

Adhiṣṭāna of the Tathāgata of the Lotus Sutra and the Notion of Gegenwart Gottes of the Theology of Karl Barth, their Correspondences and Differences:

Shinichi TSUDA

I

First, I would like to present here a simple analogy, “the simile of a limestone cavern.” For years I have called my own idea of the history of Buddhist thought “the open system”; I compare it, this time, to a cavern lying under a karst. Though it apparently looks like a naturally formed limestone cavern, I regard it as an artifice given to us by “the God of the open system.”

As far as the idea goes, the body of the historical development of Buddhist thought [which developed itself through the steps of (i) the original Buddhism of the historical Buddha Gotama, (ii) Mahāyāna Buddhism, and (iii) Post-mahāyānic Buddhism] is to be expressed, borrowing an expression from E. Husserl, as the process of “the teleological reason, which underlies through the process of the history, revealing itself gradually” (*Husserliana*, VI, S 386, Z. 11).

This cavern should have had a part leading into Buddhism. But this part having collapsed, the body of Buddhism was left as an enclosed space deep under the karst. However, as it has holes open here and there on the surface of the karst, people can go down into the cavern and enjoy the view. I myself used to go down through these passages; I had surveyed them for years, and had formed a general image of the cavern.

I recently found a new hole, which had been hidden behind shrubs. I followed the hole, that is, the 4th stanza of chapter 15, the chapter of the long life of the Tathāgata of the Lotus Sutra (*SP*) and was led to the central part of the cavern, the concept of *adhiṣṭhāna* of the Tathāgata, which should work as the pivot of the theology of future Buddhism. In my image of the history of Buddhist thought, *SP* occupies a special position, as it is the first scripture in which the Tathāgata, the God, openly declared his own presence in the world. Stanza 4, chapter 15 of the *SP* was that very declaration, which goes as follows:

<Quot. 1>

tatrāpi cātmanam adhiṣṭhahāmi

sarvāṃś ca sattvāna tathaiva cāham /

vīparītabiddhī ca narā vimūdhāḥ

tatraiva tiṣṭhanto na paśyū mām // 4 // (Kern., p.32, 11. 13--4)

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II

H. Kern translates this stanza as follows:

“There, I rule myself as well as all beings, I. But men of perverted minds in their delusion, do not see me standing there.” (Kern., p. 307, 11. 13—5)

We tried rewriting the first half of his translation as follows:

“I am also at present presenting my (whole) existence here (to this *Sahā*-world itself), and at the same time, to each and every living being therein in the same manner (with my whole existence, respectively).”

What made us do this rewrite is the following quotation found in the *Ratnagotravibhāga-mahāyānottaratantrasāstra* (*RGV*), which had been treated as unidentified, but identified quite recently by Dr. E. Zimmermann to be of the *Tathāgatagarbha-sūtra* (*TGS*). The quotation is as follows:

<Quot. 2>

*tatra ca sattve sattve tathāgatadhātur utpanno garbha-gataḥ
saṃvidyate na ca te sattvā budhyabte* (Johnston., p. 72)

This identification by Zimmermann was truly suggestive for us. As long as this quotation is from *TGS*, which comes at the head of the “three scriptures” constituting the *tathāgatagarbha* theory—that is, *TGS*, the *Śrīmālā-sūtra* (*ŚM*), and the *Anūnatvāpūrṇatvanirdeśa* (*AAN*)—it should be regarded, according to the genealogy of our “open system,” as the direct “after comer” of the stanza of *SP* (<quot. 1>). Therefore, we duly took the expression “*sattve sattve*” shown here as nothing but the “clarifier” of the meaning of “*sarvāṃś ca sattvāna*” (genitive plural) of the former, meant to be given to us by “the teleological reason” as a link in the process of its “gradual self-revelation.” This clarification convinced us that this concept of *adhiṣṭhāna* should provide us with the accurate framework for our future “theology of Buddhism.”

