

Love, Hate, Compassion: A Buddhist-Christian Depth Psychological Dialogue¹

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Introduction

LOVE, hate and compassion (*karuṇā*) can be practiced *actively* by subjects (human beings, deities, redeemers of different kinds). They can also be experienced in a *passive* way: I hate (actively). I am loved (passively). Love, hate and compassion are entities which exceed ego-concepts by far. For example, in love the ego may lose itself; in compassion the ego may be dispersed wastefully. Hate cannot only seek to annihilate its opponent, but precisely in doing so, it may lose its own (ego-) center and, along with it, the subject's control of its activities and feelings. In this sense love, hate and compassion are "ecstatic," "beyond ego"—sometimes in a positive way, at other times however, they transcend limits in a most critical way. In any case, emotions are not products of the conscious ego, rather they touch human beings, invade or even attack them. Hate arises from an abysmal depth. Love can invade and overrun people (cf. the English expression: *to fall in love*). Mercy and pity capture human beings.

However, emotions by no means merely belong to the cosmos of feelings. They also shape action and thoughts of human beings. They are not simply related to an interior space and are not to be understood merely as moods and atmospheres. Rather, they are linked with basic processes of body and mind.²

¹ This paper was presented at one of a series of lectures I gave in 2006/2007 during my visiting professorship at Otani.

² I am in search of the "logic of affects" (*Affektlogik*) in religion. Here, I refer to a category of the psychiatrist Luc Ciompi (Bern), who is interested in the interplay of emotional

The body (also the social body, i.e., the given social group), in which the ego experiences its feelings and acts according to them, is the “stage” upon which the ego performs. Emotions are the operating powers of any actual realization of life—of the divine life as well as of human life. In 1757, the protestant theologian Gerhard Tersteegen wrote a hymn: “I adore the power of love, which reveals itself in Jesus, I abandon myself to the free drive, by which I also have been loved; instead of thinking of myself I want to submerge into the ocean of love.”³ Love is a “power,” a “drive,” the ego abandons itself to; it does not remain in an attitude of reflection and thinking focused on itself.

As a Christian theologian as well as a scholar in the field of religious studies, I have been so bold as to search for essential issues concerning love, hate and compassion in the traditions of Shin Buddhism. I present here what I have dealt with, what has occupied me most and how I have come to understand these issues. Starting from there, I will turn back to my own Western tradition in a comparative, critical and positive way.

Due to different impulses, I have been provoked to deal in greater detail with the story of Prince Ajātaśatru who murdered his father and imprisoned his mother. This story is filled with love, hate and compassion. Thus, I felt challenged also to deal carefully and in detail with the three “Pure Land Sutras”⁴ and with the writings of Shinran since they discuss this material. Furthermore, I have been stimulated by the lecture Kadowaki Ken presented at the Fifth International Rudolf Otto Symposium (2006) in Marburg with the title: “Gewalt und ihre Überwindung im Lichte des Shin-Buddhismus” (Violence and its Overcoming in the Light of Shin Buddhism).⁵ I am aware that an almost infinite and voluminous discussion concerning this material and this topic is already going on.⁶ I will not be able to *surpass* the complexity and abstraction which has been reached already. Rather, I

and cognitive vital forces, which determine human feelings, thinking and activities. According to this highly complexly developed model—from a systemic point of view—these entities always interact and form a dynamic unity. See Ciompi 1997.

³ The original reads “Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe, die sich in Jesus offenbart, ich geb’ mich hin dem freien Triebe, wodurch auch ich geliebet ward; ich will, anstatt an mich zu denken, ins Meer der Liebe mich versenken” (Evangelisches Gesangbuch 1994, Lied 617). All translations of German texts are my own, with support from Yorick Schulz-Wackerbarth.

⁴ Inagaki 1994.

⁵ Kadowaki 2007, pp. 239–49.

⁶ For an overview in German, see Brück and Lai 2000, especially p. 523ff.

hope to undercut it by remembering, repeating and working through the old material, just a few texts and the basic questions within them—all this slowly and in detail.

I

Material I: The Victim's Salvation by Means of the Visualization of the Buddha

The Sutra on Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life (*Guan wuliangshoufo jing* 觀無量壽佛經, T. no. 365) tells the story of Prince Ajātaśatru who lived “in the great city of Rājagṛiha.”⁷ “Instigated by his wicked friend, Devadatta, he seized his father, King Bimbisāra, confined him in a room with walls seven deep and forbade all the court officials to visit the king.”⁸ Nevertheless “Vaidehī, the king’s consort” succeeded in bringing something to eat and drink into the prison. From this place, he worshipped the Buddha who was “staying on the Vulture Peak in Rājagṛiha with a great assembly of twelve hundred and fifty monks. He was also accompanied by thirty-two thousand bodhisattvas.”⁹ The king asked that Mahāmaudgalyāyana, a disciple of the Buddha, who was also a close friend, be sent in order to give him the eight precepts. The Buddha also sent another disciple to preach to the king. “Three weeks passed in this way” and the king “appeared peaceful and contented.”¹⁰

However when Ajātaśatru discovered that his father was still alive thanks to the support of his mother, “he drew his sharp sword, intending to kill her.”¹¹ In this situation, he was confronted by the objection of two of his ministers. They entreated him, saying, “since the beginning of this cosmic period, there have been eighteen thousand wicked kings who have killed their fathers out of their desire to usurp the throne, but we have never heard of anyone who has committed the outrage of killing his mother.”¹² Were he really to kill his mother, he would “bring disgrace upon the kṣatriya class”¹³ and the ministers, on their part, would leave. The prince “repented and begged their forgiveness. Having thrown away his sword, he stopped short of killing his mother and, instead, ordered the court officials to lock her in

⁷ Inagaki 1994, p. 317.

