The Meaning of "Other-Power" in the Buddhist Way of Salvation

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The Notion of Other-Power

In what follows I should like to offer a brief description of what I call Buddhist existentialism, which I take to be closely related in turn to the question of "Other-Power" (Jap., *tariki*).[1] In *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity*, Rudolf Otto cites a simple but really perfect image for Other-Power in religions of grace by contrasting the way of the cat with the way of the ape. When danger threatens a cat with her young, she takes her kitten in her teeth by the scruff of its neck and leaps to safety. The young one does nothing for its salvation: it remains completely passive. In contrast, when the mother ape leaps to safety, its young grabs ahold and clings to her, and in this way cooperates in its own salvation: it is a synergist.[2] The comparison is graphic and at first blush causes no particular difficulty.

But from what standpoint, we might ask, is Otto looking at the two ways to compare them? Is his a standpoint *ab extra*? Or is it *ab intra*, that is to say, one that looks at a way without leaving the way itself?

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[1] *Tariki* 他力 signifies an exclusive trust in the "Other," that is, in the gracious power of Amida Buddha. The Shin and Jōdo sects of Japanese Buddhism hold to this view. In general, the standpoint of *jiriki* 自力 shows an opposite tendency to that of *tariki*, stressing religious self-liberation. The principal representative of this view of "self-deliverance" in Buddhism is Zen.

[2] Rudolf Otto, *India's Religion of Grace and Christianity Compared and Contrasted*, trans. by F. H. Foster, London, S.C.M. Press, 1930, p. 56.

If he is standing outside of the way, then his observations may be scientifically accurate, but for that very reason lack existential awakening: the power to open the way to the observer is lacking. Is he already on the way? Then why does he turn his gaze to the other way? Or does he perhaps find himself standing at a fork in the road, undecided? Or again, maybe he has reached the end, where all the great paths converge? Questions such as these become significant when we have to do with the problem of whether salvation can be achieved by oneself alone, or whether the final, authentic ground of deliverance and salvation lies in Other-Power. For the purposes of this paper, I would approach this problem from a Buddhist frame, restricting myself mainly to considerations of the essence of primitive Buddhism.

To begin with, something further needs to be said in the way of clarifying the notion of "Other-Power." According to Otto, the essence of religion relates to our experience of the numinous, to the feeling of the "Wholly Other." This numinous contains within itself a polarity: the *mysterium tremendum* and the *mysterium fascinans*. In Christianity the feeling of being a creature and the sense of the majesty of God belong to the order of the *mysterium tremendum*; and the experience of God's freely bestowed grace, to that of the *mysterium fascinans*. With a view to the history of religions, Otto speaks in this regard of the experience of the sublime (*majestas*) and of grace.

In the history of Indian, Chinese, and Japanese Buddhism, the notion of Other-Power came increasingly to be vested with the popular spirit. Belief in Amida Buddha (Amitābha, Amitāyus), together with its dogmatics and philosophy, resulted from the efforts of masters and disciples of the Mahāyāna schools attuning themselves to the voices of the masses and striving thereby to tap the underground waters of religious life.

As for the polarization of religious sentiment in the Buddhist world, it is clear to believers that the idea of Other-Power means the freely bestowed grace of Amida Buddha which possesses limitless power in the form of a Vow (the aspect of the *fascinans*). The *tremendum*, meantime, is internalized in the form of a fundamental self-consciousness of one's own death and one's own sins, a consciousness that is infinitely deepened and widened by *saṃsāra* and *karma*.

How do the ocean of light of Other-Power and the dark seas of *saṃsāra* and *karma* relate to one another? The light is the light that proceeds from eternity to eternity, over which darkness has no proper claim. Even if

darkness has ruled for thousands of years in some hidden cave, the moment light shines in it is dispelled! From the very start, darkness is but a nihility. Buddhist metaphysics has dealt with this problem in a great many ways down through the years. In the famous introduction to Buddhism known as *The Awakening of Faith*[3] we are told: The law of Buddha is real truth. It is our self at its depth. It is authenticity itself, the *An-und-für-sich*. But then, how does the phenomenal world (the world of appearances) come about? Whence the turbidness of the human spirit? It is like the relation between sea and wind. The sea of itself is calm, but is whipped up into waves by the wind.