Besides, this conceptual framework of *adhiṣṭhāna* shown in *SP* reminded me of Karl Barth’s notion of *Geganwart Gottes* (presence of God), which should have been the main motive of his theology having its base on the Name of Jesus Christ “Immanuel,” which means “God with us” (*Matth.* 1.23).

In II\2 of the *Kirchliche Dogmatik (KD)*, Barth argues this notion of *Geganwart Gottes* in the following three stages, assuming a complete similitude with the concept of *adhiṣṭhāna* of the Tathāgata of *SP*:

- (i) *eigentlich* (original) presence of God to historical Jesus
- (ii) *besondern* (special) presence of God to the people of Israel, or the Church, and
- (iii) *allgemein* (general) presence of God to all living beings.

These three stages assume an exact correspondence with the concept of *adhiṣṭhāna* of the Tathāgata of *SP*, which goes as follows:

- (i) the identity of the *Tathāgata* of *dharmakāya* and the historical *buddha* Sākyamuni
- (ii) the self-presentation (*adhiṣṭhāna*) of the Tathāgata to the people who have met with the teaching of *SP*
- (iii) the existence of the *Tathāgata* of *dharmakāya* for all living beings even if they don't know *SP*.

I just wondered, at this parallelism, how did judge it if he had known this concept of *adhiṣṭhāna* of *SP* as I had known another example of this kind: He had found the “*genaueste, umfassendste und einleuchtendste “heidnische” Parallele zum Christentum*” (the most accurate, the most comprehensive, and the clearest “heathen” parallel of Christianity) (*KD*. I\2, S. 372) in Japanese *Jodoismus*, which is to be settled in the position of “the grandson” of *SP* in post-mahāyānic Buddhism, as both are *konsequent* religions of grace. However, in spite of, or all the more for this perfect parallelism found there, Barth (who was at that time around 50 years old) judged elatedly that the believers of *Jodoismus* are “*arme, ganzlich, verlorene Heiden,*” as they were lacking in “*der Name Jesus Christus*” (ibid. S. 376, Z. 225)—the only thing to decide the *Wahreit* or *Lüge* of a religion.

III

The quotation (<Quot. 2>) made me take another step. I felt a suggestion of the correspondence of the word *utpanna* to the word *anutpanna* which was placed, as if being hidden, between many other modifiers modifying the notion, *tathāgatadharmakāya*, the transcendent extreme of the “*Absolute,*” in the following quotation from *ŚM* in *RGV*:

<Quot. 3>

na khalu bhagavan dharmavināśo duḥkhanirodhaḥ / dhuḥkha-

niroddhanāmnā bhagavann anādikāliko 'kṛto 'jāto 'nutpanno 'kṣayaḥ kṣayāpagataḥ jityo dhruvaḥ śivaḥ śāśvataḥ prakṣtipariśuddhaḥ sarva-kleṣakoṣavinirmukto gaṅgāvālikāvyativṛttair avinirbhāgair acintyair buddhadharmaīḥ samanvāgatas tathāgatadharmakāyo deṣitaḥ / ayam eva ca bhagavaṃs tathāgatakarmakāyo 'vinirmuktakleśakośas tathāgata-garbhaḥ sūcyate / (Johnston., p. 12)

Obermiller gives the following translation of (the Tibetan version of) this quotation as follows:

“O Lord, the destruction of the elements does not mean the Extinction of *Phenomenal Existence*. O Lord, that which is called the Extinction of *Phenomenal Existence* manifests itself as the *Cosmic Body of the Buddha* which is beginningless, is neither created, nor born (by itself), *nor has it an origination (from both self and not-self)*. It cannot be destroyed (by anything else), nor can it disappear (by itself). It is eternal, persistent, quiescent, indestructible, perfectly pure by nature, delivered from all the bonds of passions, and endowed with *the attributes of the Buddha* which are inseparable (from it), inconceivable, and *greater in number than the sands of the Ganges*.
-- O Lord, this *Cosmic Body of the Buddha* when it is not delivered from the bonds of passions, is called the *Germ of the Buddha*.” (Obermiller., pp. 264-5)

