buddhist Philosophy of Universal Flux*, (1997), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Stcherbatsky, T., *The Conception of Buddhist Nirvana: With Sanskrit Text of Madhamaka-karika*. (2003), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Cox, C., *Disputed Dharmas Early Buddhist Theories on Existence: An Annotated Translation of the Section on Factors Dissociated From Thought From Sanghabhadra's Nyayanusara* (1995), Tokyo: The International Institute For Buddhist Studies.
- *Attainment through Abandonment: The Sarvastivadin Path of Removing Defilements*. In: *Path To Liberation: The Marga And Its Transformations In* Buswell, R. E., Jr. and Gimello, R. M., (Eds.). *Buddhist Thought*, (1992), Honolulu: Kuroda Institute Book, University of Hawaii Press.
- Kalupahana, D. J., . *Buddhist Philosophy: A Historical Analysis*. (1976). Honolulu: An East-West Center Book, The University Press of Hawaii.
- Kumar. F. L., *The Philosophies of India* (1991), Lewiston/Queenston/Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press.
- Sasaki, G. H., *Linguistic Approach to Buddhist Thought*, (1992), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.
- Sinha, B. M., *Time and Temporality in Samkhya-Yoga and Abhidharma Buddhism*. (1983) New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers.
- Warder, A. K., *Indian Buddhism* (1970), Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Publishers.

Sacred Time for a Sacred Sojourn in the Mystical Age

By

Jojo M. Fung, SJ

Human civilization has crossed the threshold of the Mystical Age after the era of the Mental Age that was ushered in by the Enlightenment thinkers of Europe. The dawn of the mystical age offers immense possibilities to humankind for resolving the ecological crises of the earth.³⁹² The mystical age is an opportune time (*kairos*) for humankind to realize that “we are people of the quantum leap!” (Coyle 2013, 189, Touti 1997, 3) and we have the power to transform and spiritualize our planet based on the pool of insights and wisdom gleaned from the multiple mystical traditions of the different religiosities.

This article illustrates how the Mystical Age calls for a mystagogy that employs an Ignatian pedagogy for a *sacred sojourn* in a *Sacred Time* that with three contemplative moments: (1) God’s Suffusing Love and Purpose in Creation, (2) Human Complicity and Total Freedom, (3) *Contemplation ad Amorem*. This sacred sojourn will enable more pray-ers to attain a *metanoia* that involves a paradigmatic shift and transition from the Mental Age to the Mystical Age through an experience of the sacred power of the Great Spirit/*ruah elohim*, the ancestral and nature spirits.

The paradigmatic shift involves a conversion from personal complicity in the neo-liberal and rationalistic anthropology and cosmology to a mystical anthropology and cosmology. This paradigmatic conversion and transition is explained in section one based on a personal reflection of the sojourn of more than two decades with the indigenous peoples. The sharing of my personal experience is offered in section two and the last section is the description of the pedagogy in leading believers to a personal experience of conversion and freedom to respond to become a *homo spiritus/mysticus* in a spirited world.

1. Sojourn to the Gateway of Mystical Realization

More than two decades of a sacred sojourn with the indigenous peoples have elapsed, punctuated by enriching periods of living in their forested world beneath the green canopy of the equatorial forest in Malaysia, the sacred ground of the Great Spirit in the First Nations’ reservations in North America and the hill slopes of the ancestral homeland in Thailand, Myanmar and the Philippines.

This sacred sojourn has awakened in me a consciousness that I am more than an embodied human being with desires, feelings and thoughts. Humans are actually spirits

³⁹² See Frank X. Tuoti, *The Dawn of the Mystical Age: An Invitation to Enlightenment* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Co., 1997) and Kathleen Coyle, “Theology and the New Cosmology: A Quantum Leap in Theological and Spiritual Insight,” *EAPR*, Vol. 50, no. 2 (2013), 189-205.

and I am a *homo spiritus*.³⁹³ My innumerable conversations with the renowned and reputable indigenous elders, healers, sages and shamans in Malaysia, Thailand and recently in Loikaw, Myanmar, have led me to a further realization, punctuated now by a more frequent “awake-full” awareness that I am a *homo spiritus*. I delight in living a recent heightened shamanic and mystical consciousness that is transmental, transrational and transpersonal which is always already there, waiting for me to be more fully present to this ever-present consciousness so as to be a constant witnessing awareness. This “always-there” shamanic and mystical consciousness makes me aspire to live in constant awareness as a *homo shamanicus* and a *homo mysticus*.

The dawn of a more constant presence of the “*I-am-spirit*”³⁹⁴ consciousness occasions the paradigmatic shift and transition from a *homo consumen/economicus* to *homo shamanicus/mysticus*. The neo-liberal anthropology is expounded by excessively consumeristic and hedonistic, anthropocentric, and hegemonic persons, who pride on reason and objectivity to solve today’s problems through science and technology. The neo-liberal ethos has created a disproportionate scale of unprecedented environmental disasters and human miseries, which show how untenable and unsustainable this utilitarian ethos is in its relentless drive to bolster economic development and financial growth.³⁹⁵

The resultant consequences of such systemic onslaught is “that nothing stands in the way of converting the rest of the earth – ‘the undeveloped world,’...into resources and markets”³⁹⁶ based on the capitalist tenets of “greed and venality in the name of self-interest and market competition”³⁹⁷ believing that “fair distribution and sustainability will eventually work themselves out.”³⁹⁸ Such irrationality is ultimately

393 Leap Kendra Crossen Burroughs, *The Essential of Ken Wilber* (Boston & London: Shambhala, 1998), 51.

394 Rahner spoke of the human as spirit that “reaches out toward what is nameless and by its very nature is infinite” (FCF, 62) or “reaches out beyond the word and knows the metaphysical” (SW, liii). See <http://people.bu.edu/wildman/bce/rahner.htm>. Accessed on October 25, 2013. At the same time, Teilhard de Chardin also mentioned that the deepest identity of his mystical anthropology is not just energy but spirit too. Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy* (London: Collins, 1969), 93.

395 See Jeffrey D. Sachs, “Making Sense of the Global Impasse,”

<http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/sachs168/English>, accessed on May 23, 2011 and “World Suffering a sustainability crisis?” *Bangkok Post*, April 26, 2012:10; Arianna Huffington, “The Future of Capitalism” *TIMES MAGAZINE*, Vol. 173, No.20, May 25, 2009:28; Joseph E. Stiglitz, “The Ideological Crisis of Western Capitalism,” <http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/stiglitz140/English>. Accessed November 23, 2012.

396 David Roy, “Pave the Planet or Wear Shoes? A Buddhist Perspective on Greed and Globalization,” in Paul Knitter & Chandra Muzaffar, eds., *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspectives on the Global Economy* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 72-73.

397 Ameer Ali, “Globalization and Greed: A Muslim Perspective,” in Paul Knitter and Chandra Muzaffar, (eds.), *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspective on the Global Economy* (New York: Orbis Books, 2002), 33; Steven C. Hackett, *Environmental and Natural Resources Economics: Theory, Policy and the Sustainable Society* (Armonk, N.Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1998).

398 Sallie McFague, “God’s Household: Christianity, Economics, and Planetary Living,” in Paul Knitter and Chandra Muzaffar, (eds.), *Subverting Greed: Religious Perspective on the Global Economy* (New

unmasked in the preposterous admission that “[All] for ourselves and nothing for other people, seems, in every age of the world, to have been the vile maxim of the masters of mankind.”³⁹⁹

In a span of more than two centuries, the neo-liberal ideologies have desacralized the natural world and wantonly exploited human and natural resources, paving the way for the rapacious commoditization of labor and “financialization” of nature.⁴⁰⁰ The desecration of nature is being driven by Kasi’s assertion of “an anthropocentrism that is a major concept in the field of environmental ethics and environmental philosophy,” and this concept has molded humankind into an infamous *homo economicus*, “an undersocialized loner, concerned only with maximizing her/his own preferences in order to become ‘better off.’”⁴⁰¹ With totally selfish ingenuity, the proponents of global neo-liberalism in the last 30 years have conducted a global experiment, and the verdict of George Monbiot is overwhelming in revealing “the results that are now in. Total failure.”⁴⁰²

Meanwhile the neo-liberal ideologies have spawned a secularism that has wrestled the subjugated self and public space from the hegemony of religion, it has successively taken religion and morality out of the public domain, and a supposedly “de-religionized” and “de-ethicized” society is witnessing a religious fundamentalism and revivalism albeit uneven among the primal and world religions.⁴⁰³ These globalized ideologies have also “de-traditionalized” the agricultural sector, albeit not without the resistance of the resilient rural lowland and upland indigenous farming communities.⁴⁰⁴

York: Orbis Books, 2002), 126. In the same vein, Polanyi argued that to “allow the market mechanism to be sole director of human beings and their natural environment ... would result in the demolition of society,” civilization, and Mother Earth altogether. See Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 73.

399 Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (London: Everyman’s Library, 1981), 336.

400 Jojo M. Fung, SJ “Sacred Space for Sacred Sustainability,” *Landas* 20 (2012), 267-290.

401 Rayappa A. Kasi, “Anthropology Versus Cosmology: A Schism in Cosmogogenesis,” *Journal of Dharma* 37:2 (2012), 171.

402 George Monbiot opines, “I don’t believe perpetual economic growth is either sustainable or desirable. But if growth is your aim you couldn’t make a bigger mess of it than by releasing the super-rich from the constraints of democracy. ... I have no dog in this race, (but) a belief that no one, in this sea of riches, should have to be poor. But staring dumbfounded at the lessons learned, it strikes me that the entire structure of neoliberal thought is a fraud. The demands of the ultra-rich have been dressed up as sophisticated economic theory. The complete failure of this world-scale experiment (seems) no impediment to its repetition. This has nothing to do with economics. It has everything to do with power. Neoliberal Policies fail, but never go away,” *The Guardian Weekly* (25.01.2013): 20-21.

403 See David Tracy, “On Naming the Present” in *Naming the Present: God, Hermeneutics and Church* (London and New York: SCM Press and Orbis Books) 1994.

404 See Jacques Audinet “Foreigner as an Opportunity,” in Norbert Greinacher and Norbert Mette, eds., *The New Europe: A Challenge For Christians*, *Concilium* 2 (1992), 57-65. For more details, see Don McCaskill, Prasit Leepreecha, and He Shaoying, eds., *Living In A Globalized World: Ethnic Minorities In The Greater Mekong Subregion* (Chiangmai: Mekong Press, 2008).

2. A Mystifying Personal Experience

Upon entering the sacred time of silence and solitude from 19th evening till 30th May, 2013, I received the grace to realize on the first day that I am a spirit who is ascending to a vantage point above the world looking at Mother Earth until I found myself just beneath the Great Multiversal Spirit (GMS). I understood how the different religions and religious leaders mediate the spirit presence and power of GMS that direct all to live in a state of synchronicity of mind and heart with GMS. I further realized that GMS suffuses the entire earth community and the entire multiversal creation.

In the succeeding days, the silence and solitude of aloneness in the village house in Dokdaeng facilitated a growing interior peace of mind and calmness of heart, that is experienced as a soothing interior silence. Gradually the cognitive activity is supplanted by an affective savoring and a “mutual presencing,” which enables the transcendental self to be receptive to the self-disclosure of the Great Spirit, the ancestral and nature spirits. The calmer the interior silence, the louder the “voice of fear” of the ancestral spirits associated with the darkness of the night.

The fear was only assuaged when I decided to pray at the threshold of the back entrance of the village house, facing the pitch darkness of the night. In prayer I understood that Mahatma Gandhi and Rabindranath Tagore, Carlos Martini and Basil Hume, Pedro Arrupe, Karl Rahner, Teilhard de Chardin and Ignatius of Loyola, including Jesus and Mary are the ancestral spirits with whom I relate comfortably and in whose presence I rejoice. Such insight lights up my heart and mind and liberates me from the fear of the ancestral spirits at night.

As the days passed I realized that the suffusing presence of the GMS becomes individualized in all living creatures and all things created. I realized that GMS has become an individualized spirit that sustains the life and activities of the chickens, the trees and the forests, the hills and mountains, the rivers and waters, and a humanized and incarnate spirit in each fellow human. The individualized and incarnate spirits enliven and sustain life in the multiverse and continue to resacralize life when life is desacralized/desecrated in the earth community and humankind. GMS is indeed the mystery spirit-power that makes life in creation sacred. As a humanized/incarnate spirit, I find myself in an increasingly stronger spirit-to-spirit communion with the other individualized spirits of the ancestors, nature, and fellow humans. This heightened sense of spirit-to-spirit communion enables me to have a felt sense of “one-spirit-ness” with nature, the ancestors, *Taj Thi Ta Tau*, *Wu* and God.⁴⁰⁵

405 *Taj Thi Ta Tau* is the name of the Creator of the Karen Hill tribes in the upland of Hod District, Northern Thailand. Julian F. Pas explains WU (“What is not” “what does not exist”) is explained in relation to YU (“what is” “what exists”). WU as “non-being” or “emptiness” as in space has its usefulness in relation to a carriage made up of various parts (they exist) and the empty space in the carriage makes possible the transportation of goods and persons. See Julian F. Pas, in collaboration with Man Kam Leung, *Historical Dictionary of Taoism* (Boston & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998), 242.

A heightened mindfulness during days of aloneness, silence and solitude has disclosed to my understanding related to the two puzzles that I grapple with. First, I was wondering why certain locations have a higher concentration of the spirits, like the channel or pathway of the strong wind known as *Taj dei dof* (see section 3). In this prayerful mindfulness, I received this understanding; “I chose to concentrate the spirits there much as the army and the Jesuits are concentrated in certain locations. Second, with regard to the punishment inflicted by the spirits due to irreverent comments, I understood it as integral to the web of human relationship that is tainted by human sinfulness and sinful relationship with others. In any wrongdoing and hideous crime, there is a commensurate penalty. The penalty is part of the relational morality that calls for a healing of the ruptured relationship in order to restore it to an intra-inter-trans-personal harmony. With this clarity, I realized that the Karen designation of certain places as sacred is due to the self-organizational wisdom of the Great Multiversal Spirit (GMS) of God. Such eternal wisdom of the GMS before my finite understanding only humbles and leads me to behold the GMS in awe and reverence.

The heightened sense of one-spiritedness deepens my own sense that I am spirit and that I am webbed to all other spirits of nature, fellow humans, and the ancestors, including God who is Spirit as well. This sense resonates with the insightful understanding of Chardin who believed in the “*the phenomenon of spirit*” and postulated that “we are coincidental with it. We feel it within. It is the very thread of which the other phenomena are woven for us. It is the thing we know best in the world since we are itself, and it is for us everything.”⁴⁰⁶

The silence and solitude deepens my appreciation of all the sound around me. These sounds made me aware that there is life in me, in the insects, in the wind, in the people in the remotest villages in every land, and, there is life in every galaxy, Milky Way and universe, in fact, the whole multiverse. Life is indeed a mystery all around us and the multiverse. The very life-giving factor is the animating Spirit that gives life to every creation in the multiverse.

Towards the 8th and 9th day, I found myself drawn into a state of “one-spirit-ness” with GMS in a stillness that is best explained as a “dark-presence” which is emptied and void of any conceptualization and objectification associated with the rational self. Yet this stillness in the “dark-presence” is no longer beneath the GMS, but within GMS and one with GMS. The “dark presence” tends to alternate with a “bright presence” which enables me to be in state whence I find myself within the GMS, as if I was gazing with awe and reverence from the vantage point of a Seer-witness, delighting in a consciousness of the GMS enlivening and sustaining the

406 Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy*, 93.

multiverse before me, so refreshingly alive with beauty and life, so mysteriously sacred to a beholding humanized spirit!

Living and praying in the farm house at the edge of the forest from the 10th to 12th of May 2013 has personally enhanced my dwelling in the “dark presence” that has become moments of mutual indwelling best described as a “compenetrative presencing” with GMS. This indwelling has heightened my awareness of the world of the ancestral and nature spirits. The awareness includes the “spirit-to-spirit” communion and union of the ancestral and nature spirits with my human spirit. This sense of sacredness is indeed a relational consciousness, awakening to the sense that the whole web of life in the multiverse and in this valley of passion fruit plantation and the surrounding forestland with all the creatures all are suffused with sacredness.

After the Sacred Time, I have been praying to understand what is *WU*. In joining an interfaith chant with a Filipino Tibetan Monk, Karma Yeshe Lhundrup, the disclosed understanding of *WU* has really enthralled me. As Karma Yeshe Lhundrup began the Tibetan chant with the bell and the gong, I was seated, facing the various statues of Buddha. I closed my eyes and listened to the chant. Within minutes of inhaling and exhaling, an understanding came forth from the underground stream of silence: “I am *WU*. I am the Great Spirit.” What came to my consciousness is an image of myself as a multiversal spirit in the midst of the GMS. I realized then that I am *WU* and so the GMS is *WU* too. Then my consciousness further realized, “I am *WU* in you, flowing through you, around you.”⁴⁰⁷

For several weeks I have been listening to what wells up from within after breathing in *WU* and breathing out, emptying everything into *WU*.⁴⁰⁸ What came forth in subsequent moments of mindfulness has been, “I am *WU*. I am all in all” and “I am the Great Spirit.” Additional understanding welled up a few days later when I was able to exclaim in prayer upon “seeing” the multiverse, “Wu is you!” and soon realized that “*WU* is everything and everyone; *WU* is the earth community; *WU* is the multiverse as well. *WU* is the very activity of enlivening the multiverse, a state when the multiverse is sacredly “alive” with the spirit-power of GMS.