⁸ Inagaki 1994, p. 317.

⁹ Inagaki 1994, p. 317.

¹⁰ Inagaki 1994, p. 318.

¹¹ Inagaki 1994, p. 318.

¹² Inagaki 1994, p. 318.

¹³ Inagaki 1994, p. 318.

an inner chamber and not allow her to leave.”¹⁴ In grief and despair, the queen also worshipped the Buddha from afar and asked him to send two of his disciples to her as well. Immediately they flew to her through the air. The Buddha “himself disappeared from the mountain and reappeared in the inner chamber of the royal palace,”¹⁵ surrounded by other heavenly beings.

The queen asked the Buddha: “What bad karma did I commit in former lives that I have borne such an evil son?”¹⁶ She also asked how it could be that the Buddha was a relative of the wicked Devadatta. It was difficult for her to understand this relationship. “I beseech you, World-Honoured One, to reveal to me a land of no sorrow and no affliction where I can be reborn. I do not wish to live in this defiled and evil world of Jambudvīpa where there are hells, realms of hungry spirits, animals and many vile beings. I wish that in the future I shall not hear evil words or see wicked people. World-Honoured One, I now kneel down to repent and beg you to take pity on me. I entreat you, O Sun-like Buddha, to teach me how to visualize a land of pure karmic perfection.”¹⁷

In epiphanies of light and imagination which are in direct connection with the body of the Buddha, the queen envisioned innumerable glorious and beautiful Buddha-lands. She chose “the Land of Utmost Bliss of Amitāyus” and asked to be taught “how to contemplate that land and to attain samādhi.”¹⁸

In a passing remark, it is stated that the Buddha also appeared to the king in prison and that the king also “made spiritual progress.”¹⁹ This is followed by elaborate instructions on how to visualize the Western Land of Utmost Bliss. Among other exercises, this includes the visualization of one’s own birth into the Pure Land.²⁰ Those who are able to perform all these exercises will rid themselves of their evil karma. The teaching comes to an end, including a remark about the essential meaning of calling the name of the Buddha Amitāyus. The queen has been awakened spiritually, the Buddha returns to the Vulture Peak where the assembly discovers what has happened.

¹⁴ Inagaki 1994, p. 319.

¹⁵ Inagaki 1994, p. 319.

¹⁶ Inagaki 1994, p. 320.

¹⁷ Inagaki 1994, p. 320.

¹⁸ Inagaki 1994, p. 321.

¹⁹ Inagaki 1994, p. 321.

²⁰ See Inagaki 1994, pp. 330, 337f.

This sutra text is almost completely void of psychological interpretation. That means that neither the occasion nor the motive for the protagonists' course of action or the emotions which accompany the individual acts are mentioned. The question concerning karmic entanglements is asked but not dealt with further. This is true also of the question why Devadatta incites his friend to murder and why Ajātaśatru is responsive to such incitation. The text does not offer any further information. The story told is univocal and unidirectional, the story of the victims (king and queen) and their rescue by the presence of the Buddha. A way of contemplation is shown that leads out of an unbearable world toward a world without suffering and misery.

Material II: The Path of the Perpetrator and His Redemption

In his main work the *Kyōgyōshinshō* (The True Teaching, Practice and Realization of the Pure Land Way), Shinran deals with other contents and aspects of the story of Ajātaśatru stemming from the *Nirvana Sutra* (*Da banniepan jing* 大般涅槃經, T. no. 374), which have not come into focus so far.²¹ According to this narrative, after having committed many other murders the prince regrets the killing of his father from the bottom of his heart and “sores began to cover his entire body.”²² During this time his mother cares for him, but without any success. An extensive narrative tells of six royal ministers and advisors who mention medical doctors and miracle workers and present teachings of their own or those of others. According to these teachings, the crimes Ajātaśatru has committed are not really misdoings and will not necessarily end in death and hell. The ministers and advisors exculpate him from his deeds, which they do not consider crimes since they just happened within karmic entanglements. They deny altogether that there exist karmic interrelations which work fatefully.

Finally Ajātaśatru meets an eminent physician, Jīvaka, who appreciates Ajātaśatru's shame and self-reproach and who refers to the only effective and outstanding “physician”: Buddha. Further, Ajātaśatru hears a voice announcing the same message. Upon inquiry, he discovers that it is the voice of his dead father who is full of deep mercy. Subsequently, the Buddha puts himself into the state (*samādhi*) of “moon-radiant love” and casts a light on Ajātaśatru. In this brilliant, refrigerant and refreshing light his wounds are healed. And in this very light, all sentient beings may be healed in their

²¹ *The Collected Works of Shinran* (hereafter CWS), vol. 1, pp. 125–50.

²² CWS, vol. 1, p. 126.

bodies and minds. Ajātaśatru is taught by the Buddha and is liberated from his perception of karmic evil. For according to the message of the Buddha, those who long for salvation wipe out large amounts of karmic evil.

In this tradition entirely new plot lines are added. The process of the perpetrator and his liberation is at stake. The salvation of the victims is not in focus—in fact, almost the opposite seems to be the case. The victim (the father) gives his murderer a decisive hint for his salvation. This time the emotions of the actors are clearly announced: The father acts out of *mercy*, the Buddha out of *love*. Ajātaśatru shows *contrition*.

Material III: Liberation from Karmic Entanglements

Shinran is further engaged in additional traces of traditions within the story dealing with the murder of King Bimbisāra in the *Nirvana Sutra*. Here abysmal karmic entanglements emerge, so that all differentiations between perpetrators and victims, which have been made hitherto, become impossible.