This “suggestion” of *utpanna* of *TGS* (<Quot. 2>) and *anutpanna* of *ŚM* (<Quot. 3>) corresponding made me grasp, at a stroke, the figure of the notion of *tathāgatagarbha* as the “Absolute” itself in its phase of, so to speak, the “*Identität*” of the “*Nichtidentität*” in the definition by young Hegel: “*das Absolute selbst ist die Identität der Identität und der Nichtidentität*.” (*Diff.*, Suhrkamp. 1970, S. 96)

I “paraphrase” this quotation (<Quot. 3>) as follows:

“O Lord, they take the term *duḥkhanirodha* (“extinction of afflictions,” which denotes the situation of *nirvāṇa*) as *dharmavināśa* (the state in which worldly things have ceased to exist). However, it is not the case. With the term *duḥkhanirodha*, O Lord, is meant *tathāgatadharmakāya* (the body of the

Tathāgata as the reality of the cosmos itself). It is actually *akṛta*, *ajāta*, *anutpanna*, ... and is *sarvakleśakośavinirmukta* (liberated from all the limitations of human existences caused through afflictions). But, it is equipped with *buddhadharmas* (“Phenomenal Existences” as *buddhas*), which are *avinirbhāga* (“inseparable”), inconceivable, and greater in number than the sands of the Ganges. And, O Lord, when the same *tathāgatadharmakāya* is not yet liberated from *kleśakośa* (limitations of individual human existences caused through afflictions), it is called *tathāgatagarbha*.”

Putting the quotation from *TGS* (<Quot. 2>) itself on the last sentence of this quotation, I grasped the notion of the “Absolute” as the “*Identität*” of the following two extremes (*koṭis*) of the bipolarity of the notion:

- (i) In the aspect of *utpanna*, i.e., the extreme (*koṭi*) of individual human existences, the “Absolute” is called *tathāgatagarbha* in its original meaning as is shown in the well-known expression in *TGS*:

*rīgs kyi bu dag ḥdi ni chos rnams kyi chos ṅid de / de
bshin gśegs pa rnams byuñ yañ ruñ / ma byuñ yañ ruñ
/ sems can ḥdi dag ni rtag tu de bshin gśegs paḥi sñiñ
po yin no //* (Peking., Vol. 36, 241-3-1~2)

- (ii) In the aspect of *anutpanna*, i.e., the extreme (*koṭi*) of transcendence the “Absolute” is called *tathāgatadharmakāya*. This aspect of the “Absolute” is also called *tathāgatagarbha* (which means, in this aspect, the *Tathāgata* as the cosmos-inclusive womb or the cosmos-inclusive womb of the *Tathāgata*) as is shown, for example, in a quotation from *ŚM* in *RGV*:

*śunyas tathāgatagarbho vinirbhāgair muktajñaiḥ
sarvakleśakośaiḥ / aśūnyo gaṅgānadīvālikāvrativṛttair
avinirbhāgair amuktajñair acintyair buddhadharmair
(Johnston., p. 76)*

The bipolarity of this concept of *tathāgatagarbha* as one and the same “Absolute” is expressed precisely in the following expression that was also quoted from *ŚM* in *RGV*:

*yo bhagavan sarvakleśakośakoṭigūḍhe tathāgatagarbhe
niṣkāṅkṣaḥ sarvakleśakośavinirmukte tathāgata-
dharmakāye 'pi sa niṣkāṅkṣaḥ* (Johnston., p. 79)

This notion of the “Absolute” as the “*Identität*” of the personal, or immanent, side (*koṭi*) and the transcendent side pulled my imagination back to Karl Barth again. I know the fact that Barth avoided—in connection with the argument about the *Gegenwart Gottes*—applying the term “*Identität*” to the relation of God and man in the situation

of “economical Trinity,” and adopted the phrase “*Zusammensein in einer Distanz*” instead (*KD*. II\1, S. 527). Taking account of his intellect I took the reason to be as follows: He was well aware that the term “*Identität*” was to be applied duly to the matter, but he avoided it as it should necessarily lead people to the insight that both God and man—who, in the dogma of the church, is only a creature—should equally be *ursprünglich*, and furthermore to the dialectic, which, according to R. Bultmann, can be called “the dialectic of the eschatological existence of Christians,” propositions of which, violating Barth’s conviction as a *Reformierte*, go as follows:

A: You are in yourself (actually) your God. And yet,

B: You should by yourself (through your exertions) become your own God

As I felt here a tint somewhat different from Barth’s former manner of elatedly arguing the “*Heidentum*” of *Jodoismus* in *KD*., I\2, I tried to follow his footprints and soon found them again at the next corner of the cavern marked with the expression *gaṅgāvālikāvyativṛttair buddhadharmaiḥ* in the same quotation (<Quot. 3>); the *buddhadharma* of this quotation was the most decisive in our understanding of the thought of *tathāgatagarbha*.

IV

As Obermiller translated it as “the attributes of the Buddha,” the word *buddhadharmāḥ* (pl.) in this quotation has been understood—to the last in our tradition of the study of *tathāgatagarbha* thought—in the meaning of *tatpuruṣa*. It should be taken decisively, however, as a *karmadhāraya*-compound meaning “individual existences as *buddhas*” constituting the contents of *tathāgatagarbha*, the transcendent phase of the “*Absolute*.”

This understanding of the word is to be proved finally with the notion of the *Vajradhātu māṇḍala*, the symbolic expression of the *tathāgatadharmakāya* which is expressed as “*sarvatathāgatatasamavasaraṇa*” (the complete aggregation of all the *tathāgatas*) in the *Sarvatathāgatattvasaṃgraha-tantra* (*STTS*), the main scripture of the stage of esoteric Buddhism which comes immediately after the stage of *tathāgatagarbha* thought in post-mahāyānic Buddhism; on this post-mahāyānic Buddhism, I settle the position of Karl Barth who was at that time around 70 years old.

I imagine that Karl Barth accidentally reached the position that is parallel to post-mahāyānic Buddhism at the last stage of his long, sincere effort pursuing his own

apologetic theology. I indicate, for the time being, a paragraph showing his last position, which I found by some chance in the *Lehre von der Versöhnung* (KD., IV/2,):

<Quot. 4>

Gott war auch in jenen Anfang ... nicht allein ...: nicht ohne den Menschen. Und es brauchte der Mensch nicht erst geschaffen, geschweige denn zum Sünder zu werden ... um für Gott und vor ihm da zu sein Der ... so erhöhte, so in der Rückkehr in die Heimat begriffene Mensch ist ... in der ewigen Wahl Gottes mit Gottes Sohn Erster Gewiss, kein zweiter Gott, ... gewiss nur sein (...) Geschöpf. Er ist aber als dieses Geschöpf, ... vor aller ... Zeit, als primärer Gegenstand und Inhalt seines Schöpferwillens bei, mit un vor Gott ... so real wie Gott es in der seinigen ist (KD., IV/2, S. 34, Z. 19, Z. 38)

(God was not ..., also in the beginning not alone: *not without man*. And man was not needed to be created, much less to become sinner to exist for and before God at that time. He, man (who had been already) raised and (yet who was) on the way to home was, in the choice of God, the first together with the Son of God; *indeed he is not the second God*; indeed he is now more than a creature. *However*, as (such) a creature, he exists prior to all the times, as the first object and content of the will of creation, by, with, and before God, as real as God is, is in his own way real.)

Here I found Barth's saying, "*genaueste, umfassendste und einleuchtendeste 'heidnische' Parallele*" (KD., I/2, S. 372) again; but this time not "*zum Christentum,*" but to Buddhism—to post-mahāyānic Buddhism. I really find, in every passage of this paragraph, Barth's parallelism to post-mahāyānic Buddhism, and I expect a possibility here of the "universality of the Lotus Sutra"—as it is the head, the body, and the heart of post-mahāyānic Buddhism.