I further realized that the witnessing Seer-Spirit is the ever present awareness, the eternal and infinite Spirit that is already there, formless, timeless and spaceless amidst that which is finite, spatial, temporal and visible, from the human body to all created beings and life-forms in the world. In the words of Ken Wilber (2001, 299) “Spirit is in the Free and Empty Seer, not in the limited, bound, mortal, and finite

407 I am grateful to Dr. Ruben Habito and Joey de Leon, SJ for inviting me to this visit to Karma Yeshe Lhundrup’s (Virgil S. Antonio) residence on July 11, 2013 where he invited us for a conversation over tea. The conversation culminated in an interfaith chant, communal silence and shared prayer.

408 When I met Dr. Ruben Habito again in July 19, 2013 at Loyola House of Studies, he asked me, “just breathe in *WU* and breath everything (what I know of *WU* into *WU* and see what comes out.”

objects that parade by in the world of time.”⁴⁰⁹ In the state of *WU*, I am a *WU*-spirit who is “presentness” and “I AMness” in sheer emptiness and all freedom (ibid.).

This time of aloneness in silence and solitude has helped me to be acutely aware of the ever-present God who is I AM and to deepen my own mystical mindfulness of the ever-present awareness that “I-am-spirit” who is one-spirit with the GREAT I AM.

3. The Mystagogy of the Sacred Time

The moment of mystical realization took a preparatory phase of three years (2009-2011) of contemplating on a shared sacredness with everything and everyone in the cosmic web of relations made up of the spirit-world, the natural world and the human world. This phase culminated in a sacred time of gentle yet profound mystifying experience (Section 2 above) of the mystical/shamanic self arriving at an intimate “one-spirit-ness” or union with the cosmic/multiversal Great Spirit during an eight-day period of contemplative aloneness, silence and solitude.

The mystifying experience during the sacred time is related to a mystagogy with which the Great Spirit touches the heart and mind of those in contemplative silence and solitude. This mystagogy opens the mind and heart to the “beyond” which shatters the boundary of empiricism that characterized the Euro-centric and rationalistic natural and social sciences, including the ecclesiastical disciplines like theology. This mystagogy calls for what Ryan C. Urbano (2009, 320, 321) advocates as the openness of mind and heart to receive the communication of God “who comes to mind” (rather than “from the mind”) for God “is in consciousness and awakens the desire for God.”⁴¹⁰

Upon receiving the divine disclosure, the humans are “slowly and gradually led to a path that commences with an unwavering responsibility to a neighbor and culminates in a faith to a Wholly Other” (ibid., 322). This openness to the sacred presence of the Great Spirit is fostered through entering into a long period of contemplative silence and solitude that allows the Great Spirit, the ancestral and nature spirits to reveal and speak to us of their sacred presence and power. This long period of silence and solitude is enhanced through living alone in an indigenous village or in a farm house/hut located to a forested area.

Willy-nilly the period of aloneness in silence and solitude becomes a *theatron* (a place of seeing, where things are made visible) and *theoria* (a lens “to look God in the face”) in the contemplative encounter and interaction with the Great Spirit, ancestral and nature spirits in this *cosmos* or multiversal creation.⁴¹¹ The cosmos is a place of

409 Ken Wilber, “Always Already: The Brilliant Clarity of Ever-Present Awareness,” in Ken Wilber, *The Eye of Spirit: An Integral Vision For a World Gone Slightly Mad* (Boston, Mass.: Shambhala Publications, 2001), 290-308.

410 See Ryan C. Urbano, “A-Dieu: Approaching the Divine,” *Budhi – A Journal of Ideas and Cultures*, Vol. XIII, No. 1, 2, 3 (2009), 308-322

411 See Sue Jennings, *Theatre, Ritual and Transformation* (London & New York: Routledge 1995), 191.

“seeing” how the Great Spirit makes visible a spirit-power that capacitates every individual to “look at God in the face of the victims of social suffering” and behold with awe and wonder the sacredness of the *anthropos* and the *cosmos*. In this way, life is about a constant spirit-to-spirit communion with the Great Spirit so that the individual begins to think in *one mind*, feel in *one heart* and act with *one will* with the Great Spirit for the greater good of the endangered and marginalized of the earth community.

4. Pedagogy For Sacred Time

The mystagogy that led me to a mystical realization has a pedagogy that needs to be explained in terms of “guidelines” (in *italic*) for those who are beckoned to plummet such mystical depth. The proposed “guidelines” in this section will be related with the Spiritual Exercises and Scripture to facilitate the disciples of the Lord with a desire to enter the sacred time and imbibe the mystical anthropology and cosmology that make possible the sustainability of life in the cosmic whole. The narratives from my own journal will be shared with the pray-ers for spiritual reading during the weekend Sacred Time that begins on Friday afternoon and ends on Sunday Afternoon.⁴¹²

The Week Before

As an immediate preparation, the one who desires to enter into the Sacred Time is advised to have daily prayer sessions that heighten one’s awareness and everyday mindfulness that one is a spirit whose power is manifested in the power of imagination and visualization, in the emotions of and mercy and compassion, delight and joy, love and peace.

Location for the Sacred Time

To enhance the aloneness, silence and solitude, it is better to be away from “all friends and acquaintances, and from all worldly cares... and give the whole attention to one single interest... to the service of the Creator and spiritual progress” (SP. Ex. 20). It is important to emulate Jesus who withdraws to “some deserted place and pray.” (Luke 5:16)

The Night Before Day One

Begin with the breathing exercise so that one is a spirit enlivened by ruach elohim. Ruah

412 This weekend retreat to be held at the Novaliches Retreat Center of the Philippine Province will be the culminating event of the ITP (International Theological Program) course entitled DOING CONTEXTUAL THEOLOGY IN DIALOGUE WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLES at the Loyola School of Theology in 2014. At the same time, it will be offered to the pray-ers who are interested in imbibing this emergent mystical cosmology and anthropology with the insights from the upcoming book of this author entitled A Shamanic Theology of Sacred Sustainability: Shamans in Dialogue with the Church for their Liberative Struggle.

elohim is likened to the air, the breath and the wind that one inhales and exhales. Become aware that ruach elohim is SPIRIT and as one breathes in and out, the SPIRIT is united with one's human spirit that enlivens and sustains one's life and keeps one alive at all times, the spirit of yearning, thinking, praying, loving, forgiving, of compassion, delight, joy, justice, mercy and peace.

In the prayer sessions, enter into a more focused state of mindfulness that one is spirit. This lends oneself to the *ruach elohim* to lift one's spirit up and soar into the heights to offer the pray-ers' a new understanding of God's purpose for creation. Hence there is a need to stay free and open to allow *ruach elohim* to do as *ruach* pleases (John 3:7) since this freedom "permits the Creator to deal directly with the creature, and the creature directly with the Creator and Lord" (Sp. Ex. 15).

Sacred Time Day One – God's Suffusing Love

Allow ruah elohim to intimate the pray-ers regarding a mystical cosmology that bespeaks of God's intense love for a creation that is formed out of the profundity of God's love. Creation thus manifests the beauty, honor, glory and splendor of God. The pray-ers are invited to enter into the theo-cosmocentric purpose of the Principle and Foundation (Sp Ex 23) which points to a loving God whose loving kindness suffuses and sacralizes creation.

Grace: seek a profound awareness of the pervasive suffusing love of God in creation that involves all religions and religious leaders to realize the sustaining power of God's love and creative purpose of God.

In the light of the mystical experience of Ignatius at Cardoner,⁴¹³ it is most expedient for the pray-ers to allow God to illuminate their mind and heart with an experiential understanding of God's creation as suffused with divine presence and thus realize the insight of Brian Swimme and Thomas Berry that the earth mediates "the world of the sacred."⁴¹⁴ In this way God graces the hearts of the pray-ers with a growing reverential sense of the divine presence that sacralizes and sustains life in all of creation so that the pray-ers gradually behold the multiverse, the earth with all life

413 Brian Swimme and Thomas M. Berry, *The Universe Story: From the Primordial Flaring Forth to the Eozoic Era – a Celebration of the Unfolding of the Cosmos* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 250.

414 Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., opined that the Principle and Foundation, otherwise known as the Fundamentum, has been interpreted as a philosophical statement about ends and means which unfortunately hollowed it of mysticism of Ignatius at Cardoner that pervaded the overall dynamic of the Spiritual Exercises. See Joseph A. Tetlow, S.J., "The Fundamentum: Creation in the Principle and Foundation," *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits* 21/4 (September 1989), 26 ff.

forms and humans as divinely sacred.

In other words, God deigns the “cosmic whole” to be a theater (*theatron*) of God’s loving purpose – to manifest God’s all pervasive love, glory and splendor through creation. As informed by the teachings of Vatican II, the FABC, the Roman curia and the Popes (*Nostra Aetate*, no. 2; *Gaudium et Spes*, no. 22; *Lumen Gentium*, no. 16, 17; *Optatam Totius*, no. 16; *Ad Gentes*, nos. 7, 9; FABC 1974, 1997; *Redemptor Hominis*, nos. 6, 29) that the salvific presence and actions of God and God’s Spirit are already active in the plural cultures and religions (primal and world), let the pray-ers delight in the God who has destined all the religions/religio-cultural traditions as the divine mediatory channels.

Let the pray-ers imbibe the mystical anthropology that God favors the renowned and reputable religio-cultural leaders, including the indigenous women elders, healers, sages and shamans whom God lovingly molds into the salvific intermediaries who participate in God’s loving purpose of creation as co-creators and co-saviors.

This mystical cosmology portrays creation (Psalm 148:1-14), from the sun, the moon and the stars in the heavens, to the earth, the mists, the hills, the birds in the sky and the buffaloes in the field, all the nations as offering a cosmic praise to God. At the same time a mystical anthropology evokes in all humans, women and men, young girls and boys to join creation in the cosmic symphony of praise, glory, honor and reverence to God.

Pray to realize the insight of the author of Genesis 1:1-31, especially verses 10, 13, 19, 21, 31 that God, the creator and owner of everything that is created (from the light, v. 4, day and night, v. 5, heaven and earth, vv. 6-8, plants, fruit trees, vegetables, vv.10-13, sun, moon and stars, vv. 14-19, waters, seas, oceans, fish, all sea creatures, the sky and all the birds and flying creatures, vv. 20-23, and finally women and men, vv. 24-27), was exceedingly pleased with creation for “God saw that it was good.” Everything is good because God’s Spirit fills the whole of creation and gives life to everything that God has created. Therefore the light, the day and night, the heaven and earth, plants, the fruit trees, the vegetables, the sun, moon and stars, the waters, seas, oceans, fish, all sea creatures, the sky and all the birds and flying creatures, and women, men, young adults, youth and children are all good and pleasing to God. God’s Spirit is in them and all of them are sacred and must be respected with loving reverence.

Sacred Time Day Two – Human Complicity & Total Self-Offering

[Matt 1:21, 1 John 1:10; Rom 6:1-2, Luke 15: 11-32; 1 Sam 11-12: 1-13; Ex 16:1-36; Luke 4; Matt 4; Luke 7: 36-50; John 8: 3-11; Luke 16:19-31 (the Rich man and Lazarus); Matt 21 (The wicked Steward)]

Allow ruach elohim to lead the pray-ers to dwell upon human complicity as involving human egoism, greediness and selfishness that is enslaved by privileges, power and wealth and seek to be liberated through a personal metanoia from the standard (exploitative outlook and (dis)values) of homo consumen/economicus (Sp. Ex. 140-142) to freely heed the call of Christ (Sp. Ex. 92-98) and totally embrace the outlook and values of the standard of Christ (Sp. Ex. 143-148) who inspires awe and wonder to the extent that the pray-ers render glory, honor, praise and reverence to the Great Spirit of sacredly sustains life in creation.

Grace: seek a profound freedom from personal complicity to the systemic greed of the Enlightenment and neo-liberal ethos of global capitalism that rupture the web of sacred relations and great generosity expressed in total self-offering to God for sustaining God's creation.

YOUTUBE: She is Alive... Beautiful ... Finite ... Hurting

<http://front.moveon.org/is-there-anything-more-beautiful-than-this/#.Uly3W9JJoHA>.email

Let the sacred time of the second day's sojourn be a focus on the pray-ers' complicity⁴¹⁵ in desacralizing and desecrating God's creation through an idolatrous addiction to power, prestige and wealth. Each act of greediness for more in order to have more and enjoy more makes me an accomplice. Each uncritical acceptance of blood money makes me an accomplice. My muted silence and self-censure to speak out against such rampart desecration make me an accomplice of such personal and systemic addictions. The lack of awareness make the pray-ers slavish to the standard of a greedy and self-centered *homo consumen/economicus* whose sole motive of profit-maximization has led the greedy to commoditize the human resources and

415 K.S. Juan opines that the "First Week is about self-knowledge of the different dimensions of the self: "strength and weaknesses, lights and shadows, wounds and wonders" and thus "sees the self as God sees it: with rigorous honesty and transparency ... through an examination of conscience, a deep knowledge of patterns of sinfulness, and a profound sense of being loved and forgiven." In this way the retreatant sees her/himself as "sinful, needing much grace and redemption but loved by a merciful God – life as a journey of knowing the mystery of his self and God." See Karel San Juan, "Forming Leaders Through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius," Windhover (First Quarter, 2005), 7-9. From V. R. Baltazar's perspective, the Ignatian First Week focuses prayer on the retreatant's foundational experience of God's love and the genuine penitence, healing and reconciliation that the experience of God's unconditional love brings. These twin themes of God's love and the person's experience of sinfulness sets forth a long program of discipleship where the disciple prays over the mysteries of Christ's life, seeing in Jesus Christ both an exemplar and ideal of obedient sonship, and a transforming spiritual dynamic of love that consistently pulls the disciple out of egoism into transcendent self-giving." See Victor R. Baltazar, S.J. "Sacred Space and Time" in the Mind of St. Ignatius," ANTIG: Views and News from the Center for Ignatian Spirituality, 14 (December 2012), 8-9, 12.

financialize the earth's resources.

Human Complicity.

The greedy have committed the sin of idolatry and infidelity by the hideous enthronement of mammon (Lk 16: 13; Mt 6:24) as the idol of their lives with the removal/displacement of the God of Creation from their hearts. The greedy hearts and minds have become the seats and conduits of excessive rationalism, positivism, secularism and anthropocentricism that pervade and shape the contemporary world. At the same time these trends have persuasively enticed and enslaved humankind with the cultures of insatiable consumerism, hedonism and materialism that deplete the earth's resources, widen the gap of inequitable distribution between the "have-lots" and the "worst-offs", accelerate and exacerbate climate change and the seismic movements that brings about the recent unprecedented natural disasters that decimate the natural environment and human ecology.

Human complicity is reflected in the arrogance and irreverence of humankind towards the ancestral and nature spirits arising from a flawed personality not unrelated to human sinfulness. Only sinful humans will flaunt the religio-cultural values of relationship, respect and reverence and cause the dis-rupture of such a web of relations. The moral downside of such dis-rupture is sickness and even death that can be healed and avoided through ritual celebrations that seek forgiveness *from* and reconciliation *with* the ancestral and nature spirits. The upside of such moral reconciliation will be a healing of the ruptured relationship.

Total Self-Offering.

The attained self-knowledge of one's complicity opens the pray-ers to the standard of Christ and the call of Christ the King (Sp. Ex. 92-98) which challenge the pray-ers to experience a *metanoia*/conversion by which God liberates the pray-ers from the deep-seated and rapacious effects of global neo-liberalism on humankind and mother earth, ranging from attitudes, mindset, outlook/worldview embedded in the mind and the additions, disposition, motivations, values of the heart.

When liberated the pray-ers heed the call of Christ to embrace his standard (Sp. Ex. 143-148) that involves the three classes of disciples (Sp. Ex. 149-157) and three degrees of humility (Sp. Ex. 165-168), which conform the pray-ers to Christ. The pray-ers are invited to attain total freedom so that one does not make endless promises which are never honored (1st class), or promise to give up just about everything except for a small attachment that compromises the disciples' commitment (2nd class), or living in genuine indifference whence one freely gives back with gratitude to the Lord what

one has been abundantly blessed with (3rd class).⁴¹⁶

The deepening love of Christ enables the pray-ers to overcome grave (mortal sins) and less grave (venial sins) addictions and desires, and makes this possible when the Great Spirit infuses within the pray-ers an affective love for Christ, and thus selflessly/wholeheartedly makes them desire to do what God alone desires, even if that manifest desire leads to contempt, humiliation and poverty and is considered foolish by those who pride on self-glory/self-importance that is overtly inflated by the “mammon-ic” power, privilege and wealth.⁴¹⁷

May the sacred time allows the Great Spirit to re-enchanted some if not all the pray-ers with the sacred power of the divine presence of the Great Spirit that sacredly sustains life in the *cosmos* and the *anthropos*. The pray-ers will be gradually inspired during the sacred sojourn to behold with awe and render glory, honor and reverence to the *Great Spirit of sacred sustainability*.⁴¹⁸

May the re-enchanted enable the “pray-ers” to realize that as disciples of God each one has been gifted with the ingenuity and power to act as the graced intermediaries of the Great Spirit, to harmonize the ruptured relationship between the spirit-world and the human world, the natural world and the human world and finally the humans with fellow humans.

Sacred Time Day 3 – Becoming *Homo Spiritus Like Christ* [Acts 1:1-12, 2:1-13]

*Allow ruach elohim to intensify the desire to become a homo Spiritus like Christ and become totally involved in the purpose of the Great Spirit to resacralize the cosmos and humankind with the constant consciousness that the sacred power of the Great Spirit sustain the cosmos.*⁴¹⁹

416 Ignatius opines that the active indifference of the third class of persons is necessary for reaching a genuinely free decision in a process of discernment. See V.R. Baltazar, S.J. “Sacred Space and Time” in the Mind of St. Ignatius. Unpublished manuscript.