The prince, now called Sudarśana (the handsome one), has had intentions to kill his father from the very beginning—due to karmic entanglements. In this version of the story, Sudarśana's friend Devadatta is a rival of the Buddha, but fails however at being a rival as well as in applying magical transcendent powers. Thus disappointed, he confirms the son of the king in his intentions and mentions a soothsayer who predicted that the prince would slay his father. He also tells the prince that the queen “having heard the words of the prediction, cast you from the top of a high tower when you were born.”²³ That is the reason why Sudarśana has a broken finger and why people call him “Unborn Enemy” and “Broken Fingered.” Thereupon, the prince puts his father into prison, and when he finds out that his mother intends to visit his father, Jīvaka is just able to prevent Sudarśana from killing her with his sword. However he deprives the king of everything and after seven days the king's life ends. After that the prince “becomes filled with remorse.” In this situation, Jīvaka points to the Buddha as the only aid. Shinran calls the Buddha's motive “pity.”²⁴

Here the prince is completely trapped within the entanglements of his karma. As a perpetrator he also is a victim; he becomes a victim even before

²³ CWS, vol. 1, p. 142.

²⁴ CWS, vol. 1, p. 143.

he is a perpetrator. A positive image of the mother falls apart. Yet, here also it is not the fate of his father or mother that is in focus, but the salvation of the prince.

The Ajase Complex

At this point, it would make sense to incorporate the classic psychoanalytical and depth psychological interpretations of the regicide stories we are dealing with here. It might be interesting to see how the discussions of the material at hand have been carried out in Japan.

In 1932, Kosawa Heisaku who studied with Sigmund Freud in Vienna handed him a manuscript entitled “Der Ajase-Komplex.”²⁵ In this paper, a Japanese complex of problems is juxtaposed with the Western myth of Oedipus, which deals with the impulse to kill one’s father and make love to one’s mother. In the Japanese version, a fundamental psychological impulse to kill is also prevalent. This impulse is not directed at the father however, but instead more at the mother. The story’s basic subject is the ambivalence of love and hate. Religious Buddhist aspects, however, are not taken into consideration at all. Okonogi Keigo summarizes Kosawa’s depiction of the story of Ajātaśatru as follows:

According to Buddhist sutras, Ajātaśatru is originally a prince of royal surroundings in ancient India, burdened however by a murky ancestry. Before his mother Idaike (=Vaidehī) was pregnant with him, she was in fear that with decreasing beauty the love of her husband, the King Bimbisāra, would diminish. So she eagerly wanted to have a son. A soothsayer she consulted in her despair predicted that a hermit living in a small forest would die within the next three years and would be reborn in her womb. However, fearful as she was, she was not ready to wait for three years; and since she intended to have a child as soon as possible she killed the hermit. Thus the child Ajātaśatru, with which she got pregnant, turned out to be the hermit’s reincarnation. Accordingly, Ajātaśatru was the very person that had already once been killed by his own mother. Additionally, when it had become

²⁵ The term “Ajase” in the title of this work is the Japanese pronunciation of the Sanskrit name “Ajātaśatru.” In this article, I have used the word “Ajase” in referring to psychological terms, but have maintained the Sanskrit when referring to the characters appearing in the sutras.

apparent that she was pregnant, she feared the hermit's [i.e., Ajātaśatru's] anger and attempted an abortion. Even whilst giving birth to him she intended to drop him from a tall tower.

Ajātaśatru knew nothing of all this and grew up loving his parents completely. But having realized the conditions of his ancestry, he was so disappointed by his idealized mother, that intentions arose to kill her; and he tried to murder her.

However in the guilt ensuing from his attempt to kill his mother his whole body soon began to tremble and he fell ill with severe inner ulcers. Due to his foul smell nobody came close to him any longer. Only his mother Vaidehī took care of him in an almost self-sacrificing manner. She forgave Ajātaśatru for his attempt to kill her. He in return showed understanding for her torments and forgave her reciprocally. In this tragedy of love and hate mother and son renewed their mutual affection.²⁶

This solution is positive and effective without transcendent dimensions; at the same time it is highly problematic. Its basic elements are the “feeling of being one, that is, the desire for mutual dependence, resentment and corresponding masochism, forgiveness and a corresponding awareness of guilt.”²⁷ Mutual dependence (*amae* 甘え) leads to an attitude which does not allow for “aggression” with the intention of differentiation and separation, departure and being in search of one’s own way. Repressed aggressions, however, can turn against oneself (masochism). According to the Ajase complex, the result may be anger, but because of the aggressive impulse they may also result in contrition (*zangeshin* 懺悔心). The solution is a “subtle reciprocity, a mutual understanding,” in which however “the other person [always] remains in the center.” All this is related to the expectation that precisely by this way of behaviour the other person develops a guilt of sorts and thus their relationship is strictly sustained. This might be accompanied by the wish and the effect at one and the same time “to dominate the other.”²⁸

In regard to the Ajase complex, Kawai Hayao, a scholar of C. G. Jung, coined the term “maternal society,” in which a group of whatever shape—family/companies/religious communities—realizes a network of affective tie-ups, which is critical of any form of autonomy restricted to the subject

²⁶ Okonogi 1990, p. 35.

²⁷ Okonogi 1990, p. 37.

²⁸ Okonogi 1990, pp. 57–58, 63ff.

and its ego-centered activities. To be clear, “maternal” must not be equated with “matriarchal,” since we are not dealing with rules concerning property and law but rather with a basic climate of communication.²⁹ Groups with dynamics of this kind represent the mother. They reproduce patterns of interrelations from early childhood, mutuality (which does not work always or everywhere) and co-dependency (which is not just positive). Hence, one can find the feeling of unity and the desire for mutual dependency as well as aggressive fantasies, which, however, will not be punished but rather forgiven.