But this leads us to ask further: Whence comes the wind? In the end we come to two abysses locked in combat with one another—and I, the sounding board set between them. Were we to ask Otto for his view on the matter we would receive the simple but profound reply, "Both belong to a feeling of the numinous." But we still want to know how the two come together in this feeling. "That," he would probably say, "is the *mysterium*."

In Japanese Buddhism, we may note in passing, the classic advocate of the doctrine of Other-Power was Shinran (1173–1262), while Dōgen (1200–1253) upheld the contrasting view of salvation through oneself. Although these views are radically opposed to one another, the personality, conviction, and thought of Shinran and Dōgen are closely akin at the core.

The Young Buddha and His Way Inward

The story of how the Buddha as a young man came to set out on the holy quest is recorded in one of the suttas of the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya*, and may be broken up into three texts:[4]

TEXT 1 Monks, I was delicately nurtured, exceedingly delicately nurtured, exceedingly delicately nurtured, delicately nurtured beyond measure. For instance, in my father's house lotus-pools were made thus: one of blue lotuses, one of red, another of white lotuses, just for my benefit. . . . By night and day a

[3] D. T. Suzuki, *Aśvaghosa's Discourse on the Awakening of Faith in the Mahāyana*, San Francisco, 1980, pp. 36–37.

[4] *The Book of the Gradual Sayings* (*Aṅguttara-Nikāya*), Vol. I, trans. by F. L. Woodward, London, Pali Text Society, 1979, pp. 128–29 (III, 4, 38).

white canopy was held over me, lest cold or heat, dust or chaff or dew, should touch me. Moreover, monks, I had three palaces: one for winter, one for summer, and one for the rainy season. In the four months of the rains I was waited on by minstrels, women all of them . . .

In this midst of this "delicate nurturing," the sutta goes on, the young Buddha was driven to reflection:

TEXT 2 To me, monks, thus blest with much prosperity, . . . this thought occurred: Surely one of the uneducated manyfolk, though himself subject to [the law of] old age and decay, not having passed beyond old age and decay, when he sees another broken down with age, is troubled, ashamed, disgusted, forgetful that he himself is such a one. Now I too am subject to [the law of] old age and decay, not having passed beyond old age and decay. Were I to see another broken down with old age, I might be troubled, ashamed, and disgusted. That would not be seemly in me. Thus, monks, as I considered the matter, all pride [*mada*] in my youth deserted me.

Again, monks, I thought: One of the uneducated manyfolk, though himself subject to [the law of] disease, not having passed beyond disease, when he sees another person diseased, is troubled, ashamed, and disgusted, forgetful that he himself is such a one. . .

And so there follows a series of questions similiar to those that had been raised with regard to old age and youth, this time on disease and health, and than on death and life, the result of which is that all pride in health and life deserts the young Buddha.

The linking together of the description of the superfluity of pleasures in the three palaces on the one hand with the Buddha's self-reflections on old age, sickness, and death in the midst of such magnificence on the other, seems to have come from the hand of the redactor of the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* who carried over the number "three" in order to link the texts together. If we set these two texts alongside the Chinese translation, we discover that they had originally been independent of one another. The second text is then followed by a passage on "The Threefold Pride," which ends with the metrical hymn:

TEXT 3 Though subject to disease and eld and death,
The manyfolk loathes others who are thus.
Were I to loathe the beings who are thus
'Twould be unseemly, living as I do.
So living, knowing freedom from rebirth [*dhamma*],
I conquered pride of youth and health and life.
For in release [*upādhi*] I saw security.
Then to this very me came energy,
For I had seen *nibbāna* thoroughly.
'Tis not for me to follow sense-desires.
I'll not turn back. I will become the man
Who fares on to the God-life as his goal.

According to Mrs. Rhys Davids, the historical Buddha was not born Crown Prince of the great King Suddhodana, as legend would have it, but was probably the eldest son of an aristocrat who was no more than one of the local leaders in a small kingdom in northern India where part of the Sākya clan was domiciliated at the time. This political arrangement was reinstituted into a communal order by the Buddha after his enlightenment. Rhys Davids surmises that in his youth the Buddha had likely led a life of chivalry, characterized by self-control, gallantry, and discipline, rather than, as later descriptions would have it, a life of comfort and sensuality.[5] Text 1 from the *Anguttara-Nikāya* may be the first to depict his youth in these latter terms.

We may accordingly leave to one side Text 1 concerning life in the three palaces, and turn our attention to Text 2. By relating that passage to Text 3, which as we observed forms the conclusion to the following sutta, the resultant reflections on old age, sickness, and death can be seen to suggest a way to resolve several important problems that arise in this regard.