417 On September 20, 2013, in the EAPI staff retreat in Novaliches, Danny Gusar, SJ, the retreat master, explained that the Three Classes of Disciples presupposed the Three Degrees of Humility. The incremental/progressive from gradual to total freedom/liberation from all slavish addictions to mammon (Class One to Three), enables the retreatants to avoid grave/mortal sins (1st Degree), and venial sins (2nd Degree), out of an affective love for Christ, and this deepening love enables the retreatants to embrace the manifest desire and will of God (3rd Degree) with selfless and total freedom of heart (3rd Class), even if such discipleship entails contempt, humiliation, poverty, and is considered foolish as a result of the resolute renunciation of the addiction to honor, pride and riches. Unpublished material.

418 Sacred sustainability is a theological insight that explains that the sacred-power of the Great Spirit sacredly sustains the cosmos and anthropos. See Jojo M. Fung, “An Asian Liberation Theology of Sacred Sustainability: A Local Theology In Dialogue with Indigenous Shamans,” Vol. 4, no. 2, Asian Horizon (December, 2010), 401-415.

419 Balthazar postulates that praying on God’s love and sinfulness frees the pray-ers for being initiated into a process of discipleship, whence the pray-ers contemplate “the mysteries of Christ’s life, seeing in

Grace: seek a profound and intimate desire to be likened to Jesus the *Homo Spiritus par excellence* whose Risen spirit is united with the Great Spirit that suffuses, sustains sacralizes the whole creation with divine love and power.

On the 3rd day of the Sacred Time, the pray-ers contemplate on the Risen Jesus (Sp. Ex. 312) who has become a *cosmic Homo Spiritus* united with the Great Spirit whose spirit-power suffused creation (multiversalized).

To imbibe the mystical cosmology of Ignatius of Loyola, the pray-ers are invited to contemplate the suffusing presence (*Contemplatio ad Amorem*, Sp. Ex. 230-234) of the Great Spirit in creation and seek a mystical awareness of God's spirit-power as a gift and as a co-laborer that is "all in all" (Eph 4:5). In other word, it is a mystical experience of a spirit-presence in all things, all humans, all cultures, all religions, all times, all spaces in the *cosmos* to the extent that the "all in all" is described as a "compenetrative presence" of God in creation and creation in God.

The union of the *Homo Spiritus* with the Great Spirit makes possible our union as *homo spiritus* with the Great Spirit through a mystical compentration of the human spirit with the Great spirit. Each I am is in a state of spirit-to-spirit union or "one-spirit-ness" with the Great I AM who is over all, through all, within all and *ALL IN ALL*. In this "all-ness", each "I am" is mystically united and identified with ALL in creation, be it the galaxies, the stars, the oceans, the rivers, the forests and the mountains, the fauna and flora...etc to the extent that the sense of "I AM-ness" of God and of each human enfolds all creation.

In this mystical union with the "I AM-ness" of God, the *homo spiritus* who is totally likened to Jesus the *Homo Spiritus par excellence* is able to identity with him (John 14:6 as Jesus the way, the truth and the Life) in his sayings "I am the living water" (John 3:14; 7:37-38), "I am the bread of life" (John 6:34), "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12, 9:5) and "I am the gate of the sheepfold" (John 10:7 & 9). Since Jesus has so identified himself with the natural world that "the bread" is "my body" and "the wine" is "my blood" (Matt 26: 26, 28), each one of us is "the salt of the earth and the light of the world" (Matt 5:13 & 14).

At the apex of the mystical contemplation, the *Homo Mysticus* Jesus invites the pray-ers to live in constant awareness that each "I am" is the "I AM" to the point that each pray-er realizes that "the Father and I are one" (John 10:30), since the "Father is in me and I am in the Father" and (John 13:20), like the *Homo Mysticus Jesus*, each

Jesus Christ both an exemplar and ideal of obedient sonship" to the extent that the total and unconditional self-offering of the Son "pulls the disciple out of egoism into transcendent self-giving." See Victor R. Baltazar, S.J. "Sacred Space and Time" in the Mind of St. Ignatius. Unpublished manuscript.

pray-er will be able to resonate with Jesus's utterance "I am HE/God" (Jesus is God-With-Us), since "whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me" (John 13:20).

The mystical union of the "I am" in the "I AM" brings to fullness a mystical awareness that in GOD ALL ARE ONE as GOD IS ALL in ALL (1 Cor 15:28). In God there is no dualism of the witnessing Seer and the known for there is "neither Jew or Greek, slave or freed, male or female" (Gal 3:28-29) but only "ONE-ness" of spirit-to-Spirit union with the "I AM" of life.

In that ever present mystical ONE-ness with the Great "I AM" the transrational and transpersonal *homo mysticus* is able to resonate the "I AM-ness" in expressing that I am creation, the Earth, ancestral spirits, nature spirits, the tree, the bird ...etc. It is a transpersonal I AM-ness in the ALL-ness of life in creation.

Conclusion

The Mystical Age deepens the human desire to enter the sacred time on a sacred sojourn that allows us to drink from the wells of indigenous, Ignatian and biblical mysticism. Many sojourners are awakening to the realization for a paradigmatic shift and transition occasioned by a profound conversion of the heart and mind that frees more humankind from the slavish addictions to mammon. Only a total freedom from complicity accords the believers the perennial wisdom to negotiate the current ecological crises that are exacerbated by the unsustainability of the neo-liberal project.

Humankind is in need of a mystical cosmology that explains that the cosmic whole is a spirited and therefore sacred web of relations. Humankind is in need of a mystical anthropology that portrays the transpersonal self as a *homo spiritus*, a *homo mysticus* and *homo shamanicus* with the capacity for a mystical union with the Great Spirit/Creator Spirit and with all life in creation. This mystical union with the Great Spirit enables *homo spiritus* to be mystically one with the Great I AM who suffuses every human "I am" in the world, so that all *homo mysticus* awake to the consciousness that is always there that "I am He" as I am totally one with *the Homo Mysticus* whose I "AMness" embraces all of creation.

In this "one-spirit-ness" with the Great I AM, each *homo mysticus* is one with creation to the extent that "I am creation", "I am earth, I am the mountain, sky and water." The individual "I am" is all in all too since I am one with the Great "I AM" whose "ALLness" suffuses and sustains life in creation.

The Great Spirit in Indigenous Peoples' Lives and the Future of Pneumatology

By

Jojo M. Fung, SJ

“Land, water, and rice become sacred because of the owner, especially during the rituals. All the earth and products are sacred, so that we have to purify ourselves.”

~ Poo Chie, a Karen women

“The Earth says, God has placed me here. The earth says that God tells me to take care of the Indians on this earth . . . The earth and water and grass say God has given our names and we are told those names.”

~ “Young Chief,” a Cayuse Headman

Introduction

With the unsustainability of the current global economic and financial systems that have exacerbated the ecological crises, it is timely to turn our attention to the shamanic religiosity of the indigenous peoples. The wisdom-teachings of shamanic pneumatology are invaluable in helping the earth community to negotiate this critical ecological era. The first part of this paper explains the indigenous understanding and experience of the Great Spirit. The second part will delve into the future of pneumatology in terms of the three major paths: live-in dialogue, plunging into the depth of religious mystical traditions, and dialogue with modern science and cosmology.

The Great Spirit – Understanding the Great Spirit

The response of Poo Chie, a woman of the Karen community, aged 43, from Dokdaeng (Northern Thailand) who follows primal religion and engages in traditional farming and the declaration of “Young Chief,” a Cayuse headman (U.S.),⁴²⁰ truly capture the religious sentiments of the indigenous peoples with regard to the Great Spirit, the ancestral spirits, and the nature spirits who dwell in their ancestral life-world.

In the Karen religious cosmology, the supreme owner and creator of all things is known as *Taj Thi Ta Tau* while the ancestral and owner spirits, who are the spirits of

420 The Karen (sometimes Kayin or Kariang) people belong to Sino-Tibetan language speaking ethnic groups that reside mainly in Karen State, southern and southeastern Myanmar (Burma). The Karen make up approximately seven percent of the total Burmese population of approximately 50 million people. A large number of Karen migrated into Thailand, mostly on the Thai-Karen border. See “Karen People,” at en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karen_people; accessed November 13, 2013.

Some of the indigenous American communities are the Nimiipuu (Nez Percé) and Salish (Flathead), Cayuse and Walla Walla on the Columbian Plateau in the USA.

nature, are known as *sah K'caj*. Mu Leay, a young Karenese of the traditional religion, explains that *Taj Thi Ta Tau* is the Great Spirit, using the Karen phrase *Hti k'ja Cauj k'ja*; whereas Poo Chie (cited above) describes *Taj Thi Ta Tau* as the mystic owner of nature—the sky and the earth.⁴²¹

Singtong, an elderly traditional religious leader known as *hif Hkof*, states that *Taj Thi Ta Tau* is absolute owner of the world and truth. Both Po Chie and Singtong believe in a hierarchy of spirit-beings: at the highest position is *Taj Thi Ta Tau*; next in rank are the spirits of the buffaloes, the forest, mountain, and water; at the lowest echelon are the bad spirits. Singtong claims that *Taj Thi Ta Tau* and the spirits are inseparably conjoined in that they are not separated but rather the same person, though with different roles and various levels of position.

Anne Keary opines that “the idea of a creator god or Great Spirit” refers to the one “who had made their lands for them.”⁴²² In substituting the word “me” with “indigenous peoples” and “humankind,” the declaration of the “Young Chief” summarizes the intimate relationship between the indigenous peoples and the Great Spirit, their ancestral homelands and Mother Earth. The same declaration is a clarion call to humankind to yearn for an intimate relationship with the Great Spirit and make Mother Earth a sacred and sustainable place for the earth community.

The Great Spirit “is a creative force in and of the land” and thus the “creative power alive in the landscape” to the extent that “the Great Spirit made tracks on the earth; the earth, the water, and the grass speak back to the Great Spirit.”⁴²³ As such, Native American theologians, Clara S. Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. Tinker, postulate that the Great Spirit “exists in all things in the world.”⁴²⁴

Experiencing the indwelling of the Great Spirit

In Northern Thailand, amongst the Karen folk, the Great Spirit makes her sacred presence felt in the lives of the indigenous peoples through the dreams and predictions of the healers. Most preponderantly, the Great Spirit is experienced through the sense of her nearness and spirit-power in ritual celebrations when the religious leaders shamanize in the homes, farms, forests, and water-sources to ensure a sustainable livelihood that is intimately related to the total well being of the community.

For the Lahu Nyi, the Great Spirit known as *Gui Sah* is experienced not just through dreams, but also through certain mystical communication during ritual worship

⁴²¹ Based on a conversation in a Karen village called Dokdaeng on April 12 and 15, 2013.

⁴²² Anne Keary, “Colonial Constructs and Cross-Cultural Interaction: Comparing Missionary/Indigenous Encounters in Northwestern America and Easter Australia,” in *Beyond Conversion and Syncretism*, ed. David Linderfeld and Miles Richardson (New York & Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012), 243-298, at 273.

⁴²³ Ibid.

⁴²⁴ Ibid. See Clara Sue Kidwell, Homer Noley, and George E. “Tink” Tinker, *A Native American Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001), 57.

in which *Gui Sah* descends and enshrouds all the worshippers at the sacred place called *hoye*.⁴²⁵ During ritual worship, all the religious leaders chant and pray aloud in union of mind and heart to the booming sounds of the gongs; it culminates in the ritual dance of most of the worshippers in the *hoye* to the sound of the gong and the melody of the pipes.

In Malaysia, the differential experience of the Great Spirit needs to be mentioned. For the Murut (forest people) in the remotest village of southwestern Sabah (the former North Borneo), the Great Spirit is felt during the ritual bath (*na rio* in Murut) in a stream under the canopy of the equatorial forest in the vicinity of the cave where the water spirits dwell. In an astonishing way, the Great Spirit is felt when thousands of fireflies congregate above the shaman and his disciples at night during the ritual bath in the stream.

Among the Semai, an ethnic community among the indigenous peoples in Peninsular/West Malaysia, the Great Spirit is felt during the *sewang terang* (ritual of healing with lights) and especially during the *sewang gelap* (rituals in darkness). The Great Spirit descends during the rituals when the shaman (*halaq* or *pawang*) goes into a trance and begins the sacred chant to call upon the spirits (*gonig-gonig*) to bring about the desired healing of the patients who gather for the ritual celebration in the village.⁴²⁶

The mystical experience of the Great Spirit overflows into people's everyday life in terms of the management and conservation of the forests, the Karen "rice merit network," and the communal "edict" of the Lahu Nyi. In other words, indigenous religiosity is related to a more sustainable livelihood in the indigenous communities, especially in the rural areas.

The traditional and rural Karen communities firmly believe that the rituals made the forest, the land, and the water sacred; in fact rituals sacralize the whole ecological environment. Certain areas have been sacralized through both the traditional and interfaith "ordination rituals" to ensure the sustainable management of the natural resources. The indigenous religiosity is translated into communal "rice-merit network" that enjoins the Karen villagers to contribute from the abundance of their annual harvest. Rice and seeds are pooled together and distributed among the "widows and orphans" of the communities. Similarly among the Lahu Nyi, the mystical communication is translated into a "doable edict" by which the religious leaders enjoin the community to regulate the prices of basic commodities like pork so that it is affordable for the poorer households of the community.

Among the Muruts, the dwelling place of the water-spirits in the caves amidst

⁴²⁵ A *hoye* is akin to a chapel usually made of bamboo and wood for the traditional worshippers to gather and pray to *Gui sah* to come upon the *Lahu Nyi* to communicate to them and deliver them from alcoholism and drug addiction that their people faced in the past and the present.

⁴²⁶ See Sue Jennings, *Theatre, Ritual and Transformation* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995).

the primary forest serves as a perennial reminder that the ancestral land with the fauna and lush flora are sacred. The regular invocation of their sacred power heightens the community's sense of sacredness of the forests and the streams of water cascading down the mountain. This sense of sacredness has enabled the remote Murut villagers to negotiate and resist the commoditization of the forest resources.

The Semai and their *Orang Asli* (original or indigenous) communities try to negotiate with or resist the efforts of state government officials who are hands in gloves with developers in annexing their land in the name of "national interest" or "development." Before the negotiation and peaceful rallies, traditional rituals are performed and interfaith prayers are offered by the *Orang Asli* religious leaders so that the Great Spirit empowers the leaders to press first of all for their communal rights to the land that has not been declared as their ancestral homeland and second, for the basic life amenities in their villages.

Mystagogy as a Gateway–The Gateway

The sense of the indwelling of the Great Spirit in the everyday experience of the indigenous peoples is more akin to the mystagogy of the great mystics and sages of the world rather than to Euro-centric rationalist theology. This mystagogy calls for what Ryan Urbano advocates: an openness of mind and heart to receive the communication of God "who comes to mind" (rather than "from the mind"), for God "is in consciousness and awakens the desire for God."⁴²⁷ This openness to the sacred presence of the Great Spirit is fostered by entering into a long period of contemplative silence and solitude in a village of the indigenous peoples. The long period of silence and solitude allows the Great Spirit, and the ancestral and nature spirits to reveal to us their sacred presence and power.

Ultimately, the period of silence and solitude becomes a *theatron* (a place of seeing, where things are made visible) and *theōria* (a mode of "looking at God in the face") in the contemplative encounter and interaction with the Great Spirit in the *cosmos* as multiverse/creation.⁴²⁸ The cosmos is a place of "seeing" how the Great Spirit makes visible a spirit-power that capacitates every individual to "look at God in the face of the victims of social suffering" and to behold with awe and wonder the sacredness of the *anthrōpos* and the *cosmos*. In this way, life is a constant spirit-to-spirit communion with the Great Spirit so that the individual's mind, heart, and will are one with the Great Spirit for the greater good of the earth community.

⁴²⁷ Ryan Urbano, "A-Dieu: Approaching the Divine," *Budhi – A Journal of Ideas and Cultures* XIII, nos. 1, 2, and 3 (2009): 320, 321.

⁴²⁸ See Jennings, *Theatre, Ritual and Transformation*, 191.

A Mystifying Personal Experience

When I entered into silence and solitude from the evening of the 19th till the 28th of May, 2013, in a house in the village of Dokdaeng and the last two days, May 29th and 30th in a farm house in a passion fruit farm near the edge of the forest, I realized that I am a spirit who is ascending to a vantage point above the world looking at Mother Earth until I found myself just beneath the Great Multiversal Spirit (GMS). I understood how GMS suffuses the whole multiversal cosmos or creation, including the entire earth community.

The silence and solitude have made me aware that the suffusing presence of the GMS becomes individualized in all living creatures and all things created. I realized that the GMS has become individualized spirits that sustain the life and activities of the chickens, the trees and the forests, the hills and mountains, the rivers and waters, and an incarnate spirit in each fellow human. The individualized/incarnate spirits invigorate and sustain life in the multiverse and regain the sacredness of life when life is desecrated. The GMS is indeed the mystery spirit-power that makes life in creation sacred. As a humanized/incarnate spirit, I find myself in an increasingly stronger spirit-to-spirit communion with the other individualized spirits of ancestors, nature, and fellow humans. This heightened sense of spirit-to-spirit communion enables me to have a felt sense of “one-spirit-ness” with nature, the ancestors, *Taj Thi Ta Tau, Wu*, and God.

During the 8th and 9th days, I found myself in a state of “one-spirit-ness” with the GMS in a stillness that is best explained as a “dark presence,” emptied and void of any conceptualization and objectification associated with the rational self. Yet, this stillness in the “dark presence” is no longer beneath the GMS, but *within* the GMS and *one* with the GMS. The “dark presence” tends to alternate with a “bright presence” which enables me to be in a state whence I find myself within the GMS, as if looking out with awe and reverence from the vantage point of a seer-witness, delighting in a conscious-ness of the GMS that enlivens and sustains the multiverse before me, so refreshingly alive with beauty and life, so mysteriously sacred to a beholding humanized spirit!