The essays Jens Heise has edited are a collection of contributions by Japanese authors dealing with the question of whether and how the positive aspects of the (maternal) Ajase complex can be related to the paternal dimensions of a stronger ego-power. The shortcomings in the area of maternal interactions are admitted, but it is stated that nevertheless there are valuable arguments in favour of certain expectations and operations within the Ajase-model of communication: “Self-control by mutuality is a pattern of behaviour among adult persons with social experience, in contrast to the mere emphasis on the ‘ego’ which points to childish-premature attitudes.”³⁰

According to my understanding, the Ajase complex is not just a Japanese or Eastern pattern of relationships. Rather, it might be at least one way to conceptualize an overall basic pattern concerning the *Affektlogik* (logic of affects) of love—a pattern which is positive as well as problematic. Love can be linked with a feeling of belonging together, by which life may be promoted and secured. But love may also bind people, deprive them of their freedom and make them dependent. It may absorb them and may hinder the development of an autonomous self. In this sense, love can bring about a loss of ego and self-abandonment.

In this context, Western psychology discusses the reality and the conceptualizations of “ambivalence.” “Ambivalence” means the “concomitant presence of ambitions, attitudes and feelings, which are opposite to each other, e.g., love and hate . . . in relation to one and the same object.” According to classic psychoanalysis, this antagonism is indissoluble and insurmountable; it shapes the inner and the outer reality of life.³¹ The psychoanalyst, Klaus Winkler, claims that “human ambivalence” (*Zwiespältigkeit*) belongs to those “structures of the life of the soul,” which remain in need throughout

²⁹ Kawai 1990, p. 108.

³⁰ Hamaguchi 1990, p. 144.

³¹ See Laplanche and Pontalis 1977, s.v. “Ambivalenz.”

life and which are effective in terms of all sorts of further innovations.³²

In regard to psychological and religious aspects, the entire narrative dealing with Prince Ajātaśātru is most productive in terms of love/hate/compassion. Here, one finds not only the tension of love and hate (regicide), but also the positive and critical dynamics within the interactions, in which love finally dominates hate (Ajase complex between the prince and his mother). What increases the importance of the story is also the fact that it does not just deal with actual biographical dynamics of interactions, but also with (karmic) interrelations, which transcend generations and storytelling of families. In “systemic” approaches in Western psychotherapy, circumstances of this sort are increasingly brought to attention and are treated as trans-biographical entanglements. Classic Christian dogma speaks of “original sin,” which relates the individual to the guilt carried by the entirety of mankind.

In the narrative of Prince Ajātaśātru however, conflicts are not just picked out as the central theme, rather profane human solutions and religious salvation appear that transcend the present world. The stories present *corporal* healing in the light of the Buddha (for the perpetrator who is fully laden with guilt), along with holistic liberation (from all karmic evil) by this very light, but also by the teaching of the Buddha— for the perpetrator as well as for the victims. The more material one integrates, the more it becomes evident that the karmic entanglement is so all-embracing that the “victim” is also a “perpetrator” and vice versa. To exemplify it once more: the mother was ready to kill her son even before his birth and again during it. She also is a perpetrator, not just a victim.

II

In the second part of this essay, I would like to raise the topics of love/hate/compassion in the Jewish and Christian traditions. My question is: which basic anthropological and theological pattern of interrelation might be found in these traditions? Which conflicts are picked out as central themes and which (secular) solutions and forms of salvation transcending the world are conveyed?

³² Winkler 2003, p. 97. See “Ambivalenz als Grundmuster der Seele,” section 3 of chapter 2 of Winkler 2003, pp. 95–100.

Love

According to the Jewish and Christian religions, “love” is a basic force which reveals itself as an experience of power and as a strong feeling. This is true for the entire field of the doctrine of God (theo-logy) as well as for doctrinal and phenomenological anthropological issues.

“God is love.”³³ Christian dogmatic claims that since God’s *essence* is love, other *attributes* of God, e.g., omnipotence, justice, even anger, are to be understood from the perspective of His love.³⁴ Perhaps the most important text in the Hebrew Bible concerning human love is the so called “*sche’ma Israel*”: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might.”³⁵ Since the time of Jesus and even before his time, this text belonged to the introductory liturgy of synagogal worship. The congregation performed it together. Every Israelite knew it by heart. Still today pious Jews speak the *sche’ma* every day in the morning and evening. The martyrs of the Jewish faith died with the *sche’ma* on their lips.

When Jesus was asked what the greatest commandment was, he answered with the twofold commandment of love: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind.’ That is the greatest commandment. It comes first. The second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’”³⁶ Here, Jesus not only refers to the *sche’ma Israel*, but also to other issues concerning the essential meaning of charity in the tradition of the Hebrew Bible.³⁷

Whoever deals with “love” enters an enormous field of associations and meanings. From the very beginning, the Greek language, even beyond its Biblical application, has been very differentiated concerning different terminology for the dynamics of “love.” These may all resonate in the greater term “love” with different emphases and interrelations. (1) “*Phileō*” generally denotes a positive attitude toward an object or a human being—especially in the context of blood relationships and friendship. (2) “*Philia*,” accordingly, refers to “love, friendship, faithfulness, favour.”³⁸ (3) “*Erōs*”

³³ 1 John 4:8 and 16 (The New English Bible, 1961).

³⁴ Härle 1995, pp. 235ff, 267ff.

³⁵ Deuteronomy 6:4–5 (The New King James Version, 1982).

³⁶ Matthew 22:34–40 (The New English Bible, 1961).

³⁷ See Leviticus 19:18.