To begin with, the onslaught of old age, sickness, and death is not looked upon as the lot of other people. Nor are they ever taken as mere physical phenomena. Rather the Buddha grieves over them as the wounds of his own heart. In coming to grips with the problems of old age, sickness, and death as his very own, the young Buddha became their prisoner even as he stood in the full flower of youth, in sound health, and surrounded by the delights of life. (In one sutta we read how the Buddha happened

[5] T. W. Rhys Davids, *Gotama the Man*, London, 1928.

one day upon an old beggar and his wife squatting along the roadside and warming themselves by a fire fueled with dried dung, whiling away their days in idleness. The Buddha turned to his disciples and announced, "It is already too late for such as these to walk the true path to religious awakening.") The young Buddha realized that he was in the grip of a problem of relating to his being, a problem that revealed itself from out of these "limit situations." He saw that courage is needed to carry on the pursuit of the essence or wholeness of being proper to one's actual human condition (Dasein), and that to see that pursuit through to its end one must resolve to effect a harsh and uncompromising negation of one's everyday self. This is always the case, but it was especially true in India at the time. It is a task for which one's spirit must be sufficiently strong and sufficiently supple, to say nothing of one's will power.

What Heidegger spoke of as "preliminary resolve" (*vorlaufende Entschlossenheit*) is, in a wider sense, always valid; but where religious awakening is concerned it takes on an additional nuance. For the young Buddha, the existential question unlocked the way inward—the way that he and his disciples were later to call the way of the holy quest.

The possibility of forfeiting the existential authenticity of one's being and abandoning oneself to corruption (*Verfallenheit*) is also present here. The Buddha is referred to in the translation given here as "troubled." Elsewhere the phrase has been rendered as the Buddha's having "deviated from himself" or "taken leave of himself." The word *attiyati* being used here implies a being anxious, a sorrowing over something, a tormenting of oneself, and so forth. The attitude of the average individual shows up on the one hand as a consciousness filled with anxiety over old age, sickness, and death, a consciousness that feels itself responsible for these things as something that belongs to it; and yet at the same time, on the other, hopes if at all possible to shake free of its anxiety and not to have to face these things as its own problem. Whichever be the case, though, the same relationship obtains: through old age, sickness, and death one's existence is being questioned subconsciously precisely because one does not face these things to question them consciously. That is why the sight of another's sickness, for instance, can arouse feelings of anxiety in such persons, as if it were they themselves who were the afflicted, and generate a sense of trouble, shame, and disgust within them. The Buddha sought to overcome this erroneous attitude of the commonplace individual toward old age, sickness, and death, and in its place to inspire a sort of

"preliminary resolve," constellating the problem of the three sufferings as a primordial, existential question so that each individual might assume "self-transcending" as a proper task.

Old age, sickness, and death are understood as the existential law (*dharma*, *dhamma*) before whose inevitability humans cannot but acquiesce. They point to a problem for which I myself, as an individual, must take responsibility. From this it becomes evident that this law is essentially different from a law of nature. The laws of nature relative to sickness tell us of its causes and so forth, and provide us with a knowledge of the means to recovery. A law of this sort falls within the realms of the objective-universal and thus remains forever at an abstract level where I, as the one who is sick, am but a mere instance. If, however, I am able, through the pain of my sickness, to appropriate to myself the truths which belong to my irreplaceable self, then the pain of my sickness becomes a source of something new: it opens for me the way inward. Sickness enlightens me on the essence of the human.

Now law, *dhamma*, holds true not only for the particular individual but for *all* of humanity in general, albeit in such a way that the *dhamma* touches the particular in each self. This understanding of the self as a being-human that is a being-in-the-world is already laden with the questions: Where do I come from? Where am I going? Primitive Buddhism uses the word *bhava* to express such understanding. We may now turn to consider the intimate connection between *bhava* and old age, sickness, and death.

The fact that human beings are liable to the laws of old age, sickness, and death cannot but deeply impress one with a sense of the impermanence of all things. Impermanence strips naked the one who comprehends the essence of the human as a "being-toward-death" and discovers its ground and origin to lie in nothingness. Primitive Buddhism shows a penetrating sensitivity to impermanence. In the "flower chapter" of the *Dhammapada*, for instance, we come across the following lines:

> Death overpowers a man who is gathering flowers, and whose mind is distracted, before he is satiated in his pleasures.
>
> Death carries off a man who is gathering flowers and whose mind is distracted, as a flood carries off a sleeping village.[6]

[6] *The Dhammapada*, tr. by Irving Babbit, New York, 1936, p. 10 (vv. 47, 48).