Such an experience leads us to draw out the implications of the perceived reality of the Great Spirit at work here and now.

The Future of Pneumatology

Genuine pneumatology presupposes having a lived experience or live-in dialogue with shamanic religiosity. This lived experience is the bedrock of the critical correlation with the biblical *ruach elohim* as the all-suffusing divine presence. Second, it requires a critical correlation with the interfaith meditation that attempts to drink from the wells of mystical traditions. Finally, it has to dialogue with modern science and cosmology.

Pre-requisite: Live-in Dialogue

First of all, genuine pneumatology calls for a live-in dialogue with the indigenous communities that allow time for periodic participation in the ritual celebrations of the community and regular conversation with the religious leaders. Though this experience is important, it only serves as the foundation for the contemplative silence and solitude that allow the Great Multiversal Spirit to beckon us into the everyday mysticism of indigenous religiosity. This contemplative experience of GMS can be regarded as a religious quest in which the participants are directed and guided to an initial experience of the spirit-presence of GMSs, the ancestral and nature spirits.⁴²⁹

Biblical *ruach elohim*

This lived experience of the Great Spirit is enriched by correlating with the biblical *ruach elohim* which is explained as the Spirit power that comes forth from Yahweh (YHWH) the God-creator-liberator for the Israelites and brings creation into being. According to Kwong Lai Kuen, the Jews understand *ruach elohim* at the cosmic level as the “wind, breath, air, atmosphere, the great space between the heavens and earth.”⁴³⁰ Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz explains *ruach* as “the motherly energy of God, the inexhaustible and creative power that is exceedingly tender in the soft breezes and wondrously fierce in the tempest’s blast.”⁴³¹ *Ruach* brings the world together as a united whole (principle of universal cohesion and unity of the whole universe) and it is the deepest core (interiority) of every being. At the microcosmic level, *ruach* is “the principle of life, the seat of knowledge, sentiments, will and the human character.”⁴³² *Ruach* is the “power” and effective “action of God in history and in the world” that is creative and transformative and enables God to bring about the salvation of humankind and the cosmos.

Ruach elohim remains transpersonal and personal in nature. Hence, Lai Kuen posits that “its rhythmic dynamism, its creative flexibility, its sweetness and its vigor, its unity made up of diversity, and its harmonious diversity allows us to go beyond certain breaks that exist in the dualist and static regime of thinking.”⁴³³ This is echoed by Philip Clayton, a scientist and theologian who argues that the “Spirit is set free from any

⁴²⁹ With the experience I underwent from May 19 till 31, I am willing to guide and direct those who have sufficient lived-in experience of indigenous religiosity to a deeper experience of the presence of the Great Spirit.

⁴³⁰ Kwong Lai Kuen, “The Chinese *Qi* and Christian Anthropology,” *Ignis*, Vol. XLII, no. 3 (2012): 38. Also see Richard J. Clifford and Roland E. Murphy, “Genesis,” in *The New Jerusalem Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, Joseph A. Fitzmyer, and Roland E. Murphy (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 10.

⁴³¹ Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz, *God’s Spirit: Transforming a World in Crisis* (New York: Continuum), 8.

⁴³² *Ibid.*

⁴³³ Lai Kuen, “The Chinese *Qi* and Christian Anthropology,” 38

metaphysical parameters and allowed to roam freely, immersing itself fully in the self-creating enterprise which is its natural birthright . . . Spirit is the creative, artistic impulse that rises on outstretched wings to soar above the objectifying forces of law-like explanation and prediction.”⁴³⁴

The personal and transpersonal nature of *ruach elohim* makes it possible to correlate it with the cosmic and personal *Qi* of Chinese cosmology whose life-giving presence sustains the *cosmos*, humans, and all beings.

Plummeting the Mystical Depth

Joining interfaith circles of chanting and silent meditation will be necessary to plummet the mystical traditions of the different religions, from Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism to Islam. The long period of silent-contemplative dwelling in the *Qi* or Wu that is inhaled and exhaled is one way to enter into a deeper understanding of the depth of the mystery that discloses to human consciousness the “ALL IN ALL-ness” of life.

A Personal Experience

My personal experience of joining a Filipino Tibetan Monk, Karma Yeshe Lhundrup, has really enthralled me. I am a Malaysian Jesuit enchanted by shamanic religiosity. There is another Filipino who is steeped in the Zen meditation of the Sanbo Kyodan lineage, and a third Filipino steeped in non-dual contemplation. As Karma Yeshe Lhundrup began the Tibetan chant with the bell and the gong, I was seated, facing the various statues of the Buddha. I closed my eyes and listened to the chant. Within minutes of inhaling and exhaling, an understanding came forth from the underground stream of silence: “I am Wu.”⁴³⁵ I am the Great Spirit.” What came to my consciousness is an image of myself as a multiversal spirit in the midst of the Great Multiversal Spirit (GMS) which I experienced at the end of my 8-days of silence and solitude (see A mystifying experience above). I realized then that I am Wu and so the GMS is Wu, too. Then my consciousness came to realize further, “I am Wu in you, flowing through you, around you.”⁴³⁶

⁴³⁴ Philip Clayton, *Adventures in the Spirit* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 153, 248. Also see Diarmuid O’Murchu, *In the Beginning Was the Spirit: Science, Religion and Indigenous Spirituality* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2012), 11.

⁴³⁵ Julian F. Pas explains Wu (“What is not,” “what does not exist”) in relation to Yu (“what is,” “what exists”). Wu as “non-being” or “emptiness” as in space has its usefulness in relation to a carriage made up of various parts (they exist), and the empty space in the carriage makes possible the transportation of goods and persons. See Julian F. Pass, in collaboration with Man Kam Leung, *Historical Dictionary of Taoism* (Boston & London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1998), 242.

⁴³⁶ I am grateful to Dr. Ruben Habito and Joey de Leon, SJ for inviting me to this visit to Karma Yeshe Lhundrup’s (Virgil S. Antonio) residence on July 11, 2013 where he invited us for a conversation over tea. The conversation culminated in an interfaith chant, communal silence, and shared prayer.

The Depth of *Qi*

Chinese cosmology is inextricably linked to the notion of *qi* in Chinese philosophy which “embraces the whole universe and it is the force that links beings among themselves.”⁴³⁷ According to Benoît Vermander, the Chinese term *qi* “is the vapor that emerges” like vapor from the rice that is cooking. So *qi* is the vapor, the expiration, the fluid, the overflow . . . the breaths.”⁴³⁸ Later on, a disciple of Confucius, Mencius, explained *qi* not so much a cosmic overflowing as an outcome of one who has a clear conscience and whose life is ethical.⁴³⁹

Caroline Fu and Richard Bergeon explain that “the ancient Chinese sages believed that the cosmic energy-flow (known as super cosmic *qi*) affected inspiration, environment, and social interaction on earth.”⁴⁴⁰ This impact of the cosmic energy-flow on nature/earth is depicted by the 5,000-year old Tai-Ji symbol of yin-yang (Tai-ji is translated as the “Great Supreme” or the universal energy-flow of consciousness). The dipolar yin-yang represents polarities in nature and the existence of complementarities to the extent that yin-yang “rotate and transform into each other”— expressing variations of “being”—having no beginning and no ending, affecting Earth as formless super cosmic *qi*.⁴⁴¹ In this complementarity, the cosmic *qi* interacts with each individual’s personal *ch’i*, amalgamating the personal energy-flow with the universal consciousness and “*ch’i* is the nature and consequence of being, energy-flow, and transformation.”⁴⁴² Korean theologian Grace Kim Ji-Sun states that *qi* “is a vital dynamic, an original power that permeates the entire universe and leads to ultimate unity.”⁴⁴³

In the societal and cosmic dimensions, Vermander believes *qi* is related to two other terms, “Virtue” and “Way,” whose meaning is related to a river that digs its course. Like water, *qi* nurtures and sustains Virtues and the Way, circulates between Heaven and Earth, the human and the cosmos. Just as “water is the manifestation of the primordial energy which can be creative of life or of death,”⁴⁴⁴ so *qi* is the social energy to be harnessed and used to bring about the prevalence of virtues and the Way that symbolizes the earnest human quest for the way of wisdom through learning and

⁴³⁷ See Benoît Vermander, “*Qi* (Energy) in Chinese Tradition,” *Ignis*, Vol. XLII, no. 3 (2012): 24.

⁴³⁸ *Ibid.*, 25.

⁴³⁹ See *ibid.*, 26. Vermander opines that the Chinese cosmology, culture, anthropology, and medicine speak of *qi* in terms of “circulations, links, exchanges, among others, by the exchanges of energy which makes of all the world—the small world or the macrocosm—a united whole.”

⁴⁴⁰ Caroline Fu, Robinson Hickman, and Richard Bergeon, “A Tao Model: Rethinking Modern Leadership for Transformation,” in *Leadership for Transformation*, ed. Joann Danelo Barbour and Robinson Hickman (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011), 17.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴⁴³ Grace Kim Ji-Sun, “In Search of a Pneumatology: Chi and Spirit,” *Feminist Theology* 18 (2009): 122; also see her work, *The Holy Spirit, Chi and the Other* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 121.

⁴⁴⁴ Vermander, “*Qi* (Energy) in Chinese Tradition,” 32

reflection, the thirst for the virtue of justice that brings about a right relationship with oneself, with fellow humans, with nature and creation.

Qi without Virtues and the Way of wisdom and justice will bring death, destruction, injustice, oppression, unrest, and violence in all spheres of life in society (social, cultural, economic, political, and religious). The revolutions in China are seen as social energy (like water that breaks the dikes) that great leaders unleashed in the Chinese people to “wash away” political obstacles and then later stopped to avoid or mitigate any destruction by the massive release of social energy. Hence, the use of the Chinese terms *feng* (to open) and *shu* (to close) to denote the cycle of “opening” and “closing” of the social energy at work in society in relation to the cosmic forces of the heaven and earth.⁴⁴⁵

Commenting on its transpersonal nature, Lai Kuen adds that *qi* is “a vital overflowing force” like air and water flowing everywhere, linking heaven and earth, the humans and all beings, “affecting many dimensions: cosmic, ethnic, spiritual, social, medical, esthetic, linking matter and spirit, heart and body, physics and metaphysics, emptiness and fullness, nothing and everything.”⁴⁴⁶ Furthermore, “what unifies and makes possible communion between all is the one and only *qi*. Being empty, it receives everything. It reaches the depths of every being and, at the same time, it is large enough to embrace and cover the whole universe.”⁴⁴⁷ As a transpersonal force, the Chinese *qi* “allows us to seize better and more subtly the active and creative presence of the Spirit in the world, the mutual communication between Heaven and Earth.”⁴⁴⁸

This cosmological explanation of *qi* articulates with Kim Ji-Sun’s postulation that *qi* is “the Spirit which is part of the universe and permeates all living things as it gives life and energy” and this “same Spirit is bridging all life-force between Creator and creature” to the extent that this selfsame Spirit “is not an energy proceeding from the Father, or from the Son” as “it is a subject from whose activity the Son and the Father receive their glory and their union, as well as their glorification through the whole creation.”⁴⁴⁹

The cosmological explanation of *qi* finds an affinity with the understanding of the Spirit in modern Western science and cosmology.

⁴⁴⁵ See *ibid.*, 34.

⁴⁴⁶ Lai Kuen, “The Chinese *Qi* and Christian Anthropology,” 39

⁴⁴⁷ See *ibid.* Lai Kuen also adds that the Chinese *qi*, “insofar as it is finite fineness and unlimited movement, to and fro, of *ganying* (stimulus-resonance, the response “of *qi* to *qi*”) is at the same time the milieu and the dynamism of mutual interaction and inter-communication and it is always present between Heaven and Earth. It is in this way that the Chinese *qi*, because of its rhythmic dynamism, its creative flexibility, its sweetness and its vigor, its unity made up of diversity, and its harmonious diversity allows us to go beyond certain breaks that exist in the dualist and static regime of thinking.”

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴⁹ Kim Ji-Sun, “In Search of a Pneumatology: Chi and Spirit,” 4, 54.

Engaging Modern Science and Cosmology

Modern western science and cosmology acknowledge that the multiverse came into being about 13.7 billion years ago as a result of the sudden bursting forth of energy often described as the “Big Bang” or “the great radiance” that resembles a cosmic microwave background radiation.⁴⁵⁰ Others describe this phenomenon as the “eternal inflation”⁴⁵¹ which left an “afterglow” with an evolutionary expansion of great velocity.

The cosmos is being presented as a self-directed “process of complexification” toward a future of infinite openness. The cosmos is indeed an infinite open multiverse caught up in an ongoing process of being created out of the creative vacuum. The emergence of the multiverse out of such profound depths was never a “creation out of nothingness“ (*creatio ex nihilo*) as an emergence out of the profundity within the chaos (*creation ex profundis*).⁴⁵²

The multiverse is charged with a primordial energy that “moves within self-organizational forms known as fields,”⁴⁵³ which are “constellations of energy, with assuredly functional properties and influences, but also endowed with potentialities,” thriving “on relationships, always pushing forward toward enlarged horizon,”⁴⁵⁴ also known to “flow in patterns (sometimes chaotic), and the patterns seem to have a preferred sense of direction.”⁴⁵⁵ These fields of energy, according to the spirituality of John of Damascus, are identifiable with the energy of God and thus with the energizing Spirit.

Modern western science and cosmology offer more compelling evidence of the energizing Spirit than the spiritual or theological tradition.⁴⁵⁶ Two leading scientists,

⁴⁵⁰ In 1965, two young astronomers working at the Bell Labs at Holmdel, New Jersey, Arno Penzias and Robert Wilson, discovered the cosmic background radiation. See Marcus Chown, *Quantum Theory Cannot Hurt You* (London: Faber and Faber, 2006), 147. The eternal radiance was extrapolated by Michael Dowd. See his work, *Thank God for Evolution* (San Francisco: Council Oak Books, 2009).

⁴⁵¹ Inflation became a more acceptable cosmological explanation in the 1980s due to the research of Alan Guth, Andrei Linde, Paul Steinhardt, and Andy Albrecht and gained further inroads in the 1990s due to the efforts of Paul Davies and John Gribbin. The insight of British physicist Neil Turok regarding an infinite open universe has recently been developed into the Hawking-Turok Instanton Theory (Steinhart and Turok 2007). The multiverse theory of Gribbin postulates that the universes are continuously being created and that we engage with billions of galaxies in the multiverse of staggering complexity and profundity. See John Gribbin, *In Search of the Multiverse* (New York: Allen Lane, 2009).

⁴⁵² For details on *creatio ex profundis*, see Catherin Keller, *Face of the Deep: A Theology of Becoming* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

⁴⁵³ O’Murchu, *In the Beginning Was the Spirit*, 72; see no. 15 above.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁵⁶ O’Murchu believes that “only the contemplative, mystical gaze can hope to plumb such depths, and today, science rather than religion leads the way,” while Andrew Pinsent, a former particle physicist working on the DELPHI experiment at CERN, and now a Catholic diocesan priest of Arundel and Brighton diocese and research director of the Ian Ramsey Centre for Science and Technology in the Theology Faculty of Oxford, alludes to the fact that in science “most discoveries today are on the basis of theories formed decades or even centuries ago, and it is not yet clear how to make further progress in

Isaac Newton and Albert Einstein, have engendered two different pneumatologies. Newton coined the term "ether" to denote the "vehicle for the activity of the living Spirit."⁴⁵⁷ Wolfgang Vondey offers a concise description of the Newtonian pneumatology:

- (1) Spirit is a necessary component of a philosophy of nature.
- (2) Spirit is an intermediate agent of a transcendent God in creation.
- (3) Spirit is a universal principle present in all natural phenomena.
- (4) Spirit is an internal medium of infinite duration (time) and extension (space).
- (5) Spirit is a cohesive and conforming force in nature.⁴⁵⁸

On the other hand, Einstein believes that the Spirit "is the rationality at work in the cosmic order, endowing the laws of nature with meaning and order, and bestowing an overall sense of unity and coherence in the workings of nature."⁴⁵⁹ In summary, Einsteinian pneumatology offers a different explanation:

- (1) Spirit is a necessary component of scientific endeavor.
- (2) Spirit is the rational order of the universe.
- (3) Spirit is a universal principle present in all natural phenomena.
- (4) Spirit is the symmetry of the space-time continuum.
- (5) Spirit has no physical, material reality.⁴⁶⁰

How do these "scientific" pneumatologies correlate with the biblical understanding of *ruach elohim*? At the onset it must be clear that both Newtonian and Einsteinian pneumatologies fail to link with the personal and embodied identity of the Spirit in Christianity. They resonate, however, with the transpersonal nature of the Creative Spirit. *Ruach elohim* is arguably the energizing Spirit of God that *emerges out of* and *co-creates within* the same foundational energy that has suffused the multiverse with an emergent orientation to "flourish, blossom forth and grow in complexity."⁴⁶¹

Given the personal and transpersonal nature of *ruach elohim* that is

many areas." See his article, "Jesuits and the 'God Particle'," *Vagdevi* 13, no. 7 (January 2013): 7. Also see O'Murchu, *In the Beginning Was the Spirit*, 30.

⁴⁵⁷ O'Murchu, *In the Beginning Was the Spirit*, 52.

⁴⁵⁸ See Wolfgang Vondey, "The Holy Spirit and the Physical Universe: The Impact of Scientific Paradigm Shifts on Contemporary Pneumatology," *Theological Studies* 70, no. 1 (March 2009): 22.