³⁸ Coenen and Hacker 1979, s.v. “Liebe,” p. 895.

is the passionate aspect of love with a powerful drive and the intention to possess (*erotics*). However, starting with Plato, *erōs* has not only come to designate the dynamics of going beyond and the ecstasy of leaving behind reason, will and prudence completely. *Erōs* may also lead the way to wisdom, to the good and to immortality. Thus *erōs* must not be understood exclusively or primarily as a partial, splintered drive. Rather, it is a cipher for the entire reality of life and love. In this sense *erōs* is holistic, since it is precisely here that affectivity, bodily experience and action as well as reason and mind join together. (In our approach, this corresponds with the understanding of “emotions.”) In Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*, the different aspects of *erōs* as “desire”—primarily bodily, but also in a philosophical movement upwards—*erōs* as conviviality and *erōs* as care are related to each other and interconnected.³⁹ Theological scholars of the ancient church, especially in Antioch, did not originally evaluate sensuality or desire critically either. Rather they conceptualized them as elements of a body/soul-unit of human existence. (4) “*Agapaō*” in the profane Greek language is not so much an accentuated word; originally it might have meant “to hold someone in high esteem,” “to treat someone in a friendly way.” In their usage in the New Testament however, “*agapaō*” and “*agapē*” are the essential and basic terms for the love directed to God, for God’s love and for the mutual love among human beings. In the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, “*agapē*” is also the main term to express “love” in these three directions (Hebrew: *āhēb*).

Love and Hate

Not only according to psychoanalytical theories but also in the Biblical awareness of reality, a countervailing power often takes over. Love and this power can remain in a relation which continues to be full of tensions and “ambivalence.” The later Freud picked out the polarity of love (Gk. *erōs*) and death (Gk. *thanatos*) as a central theme. Mostly, this is a tension between a positive approach within the framework of love and a way of keeping distance and showing rejection which comes close to hate.

In Biblical tradition, love, including God’s love, is situated in a polarity over against anger and revenge as manifestations of hate. In a vast number of prayers in the Hebrew Bible appealing to God’s faithfulness and justice, God is asked to refrain from his anger and his revenge in favor of his love,

³⁹ Ritter et al., 1971–2007, vol. 5, s.v. “Liebe, I–III,” especially p. 292.

grace, mercy and pity. God's essence may be love—his other attributes like anger and revenge are however also real and effective. This is the case until the development of apocalyptic conceptualizations of the final judgement by which the enemies of God and all evil doers will be separated from one another forever.⁴⁰ Even if in this context God's hate is not mentioned explicitly—love is not the only effective power. This idea comes up only in the doctrine of universal reconciliation (Gk. *apokatastasis panton*). This, however, is a concept which has always remained highly controversial.⁴¹

In the tradition of the *logia* of Jesus in the New Testament, one can find quite an open discourse on the remaining tensions between love and hate, e.g., "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and his mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, and even his own life, he cannot be a disciple of mine."⁴² Some interpreters express the idea that there might be an essential moment of "hate" within "love," since love might be forced even in a resolute and aggressive way to demarcate boundaries in order to ward off other lifestyles and counterforces which are contrary to the Gospel. This type of hate is not blind and powerless, rather it is "a univocal and radical 'no,' which results from a 'yes' for the concerns of Jesus."⁴³

Salvation

For me in existential theology the most important question seems to be: is there a doorway leading out of the fundamental polarities between love and hate—polarities which are still effective even in situations in which love might dominate (Ajase complex) and in which love is understood as the *essence* of God? By answering this question, all kinds of energetic reductions of the power of love must be avoided. The potency of love and the abundance of life must not be diminished.

(a) The Theology of St. John

In the New Testament, the Gospel and the letters of St. John, separate hate most decisively from an all-embracing love with which God loves the world and with which human beings are to love each other and God. "Dear

⁴⁰ Matthew 25:31–46; Revelation 21:8; 22:15.

⁴¹ See Härle 1995, pp. 610ff, esp. 624ff.

⁴² Luke 14:26 (The New English Bible, 1961).

⁴³ Sölle 1987, p. 53. On this topic, see the part entitled "Gibt es einen schöpferischen Hass?" in Sölle 1987, pp. 51–59.

friends, let us love one another, because love is from God. Everyone who loves is a child of God and knows God, but the unloving knows nothing of God.”⁴⁴ Also, “everyone who hates his brother is a murderer.”⁴⁵ However, if hate were to exist only outside of the community, it would not be raised as an issue. With this last quotation it becomes evident that confronted with a threatening and alien “world” out there, even the theology of St. John with all its divine and brotherly love remains within the fundamental ambivalence of love and hate. Thus, even here the question persists as to how far the basic entity “love” reaches out within brotherly love and, more so, beyond this type of love, and how the ambivalence between love and hate may be overcome in an effective and definitive way.

(b) Song of Love (1 Corinthians 13)

A powerful and effective attempt to articulate “love” (*agapē*) as an essential entity which is no longer caught in an insurmountable ambivalence can be found in 1 Corinthians. In Chapter 13, the apostle Paul sings a hymn dedicated to love—a text that belongs to world literature and is recited in each and every Christian wedding ceremony. Here, love is placed even higher than faith and hope (v. 13). And ecstatic experiences on the highest level, ultimate knowledge, most powerful faith and devoted service to others are all declared to be nothing, if they do not interconnect with the specific dynamics of love (vv. 1–3). This point is followed by fifteen different verbs which define love more clearly in its *Affektlogik*, especially in relation to all sorts of activities. The following translation is my own, whilst briefly paraphrasing and referencing various (others’) diverging attempts of translation.⁴⁶

Love is magnanimous and endures inconsistencies. It is not jealous (it does not compare), it does not show off to dominate others. It does not swell. Love does not act disrespectfully over against others. Love is not ego-centered. Love does not turn bitter by bitter experiences. Love is not resentful. Love does not enjoy injustice, rather delights with others in the truth. Love bears and endures everything. Love believes everything. (That also means: Love considers everything possible. Love believes also in that

⁴⁴ 1 John 4:7 (The New English Bible, 1961).