In the *Dhammapada*, as in other canons, impermanence is also likened to a burning fire. Fire, which sets ablaze everything that it comes into contact with, is a particularly fitting image because it represents the essential relationship between impermanence and suffering. Indeed, the articulation of the connections between impermanence, suffering, and egolessness make up the fundamental creed of the Buddha.

Later in the *Dhammapada* we find the verses:

> "All existing things are transient." He who knows and sees this ceases to be the thrall of grief.
>
> "All existing things are involved in suffering." He who knows and perceives this ceases to be the thrall of grief.
>
> "All existing things are unreal."[7] He who knows and perceives this is no longer the thrall of grief.[8]

That everything is impermanent (transient), then, may be expressed in the words, "Everything burns." Once, after his enlightenment, the Buddha climbed atop a mountain. At that point a fire broke out somewhere on the opposite mountain or in the town below it. The Buddha turned to his disciples in their commotion and said, "Do you think it is only the mountain that is burning? It is not only the mountain that burns, but your eyes that see it as well. Everything is burning. As much that which is seen as that which sees—all burning together. As much that which is heard as that which hears—all burning. . ."

This instruction easily throws understanding into confusion, for it takes epistemological reflection on the relationship between sense organs—eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body (touch) and will, the organ of thinking—and their objects—colors, sounds, smells, tastes, textures, mind-objects—and transposes it into the problem of impermanence.

To the Buddhist way of thinking, what happens in impermanence is that each and every thing becomes what it in truth is. In this context, the sense of the "impermanence of all earthly things" gives expression to the disposition of impermanence that informs the whole of beings and so immingles with it as to make the *sense* of impermanence and impermanence itself one and the same. To see the sense of impermanence as a form of

[7] That is, without a firm ground or ego.

[8] *The Dhammapada*, p. 93 (vv. 277–79).

impermanence suggests seeing the whole of being mirroring itself to itself. This sense of impermanence is thus a consciousness of my finiteness, and the impermanence of my self is thus able to bring me for the first time to an insight into the impermanence of the world as a whole. It would therefore be a misunderstanding on my part if I were to take it merely as another of those feelings of self-will that I, as a subject, impose onto things, and fail to see my sentiment of impermanence as belonging to the authentic disposition that informs things themselves. The fact that I feel my own impermanence is rather an expression of the impermanence of the entire cosmos and the whole of being itself. And thereby that "sense" (*Stimmung*) becomes the fundamental "disposition" (*Bestimmung*) that originates in things from out of their very essence. Only in so understanding the metaphysical significance of the statement that "Everything burns" do world and ego, each in its thusness (*tathatā*), assume a relationship to that "burning," an *original* relationship grounded in a dimension that lies beyond the opposition of subject and object. There can be no understanding *sub specie aeternitatis* without understanding *sub specie mortis*.

To take up one of the images from the *Dhammapada*, when the waters of a flood overwhelm a village, it is the entire order of the town (the totality of relationships that assign each thing its place within the town) that is caught up in the whirlpool together with me myself—I and Thou, people and houses, roads and bridges, trees and forests. This, too, leads us to see that the opposition between subject and object really stems initially from a feeling of their oneness in impermanence: one takes this feeling of oneness from its base and stands it upright like a partition to divide the world between subject and object. In other words, this opposition of subject and object arises from a perverted self-consciousness, from reflecting the feeling of impermanence in the mirror of reason.

We usually consider purely epistemological reflection on the essence of subject and object to suffice. It seems to me, however, that when we take a closer look at such reflection we see that it does not represent so much the mature fruit of thought as a failure of insight into the web of impermanence that makes up the world as the ground of such reflection. That is, it arises from a lack of authentic experience of the ground where subject and object are one. In primitive Buddhism's considerations of the actual condition of things (their Dasein), we find a way of representing "the objective in general" by referring to it concretely and directly as "form" or *rūpa*. It speaks of sensible entities as configurations with shape and

color. Buddhist commentators derive the word *rūpa* from the verb *rūppati* meaning "to be broken," "to be suffering from fever," "to be pestered by snakes, mosquitoes,or the like." The notion of *rūpa* as form or configuration thus represents the outcome of a process or event that is circumscribed by the verb *rūppati*. There is deep insight to be found here in primitive Buddhism, even though there be modern scholars who resist such an etymological derivation.

