

Buddhist Enlightenment and Hegelian Teleology

The Dialectic of the Means and End of Enlightenment

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Preface

THIS PAPER ATTEMPTS to explore a Hegelian account of Buddhist Enlightenment in the context of the subitism/gradualism debate in Mahayana Buddhism. It will argue in light of Hegelian immanent teleology that Buddhist transcendental enlightenment (the end) must be understood in terms of “inclusion” or “sublation,” but not “annihilation,” of the process of cultivation (the means). In other words, the problem of the relation of the means to the end, i.e., of the cultivation and the enlightenment must be *worked out dialectically*, not *emptied out unilaterally*. The very spirit of the Buddhist renunciation of the dualism of the subject and the object, of the end and the means, would in turn make itself dualistic if the transcendence of the enlightenment were to be separated from the means.

The ultimate end (*Telos*) of both Buddhist subitism and Hegelian teleology is to be understood in terms of nonbifurcation of the end and the means. However, the difficulty in subitism is that its “immediate” nonbifurcation of the end (enlightenment) with the means (cultivation) ironically “re-bifurcates” the two on account of its annihilation of the gradual aspect of the means. Thus I would argue in light of Hegelian teleology that the true sense of enlightenment must be dialectically understood in such a way that the enlightenment (the end) *includes* cultivation (the means) as necessary to its self-actualization in concrete and determinate terms. In other words, the silence of subitist enlightenment

cannot articulate itself if it annihilates its necessary counterpart of speech.

There is to be found, from the outset, a similarity between the Hegelian immanent teleology of the Absolute Spirit and the Buddhist teleology of Enlightenment in that the end is not to be taken as something external to the means; in other words, the means to the end is already *inherent* in the end, and to that extent the end is already achieved in the means, or the end is also *achieving itself* in the means. Hegel would agree with subitism to the extent that the preliminary act of enlightenment is *already* enlightenment itself; however, Hegel would argue that the premise of the initial identification of the end and the means does not necessarily negate the gradual aspect of enlightenment, i.e., all the means of cultivation or practice. This is to say that the immediate identification of enlightenment and cultivation, i.e., the end and the means, is a *necessary* factor, but not a *sufficient* one. The inherent, the immediate, must be further developed into the explicit, a mediated actuality. The true identification of the means and the end does not “obliterate” the subsequent processes from the former to the latter; rather the means must be “sublated” in such a way that in the end, nothing is lost, but all are included. As Ken Wilber says, “Each higher fact must transcend yet include each lower level in its higher-order unity and synthesis. To negate everything is to preserve everything; to transcend all is to include all.”¹

I. THE DEBATE BETWEEN SUBITISM AND GRADUALISM

Let us now examine the fundamental problems in the Buddhist debate between subitism and gradualism. Enlightenment is characterized by subitism in terms of “suddenness” or “immediacy”; no previous engagement of practice or cultivation is required to achieve it. As Whalen Lai puts it, “Enlightenment is both sudden in approach and total in impact.”² The subitists insist that true enlightenment is one that transcends any progressive cultivation in such a way that it is attained “suddenly” or “immediately” without verbal or philosophical articulation,

¹ Ken Wilber, *Up from Eden* (Boston: Shambhala, 1985), p. 310; see also p. 315.

² Whalen Lai, “Tao-sheng’s Theory of Sudden Enlightenment Re-examined,” in *Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, ed. Peter N. Gregory (Kuroda Institute Studies in East Asian Buddhism, 1987), p. 15.

and without the mediation of cultivation. The silence of apophaticism is the only true sign of enlightenment. This "suddenness" (*don*, in Korean, *tun* in Chinese), which implies "intuitivity," "immediacy," "nontemporality" and thus "the mystical" and "the transcendental," involves two terms: the means and the end, i.e., the cultivation and the enlightenment.