⁴⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁴⁶⁰ See *ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁶¹ O'Murchu, *In the Beginning Was the Spirit*, 40.

completely transcendent and totally immanent in creation, it is best to speak of the Spirit's divine creativity that suffuses creation with its sacred power. The Creative Spirit is completely enmeshed in the mystery of life; it "comes forth to thrive and complexify through relationships."⁴⁶² This is the Creative Spirit that is at the heart of cosmic creativity or the self-creativity of the cosmos that exhibits an ecosystemic capacity for self-organization and "a preferred sense of direction."⁴⁶³ With mystical courage, Teilhard de Chardin extrapolated a pneumatological insight:

Besides the phenomena of heat, light and the rest studied by physics, there is, just as real and natural, *the phenomenon of spirit* ... [which] has rightly attracted human attention more than any other. We are coincidental with it. We feel it within. It is the very thread of which the other phenomena are woven for us. It is the thing we know best in the world since we are itself, and it is for us everything.⁴⁶⁴

Teilhard's insight furthers the understanding of modern science and cosmology of a multiverse that is evolving, emergent, pervasively infused with patterns and a dynamic sense of direction for reasons that "the cosmos, in this sense, is overflowing [*sic*] with spirit because it is interactive, pan-relational, and creative."⁴⁶⁵

This primordial Spirit enfolds and permeates the entire cosmos with an aura of sacredness to the extent that all *anthrōpoi* and the *cosmos* enjoy their existence through the sustaining presence of the indwelling Spirit whence came its primordial sacredness.⁴⁶⁶ This indwelling Spirit who fulfills that primordial role articulates with the biblical *ruach elohim* who is known to Christian theology as the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶⁷

A primordial sacredness due to the sustaining indwelling of *ruach elohim* correlates with the transpersonal-personal nature of the Great Spirit, the *qi* of Chinese cosmology, and the Spirit of modern science and cosmology. Essentially these are the mystical-contemplative yet contextual articulations of the ultimate mystery of life. In spite of the observable differences in the diverse systems of explanation, there is an "epistemological affinity" between the different contextualized articulations of the

⁴⁶² Ibid., 72.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 68, 72, 198. Also see Stuart A. Kauffman who in his work argues that "the creativity in nature is God . . . God is our name for the creativity in nature. . . Using the word God to mean creativity in nature can help to bring us to the care and reverence that creativity deserves." Stuart A. Kaufmann, *Reinventing the Sacred* (New York: Basic Books, 2008), 142, 248.

⁴⁶⁴ Teilhard de Chardin, *Human Energy* (London: Collins, 1969), 93; see also his *Activation of Energy* (London: Collins, 1970). (Emphasis in italics mine).

⁴⁶⁵ Mark Hathaway and Leonardo Boff, *The Tao of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2009), 316.

⁴⁶⁶ For detail on primordial sacredness, read Thomas Berry, *Evening Thoughts: Reflecting on Earth as Sacred Community* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 2006), 118.

⁴⁶⁷ See O'Murchu, *In the Beginning Was the Spirit*, 26.

pervasive mystery of life.

Such an interrelated understanding of the sacred mystery that sustains the cosmic web of transpersonal and personal life promotes the discursive legitimacy of the wisdom of the indigenous peoples that were de-legitimized by the hegemonic colonial powers and narratives. Second, this critical correlation establishes the “pneumatological potentiality” of the Great Spirit as experienced by the indigenous people. Third, the legitimacy and authority conferred on oral narratives and indigenous wisdom in turn elevate the role of the indigenous shamans, sages, healers, and elders as well.

Conclusion

Living merely at the cognitive-rational level with concepts of the objectified reality of the world, human civilization remains impoverished, fragmented, and uprooted. The era of unsustainability turns the attention of our techno-economic age to seek and dwell within the nurturing and sustaining multiple mystical traditions that enable our age to live within the depths of the mystery of life. At this depth, humankind discovers and realizes that all *anthrōpoi* are spirit and that the multiverse, in the words of a young ritual specialist, Chan Kam of Maelid, “becomes sacred because the spirits come and dwell in nature.”⁴⁶⁸

The future of the earth community depends on an incremental consciousness that reveres the multiverse and earth community as sacredly sustained by the Great Spirit whose power suffuses the entire multiverse (multiversalized), the earth (“earthicized”), individualized in all living creatures, and incarnate in every human. The Great Spirit is indeed the ALL-ness in ALL of life in creation. All life draws energy and spirit from the bosom of the Great Spirit.

⁴⁶⁸ Based on an interview in the Karen village of Dokdaeng, April 15, 2013.

The Buddha's Psycho-Spirituality at the Service of Ignatian

Spirituality⁴⁶⁹

By

S. Lawrence, SJ

In this article, in Part-A, I explicate the fact that the Buddha's discovery of Universal Human Psychology and its Dynamics, is a great help for all who wish to grow in self-awareness, self-purification, self-mastery, and spiritual perfection. Also, I point out certain similarities between Buddhist Psycho-Spirituality and Ignatian Christ-centric Spirituality. In Part-B, I illustrate the Buddha's Psychotherapeutic Meditation, namely the Mindfulness Exercises, which enable a person to practice Ignatian Spirituality in many ways more effectively. In this article only Theravāda Buddhist Spirituality is dealt with.

Part–A

Introduction

St. Ignatius of Loyola, before his conversion, was a man given to worldly pleasures, power, pride, and vainglory, but once God intervened in his life he was converted, and he thereupon offered his life entirely for the service of the Kingdom of God in companionship with Jesus Christ. To continue the mission of Christ he also established the Society of Jesus, in order that many more may join his company in serving the Lord. To enable his companions to be rooted, grounded, and centered in Christ, St. Ignatius wrote the Spiritual Exercises (SE), which each and every Jesuit has to undergo in order to become a member of the Society of Jesus that he founded.

Although encountering Jesus through contemplating his birth, life, values, mission, suffering, death, and resurrection constitutes the core of the Spiritual Exercises, Ignatius introduced in and through his SE a few spiritual practices, which collectively constitute what is known as Ignatian Spirituality (IS). Some of the significant spiritual practices of IS are:

- 1) Daily Particular Examination of Conscience (SE: 24-26)
- 2) General Examination of Conscience (Thoughts, Words, and Deeds); (SE: 32-43)
- 3) Contemplation to attain Love (SE: 230-237)
- 4) Discernment of Spirits (SE 313-336)

How to train a person in these Spiritual Practices is well explained by Ignatius

⁴⁶⁹ This article is inspired by and follows in the long and rich tradition of mainly Jesuit research, scholarship and writing on the subject, and attempts to contribute to the tradition by taking another look at the unique complementarities between Buddhism and Ignatian Spirituality.

in the SE, and the hallmarks of IS are Introspection, Self-purification, Indifference, Discernment, Interiority, and Being men of God or Living in the Spirit. Buddhist Meditational Practices too aim at these spiritual and interiority skills, though the terminology employed to refer to these skills may differ.

The Main Aspects I deal with in this Paper are:

Part-A: The relevance of the Buddha's Psycho-spirituality in our development as spiritual beings and its similarity to Ignatian Spirituality (Theory: Psycho-spiritual Soteriological Philosophy).

Part-B: A few Buddhist Meditational Practices that can help us perform various aspects of IS effectively. (Practice: Soteriological Psychotherapy).

Buddha's Contributions in the Discovery of Universal Human Psychology (Human Psycho-system):

Before we go into Buddhist meditation proper, it is worthwhile dwelling upon facts related to a human person that are so to say specific contributions of the Buddha to humanity. It is vital to note here that these useful facts are not sufficiently explained in Christianity. Nevertheless they are highly essential and relevant for anybody's growth in Interiority, Self-examination-cum-exploration and Spirituality.

Some key contributions of the Buddha that promote within us introspection, self-awareness, self-purification, interiority, composure, compassion, and diligence are his discoveries and explanations on the following:

- 1) The parts that constitute a human individual: (This answers the question: What is a human being?). According to the Buddha, the material (physical) and immaterial (psychological) parts that constitute a human person are: a) One material part, namely the Body, and four immaterial parts, namely, b) Feelings c) Perceptions d) Mental Formations and e) Consciousness (SIII 89-61; BD 98-102). These five parts or dimensions of a human being are otherwise referred to as the five aggregates, and they together form a unit, which according to the Buddhists is conventionally termed a human person.
- 2) Their unity and interconnections: The five aggregates are very much interconnected and inter-dependent and function as one unit. The psychological (immaterial) dimensions cannot exist on their own without the body (material dimension), and the body cannot survive on its own without the psychological dimensions.
- 3) Human Psycho-dynamics: (Interaction between the human individual and the external world through the sense faculties).

Importance of the Senses

We human beings encounter, experience, and enjoy realities around us through our five sense faculties (eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body), and their coordinator the mind. In Buddhism, the mind is also considered a sense faculty, since it can reproduce mentally the objects of the five sense faculties through imagination, ideation, and reflection. Hence the number of sense faculties is counted as six in Buddhism. According to the Buddha, for a human individual, who is a combination of five aggregates, the six sense faculties and their respective objects make up the whole universe, and once these six faculties are no more, the universe too is non-existent for that individual. Thus in Buddhism, the six sense faculties in a human being along with his constitutive five dimensions, form the basis for existence, knowledge, moral action, suffering, happiness, rebirth, and final liberation (Nibbāna). (A. II. 48)

Role of our Senses in our Lives

We all know how important our sense faculties are to our everyday life. We interact and learn about nature and all existing realities through our senses. We enjoy and cherish the beauty and wonders of all that exists by means of our senses. Our eyes delight in attractive sights; our ears enjoy melodious sounds; our nose looks for sweet fragrances; the tongue craves for tasty foods; the body longs for warm touches; and our mind, through memory, recollection, and imagination indulges in the pleasures and enjoyments of all the above mentioned senses. Although enjoying pleasures through all our senses is ratified in all religions, over-indulgence in sensual pleasures is not ratified by any religion. Rather, moderation in the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is advised in all religions.

It is common knowledge that we enjoy pleasures through objects that are pleasing to our senses. It is also true that we crave for or desire things that are pleasing to our senses, and yet it is also a fact that there are things in life that are displeasing to our senses. Our natural reaction to things displeasing to us is aversion or rejection, or sometimes even hatred. There also things in life concerning which we have no knowledge or understanding, and towards such things we are generally neutral. For example, if we hear someone speak in an unknown or strange language we either like or dislike the sound of that language, but we will be totally unaware regarding its meaning and so we adopt a neutral attitude (neither liking nor disliking) towards it. From these deliberations we understand the truth that to like or dislike a thing depends very much on our knowledge or understanding of that thing, and that we respond in three ways towards things in life, namely, liking, disliking, or adopting a neutral stance towards them, based on the knowledge we have of them. This basic psychological truth that is founded on our perception of the things we interact with,

things we either like or dislike or adopt a neutral stance to, and the fact that a correct perception of things (wisdom) is highly necessary for our appropriate and healthy dealings with them, is the pivotal point in Buddhist morality and spirituality.

Human Psycho-Dynamics According to Buddhism

As we have seen earlier, in Buddhist understanding, a human being is constituted of five dimensions, namely, Body, Feelings, Perceptions, Mental Formations and Consciousness. According to Theravāda Buddhism, the five sense faculties, namely sight, hearing, smell, taste, and touch are situated in the physical sense organs of the eye, ear, nose, tongue, and skin; and the sixth sense faculty, namely mind, is located at the base of the heart. When a person is awake and active, these six sense faculties constantly influence and determine the nature and dynamics of the five dimensions of that person.

For example, if the eyes of a conscious person come in contact with a beautiful ripe mango, the coming together of the three, namely, the sense organ which is the eye, the sense object which is the mango, and the consciousness of that person, produce an image or sense impression of that mango within the mind of the person. Perception and feeling with reference to the mango immediately arise within the person. Through his previous experiences, if he perceives the mango to be good both for his physical and psychological dimensions, pleasant feelings arise within him, but if he perceives it to be bad for both dimensions, then unpleasant feelings arise within him. (The physical activity of eating a mango can produce both physical as well as psychological benefits, for the mango can both physically nourish the person who eats it, as well as make him mentally happy). If he had no earlier knowledge about mangoes, he may study and investigate the truth about them, and once he has obtained the truth he may reason out (mental formations) as to whether a mango of such and such a quality would be helpful or harmful to him. Once he has made a judgment he will take a decision (with some intention and volition-aspects of mental formations), as to whether to eat or discard the mango. Once he has made a decision he will realize it by acting in accordance with his decision, and in this case, he might eat the mango (bodily action), or discard it. Here we see how a simple act of a sense organ (the eye seeing a mango) influences and activates the five dimensions of a human being.

Principles of Buddhist Psycho-dynamics

From the above description we realize how inter-connected and inter-related the five dimensions of a human being are with the sense faculties. The same psycho-dynamics (operation between senses and the five dimensions of a human being) takes place when other sense organs such as the ear, nose, tongue, skin, and

mind come into conscious contact with their respective sense objects, namely sound, smell, taste, touch and memory. The various above-mentioned psycho-dynamics are noted below in their chronological sequence.

- 1) First, contact (between the sense organ, sense object, and consciousness) takes place.
- 2) Then, a sense impression of the object occurs in the consciousness of the person.
- 3) After that, perception (identification) and feeling (affective simultaneous response) about the object arise in the mind. (According to the Buddha, perception and feeling arise simultaneously [M I 293]).
- 4) That leads to thinking, reasoning out, judging, volition and decision-making with regard to the object under consideration. (All these aspects constitute mental formations and they are essentially mental activities [M I 112]).
- 5) Finally the decision, which is a mental action, is executed externally through physical action, either in the form of speech or bodily activities.

In the five steps mentioned above we see that before the physical action (of speech or any bodily activity) is done, the mental act of judging and decision-making (with some intention or motivation) takes place. According to the Buddha each and every external moral action, necessarily has to be preceded by a corresponding mental action in the form of judging, intending, willing, and decision-making. In fact for the Buddha, primarily, the mental action of willing (volition) and decision-making in itself is action already done; and speech and bodily actions are mere external expressions of that action performed internally. (*Cetanāham bhikkhave kammam vadāmi;..Cetayitva kammam karoti kāyena vācāya manasā Nibbedhika-pariyāy Sutta (A III 415)*).

Further, for any decision-making (or in other words for any moral action to be performed), knowledge concerning the objects or individuals about whom the decision is made and the disposition and intention of the decision-maker (in brief the wisdom of that person) are very significant. Although the sense organs, sense impressions and the corresponding feelings they generate are also very vital and potent in any moral action, they are just the initial factors of moral actions. The key, and master factor, or deciding factor that finally helps the doer to choose which type of action is to be performed, is his knowledge, experience, judgment and discernment concerning the issue at hand. In other words, the wisdom of the individual is the root or key factor that assists him in choosing the right or wrong course of action in all circumstances.

Psychological-Causality Operative in the Moral and Spiritual Realm (The Four Noble Truths)

According to the Buddha the psychological roots of craving for things we like, hatred for things we dislike, and ignorance as to why we like or dislike things, are the negative mental motives or roots, which cause all our sufferings. Detachment, compassion, and wisdom are the mental roots that cause happiness and liberation in us. Hence the Buddha suggests that we constantly remove these negative mental states (craving, hatred, ignorance) through meditation, and refill our hearts and minds with detachment, generosity, compassion, and wisdom. Now the questions that arise are, why and how do the negative mental roots of craving, hatred, and ignorance arise in our minds? And how can we replace them with positive qualities of detachment generosity, compassion and wisdom? In answer to these questions the Buddha discovered Human Psycho-mechanics, through which we understand who a human being is, how he interacts with himself and the world through his senses, and how he becomes happy or unhappy.

Dependent Co-origination

Dependent Co-origination according to the Buddha is a Causal Reality that governs the entire universe and all Existence, and all the living and non-living beings they include. This Causality states that each and every object, event, and being is affected by the causes and conditions in this Universe, but the central quest of the Buddha was to seek the Causality that affects Human Suffering and Liberation. After his quest the Buddha arrived at a psycho-ethical Causality as a solution to Human Suffering and Liberation. The various factors operative in this psycho-ethical Causality are the following:

- A) Ignorance conditions Mental Formations (2) Mental formations condition Consciousness (3) Consciousness conditions Mentality-Materiality (4) Mentality-Materiality conditions Sense-Faculties (5) Sense-Faculties condition Contact (6) Contact conditions Feelings (7) Feelings condition Craving (8) Craving conditions Clinging (9) Clinging conditions Becoming (10) Becoming conditions Birth (11) Birth conditions aging, death, sorrow, suffering and lamentation etc. This is the causal link for the origination of suffering. (M Sutta 38).

- B) The causal link for the cessation of suffering is: (1) With the cessation of Ignorance comes the cessation of Mental Formations (2) Cessation of Mental Formations leads to Cessation of Consciousness (3) Cessation of Consciousness leads to the cessation of Mentality-Materiality (4) The Cessation of

Mentality-Materiality leads to the cessation of Sense-Faculties (5) Cessation of Sense-Faculties leads to cessation of Contact (6) Cessation of Contact leads to cessation of Feelings (7) Cessation of Feelings leads to cessation of Craving (8) Cessation of Craving leads to cessation of Clinging (9) Cessation of Clinging leads to cessation of Becoming (10) Cessation of Becoming leads to cessation of Birth (11) Cessation of birth leads to cessation of aging, death, sorrow, suffering and limitation etc. (M Sutta 38)

We see in these cause the links, the involvement of all the five aggregates of a human person; namely,

Ignorance > [1] Mental Formations–[2] Consciousness–[3] Body (Mentality-Materiality + Sense Faculties)–[4] Perception (Contact)–[5] Feelings–[6] Craving–[7] Clinging–[8] Becoming–[9] Birth → Leads to Suffering.