Everything flows. For the subject that clings obstinately to something, not wishing to let go of it, the "form" of that thing—that is, that with which the subject wills to engage itself—becomes a hindrance and an affliction.

From just such a nexus of involvement the configuration of a thing arises, in a perverted sort of way, as something objective which is rightly rendered by the word *rūpa*. For the epistemological opposition of subject and object is simply a projection from the dimension of willing. Seen in this light, the symbolic expression, "Everything burns," requires that we take a closer look at the opposition of subject and object as it arises from a willful obstinacy, from a "thirsting."

"Burning" points both to the fact of impermanence and to the fact of thirst. In burning and thirsting I pursue the object of my desire and make it burn: I consume it for the satisfaction of my thirst. Meantime, the object of my desire works an allurement of its own, enkindling my desire. This is what the notion of "burning" implies.

With the idea, "Everything burns," therefore, two aspects of the world are brought together in a most significant and intelligible way, that of impermanence and that of thirsting.

In the passages from the *Dhammapada* cited earlier, death is understood as the destiny that befalls one suddenly from without. In the reflections of the Buddha on old age, sickness, and death in the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* referred to, however, these three sorrows are understood as the fundamental fact of human finiteness. They are seen at the same time as a task—one must be prepared to walk the way of overcoming the three sorrows—though in fact humans ever and again turn aside from this task as from no other.

One prefers to leave one's original essence in the dark and to ascribe all responsibility for the tragedies of the present to others. Yet even if one be now rich and young, healthy and full of the pride of life, sooner or later there will be no escaping the responsibility that comes from being liable

to the laws of old age, sickness, and death that apply to all humans.

Death has us in its grip, even in the midst of youth, health, and fullness of life. At any moment death can grab ahold of us and take us on a trip, even during the repose of a life of enjoyment. And that is not all. The laws of old age, sickness, and death form the essential ground of my actual condition. Their three sorrows *are* my very Dasein itself. That I recognize this fact only in others and fail to see it as true for myself as well, like a rich man looking down at a poor beggar, is the result of being under the illusion that I am somehow uniquely privileged. But in such matters there is no privilege.

The trouble, shame, and disgust that I feel when I see another advanced in years, sick, or dead points me the way to the ground that I am to reach. Although the way that leads to my ground also leads to my downfall, still it should be faced squarely and trod to the end (one may liken it to Hegel's "going to the ground"), for it is at the same time the leap to true, authentic existence, a surmounting or overturning of negation into affirmation.

One who is not up to this task will for that reason stand arrogantly in front of others, even though their aging, their sickness, or their death are just as much his own affair. As a robber, anxious for his own safety, ends up murdering the one he would rob, so does it happen that a commonplace fellow faced, let us say, with the appearance of a sick fellow, comes to feel uncertain of his own state of being and is cast into anxiety.

For the Buddha, the word *mada* connotes an "arrogance" that combines the senses of pride and inebriation. It expresses a situation in which one is transported out of oneself, drunk with the vitality of youth. The primitive Buddhist analysis of arrogance runs somewhat along the lines of the treatment of *Angst* found in the existential philosophy of Heidegger and the analysis of despair found in Kierkegaard. Dealing with anxiety in the face of death, Heidegger reckons the flight from anxiety to be itself a sign of anxiety, and Kierkegaard similarly analyzes the relationship between despair and arrogance in considering the state of not-being-in-despair as itself a form of despair. It is, however, to be noted in this regard that in the Buddha's analysis of arrogance, the problem of the awakening of the inauthentic individual to authentic self-awareness is immediately carried over into the relationship between I and Thou ("they," "others"). In existential philosophy, the commonplace fellow who is not aware even of the problem of his own death is taken to be buried alive in mediocrity where empty chatter and the mask worn before the world are all impor-

tant; but the relation between one's own anxiety and "others" is not included in the concrete form of arrogance.

Quite to the contrary, in Kierkegaard the Thou is seen exclusively as the absolute, the "Wholly Other" who is God. This means that interhuman relationships must relate to the relationship to God as periphery to center. What is more, our despair is seen as a confrontation with or estrangement from God and hence, consciously or not, presupposes that relationship at its ground.