Gradualism, on the other hand, teaches that enlightenment requires gradual cultivation, practices, moral pursuits, meditative practices, and intellectual disciplines, all of which are to be renounced according to subitists. However, there are common teachings they both agree on. As Demiéville claims both believed that the intrinsic purity of the mind, while pure in its self-nature, is soiled by "adventitious passions."³

I will argue on the basis of the *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, which is the textual foundation of the two philosophical constructs, that the exclusive, transcendentalistic, mystical subitism needs to be complemented by inclusive gradualism in order to complete its own self-concept. I will argue further, however, that although gradualism is more in accord with the spirit of the Sixth Patriarch than subitism on account of its inclusivism, it falls short of articulating a logical explanation of the dialectical interplay of cultivation and enlightenment, i.e., the means and the end. Therefore, I will examine the problem in light of the immanent teleology of Hegel in order to suggest ways in which Buddhists might be able to articulate more clearly the relation between means and ends in the process of enlightenment.

I would like to draw careful attention to the fact that the *Platform Sutra*, which is the authentic textual resource out of which the problem of the subitism and gradualism emerges, is, in fact, dual-faceted. Neither subitism nor gradualism alone can be said to be a fair account of enlightenment. On my reading, the Sutra clearly manifests a "dialectical," not "exclusive" or "unilateral," affirmation of "both" gradualism and subitism. Let me thus proceed to a detailed textual analysis.

Author of the sutra Hui-neng, the sixth patriarch, says that there is neither suddenness nor gradualism in the Dharma; but in the capacity

³ Paul Demiéville, "The Mirror of the Mind," *Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, p. 15.

of the people who pursue the Enlightenment there is a methodological distinction between “sudden” and “gradual.” The Sutra thus says:

[16] *Good friends, in the Dharma there is no sudden or gradual, but among people some are keen and others dull* (italics mine). The deluded recommend the gradual method, the enlightened practice the sudden teaching. To understand the original mind of yourself is to see into your own original nature. Once enlightened, there is from the outset no distinction between these two methods; those who are not enlightened will for long kalpas be caught in the cycle of transmigration.⁴

[39] What is meant by “gradual” and “sudden”? The Dharma itself is the same, but in seeing it there is a slow way and a fast way. Seen slowly, it is the gradual; seen fast it is the sudden [teaching]. Dharma is without sudden or gradual, but some people are keen and others dull; hence the names “sudden” and “gradual.”⁵

It is not difficult to see from the above two passages that there are two methods (the means) to enlightenment (the end), i.e., sudden and gradual, which, without doubt, supports gradualism. However, in other passages Hui-neng says something different. For example, in passage 29 he says:

When people of shallow capacity (*so-kun-ki*) hear the Sudden Doctrine being preached they are like the naturally shallow-rooted plants on this earth, which, after a deluge of rain, are all beaten down and cannot continue their growth. People of shallow capacity are like such plants. Although these people have *prajna* wisdom and are not different from men of great knowledge, why is it that even though they hear the Dharma they are not awakened? It is because the obstructions of their heterodox views are heavy and the passions deep-rooted. It is like the times when great clouds cover the sun; unless the wind blows the sun will not appear. *There is no large and small in prajna wisdom* (italics mine). Because all sentient

⁴ Ibid., 137; italics mine.

⁵ Ibid., 193.

beings have of themselves deluded minds, they see the Buddha by external practice, and are unable to awaken to their own natures. But even these people of shallow capacity, if they hear the Sudden Doctrine, and do not place their trust in *external practices* (italics mine), but only in their own minds always raise correct views in regard to their own original natures; even these sentient beings, filled with passions and troubles, will at once gain awakening.⁶

As shown above, passages 16 and 29 do not coincide. In passage 16, the Sutra asserts that people differ in their capacities for enlightenment, so that it defines the difference between gradualism and subitism in terms of people's capacities. However, in passage 29, the sutra contradicts the former position, and says that even lower capacity people can attain enlightenment "suddenly."

My understanding of these two inconsistent passages runs as follows. If the former argument is right, then, "the lower capacity people" must not be thought of "lower" but as "the higher capacity people"; but if latter argument is right, then passage 16 must be saying that there is no difference in the degrees of capacity regarding enlightenment. My interpretation of this inconsistency is that the Sutra intends to "encourage" subitism as the best instruction for the attainment of the enlightenment, but not to "dismiss" gradualism on account of the former. This should be clear from what is said about the two paths to enlightenment, gradual and sudden, that enlightenment itself is neither gradual nor sudden.