In the above sequence, we see ignorance as the root and initial cause of the chain, which conditions Mental Formations, and in turn Mental Formations condition the rest of the factors in the chain. In fact, ‘ignorance’ is not a thing in itself but a quality or a state of mind (Mental Formations). It is characterized by a lack of true knowledge or presence of wrong knowledge. So primarily, ‘ignorance’ is the wrong perception of reality or the distorted or constructed perception of reality by the mind. This wrong and distorted perception of reality by the mind which is otherwise referred to as Mental Formations leads one to suffering, whereas when this wrong perception of the mind is replaced by a correct perception of reality which is wisdom itself, then this transformed mental condition leads one to happiness.

This particular perception of reality by a person (that is, by his mind) whether a wrong or correct perception, can be referred to as his or her world-view or value system. If our value system is based on a wrong perception of reality it will lead us to suffering, but if our value system is based on a correct perception of reality it will lead us to happiness. Fitting into this causal chain of the Buddha, we may say that the value system of a person affects and influences his or her thinking (feelings included), decision-making and behavior. This causal link may be explained in another way in the following manner:

Our values affect our thinking and decision-making, which in turn affect our speech, action, and habitual living. (Below, the ideogram [→] signifies ‘conditions’).

Values → Thinking → Decision-making → Speech → Actions → Habits
(Wisdom)

How our values are formed, how they affect our behavior, and how our values can be transformed for the better are explained below:

Value-Construction, Attachments, Obsessions and Craving

Human beings interact with the world through their senses for the purpose of acquiring economic (material) and psychosocial (psychological) security, which together may be called (Wholesome Security), in order to lead happy and healthy lives. Hence the criterion of Wholesome Security becomes a deciding factor for people to attach value to things. Based on their sense experiences, social-upbringing, traditions and education, people judge the potentials of an object to bring Wholesome Security to them, and accordingly grant value and importance to it (this mental and moral activity can be referred to as value construction). The crucial point to be noted here is that the value a person gives to a thing maybe right or wrong (since his lack of experience or bias can influence his interior activity of value-construction), yet what value he gives to things will certainly influence his feelings, thought-patterns, and everyday behavior.

This kind of value-construction, attitude-formation, inclination, orientation, and determination towards things and people in the world become part and parcel of the Mental Formations of a person, which as I stated earlier is one of the five dimensions of a human being. These constituent aspects of Mental Formation in a person, namely, values, attitudes, inclinations, orientations and determinations become a driving or directing force, when he interacts with things of the world through his senses. As a result, the other four dimensions of a human being, namely Feelings, Perceptions, Consciousness, Body, as well as his moral actions are influenced and determined by the dominating forces of his Mental Formations.

Since the Mental Formations of a person, which include values, attitudes, and inclinations, play a decisive role in his interacting with the world through his senses, the interior activities of value-construction and attitude-formation of a person with regard to things in the world are central and crucial. Hence, to the extent the person has right and noble values, to that extent his thinking, speaking, and behaving will be right and noble. And since transformation of value systems is possible in a person, the more a person transforms his or her value systems (that is, the way of viewing things, people, and events or way of giving meaning or value to things, people, or events) for the better, the better would be his or her thinking, speaking, and behavior. And when a person's value system, thinking, speaking and behavior grow more enhanced and nobler, his or her happiness increases, and suffering decreases.

[The Ideogram → below denotes 'leads to.']

Transformation of Values → Transformation of Thinking → Transformation of
Decision-making → Transformation of Speech → Transformation of Action →
Transformation of Habit

Hence the main purpose of the Eight-fold Noble Path (which is the Middle Path discovered by the Buddha for the ending of suffering and attainment of liberation) is to bring about transformation in the value systems of people, since their value system is the root cause of their suffering or happiness. According to the Buddha, when people wrongly perceive beings as permanent, pleasurable, and with selfhood, they become avaricious, proud, and delusive. This leads to the value system of craving for possessions, hatred towards all who challenge their pride (Ego), and ignorance concerning reality, and they consequently end in suffering. However, when people begin to realize beings as impermanent, without a self, and laden with suffering, they acquire the value system of detachment, humility-cum-compassion, and wisdom, which leads them to true happiness.

Diagram Representing the Transformation of the Value System as Suggested in Buddhism

a) Wrong Perception of Reality: Permanence, Ego, Pleasurable



Corresponding Value System: Craving, Hatred, Delusion

b) Transformation in Perception of Reality: Impermanence, No-Self, Suffering



Corresponding Transformation in Values: Detachment, Compassion, Wisdom

The Eight-fold Noble Path of the Buddha (M I 49) aims at this type of transformation of values from Craving, Hatred, and Delusion to Detachment, Compassion and Wisdom. The Eight-fold Path is as follows:

- (1) Right View (2) Right Thought (3) Right Speech (4) Right Action (5) Right Livelihood (6) Right Effort (7) Right Mindfulness (8) Right Concentration

These eight steps are classified into the following three groups: Wisdom (1, 2); Virtues (3, 4, 5); and Concentration (6, 7, 8).

When an individual by following the Eight-fold Noble Path steadily and constantly grows in Wisdom, Virtue, and Concentration (Single mindedness), he sees reality as it is (with the characteristics of impermanence, soullessness, and laden with suffering. He becomes detached, humble, compassionate, and wise, and proceeds towards Nibbāna, the final liberation. Thus the essential psycho-spiritual dynamics of

the Eight-fold Noble Path is the transformation of one's value system that is based on a wrong perception of reality, into a liberating value system based on a true perception of reality obtained through introspective and insight-producing mindfulness meditations.

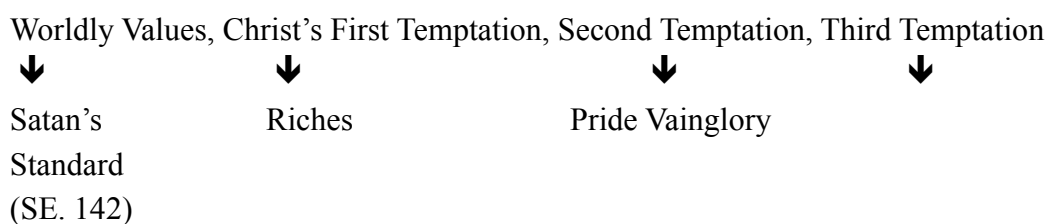
Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

The spiritually transforming dynamics of the Exercises of St. Ignatius consist in a sinful and worldly individual being invited to purify himself in the forgiving grace of God, and he is then made to encounter the historical Jesus through contemplative meditations on His birth, life, values, death, resurrection and on-going saving presence, through the Holy Spirit. Through this spiritual process the individual is challenged by the life, love, and values of Jesus Christ, and called to transform himself in accordance with those values and life, in order to grow fully in the image, nature, wisdom, and holiness of Christ, who is the Way, Truth, and Life (Jn. 14: 6-7). Herein consist the central and the essential spiritual dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

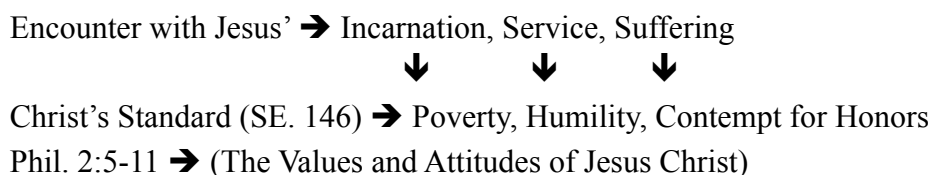
Jesus Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life

Hence the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius are aimed at transforming each and every individual and converting them into the image and likeness of Jesus Christ, by following Him faithfully and fully. In other words, the Spiritual Exercises are meant to train people to die to their worldly values of selfish attachments and ego-centered pride, in the manner of and in union with Christ, and to grow in the fullness of life, nature, and liberating values of Christ, namely, Poverty, Humility, and Contempt for Worldly Honors. The value transformation attained through the Spiritual Exercises is represented as follows:

a) Values of a Worldly Person before Encountering Christ:



b) Value Transformation in the Person after Encountering Jesus in his heart:



The need for every Christian to grow in the personhood of Christ is expressed in the following Biblical Passages:

Jn. 14: 6-7: "I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the father except through me. If you know me, then you will also know my father."

Col. 2: 2-3: "Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

Col. 2:6-7: "So, as you received Jesus Christ the Lord, walk in him, rooted in him and built upon him and established in faith as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving."

Col. 2: 9-10: "For in him dwells the whole fullness of the deity bodily, and you share in this fullness in him, who is the head of every principality and power."

Col. 3: 17: "And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving to God the Father through Him."

Eight-Step Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius

The value or spiritual transformation expected to occur in a person making the Spiritual Exercises can be represented as taking place in eight steps as show below:

(1) Self-purification in the love of God (2) Encounter with Jesus Christ (3) Assimilating the values of Christ (4) Having the heart and mind of Christ (growing in the personhood of Christ) (5) Thinking like Christ (6) Speaking like Christ (7) Acting like Christ (8) Living in the Spirit (living in union with God the way Jesus did). By repeatedly making the Spiritual Exercises and practicing its spiritual fruits in daily life, one goes through these eight steps again and again and grows ever more in the likeness of Christ.

It is fascinating to note that these eight steps of the Spiritual Exercises cited above bear a striking similarity to the Eight-fold Noble Path of the Buddha, which as stated earlier comprise the following:

(1) Right Concentration (2) Right Mindfulness (3) Right Efforts (4) Right View (5) Right Thought (6) Right Speech (7) Right Action (8) Right Livelihood.

The Psycho-Spiritual Liberation Dynamics (intra-personal activity through introspection) that is operative in the Eight-fold Noble Path of the Buddha is also seen to be occurring in the liberating and sanctifying spirituality of the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius, but through an inter-personal activity of growing in a relationship with Christ. Also, the three groups into which the Eight-fold Noble Path of the Buddha is classified, namely Wisdom, Virtue, and Concentration, bear a similarity to the concept of Christ as the Way, Truth, and Life.

Wisdom → Truth, Virtue → Way, Concentration → Life

Further, Right View according to Buddhism is knowledge that each and every being is impermanent, laden with suffering, and devoid of any self-sufficient Self, and

hence there should be no craving for anything in the world. This view of Buddhism resonates with the First Principle and Foundation of the Spiritual Exercises, which states that we should not get entangled with created objects, but use them to the extent they assist us in encountering God.

In the passages we dealt with so far we first encountered the Psycho-spiritual Dynamics of Buddhism, later followed by certain analogies between Ignatian theistic (Christ-centric) Spirituality and Buddhist Psycho-spirituality. It is indeed amazing to note how an atheistic Buddhist spirituality and a theistic Ignatian Spirituality have the same spiritual transformation (perfection) as their ultimate goal, for though their paths to the goal may differ, yet they do possess resemblances as we just observed.

Differences and Uniqueness between these two Spiritual Traditions

When speaking of differences between Buddhist and Ignatian (in general theistic) spiritual traditions, we see that the Buddhist emancipative path is generally termed an intra-personal activity, and the final goal here, namely Nibbāna, is attained essentially through the self-effort of each individual. The Ignatian salvific path however is referred to as an inter-personal activity between the believer and God in Christ, and here the believer essentially attains the final goal of Salvation through the grace of God, in and through Jesus Christ. Before proceeding further however, I feel it better to clarify here the meanings of the terms, ‘inter-personal’ and ‘intra-personal.’

Regardless of whether we desire it or not, as human beings we ceaselessly interact with people and other existential beings (that is, non-human entities such as air and water, and creatures such as birds, animals, and so on), that surround us. Even while asleep we interact with the surrounding air through breathing, and in theistic traditions, besides interacting with people and other existential beings, a person at times interacts with God through prayer and other spiritual activities. When interacting with people and God, the interaction is referred to as inter-personal interaction, and when relating to creatures other than human beings and God, such interaction may be termed inter-being interaction.

Irrespective of whether the interaction is inter-personal or inter-being, all forms of interaction affect our body, feelings, thoughts, and even so to say our entire personality, and such influences in us, which are the outcome of both our inter-personal and inter-being interactions, have to be known, discerned, and regulated in order to aid our well being. To assist a person in doing the spiritual activities of self-awareness and self-regulation, Buddhism advocates an Introspective Meditation called Mindfulness to its followers. This introspective exercise of Mindfulness is termed an intra-personal activity, since the person doing it is focused on his interior self, in order to be mindful of all that goes on within.

On comparing them superficially, the intra-personal activity of Introspective

Mindfulness Meditation in Buddhism and the inter-personal activity of relating to God in the Ignatian tradition may appear different, and yet, both these spiritual activities are mutually inbuilt. In other words, the intra-personal activity of Introspective Mindfulness Meditation by a follower of Buddhism, is built upon (or performed upon) the experiences and impacts of the inter-personal and inter-being interactions executed by that person with people and beings in this existential world. Thus, the meditator's inter-personal and inter-being interactions and experiences feed upon the contents of his intra-personal meditation. Hence, to say that Buddhist spirituality is only of intra-personal meditation would not be true, since inter-personal and inter-being interactions, especially regarding the issue of morality are part and parcel of any and every human society, irrespective of race, language, or religion.

Similarly, in Ignatian spirituality, the inter-personal activity of relating to God takes place within the depth and core of a person, or rather in the person's innermost space, and this innermost and intimate divine encounter could be experienced and nourished only through an activity of introspection, self-awareness, interiority and indwelling by the believer. This activity of introspection, self-awareness, interiority and indwelling is nothing other than intra-personal activity. Thus to promote inter-personal spirituality, we need to grow in intra-personal spiritual skills as well. Hence, saying that Ignatian spirituality is merely of an inter-personal nature is no full truth, for on the contrary, the inter-personal spirituality of Ignatius is much exalted by the intra-personal spirituality of introspection, interiority, self-awareness, examination of conscience and so on.

Thus, we may say that the intra-personal activity of mindfulness in Buddhism is in need of the experiences born of inter-personal and inter-being interactions of the meditator as its food and content, whereas the inter-personal spiritual activity of St. Ignatius requires the method and art of the intra-personal activities of introspection and interiority, for its effectiveness and enhancement. Thus both spiritual traditions need and both use intra-personal and inter-personal spiritual activities. Yet as a slight variation, we can accept the fact that in Buddhism intra-personal spirituality is emphasized greatly and highly developed, while in Ignatian spirituality it is inter-personal spirituality that is greatly stressed. Since any spirituality, and certainly inter-personal spirituality too has to be developed mainly through intra-personal skills (self-awareness skills), and since Buddhism is possessed of highly developed intra-personal skills, proponents of Ignatian spirituality, by adopting a mindset of humility, can indeed acquire a few intra-personal skills from Buddhism for the advancement of their own spirituality.

Another issue waiting to be explained is the 'self effort' of Buddhism and 'grace' of Ignatian (Christian or Theistic) Spirituality. This can be affirmed as the central and core distinction between Theravāda Buddhism and all Theistic traditions, and an area in requirement of a great deal of inquiry and research with reference to

religious studies. However I wish to point out here that many Mahayana Buddhist Traditions (like the Amitabha Pure Land School) also believe very much in grace.

To conclude Part-I, I wish to state that in my opinion, whether the emphasis is on intra-personal or inter-personal spirituality, the emancipation, liberation, or salvation takes place within the core and depth of a person, where and when the self becomes empty and inactive, while grace (or mindfulness in Theravāda Buddhism) becomes abundant and active. Here it would be appropriate to point out that the Venerable Thich Nhat Hanh, a famous Vietnamese Buddhist monk and peace activist, in his book entitled *Living Buddha and Living Christ* draws a similarity between the Buddhist belief in the power of “Mindfulness” and the Christian belief in the power of the “Holy Spirit.”

Even so we must grant that the Buddha, by rooting his emancipative path on universal common human psychology and introspective psycho-therapy, has made his spiritual path more sensible, experiential and alluring, to human beings of all cultures, languages, and religions. As a common, universal, and emancipative mental science, Buddhist wisdom assists people of all religions to pursue their respective spiritual goals more consciously, concretely, and effectively.

In fact, by establishing his emancipative path on universal and concrete psychological experiences, the Buddha sets the universal common human liberating standards (of Detachment, Humility, and Wisdom), through which we may evaluate the meaningfulness, effectiveness, and relevance of other soteriological paths (Religions) in the world. If we evaluate Ignatian Spirituality via the standards of Buddhism, it emerges as a liberating, meaningful, relevant, and effective spiritual path that concretely addresses the human existential situation (that is, the sinfulness of avarice and craving, pride and hatred, delusion and vainglory), and ensures mankind’s constant inner aspiration (of purification, peace, love, and hope through detachment and generosity, humility and compassion, wisdom and truth), and his final eternal destination (total liberation through union with God) in Jesus Christ.

Part-B

Here I deal with the practical aspects of Buddhist Psycho-spirituality, that is, about the Mindfulness Meditation and its relevance to Ignatian Spirituality. As we saw in Part-A, when an individual interacts with the world with his six senses, all the five aggregates of that person are affected, and if that individual is unmindful of all the changes and movements that are taking place in his five aggregates, he would end up in suffering, by indulging in evil thoughts, speech, and actions. If however he is diligently mindful of all that happens in his five aggregates, then he can discern well and choose only good thoughts, speech and actions and thus be constantly happy. This is the central and essential purpose of the Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation. That is, to keep constant track of a person’s five aggregates (one’s entire interior world), and thereby become

master of one's thoughts, words, and actions by ordering them to be wise, wholesome, helpful, and compassionate towards self and others.