For the Buddha, the distinctive feature of ego-dominated consciousness consists in that anxiety before the laws of old age, sickness, and death is able to bring us to the decision that precedes religious existence; and that the flight from this anxiety, as a concrete anxiety before the world, is able to include from the outset the I-Thou relationship, even if only in veiled or perverted form.

The Departure of the Buddha from the Four Castle Gates

As the young Buddha reflected on how unsuitable a response arrogance was, and as he set out on the way that was to carry him beyond the inauthentic self that is liable to the laws of old age, sickness, and death, perversion with all its manifestations was wiped away. The exposition of the previous pages places the first conversion of the Buddha at this point, for it was precisely here that the religious question first came to light in him, though not in such a way that the final state of salvation was to be reached all at once. As we shall see, the continually new forms that his religious quest assumed show us a process of deepening. The goal of authentic Buddhahood lay still far ahead.

As Oldenberg has rightly pointed out, the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* in the *Digha-Nikāya*[9] is a further development of the legend of the three palaces found in the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* and treated in the foregoing section. There we read, too, that the young Buddha—who is called now Vipassi[10]—spent his days full of pleasures in the three palaces. The miracle stories of his childhood are given somewhat fuller treatment in this sutta, and

[9] *Dialogues of the Buddha*, Part II, trans. by T. W. and C. A. F. Rhys Davids, London, Pali Text Society, pp. 4–41.

[10] Vipassi is the name of the first of seven former Buddhas.

the details of his life of luxury are also more amply described.[11]

Then one day, on his way through the country, the Buddha met an old man. Never having seen an old and feeble person before, he was taken aback at the sight. In the course of his ensuing conversation with a wagoner, the Buddha gains the insight that he, too, is liable to the law of old age and cannot escape it. He is sorely afflicted and laments: "Shame then verily be upon this thing called birth [*jāti*], since to one born old age shows itself like that!"[12]

The same reflection is repeated in the next scene in which he encounters a sick person, and again a third time when he runs across the body of one who has died. Last of all, he meets a monk and is deeply moved by his peace of mind and life of chastity. After speaking with the monk, Vipassi finally comes to the decision to undertake himself the life of a monk.

These four events are known as the "departure of the Buddha from the four castle gates" since, according to later accounts of his life, he sallied forth on each occasion from a different one of the four portals of his residence—the eastern, the western, the southern, and lastly the northern. This resolve of the Buddha to become a monk, together with his subsequent "withdrawal from the world," is the part of his story that has been accorded the greatest affection and attention in later narrations, poetry, and artistic representations.

Given their profound content and symbolic religious power, the encounters of the Buddha with old age, sickness, and death, and his religious decision to renounce the world—especially in their dramatic representations—made a deep impression on the common people and were decisive in promoting the transmission of Buddhism to later generations.

For example, the biographies of famous people from the Japanese middle ages often show the direct influence of these dramatized narrations of the Buddha's life on the resolve of these individuals to cut themselves off from family and home. Young men at the time who wished to strike out on a religious path, were consciously or unconsciously imitating the way of the Buddha, as we see for example in the case of Saigyō (1118–1190), Shinran (1173–1262), and Dōgen (1200–1253). This pattern is also

[11] One may suppose that the ideal type after which the legend of the young Buddha as savior was fashioned was already considerably developed at the time of the composition of this sutta. The time of composition itself is difficult to determine, but I would place it between 50 and 100 years after the death of the Buddha.

[12] *Dialogues of the Buddha*, I, p. 19 (v. 22).

reflected throughout the Buddhist lands of southeast Asia in certain initiation rites for entrance into a temple: a young man introduced to the community of monks is looked on as a "Crown Prince Siddhārtha" come forth from the castle gates.

One of the distinctive characteristics of this biographical account of the Buddha is, as we shall mention later, that it shows in very concrete form the process through which the religious question deepened in the experience of the Buddha himself. This is what lends the story its impressiveness.

In the hearts of simple Christian folk the figure of St. Francis of Assisi sunk deep roots in like fashion. For many, hearing the life of this saint meant the first time that the problems of old age, sickness, and death became real to them and permeated their whole being. In his life as well we see all the stages through which the Buddha had passed: how pride in the flower of his youth did battle with a deepening religiosity, and how the entire course of his life led him gradually to forsake his paternal home and withdraw from the world. Up to our own day the image of the saint from Assisi has left its indelible mark on Christian religiosity.