⁴⁵ 1 John 3:15 (The New English Bible, 1961).

⁴⁶ Kirchenrat des Kantons Zürich 1942, Lutherbibel 1984, Dietzfelbinger 1990, Bail et al. 2006.

which is impossible at present. Love has great confidence instead of permanent and categorical distrust.) Love hopes everything. (That means: Love expects and anticipates radical alternatives and changes.) Love endures everything. (That means: Love perseveres, resists and is not on the run.)⁴⁷

According to my impression, the characterization of “love” in 1 Corinthians 13 takes on the communicative qualities of friendship (*philia*) in a positive way, does not diminish the energetic qualities of *erōs* but nevertheless transcends the sphere of ambivalence of love and hate. However, here also—as with St. John—the early Christian community is addressed, not the entire world.

(c) Love of Enemies

An advanced position in the search of overcoming the ambivalence of love and hate is Jesus’ commandment to love one’s enemies in his “Sermon on the Mount.” “You have learned that they were told, ‘Love your neighbour, hate your enemy.’ But what I tell you is this: Love your enemies and pray for your persecutors; only so can you be children of your heavenly Father, who makes his sun rise on good and bad alike, and sends the rain on the honest and on the dishonest.”⁴⁸ “You must therefore be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect (Gk. *teleios*).”⁴⁹

“Perfection” here must be understood not as a maximal demand, but rather in the sense of “completeness” and “integrity” intending to transcend the basic ambivalence and fundamental tension between love/hate, good/evil, just/unjust. The commandment to love one’s enemies is presently realized in the practice of non-violent resistance.⁵⁰ The strategic and spiritual truth of the renunciation of violence is based on the confidence that in the long run the energies of love are stronger than the powers of hate—though connected with the high risk of one’s own and others’ lives.

Here, I would like to mention that the important partner and counterpart to psychoanalysis in the conceptualization of Sigmund Freud, the “complex psychology” of C. G. Jung, declared the integration of the “shadow” and of the evil (which means getting in touch with negative energies) as the essential

⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 13:4–7.

⁴⁸ Matthew 5:43–45 (The New English Bible, 1961).

⁴⁹ Matthew 5:48 (author’s translation).

⁵⁰ As just *one* example in theological discussions and Christian practice, see Wink 1987.

issue of the processes of the soul and the therapeutical practice. This integration aims at the continuous overcoming of ambivalent tensions in favor of “completeness.” At this very point, Freudian scholars state the danger of a “regressive need for restitution of a symbiotic state” (*rückwärtsgewandter Entdifferenzierungsvorgang*).⁵¹

(d) Compassion

In the prophetic tradition of the Hebrew Bible, one can find important, though relatively late, testimonies concerning the development of God’s anger in the direction of boundless pity and compassion.

How can I give up you, Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, Israel?

...

My heart churns within Me;
My sympathy is stirred.
I will not execute the fierceness of My anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim.
For I am God, and not man,
The Holy One in your midst;
And I will not come with terror.⁵²

“In this way Hosea has described the passionately agitating love in an outrageous boldness. According to Hosea the godhood of God does not manifest itself in its devastating power, rather in its robustness of its loving mercy, which precedes all human corresponding love and which suffers from the disloyalty of his people (6:4) without divulging it to chaos.”⁵³

All imaginations and concepts that are related to “graceful,” “kind,” “faithful,” “patient,” “turning to someone” and “bending down to” are concentrated in the term “compassion.” In the New Testament, compassion/mercy is mentioned in the fifth beatitude in Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount”: “How blest are those who show mercy; mercy shall be shown to them.”⁵⁴ Traditionally those deeds which are alluded to in the narrative of the final judgement,⁵⁵ are called “acts of compassion/mercy.” Their topic is basic

⁵¹ Winkler 2003, p. 98.

⁵² Hosea 11:8f. (The New King James Version, 1982).

⁵³ Coenen and Hacker 1979, s.v. “Liebe”, p. 897.

⁵⁴ Matthew 5:7 (The New English Bible, 1961).

⁵⁵ Matthew 25:31–46.

care between human beings: offering food to the hungry, giving a drink to the thirsty, taking strangers into one's home, clothing the naked, helping the ill, visiting the imprisoned, burying the dead.⁵⁶

III

Compassion as a Practice in Meditation and in Social Life in Eastern and Western Traditions

It may well be possible to compare Eastern and Western characteristics of love, hate and compassion—and the correlations between them—by introducing concepts beyond those utilized above. I do not want to disappoint this expectation entirely. However, I would like to deal with it on a “pragmatic” level, that is, in terms of practice. I am going to ask the question in what ways of meditation and everyday practice do human beings reach the powerful spheres of love and compassion, and how do they live and act within them.

(a) Practice of Meditation

According to *The Sutra on Visualization of the Buddha of Infinite Life*, which we considered at the beginning of this article, visualizations (essentially the visualization of the Buddha and of one's own birth in the Pure Land) are Buddhist spiritual exercises. In the narrative of Ajātaśatru, they are a spiritual way to escape the powerful sphere of hate into another world—a world of bliss excluding all polarities and ambivalences of love and hate. (Bliss has its own *Affektlogik*, which cannot be discussed further here.)

Meditation of this kind should however neither be understood as an “activity,” nor should it be performed in this manner. Rather, in it human beings come into contact with a reality that cannot be made, manipulated or controlled. They gain a distance from their present reality, they empty and prepare themselves and then the religious reality might appear in its own dynamic. In the *Nirvana Sutra*, quoted by Shinran, Ajātaśatru's wounds heal in the light of the moon-radiant love of the Buddha. It is this light that works on its own. It comes from without (not from within) and is by no means merely a product of meditative techniques.