The Sutra maintains that there are two kinds of teachings, *donodonsu* (sudden enlightenment—sudden cultivation) and *donochūmsu* (sudden enlightenment—gradual cultivation), the former being more authentic and superior, and the latter being inferior. However, it does not say that the latter is wrong or unacceptable. In another passage where gradualistic well as subitistic factors can be found, Hui-neng says:

[53] If only within your self-nature you yourself separate from the five desires, the *instant*⁷ you see into your own na-

⁶ Ibid.; italics mine.

⁷ All italics in this text are mine.

ture—this is the True [Buddha]. If in this life you awaken to the teaching of the Sudden Doctrine, Awakening, you will see the World-honored One before your eyes.

If you do not seek the True yourself and seek the Buddha *outside*,

All your seeking will be that of a highly ignorant man.

The teaching of the Sudden Doctrine (*donkyo bupmun*) has come from the West.

To save people of the world you must *practice* (italics mine) yourself.

[53] If within your own nature you seek to see for yourself, This then is the *cause*⁸ (italics mine) of becoming Buddha and gaining enlightenment.

If you wish to practice and say you seek the Buddha,

Who knows where you will find the True [One]?

If within your own body you yourself have the True,

Where the True is, there is the *means* (italics mine) of becoming Buddha.⁹

As we have seen, practice and cultivation are encouraged by the author of the Sutra. The gradual aspect of sudden enlightenment cannot be overlooked, for practice, by definition, needs something to practice for, and this again proves the gradual, process character in “enlightenment.” So it may be right to say that *after* enlightenment there need be no more practice, as subitism argues. But is it not the case that practice is needed until enlightenment is achieved?

The ambiguity of subitism and gradualism may be clearer from the perspective of a distinction between the *what-ness* and *how-ness* of enlightenment. Subitism seems to say that true enlightenment has to do only with the *status* or *what-ness* of it, but not its *how-ness*, the process of attaining it. The fact of the matter is that as far as the *what-ness* of enlightenment is concerned, gradualism does not differ from subitism. The difference lies in *how* to attain the same *what-ness* of enlighten-

⁸ It seems to me that “seed” here is a better translation than “cause.”

⁹ *The Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch*, trans. Philip Yampolsky (New York: Columbia University, 1967), p. 181.

ment. In the *how-ness* of it, there are two factors involved: one is a matter of "temporality" and "endurance," which leads to the problem of immediacy versus mediacy. The other factor involved is the practical method (or means) for attaining enlightenment.

Subitists seem to conflate the status, the *what-ness* of sudden enlightenment, at the expense of the process, the *how-ness*, of the end. Gradualism does not seem to deny the *status* of enlightenment, but it simply emphasizes the processes to the end by articulating the necessary stages. The difference between gradualism and subitism, then, may not be located in the end or *what-ness* of the final enlightenment; rather, it may be the means, or *how-ness*, of it. And this *how-ness* seems to be determined by where the emphasis is placed. Gradualism emphasizes the means, a cultivation which must be gradual, while subitism emphasizes the end, which is sudden.

Now the term, *dono* (sudden enlightenment) needs some clarification. The term, *dono*, in the context of *dono-chūmsu* (sudden enlightenment-gradual cultivation), does not seem to be the same kind of *dono* as subitism defines, i.e., *kyōn-sōng*, the completed enlightenment. It is only the initial, embryonic, incomplete enlightenment, and thus secular distress, anguish, and afflictions still linger in it. Therefore, an eradication of the distress and afflictions through gradual cultivation is needed. And subitism does not differ from gradualism in this respect. So if the fundamental problem is a matter of clarification of the definitions, then the reconciliation of the two schools would seem to lie in simply changing the term *dono-chūmsu* to *haeo-chūmsu-dono* (initial enlightenment—gradual cultivation—final, sudden enlightenment).

Subitism says that if enlightenment is sudden, then, cultivation must be sudden too. The term *dono-donsu*, sudden enlightenment and sudden cultivation, would thus seem a contradiction in terms, since "cultivation" by definition involves temporality, i.e., duration, and duration cannot be "an immediate moment," no matter how short a period of time. It may be plausible to say that the "moment" of awakening is immediate, but it does not seem to right to say that "cultivation" or "practice" has an immediate feature. Therefore subitism must maintain either that (1) there is an embryonic moment of enlightenment and the gradual cultivation, and perfected enlightenment may be achieved by these two features; or, (2) there is only perfected enlightenment

from the beginning and the end, and no mediative moments between them is necessary.