It is now thought that St. Francis may have read a modified version of the legend of the Buddha in the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat,[13] which had been composed in Greek in the eighth century and transmitted westwards to Europe in the Middle Ages. From there, the formulation of the religious question and the renunciation of the world as a solution to that question, as we find them in St. Francis, influenced a great number of believers after his death.

Scholars such as Foucher[14] argue that if one takes into consideration the conditions under which his conversion occurred, the biography of Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, is almost closer to the life of the Buddha than it is to that of St. Francis. In many religious conversions, the deeds of great religious personalities are being imitated, often unconsciously. There are also typical and well known instances of this phenomenon with regard to a strengthening of religiosity. It should be noted

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[13] See H. Thode, *Franz von Assisi und die Anfänge der Kunst der Renaissance in Italien*, Vienna, 1934. Regarding the legend of Barlaam and Josaphat (Joasaph), see H. Dumoulin, *Begegnung mit dem Buddhismus: Eine Einführung*, Freiburg, 1978, pp. 29–30; J. Jacobs, *Barlaam and Josaphat: English Lives of the Buddha*, London, 1896.

[14] A. Foucher, *La vie du Boudda d'après les textes et les monuments de l'Inde*, Paris, 1949.

further here that the departure of the Buddha from the four gates, which has become something of an archetype of this process, is operative not only in Buddhist lands but also in the West, though not with the same impact that it has in the East.

The origin of the belief in former Buddhas belongs, of course, to the time after Gotama Buddha. According to the Dharmic Inscriptions of King Aśoka, the king himself had made a personal pilgrimage to the tomb (*stūpa*) of the Buddha of a former age (Konāgāma Buddha). Other ancient texts[15] present the fundamental principles of morality as the basic teaching of the "many [former] Buddhas." One sutta in the *Saṁyutta-Nikāya*[16] describing "dependent origination" remarks in an important passage that this doctrine of the Buddha is the rediscovery of an ancient teaching, and that dependent origination belongs to a way of the Four Holy Truths and the Holy Eightfold Path already trod by ancient sages (Buddhas). From this one might conclude, as Schayer does,[17] that there existed ancient transmissions, since lost, which had been linked to four, seven, or ten former Buddhas.

Further worthy of note is the fact that immediately after the account of the departure of the Buddha from the four gates in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta*, we find an explanation of the doctrine of dependent origination.[18] The three original questions of the Buddha reproduced in the *Aṅguttara-Nikāya* (Text 2 above) were thus developed in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* into the legend of the four departures. But the further passage in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* on the doctrine of dependent origination provides the real and proper answer to these questions. And the resolute spiritual conversion based on this answer constitutes the content of the Buddha's enlightenment.

As noted above, the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* takes the most striking events in the biography of the Buddha and simply sets them up as norms (*dhammatā*) for Buddha-existence, projecting them then onto former Buddhas

[15] *The Dhammapada*, vv. 184ff.

[16] *The Book of the Kindred Sayings*, Part II, trans. by F. H. Woodward, London, Pali Text Society, 1982, XII, pp. 1ff.

[17] S. Schayer, *Vorarbeitan zur Geschichte der mayahanistischen Erlösungslehren*, Munich, 1921; "Pre-canonical Buddhism," *Arvhic Orientalni*, 7, 1935, pp. 122–32, especially pp. 124–25; "New Contributions to the Problem of Pre-hinayanistic Buddhism, *The Polish Bulletin of Oriental Studies*, 1, 1937, pp. 8–9.

[18] See note 9.

(Vipassi et al.). This helps to explain why the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* omits the description of the entire long course of the quest for the way of the holy, and why the departure of the Buddha from the four gates is followed immediately by the doctrine of dependent origination.