⁵⁶ It should be mentioned that from a historical point of view it can be stated: “In some respects the development of Christian compassion is installed already in the Greek understanding of *eleos*. In Athens there is an altar of *eleos* linked to the right of asylum, the deity also is *eleēmōn*” (Ritter et al. 1971–2007, vol. 1, s.v. “Barmherzigkeit”).

In search of Jewish and Christian analogies, an equivalent may be found in Jesus' assurance of the man crucified beside him: "Today you shall be with me in Paradise."⁵⁷ "Paradise" is the garden God created for human beings at the beginning of the world—before all conflicts, before all befalling realities of shame, guilt and murder.⁵⁸ Although this is not an exercise of visualization, there are parallels in terms of structures and dynamics. Jesus points to and assures the man of an effective escape from the realm of hate and death with the promise of near fulfilment ("today").

The promise of a new world without conflicts can be found also in the vision of St. John who envisions that "the holy city, new Jerusalem . . . and God . . . will wipe every tear from their eyes; there shall be an end to death, and to mourning and crying and pain; for the old order has passed away."⁵⁹ This also is not an (active) exercise of visualization, rather a real vision that invades St. John as a medium.

Also, *messianic* ideas and imaginations concerning the "kingdom of God" as a radical different "land," as the New World may on some level correspond with Buddhist meditative exercises. But here ideas of a final *apocalyptic* religious salvation are always connected to a social and political utopia. At one and the same time, a kingdom of peace on earth is also at stake and not just a completely other new world, a "Pure Land."

Without going into greater detail, the following should however be emphasized: The Shin Buddhist's crucial center of all meditative practice aims at granting contact with the reality of Amida Buddha by the chanting of *Namu-amida-butsu*. Its counterpart may be seen in the so-called "prayer of the heart" (*Herzensgebet*) of the Christian Orthodox Church with the formula "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me."⁶⁰

As far as Catholic traditions are concerned, I would like to refer to Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuit Order. In the period of the Counter-Reformation in the sixteenth century, he put together a program of "spiritual exercises" for himself and others, some of which extend over several weeks. Ignatius' rather rigid programs—intended to clarify the will and gain self-control—contain an exercise to contemplate and to gain love. Having surpassed aspects of mutuality in love, boundless gratitude and cor-

⁵⁷ Luke 23:43.

⁵⁸ Genesis 2:4ff.

⁵⁹ Revelation 21:1–4.

⁶⁰ For an informative and critical approach by Hans-Martin Barth, see the chapter "Betet ohne Unterlaß!" in Barth 2000, pp. 225–43.

responding obligations toward God, creation as such comes into focus. To quote from parts of points two through four of this contemplation:

The second, to look how God dwells in creatures, in the elements, giving them being, in the plants vegetating, in the animals feeling in them, in men giving them to understand: and so in me, giving me being, animating me, giving me sensation and making me to understand; likewise making a temple of me, being created to the likeness and image of His Divine Majesty . . .

The third, to consider how God works and labors for me in all things created on the face of the earth . . . as in the heavens, elements, plants, fruits, cattle, etc., giving them being, preserving them, giving them vegetation and sensation . . .

The fourth, to look how all the good things and gifts descend from above, as my poor power from the supreme and infinite power from above; and so justice, goodness, pity, mercy, etc.; as from the sun descend the rays, from the fountain the waters, etc.⁶¹

This exercise however does not lead out of the world, rather it leads into its deepest ground and toward its last horizon. The frame of reference for this exercise is a theology of creation and is oriented toward the world. It might be beneficial to strengthen all varieties of practice which are turned toward justice, kindness, piety and compassion.

(b) Everyday Practice

Religion is never just a meditative practice but always also a social one. I have already alluded to the beatitude of the compassionate. The acts of compassion have found their concrete realizations in history, especially in the nursing of the sick—ambulatory as well as stationary. An example close to home: St. Elizabeth founded a hospital at the foot of the Wartburg in Eisenach and later she lived in a hospital-community in Marburg (1228). Such institutions were already being run in France in the twelfth century.

In the Buddhist tradition, one can find an impressive collection of acts of compassion in the article “*Karuṇā*” written by Taitetsu Unno:

⁶¹ Elder Mullan S.J., trans., “Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius,” Society of Jesus, Oregon Province, http://www.nwjesuits.org/JesuitSpirituality/Exercises/SpEx230_260.html (see under headings SPEX 235–237).

Compassion wherein those in need, helpless beasts . . . are the objects of care and concern . . . the poor where the destitute are fed, clothed and housed; and animals, which are to be released from human enslavement. In premodern times, *karuṇā* was also understood and appreciated in much more concrete forms: planting orchards and trees, digging bathing ponds, dispensing medicine, building bridges, digging wells along highways, making public toilets, establishing clinics and orphanages, teaching sericulture, farming methods and irrigation, building dikes and canals.⁶²

Like all religious welfare and social work (Gk. *diakonia*), this practice of mercy does not aim at salvation. Rather they are all limited contributions intended to avert surrendering this present world over to chaos even more, indeed, to sustain it in the light of God's compassion till the breaking-in of a completely new reality.

Turning back to the few but important Buddhist sources we have dealt with: evidently there is a sceptical trait toward the deeds of mercy questioning their degree and effect. The following statements from the *Tannishō* may strike us as unusual. In Chapter 2, Shinran states, "I am absolutely incapable of any religious practice."⁶³ Chapter 4 states:

There is a difference in compassion between the Path of Sages and the Path of Pure Land. The compassion in the Path of the Sages is expressed through pity, sympathy, and care for all beings, but truly rare is it that one can help another as completely as one desires.