In order to keep constant track of one's five aggregates, or in other words to be aware of oneself always, the Buddha in his *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta* (M I 57) advocates for all Four Foundations of Mindfulness Exercises, in order that each individual may be mindful of his entire interior personality as well as the entire mental and material reality surrounding him, so as to gain mastery over himself, that is, over his thoughts, words and deeds. The Four Foundations of Mindfulness Exercises as prescribed by the Buddha are as follows:

- 1) The Contemplation of the Body
- 2) The Contemplation of Feelings
- 3) The Contemplation of the States of Mind
- 4) The Contemplation of Mental Contents

Although these Four Foundations of Mindfulness Exercises produce many spiritual benefits in a person, in Part-B, which is a brief study on the relevance of Buddhist Meditation for Ignatian Spirituality, I wish to deal with a few Buddhist Mindfulness Exercises that may help us greatly in the effective practice of some aspects of Ignatian Spirituality. For this purpose I have selected a few Exercises from the first Foundation of Mindfulness, namely Contemplation of the Body. According to the Buddha, the contemplation of the body should be done in six different steps, and these are:

- a) Mindfulness of Breathing
- b) Mindfulness of the Four Bodily Postures
- c) Mindfulness of all Physical Activities of the Body
- d) Mindfulness of the Parts of the Body
- e) Mindfulness of the Four Primary material Elements of the Body
- f) Charnel ground Contemplations on the 9 stages of a decaying dead Human Body

For our purpose I take here only the First Three Mindfulness Meditations (a, b, c) as presented above. These three Mindfulness Exercises assist a person in calming down his body and mind and growing in tranquility, silence, concentration, and steadiness of mind. These three meditations enable a person to begin the skill of Mindfulness, which in turn helps the person to develop interior calm and the art of introspection (the ability to perceive clearly by oneself all that goes on within a person). This skill of Mindfulness, or in other words the Art of Introspection, is a help for all who desire to conduct an examination of their mind or heart.

Buddhist Meditational Practices and their Helpfulness in the Practice of Ignatian Spirituality

The Buddhist Mindfulness Exercises, namely Mindfulness of Breathing, Mindfulness of Four Bodily Postures, and Mindfulness of all Physical Activities, greatly facilitate a person in practicing the following aspects of Ignatian Spirituality, that is:

- a) The Daily Particular Examination of Conscience (SE: 24-26)
- b) The General Examination of Conscience (Thoughts, Words, and Deeds: SE: 32-43)
- c) The Discernment of Spirits (SE: 313-336)
- d) The Spirituality of being a Contemplative in Action (SE: 230-237)

A) Mindfulness of Breathing

The appropriate preparations suggested by the Buddha for a person desiring to practice this Exercise well are:

- Selecting an appropriate external environment, like a secluded and quiet place.
- Taking a suitable physical posture: Folding the legs crosswise we take a sitting position, keeping the body erect with a straight back and head slightly bent to align with the spinal cord. Sitting with an erect body in alignment with the spinal cord can enable a person to meditate even for about 2 to 3 hours without interruption. (Those having problems in sitting on the floor may sit on a chair or a raised seat).
- Establishing concentration on the Nostrils (or Abdomen).
- Maintaining full awareness on breathing in and breathing out.

Method of Actual Practice:

- The person doing the exercise, while taking in a long breath, should be aware that his 'breathing in' is long.
- While breathing out with a long breath, he should be aware that his 'breathing out' is long.
- A similar awareness has to be maintained while breathing in and out with short breaths. As a next step, the person has to train himself in experiencing the whole body while breathing in and out, to see whether there is any pain or disturbance in the body.
- The person has then to train himself in calming the body while breathing in and out, since calming the body is a necessary step to calm the mind.
- As a next step, the person has to develop an awareness of his feelings, thoughts, and attitudes, or the current state of his mind.
- The person has then to maintain inner calm and peace, by not entertaining any attachment or hatred in his mind and heart.

Advantages

Mindfulness of breathing has a peaceful character and leads to stability of posture and mind. Mental stability prevents distraction and discursive thoughts. This practice can also lead to deep concentration and penetrative insights. The *Ānāpānasati Sutta* (M III 80) describes around 16 steps for the Breathing Meditation, starting from the bodily phenomena of breathing, to feelings, mental events, and the development of insight. Thus mindfulness of breathing becomes a skillful tool for self-observation (Sa p. 131).

Obviously the art of self-observation is highly essential for the examination of conscience. As an able tool for self-observation, the Buddhist Mindfulness of Breathing Exercise is effective in the practice of both the Ignatian Daily Particular Examination of Conscience and General Examination of Conscience. The inner calm, and the steadiness and sharpness of mind produced by this exercise, facilitate a person in examining his conscience (both in particular and general forms) clearly, thoroughly, and deeply. Hence for an individual proficient in the Mindfulness of Breathing, Ignatian practices of the Daily Particular and General Examination of Conscience become easy and effectual. Another benefit of the Mindfulness of Breathing (that is, steadiness of mind), is the fact of being in the Joy, Peace, and Tranquility of the PRESENT.

The Present is God's only Residence

When we are living in the PRESENT, God comes to reside in us, or we reside in God. When we are silent, still, calm, and interiorly present, God draws his picture within us and we become authentic representatives and true images of God. Thus by causing us to be in the present the practice of Mindfulness of Breathing enables us to grow in the image and likeness of God (Jesus), which also happens to be one of the goals of Ignatian Spirituality.

General Examination of Conscience

We have seen how the Mindfulness of Breathing is helpful in the practice of the Ignatian General Examination of Conscience. However, there are other doctrinal aspects of Buddhism that are also helpful for a person desiring to examine his conscience clearly, and one such aspect is the psycho-morality of Buddhism. According to Buddhist psycho-morality, the three roots of evil (sinfulness) are Craving, Hatred and Delusion. This type of moral understanding assists one in examining clearly and thoroughly his errors and sins, performed under the urging of these three roots. For example, the sins of lust, greed, inordinate attachments, and excessive desire for anything, come under the root of Craving, while anger, fights, violence, character-assassination and so on, come under the root of Hatred, and acts committed in ignorance, insensitivity, failure in duties and so on fall under the root of Delusion.

There is another doctrinal aspect of Buddhism that aids us in examining our Conscience, and that is the Buddha's code on Right Speech as given below:

- Not to utter any falsehood
- Not to speak harsh words
- Not to indulge in rumormongering
- Not to engage in empty talk.

In order to meticulously examine our conscience, St. Ignatius advises that we probe our thoughts, words, and deeds (SE: 32-42), in order to uncover sins and faults committed through these basic activities. The Buddha's Right Speech Code presented above aids us in examining our sins committed through words (that is, whether we have uttered any falsehood, used harsh words, engaged in empty talk, and so on).

In another place, the Buddha clarifies the quality of talk of an inferior person and contrasts it with that of a superior person, as shown below. This clarification of the Buddha also serves us in examining the quality of our speech, as well as the mistakes we may have committed through our speech.

**TALK OF AN INFERIOR AND SUPERIOR PERSON
(FROM THE DISCOURSE OF THE BUDDHA)**

TYPE OF PERSON	EVEN WHEN UNASKED	WHEN ASKED
INFERIOR PERSON	~ Even when unasked he reveals the faults of others, and so how much more so when asked.	~ When asked however and led on by questions, he speaks of others' faults without omitting anything and without holding back, fully and in detail. ~ When asked he does not reveal what is praiseworthy in others, and still less so when not asked. When asked and when obliged to reply to questions he speaks of what is praiseworthy in others with omissions and hesitation, incompletely and not in detail.
INFERIOR PERSON	~ Even when unasked he reveals his praiseworthy qualities, and so how much more so when asked.	~ He does not reveal his faults when asked, still less so when not asked. When asked however and obliged to reply to questions, he speaks of his own faults with omission and hesitation, incompletely and not in detail. ~ When asked however and led on by questions, he speaks of his own praiseworthy qualities without omission and hesitation, fully and in detail.

TYPE OF PERSON	EVEN WHEN UNASKED	WHEN ASKED
SUPERIOR PERSON	<p>~ Even when unasked he reveals what is praiseworthy in others, and so how much more so when he is asked.</p> <p>~Even when unasked he reveals his own faults, and so how much more so when he is asked.</p>	<p>~ Even when asked he does not reveal the faults of others, and still less so when he is not asked. When asked however and led on by questions, he speaks of others' faults with omission and hesitation, incompletely and not in detail.</p> <p>~When asked however and obliged to reply to questions, he speaks of what is praiseworthy in others without omitting anything, without holding back, fully and in detail.</p> <p>~ When asked however and obliged to reply to questions, he speaks of his own faults without omitting anything, without holding back, fully and in detail.</p> <p>~Even when asked he does not reveal his own praiseworthy qualities, still less so when not asked. When asked however and obliged to reply to questions, he speaks of his own praiseworthy qualities with omission and hesitation, incompletely and not in detail.</p>

Our thoughts, words, and deeds can also be evaluated from the viewpoint of the three Buddhist evil roots, namely Craving, Hatred, and Delusion. So far we have seen that not only the Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation, but also some its doctrinal aspects as well as the preaching of the Buddha, contribute to the effective practice of the General and Particular Examinations of Conscience of Ignatian Spirituality. I now take up the second exercise of Contemplation of the Body, namely Mindfulness of the Four Bodily Postures, and discuss its role as an aid in the practice of Ignatian Spirituality.

B) Mindfulness of the Four Bodily Postures

Procedure

Here, four common and basic human activities are taken up for meditation. The person making this meditation needs to be aware that:

While walking, he or she is walking

While standing, he or she is standing

While sitting, he or she is sitting

While lying down, he or she is lying down

In brief, the person needs to be aware of the body regardless of the way in which it is disposed.

The Advantages of this Meditation are:

- It helps in the awareness of the body in a general manner. That is, to be ‘with’ the body during its natural activities, instead of being carried away by thoughts and ideas. Hence, to be mentally anchored in the body.
- It provides a firm grounding of awareness in the body, and thus controls mental distractions to a considerable extent.
- By performing even the least important movement of the body in a conscious and deliberate manner, the most mundane activities can be converted into occasions for mental development.
- The four bodily postures can also be used as objects of insightful investigation.
- It assists us in being aware of predominating mental events, such as fear and unwholesome thoughts, or in the overcoming of the five mental hindrances (M 121), namely lust, anger, doubts, laziness, and restlessness.
- It assists us in being aware of the concurrent state of mind in any posture.
- Removing unwholesome states of mind should be done during all postures, and not just in the process of doing seated meditation.
- Bodily posture and state of mind are intrinsically inter-related, and so the clear awareness of the one naturally enhances the awareness of the other.
- According to the discourses, the walking meditation benefits bodily health and digestion, and leads to the development of sustained concentration. The commentaries (Ps I 257) document the insight potential of the walking meditation, with instances of its use that led to full realization.
- The standard instructions for the walking meditation found in the discourses take mental events as their main object of observation. The instructions mainly speak of purifying the mind from obstructive states, which is also the main goal of the seated meditation. (M I 273)
- To cultivate awareness with regard to the reclining posture, meditators should lie down mindfully on their right side to rest during the middle part of the night, keeping in mind the time to wake up (M I 273). According to other passages, falling asleep with awareness improves the quality of one’s sleep and prevents bad dreams and nocturnal emissions. (Vin I 295 and A III 251)

Helpfulness of the Mindfulness of the Four Postures in the Ignatian Discernment of Spirits and in being a Contemplative in Action:

Judging by the advantages in the art of Mindfulness of the Four Postures as we have just seen, it is clear that it enhances within oneself the ability to be constantly

in touch with both positive and negative states of a person's mind. Also, it develops within oneself the capacity to discard from within the negative states of mind and heart, and thereby enables oneself to constantly purify one's plans and intentions and choose noble and virtuous ideas and activities. Thus this meditational practice will without doubt help in the performance of the Ignatian Spirituality of Discernment of Spirits. Also, since this meditation makes a person interiorly alert while performing the four basic and common activities that fill our day, the constant practice of this meditation transforms a person into a Contemplative in Action.

There are other Mental Exercises (Meditations) the Buddha prescribes for his followers in order that they might grow in proper discernment, correct decision-making, and in leading a virtuous life, and these are 'Right Effort' and the 'Purification of one's Mental, Verbal, and Bodily Actions.' Doubtless they also enhance an individual's growth in Ignatian practices of Discernment of Spirits and becoming a Contemplative in Action.

C) Right Effort of the Eight-fold Noble Path (MN III 252)

'Right Effort' is a factor in the Buddha's Eight-fold Noble Path. It is more a mental than physical exercise, though physical action may follow in the end. There are four steps that make up this factor, and they are:

- a) Here a Bhikku/ Bhikkuni (or anyone else) awakens zeal for the non-arising of un-arisen evil unwholesome states, and makes efforts, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives.
- b) The person awakens zeal for the abandoning of arisen evil unwholesome states, and makes efforts, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives.
- c) The person awakens zeal for the arising of un-arisen wholesome states, and he makes efforts, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives.
- d) The person awakens zeal for the continuance, non-disappearance, strengthening, increase and fulfillment by development of arisen wholesome states, and makes efforts, arouses energy, exerts his mind, and strives.

These four steps can be simplified into two main steps, that is, i) through self-observation the person attains the removal of negative ideas and plans from the mind and ii) through self-observation the person develops positive ideas and plans in the mind. These types of interior mental efforts help one to discern movements of different spirits in one's heart and mind. Hence we can say without hesitation that this mental practice of Right Effort of the Buddha certainly enhances the Ignatian practice of Discernment of Spirits, and when one is constantly making Right Efforts to remain positive minded, he or she becomes a Contemplative in Action, as St. Ignatius desired

his followers to be.

D) Purifying one's Bodily, Verbal, and Mental Actions by repeated Reflection (MN I 415-420)

This is another Mental Exercise prescribed by the Buddha for his disciples, in order that they may perform all activities (mental, verbal, or physical) with proper consideration and discernment. According to him this consideration of activities has to be performed in three stages as presented below. The Buddha instructed his disciples as follows:

a) First Stage: "When you wish to perform an action by body, speech, or mind, you should reflect upon that action in the following way.

- Would this action I wish to perform lead to my own affliction, or to the affliction of others, or to the affliction of both?
- Is it an unwholesome action with painful consequences? With painful results?

If the answer is 'Yes', that is, if the consequences of that action bring painful results to either one or both, then you should definitely not perform such an action, but if the answer is 'No', that is, if the consequences of that action bring positive results for all, then you may perform that action."

b) Second Stage: While performing an action by body, speech, or mind, the same kind of reflection as above should be taken up.

After reflection, if it is found that it would bring suffering to all, then that action should be immediately suspended, but after reflection if it is found that it would bring positive results to all, then the action may be continued.

c) Third Stage: After having performed any action (by body, speech, or mind), you have to evaluate the results and consequences of your action.

If the results were negative and harmful to all, then the performer of that action should confess having performed it, reveal it, and lay it open to the Teacher or to wise companions in the holy life. After having confessed it, revealed it, and laid it open, the performer should undertake restraint for the future. However, if the outcome of that action was positive and helpful to all, then the performer may abide happy and contented, training day and night in wholesome states.

The above-mentioned Buddhist method of reflection can be a helpful tool for the effective practice of the Ignatian Spirituality of Discernment of Spirits.

The basic qualities needed to be a Contemplative in Action are, interiority, alertness, union with God, and being kind, loving, and positively oriented with pleasant

dispositions. Since the above-mentioned four A, B, C, and D Buddhist meditations are endowed with a capacity of enabling a person to be constantly aware of himself, and of purifying his heart and mind of negative and unwholesome states, they can certainly assist a person in becoming a Contemplative in Action.

E) Mindfulness of all Physical Activities of the Body (Full Awareness)

This third Exercise of the Contemplation of the Body deals with all the activities of a person, performed when awake. Here the person is advised to be fully aware of each and every activity (including even minute ones such as moving the face).

Procedure:

The Buddha instructs as follows: “When going forward and returning he/she acts clearly knowing; when looking ahead and looking away he/she acts clearly knowing; when flexing and extending limbs he/she acts clearly knowing; when wearing robes and carrying the outer robe and bowl he/she acts clearly knowing; when eating, drinking, consuming food and tasting he/she acts clearly knowing; when defecating and urinating he/she acts clearly knowing; when walking, standing, sitting, falling asleep, waking up, when talking and keeping silent he/she acts clearly knowing.” (M I 57)

Advantages of being clearly aware of all Activities performed by a Person

- a) Regarding these activities, discourses (A II 104) emphasize that they should be performed in a graceful and pleasing manner. This particular set of activities stand for a careful and dignified way of behaving, appropriate to one’s living as a monk or nun.
- b) They enable keeping in mind the purpose of an activity, to see how far it is oriented towards one’s progress in holy life.
- c) They enable constant awareness of the suitability of an action for dignified behavior.
- d) They enable the promotion of sense-restraint, since this is the proper behavior for a monk or nun.
- e) They enable a clear understanding of the action undertaken without any delusion.
- f) They thus enable the practice of developing clear knowledge regarding all activities, combine purposeful and dignified conduct with sense-restraint, in order to build up a foundation for the arising of insight.

This Mindfulness Exercise, by training a person to be constantly aware of all activities in order that they may become purposeful and dignified, converts that person into a Contemplative in Action and a Person of Discernment.

So far we have seen five (A, B, C, D, and E) Buddhist meditations that can facilitate a person’s effective practice of certain important aspects of Ignatian

Spirituality, namely the Daily Particular Examination of Conscience, the General Examination of Conscience, Discernment of Spirits, and being a Contemplative in Action. There are a few more Buddhist Meditations that can enhance the Ignatian Spirituality of Contemplation to obtain Love, and I shall now list a few:

CONTEMPLATION TO OBTAIN LOVE (SE. 230-237):

F) Loving Kindness Meditation: In this Buddhist Meditation, a person first fills his heart with love for himself, and then expands this love towards his parents, friends, and other loved ones. Later he extends his love towards his so-called ‘enemies’ and people unfriendly to him. Next he sends forth his love towards the rest of humanity, and finally fills all living beings and the entire universe with his love. When repeating this Meditation the person is automatically filled with Divine Love, which is the goal of the Ignatian Contemplation to obtain Love.