Also connected with the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* is the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* in the *Majjhima-Nikāya*. In its first part, this sutta explains the difference between the holy (ariyan) and the unholy (unariyan) quest. Of this latter, the Buddha remarks: "As to this, monks, someone, liable to birth, because of self, seeks what is likewise liable to birth. . . ." The same is then repeated of old age, sickness, and death. It is easy to see that this is nothing other than a new development of the problem treated in the foregoing section which had led the young Buddha to his first reflections. There it was presented in terms of arrogance before others subject to the selfsame laws of old age, sickness, and death; here it is presented as the "quest for something" subject to the same fate as the one who is questing. The passage that follows, however, provides a new twist to the problem:

> And what, monks, would you say is liable to birth? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to birth, women-slaves and men-slaves are liable to birth, goats and sheep, . . . cocks and swine, . . . gold and silver. . . . These attachments, monks, are liable to birth; yet this (man), enslaved, infatuated, addicted, being liable to birth because of self, seeks what is also liable to birth.
>
> And what, monks, would you say is liable to aging? Sons and wife, monks, are liable to aging. . . .[19]

Once again the point is repeated that all are subject to sickness and death as well. This passage revolves about the notion of the foundations of the human condition (*upādhi*; pl., *upādhago*) encountered earlier in Text 3. *Upādhi* is what we long for in the things enumerated there, what we think worth possessing. Like the boy that sticks his hand into the jar of sweets and cannot pull it out again once he has taken ahold of what he was after, so our grasping after things provokes a counter-reaction from the side of the things themselves. Behind the lure lurks the snare. When we imagine an object as object, our attitude is already unconsciously one of grasping.

[19] *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings (Majjhima-Nikāya)*, Vol. 1, trans. by I. B. Horner, London, Pali Text Society, 1967, p. 205.

This is particularly noticeable when our grasping gets solidified, that is when it becomes, objectively speaking, possession and property, and subjectively speaking, habit and inclination. Just as memory consists in the following of time-worn tracks (*milinda pañha*), so too does the inclination to evil consist in the same evil deeds being repeated persistently in complicity with the objects that lead me astray. The fateful collaboration of the inclination to evil with the enslaving character of things shows withal the same structure as the correlation between our sense of and disposition to "being toward death" on the one hand, and the transiency of things on the other. This explains why the inclination to evil, when truly realized through existential self-consciousness, not only continually pronounces an indictment against particular individuals for their sinfulness but against all of humanity and the world as a whole.

The connection between this first part of the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta* and the sutta cited earlier in Text 2 receives its literal confirmation in the following terms:

> And I too, monks, before awakening, while I was still the *bodhisatta*, not fully awakened, being liable to birth because of self, sought what was likewise liable to aging. . . . Then it occurred to me, monks, "Why do I, liable to birth because of self, seek what is likewise liable to birth; . . . being liable to stain [and death] because of self, seek what is likewise liable to stain [and death]? Suppose that I (although) being liable to birth because of self, having known the peril in what is likewise liable to birth, should seek the unborn, the uttermost security from the bonds—*nibbāna*?. . . ."[20]

The intimate connection between the two suttas may help us to appreciate the similar parallel to be seen between the doctrine of dependent origination in the *Mahāpadāna Suttanta* and the doctrine of the quest for the holy in the *Ariyapariyesana Sutta*.[21] Whereas at first sight the two are different, in fact both treat the same quest for the holy, only from different aspects. It is here that mention needs be made of the problem of dependent origination and the closely related question of the Four Holy Truths. The way of the quest for the holy I should like to call the *transcendental* way, since it leads us to the absolute (*nirvāṇa*) through a self-tran-

[20] *The Collection of the Middle Length Sayings*, p. 207.

[21] See notes 9 and 19.

scending. In contrast, the doctrine of dependent origination leads us to a fundamental unknowing, and only by breaking through this fundamental unknowing are we able to realize the absolute in ourselves. Since the quest for the holy leads directly to the ideal in ascending stages, it must needs be supported by a *transdescendental* way as its counterpart. As Kant arrived at the notion of "radical evil" and our "inclination to evil" in the final phase of his reflections on the transcendental way, and as Schelling and Hegel developed this problem of Kant further, transcendental idealism and transdescendental existentialism belong together as two aspects of one and the same way. The former was undertaken by German idealism; the latter has, alas, yet to be adequately developed in Western thought. In this regard, the tradition of Buddhism, and in particular the Yogācāra School, has achieved noteworthy results.

I believe that a dialogue and synthesis of these two spiritual standpoints is both possible and desirable. At the end of the transcendental-transdescendental way, the true way of communication between the Buddha and his disciples springs open before us. Therein lies the core of the spirit of primitive Buddhism, with the Holy Eightfold Path representing the summit of it ᵒⁿ religious self-consciousness. How do *jiriki* and *tariki* relate to one another at this summit? What happens to the master-disciple relationship there? Primitive Buddhism presents us with the key to the answer.

TRANSLATED BY JAMES W. HEISIG