The compassion in the Path of the Pure Land is to quickly attain Buddhahood, saying the nembutsu, and with the true heart of compassion and love save all beings as we desire.

In this life no matter how much pity and sympathy we may feel for others, it is impossible to help another as we truly wish; thus our compassion is inconsistent and limited. Only the saying of nembutsu manifests the complete and never ending compassion which is true, real, and sincere.⁶⁴

Similarly sceptical, but with positive—maybe even minimalistic—advice coming from the tradition of the wandering monks (*hijiri*) is the following

⁶² *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 8, s.v. "karuṇā."

⁶³ Unno 1984, p. 5.

⁶⁴ Unno 1984, p. 7.

statement: “Most likely you never awaken any genuine compassion; but you must harbor hatred of no one.”⁶⁵ “Hijiri monks are impeded by their own virtue. Rather than trying to perform good acts, just stop doing evil.”⁶⁶ In the texts of the *hijiri*, one can also find a hint concerning the strategy for loving one’s enemies, enabling the individual to helpfully turn toward negative powers: “When confronted by demons and imps, arouse your compassion and try to help them; do not feel you must overcome them.”⁶⁷

Ugo Dessi has presented fundamental studies on the practice of compassion and on basic positions in terms of social ethics in Shin Buddhism in his recent book, *Ethics and Society in Contemporary Shin Buddhism*. He has reconstructed historical and actual positions comprehensively and documents and discusses essential areas in which Shin Buddhists’ social efforts have been ethically effective, such as the issues of discrimination against certain lower classes and the isolation of lepers. Dessi also has focussed on the wider field of pedagogical and social welfare, working with refugees and those moribund in hospices.

In our context, the Buddhist motivations concerning activities of this kind are especially interesting. In reports as well as in a more systematic approach, Dessi has compiled a vast number of Shin Buddhist positions beginning with the Meiji period (1868–1912). For “*shinjin*” is not just a personal “faith.” Rather, the participation of each single believer in the historical development of the original vow of Amida is at stake.⁶⁸ Oftentimes, worldly activities are understood as a “response in gratitude” and as returning and passing down the benefits one has received. In this context, the idea of religious sameness and equality which is linked to the Buddhist understanding of karma is very important.⁶⁹ Finally, Dessi points to the Japanese criticism of one-sidedly taking over Western anthropocentric “humanistic” concepts instead of its own profile of Buddhist (Japanese) spirituality, which, in opposition to Western philosophy and religion, may contain very different ideas about ego/non-ego.

⁶⁵ Hirota 1989, p. 6 (8; Anon.).

⁶⁶ Hirota 1989, p. 12 (25; Myōzen).

⁶⁷ Hirota 1989, p. 37 (69, Anon.). Also see units, 42, 132, 135.

⁶⁸ Dessi 2007, p. 86.

⁶⁹ Dessi 2007, pp. 105–10.

Conclusion

The following sentences might sound somewhat simplistic. They refer however to a process that has been continued for thousands of years or even for *kalpas*—a process essentially concerned with life and death and in which Buddhists and Christians participate most deeply.

In relation to human and divine recognition, feeling, acting and thinking (which is related to experience), love, hate and compassion are extremely important dimensions. They are essential aspects of religious traditions and of spiritual and social practice. This is true for Eastern and Western traditions alike. Both contain a strong polarity between love and hate (Ajase complex; conflict of ambivalence), but, on very different levels, they also include tendencies in which love is understood as a means to finally surmount hate. In order to realize this, the dynamic of compassion is required. All ethical (inner-worldly) *solutions*, however, remain limited in terms of their power and effectiveness in comparison to religious *salvation*.

In the tensions between love, hate and compassion, the ego is quite often completely surrendered to these dynamic entities. The ego lives, suffers and acts not so much *with* them by employing them, but rather exists *within* them. Its development leads from blind, not quite conscious egocentricity regarding wishes and demands, to a more encompassing reality of interconnectedness, which surmounts karmic and systemic entanglements of very different sorts. In this realm, the ego does not simply perish, its patterns of realization and its concerns and requests however might change radically.

I close with a few sentences by the psychiatrist Luc Ciompi dealing with the reality and the dynamics of love—sentences which may have validity within this world as well as beyond all worlds:

According to the well-known saying, “love blinds us” (*Liebe macht blind*). This saying, however, merely refers to the gross restriction of the visual field in amorousness which is close to psychosis. True love however opens up and enables us to see. In the unique human phenomenon of love . . . dimensions of reality emerge that remain completely hidden in other affects. For more than anything else, love is the ability to refrain from one’s own point of view as the center of everything. . . . Love is the unique human ability to understand an other’s world—the world of another human being, but also the world of an animal, of a plant, even the “world” of an object, of a concern, of an ideal—from pre-

cisely this other as the center of action and interest instead of one's own person and position. Therefore, love is essentially self-abandonment, surrender in the deepest meaning of the word. Love . . . is . . . the maximal enlargement, interconnection with the whole, religion with a structural relationship . . . to an *unio mystica*.⁷⁰

In order to transcend the remaining ambiguities of the term “love” in our discourse, it might be adequate to read this characterization as a description of “compassion.”

ABBREVIATIONS

- CWS *The Collected Works of Shinran*. Shinran 親鸞, 2 vols., trans. Dennis Hirota, Hisao Inagaki, Michio Tokunaga and Ryushin Uryuzu. Kyoto: Jōdo Shinshū Hongwanjisha, 1997.
- T *Taishō shinshū daizōkyō* 大正新修大藏經. 100 vols., ed. Takakusu Junjirō 高楠順次郎 and Watanabe Kaigyoku 渡邊海旭. Tokyo: Taishō Issaikyō Kankōkai, 1924–34.

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⁷⁰ Ciampi 1997, p. 198.

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