G) Meditation on the Divine Qualities as explicated by the Buddha: According to the Buddha, Loving Kindness, Compassion, Altruistic Joy and Equanimity are divine qualities. Hence he says that if anyone desires unity with the Divine (since people of his time sought union with God), he should through meditation fully develop these divine qualities. In this Meditation, a person first calms himself down through the breathing meditation, and gradually fills his heart and mind with these divine qualities. This is hence another Buddhist Meditation that can assist us in obtaining Divine Love and Union with God.

St. Ignatius also stressed the union of minds and hearts among his companions. Here below we have an incident from the Buddha’s life, whereby we can gain wisdom from the Sangha (Community of Monks) to promote the union of hearts and minds among people living in communities.

Creating a Happy, Loving, and United Community Life, and the Union of Hearts and Minds (M I 207)

The Buddha asked the Venerable Anuruddha (a disciple), “How (in your community) are you living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes?”

The Venerable Anuruddha answered, “Venerable Sir, as to that, I think thus: ‘It is a gain for me, it is a great gain for me, that I am living with such companions in holy life.’ I maintain bodily acts of loving kindness towards those venerable ones both openly and privately; I maintain verbal acts of loving kindness towards those venerable ones both openly and privately. I consider: ‘why should I not set aside what I wish to do

and do what these venerable ones wish to do? I then set aside what I wish to do and do what these venerable ones wish to do. We are different in body Venerable Sir, but one in mind. This is how, Venerable Sir, we are living in concord, with mutual appreciation, without disputing, blending like milk and water, viewing each other with kindly eyes.”

Is it not wonderful to learn from the Buddha’s Sangha the wisdom of promoting the union of hearts and minds in our religious communities?

CONCLUSION

From what we have discussed so far, the following can be affirmed.

1. The Buddha’s discovery of Universal Human Psychology and its Dynamics help us in understanding our inner psycho-spiritual realities or truths, clearly and accurately. Hence his discovery of human mental science is a useful tool for self-awareness, a pre-requisite for a person’s spiritual growth. Thus Buddhist Human Psychology unravels the inner mystery of a human person and functions as a key tool for finding the meaning and purpose of human existence.
2. Buddhist psycho-dynamics enables us to understand how we relate and interact with the external world through our senses.
3. The Buddha’s discovery that our thoughts precede our actions (words or deeds), helps us to discipline our external actions of words and deeds, by keeping control over our thoughts.
4. Our attitudes and value system affect our way of looking at objects, people, and events, and influence our decision-making, words, and behavior.
5. False value systems and wrong attitudes lead to suffering, while value systems and attitudes based on truth (wisdom) bring us happiness.
6. Buddhism’s root evils, namely Avarice and Attachment, Pride and Hatred, and Ignorance and Delusion, are similar to the standard of Satan as described by St. Ignatius, as linked to Riches, Inordinate Attachments, Pride and Vainglory.
7. The root virtues of Buddhism, namely Detachment, Compassion, and Wisdom are similar to the Standard of Christ, as linked to Poverty, Humility, and Contempt for Worldly Honors.
8. The transformation of one’s false and selfish value system consisting of Avarice, Hatred, and Delusion into a realistic and human value system of Detachment Compassion, and Wisdom, is the core purpose of Buddhist Meditational Spirituality. Similarly through the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, a person is expected to purify himself of sinful ways and attitudes, and he is directed to transform himself into the nature and person of Christ. Thus we see a parallel Transformative Spiritual Dynamics operative, both in the Buddhist Meditational Spirituality and the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius.

9. Thus a similarity can be drawn between the Eightfold Noble Path and the Eight-step Dynamics of the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius, as described above.
10. The Classification of the Eightfold Noble Path into three groups of Virtues, Wisdom, and Concentration, corresponds to Christ being the Way, Truth, and Life in Christian Spirituality.
11. Some Buddhist Mindfulness Exercises are useful for the effective practice of certain critical aspects of Ignatian Spirituality, namely the Particular and General Examination of Conscience, the Discernment of Spirits, Being a Contemplative in Action, and the Contemplation to obtain Love.
12. In Buddhist Spirituality, intra-personal exercises are emphasized more, whereas in Ignatian Spirituality it is inter-personal exercises that are emphasized more.
13. The one main distinction between Christian Soteriology and Theravāda Buddhist Soteriology lies in the fact that in the Theravāda Buddhist path, final liberation, Nibbāna, is attained through one's own self-effort, whereas in the Christian path, the salvation of each person is a gift and grace from God received through Christ. In other words, each Christian attains his salvation through his truthful following of Christ, aided and guided by the grace of God. Hence in Christianity, human effort and grace go hand in hand.

As a whole, Buddhist Psycho-therapeutic Meditational Spirituality does indeed aid growth in Interiority, Purity, Freedom and Self-mastery, all of which are essential for believers to progress in Union with God in Christ, and excel in meek and selfless service to God, Mankind, and Nature. In fact, as a universal Psycho-spirituality, Buddhism aids each and every person's growth in Introspection, Interiority, Self-discovery and Self-mastery, regardless of that person's religion.

MODIFICATION IN THE VATICAN II DOCUMENT

In view of the benefits Buddhism offers for spiritual growth, cannot the statements in the Vatican II document (*Nostra Aetate*) be modified as follows?

“Prudently and lovingly, through dialogue and collaboration with the followers of other religions, and in witness of Christian faith and life, acknowledge, preserve and promote the spiritual and moral goods found among these men as well as the values in their society and culture” [*and also benefit from them to the extent they are helpful for us to follow Jesus (the Way, the Truth, and Life) very closely*]. *Nostra Aetate* No. 2

RELEVANT QUOTES BY SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

“The Christian is not to become a Hindu or a Buddhist, nor a Hindu or a Buddhist to become a Christian. But each must assimilate the spirit of the others and yet

preserve his individuality and grow according to his own law of growth.

“If the Parliament of Religions has shown anything to the world, it is this: It has proved to the world that holiness, purity and charity are not the exclusive possessions of any church in the world, and that every system has produced men and women of the most exalted character. In the face of this evidence, if anybody dreams of the exclusive survival of his own religion and the destruction of the others, I pity him from the bottom of my heart, and point out to him that upon the banner of every religion will soon be written in spite of resistance: ‘Help and not fight, Assimilation and not Destruction, Harmony and Peace and not Dissension.’

Swami Vivekananda
Address at the Final Session
World Parliament of Religions
Chicago, September 27, 1893

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. A: Aṅguttara Nikāya, I-IV, ed. R. Morris, E. Hardy, C.A.F. Rhys Davids, PTS. 1885-1910
2. BD: Buddhist Dictionary (Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines) by Ven. Nyanatiloka, ed. Ven. Nyanaponika, 2004: Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
3. M: Majjhima Nikāya, I-IV, ed. V. Trenckner, R. Chalmers, Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, PTS. 1888-1925
4. Ps: Papañcasūdanī (Majjhima Nikāya Aṭṭhakathā) I-IV, ed. J.H. Woods, D. Kosambi, and I.B. Horner. London: P.T.S., 1922-1938.
5. S: Saṃyutta Nikāya, I-VI, ed. L. Feer and Mrs. C.A.F. Rhys Davids, PTS. 1884-1904
6. Sa: Satipaṭṭhāna, The Direct Path to Realization by Bhikkhu Anālayo, 2003: Kandy: Buddhist Publication Society.
7. V: Vinayaṭṭhaka, I-V, ed. H. Oldenberg, PTS. 1879-83

Buddhist Education and its Relevance Today

By

S. Lawrence, SJ

When speaking of Buddhist Education, we promptly recall ancient Buddhist Universities such as Nalanda, Vikramasila, and others, but in point of fact Buddhist content and style of education started from the time when Gautama Siddhartha turned into a Buddha, and started preaching and teaching the new liberating Wisdom he had discovered. It was an altogether new knowledge and wisdom that intellectuals and philosophers of his time were totally unaware of.

On perusing mankind's history we note that when humans, who at one time mutually communed merely via signs and sounds managed to convert such sounds into words, language arose, and that was a critical moment when they executed a great stride in the development of their civilization. Writing began, literature developed, and humans became top-level intellectuals, philosophers, artists, creators and dreamers. Indeed, the fact that they could communicate with others constituted a big leap in their evolution, and all they experienced and learned with regard to the external world was through their five physical sense faculties, namely eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and skin.

However, from the time of the Buddha's enlightenment in the sacred city of Bodhgaya, a new knowledge and Wisdom arose in human history, which the Buddha himself had discovered by developing his inner mental sense faculty of Mindfulness or Introspection, which enabled him to witness all the phenomena operating within him. By developing the art of Mindfulness the Buddha discovered realities within himself that caused human suffering, and the means or paths that led to human liberation. After having attained enlightenment and total liberation by gaining mastery over himself through the Mindfulness Meditation, the Buddha went about preaching and imparting his newfound Wisdom for the liberation of the people of his time.

There then began for the first time in human history the dawn of Buddhist Education in India. Hence the main purpose of the Buddha's (or Buddhist) Education was the termination of human suffering and attainment of total liberation or Nibbāna (Mukti), by growing in self-knowledge and self-conquest through the Mindfulness Meditation. The hallmark of Buddhist Education consists in acquiring the art of knowing and grasping one's inner world, by the development of one's mental sense faculty of Mindfulness.

There were many salient features in the Buddha's method of Education, which differed from the education and training other religious teachers followed in his time. In the Gurukul system of education, (which Brahmin Gurus followed at that time), a small group of students who generally belonged to a particular caste lived in the Guru's house and obtained their education, but the Buddha was an itinerant preacher and educationist

who went around to places where people lived and taught them. Hence it was a universal education that included people from all strata of society.

Also, the Buddha taught people in their own language, setting aside Sanskrit which was supposed to have been the language of the upper caste people of his time. Furthermore, he taught each person according to the person's capacity and background. That is to say he paid personal attention to each, and never imposed any teaching of his on anybody. He advised his disciples not to believe in something simply because it arose from either tradition or the teachings of elders or teachers, but rather, he advocated personal verification of things that each was confronted with. Hence, personal verification of ideas, values, and beliefs, by discovering their validity through personal enquiry and reasoning, is a crucial and essential aspect of Buddhist Education.

Accordingly in Buddhist Education, asking questions, debating, refuting, and argumentation are part and parcel of the curriculum. The Buddha never forced either his disciples or opponents to accept his views. Rather, he asked questions, argued, refuted, and debated gently, in order to convince them. It was his agreeable way of persuading others by the use of soothing arguments (Upali Sutta) that enabled him to win over many opponents to his fold.

Finally, the Buddha always advised his disciples to maintain an ever-seeking, probing, and striving mind, by viewing one's inner world through the Mindfulness Meditation, for through his own enlightenment the Buddha had discovered that the root of one's suffering and lamentation resided within one's own heart and mind, in the form of Craving, Hatred and Ignorance. To attain liberation or Nibbāna one had to uproot such negative forces from oneself, which was possible only by self-discovery, self-purification and self-conquest, gained via the art of the Mindfulness Meditation. Hence we may say that the greatest gift of the Buddha to humanity is the unveiling of the art of Mindfulness, which leads to the discovery of our inner-world, its purification, and its conquest, which is none other than final liberation or Nibbāna.

The salient features of the Buddha's method of Education are:

- The purpose of education is spiritual growth and liberation for each individual
- The fostering of the Mindfulness Meditation in order to lead to self-discovery and self-mastery
- His education was for all, and not just for selected people
- He taught with personal care for each person
- He taught people in their own mother tongue
- He did not impose any of his teachings on others
- He welcomed questions, debates, and arguments, in order that people may learn through personal verification of matters.

- He encouraged people to learn through personal experience, reasoning, and conviction.
- He fostered a spirit of learning, seeking, probing, and striving through the Mindfulness Meditation, which would lead to Wisdom that brings liberation. These were conserved and continued by the Buddhist Sangha, who maintained their monasteries as centers of learning after the demise of the Buddha. The glory and grandeur of such Buddhist monastic education is known through investigating ancient Buddhist Universities like Nalanda, Vallabhi, Vikramasila and others, but my concern now is not to dwell on the past glories of Buddhist education, but rather to underscore the fact that the salient features of the Buddha's Educational methods could and should be followed, for the contemporary education of our children.

Violence, conflicts and divisions plague present-day society, and they first and foremost originate within the hearts and minds of people comprising that society. So too, peace and harmony in society originate first and foremost within the hearts and minds of its people, and by generating amity and concord within people's hearts, we can promote such peace and harmony. Since the Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation enables people to grow in inner peace and uproots evil forces from within, I humbly suggest that in schools, colleges, and other educational institutions, we teach children the art of Mindfulness Meditation.

Buddhist Mindfulness meditation is a mind-training program, and while our schools have programs in physical training (PT) for children, yet they lack programs in Mind Training. I see no better mind-training program than Mindfulness Meditation, for Buddhist Mind Training Methods that include such Meditation are useful for the students' growth in concentration, mental sharpness, memory power, insightfulness and character formation. Hence, launching Mindfulness Meditation in educational institutes will result in a new and enlightened society, a society peaceful and honorable. This will undoubtedly pave the way for the dawning of a new era, an era of peace and harmony.

INDEX

Since this is a digital book strictly speaking an Index is not necessary. However, I have included these key words below for the benefit of the readers. In case you need to look up the location of any particular word, please do so using your computer's 'search and find' feature.

Abe,	Dogen	Johnston
Airen	Dumoulin	Jojo M. Fung
Aitken	Dunhuang	Joseph Ng Swee Chun
Ambedkar	Ebullitio	Jōshū
Antinoff	Eckhart	Kadowaki
Ariyaratne	Ekō	Kamilar
Ateneo de Manila	Enomiya-Lassalle	Kanhwa Sōn
Aum	Fanxing	Karasu
Balthasar	Fromm	Karl Rahner
Beck	Gandhi	Kasamatsu
Berger	Gelassenheit	Kasser
Bingenheimer	Gohōgō	Kasulis
Bonzes	Graham	Keefe
Buddhadāsa	Gregory Sharkey	Kil Hūisōng
Bullitio	Gunn	Kim Sunhwan
Cantwell Smith	Gyō	Kim Taejung
Cheng Gongrang	Habito	Kim Yōngsam
Chin'gak Hyesim	Haein-sa	King Bhumibol
Chit-wāng	Hakuin Ekaku	King Rama IV
Cho'gye-jong	Hans Kūng	Kinhin
Chung	Harada	Kiyozawa Manshi
Coincidentia	Harre	Knewitz
oppositorum	Heart Sūtra	Knitter
Christian Cochini	Herrigel	Koan
Confucianism	Hick	Kōbōdaishi
Cusumano, Jerry	Hirai	Kopf
Cyril Veliath	Hwadu	Kōyasan
Dainichinyorai	Ignatius of Loyola	Kubota
Dalai Lama	Inculturation	Kubota Ji'un
Danjo Garan	In-gun Kang	Kūkai
Deikman	Jin	Kung'an Sōn
Dhārāni	Jinje	Kwan Um

Kwanjizai	Pāpadeśanā	Shaolin
Lawrence Soosai	Paulus Agung	Shapiro
Lee Ch'ansu's	Wijayanto	Shih
Lee Myōngbak	Phasa khon	Shikantaza
Leung	Phasa tham	Shin-Buddhism
Liang	Pieris, Aloysius	Shingon
Liang Qichao	Pio	Shinnoin
Liang Shuming	Pojo Chinul	Shinran
Lin Anwu	Prajñā-Pāramitā	Shizuteru Ueda
Longquan temple	Pratyekabuddha	Shrīmāladevī Sūtra
Loori	Puntarigvivat	Shugendo
Luoyang	Qi	Shukyō
Magid	Radcliff	Sophia University
Maha Ghosananda	Rakuzai	Soga
Mahāvairocana	Rama IX	Sogang University
Malec	Ramakien	Soga Ryōjin
Mantra	Reditus	Sogen
Mark Raper	Rensheng	Suan Mokkh
Martin	Rensheng Fojiao	Sulak Sivaraksa
McGinn	Rhee Sūngman	Suler
McMahan	Ricci, xiii, xiv	Suzuki
Merton, Thomas	Rinzai	Swami Vivekananda
Merzel	Ru Rui	Tacey
Meynard, Thierry	Ruach Elohim	Tahui
Mindfulness Meditation	Rudy	Tahui Tsungkao
Mochao Chan	Ryojun Shionuma	Tai Xu
Moridaira	Samaya	Taixu
Morita	Sanata Dharma	Takakusu Junjiro
Mu	University	Tanahashi
Murase	Sanbō Kyōdan	Taoism
Naikan	Sanbo-Zen	Teilhard de Chardin
Nanhaengdo	Santikaro	Teshima
Nicolás Adolfo	Sargent	The Hail Mary (Wantha Maria)
Nishida	Sarvodaya Movement	The Lord's Prayer
Nishitani	Sato	Thich Naht Hahn
Noel Sheth	Schermer	Thích Nhất Hạnh
Nukariya	Schnider	Thierry-Jean Roboüam
Ornstein	Senécal Bernard	Tiansheng
Ox herding pictures	Setouchi Jakuchō	Tobōp
Packer	Seungsahn	

Ton
Tony de Mello
Uchiyama
Uposatha
Venerable Cetana
Vipassanā
Visuddhimagga
Wajira Nampet
Wang Yangming
Watts
Way's End Stone Field
 Community
Wonhyo
Wutaishan
Xue Cheng
Yamada
Yamada Koun
Yamada Ryouin
Yang Wenhui
Yihaengdo
Yinshun
Yong Un Choe
Yong Xin
Yōnse
Young-Eisendrath
Yuichi Tsunoda,
Yungang
Zen
Zhang Taiyan, 121, 122