The alternative given to subitism seems to be, then, that either it has to agree with the gradualist's *dono-chūmsu*, sudden enlightenment and gradual cultivation, given that gradualist enlightenment is embryonic and not perfected as subitism contends, or it must say simply, *dono*, sudden enlightenment, without *donsu* attached to it because no cultivation is necessary. But this is impossible, both logically and actually. Subitism thus may be guilty of trying to "have its cake and eat it, too."

Park Sungbae expresses his difficulty in accepting subitism's unelaborated doctrine of *dono-donsu* on account of its exclusivism,¹⁰ and his proposed syncretism of "subitistic gradualism" (*donodonsujök chumsusöl*),¹¹ seems to be a possible solution to the problem of the exclusivism of subitism. In line with Professor Park's syncretism, I would like to propose, as a (not *the*) possible solution to the problem, *donochūmsuseök donsuseöl*, or *haeo-chūmsu-dono*, that is, a "gradualistic subitism" whose character is inclusive.

II. HEGELIAN THREEFOLD IMMANENT TELEOLOGY

I would like to examine this *haeo-chūmsu-dono* (gradualistic subitism) in light of Hegelian immanent teleology which consists of three aspects, or moments: the immediate, the mediate, and the mediated-immediate. *Inclusive subitism* as Hegelian Absolute Idea has three features: (1) gradualism's embryonic enlightenment, which is sudden and immediate; (2) gradual cultivation, which is mediated; and (3) subitism's perfected enlightenment, which must be understood as the "mediated immediacy," i.e., immediacy actualized *through* and *in* mediation.

Subitism seems to annihilate the means to the end of enlightenment as an irrelevant factor because of its emphasis on the nontemporal, immediate feature of enlightenment. On the other hand, for Gradualism, the means is much emphasized as a necessary factor in the attainment

¹⁰ Park Sungbae, "Criticism of Songchol Sunim's Account of Donochūmsu," in *Kkaedalūm, Donochūmsu or Donodonsu?* (Seoul: Minjoksa, 1992), p. 269.

¹¹ Park Sungbae, "Donodonsujök Chumsusöl," in *Kkaedalūm, Donochūmsu or Donodonsu?*, p. 276.

of enlightenment. Subitism further insists that the means are only for those of lower capacity with no direct access to enlightenment, whereas those who have superior capacity can achieve immediate, direct enlightenment. But this exposes a *logical* gap in the thought of subitism, for how can there be no means to the end when there is the end? Lin-chi, a subitist, resolves this difficulty of the logical jump by saying that the bifurcation of the means and the end can be bridged by means of the identification of "enlightenment itself" with "faith-in-enlightenment." Robert Buswell says, "Faith, for Lin-chi, is both the means and the end of practice, the catalyst of enlightenment as well as its consummation. When all doubts about inherent Buddhahood are resolved through the perfection of faith, faith and enlightenment are realized to be coextensive."¹² However, the Lin-chian method of nonbifurcation of the means and the end in terms of faith, as identified with enlightenment itself, does not seem to be quite convincing, for "faith-in-enlightenment" and the very status of "enlightenment itself" cannot be the same. Faith in this respect, regardless as to whether it is with respect to "I *can* become Buddha" or "I *am* already Buddha," does not make much difference.¹³

Thus, Lin-chi's immediate identification of the means with the end of the enlightenment in terms of "faith as enlightenment" may serve only as a partially correct methodology for solving this difficulty. Faith is necessary but not *sufficient* for enlightenment. The subitistic, immediate identification of the means with the end lacks the holistic, integral frame of the teleology of enlightenment. Hegel, in his immanent teleology, argues, as the subitists do, that the end is "immediately" identical with the means in the sense that the end is inherently in the means. However, Hegel says the nondifferentiated immediacy must go through the stage of differentiation by means of the mediate and the determinate, otherwise the immediate will remain abstract and insipid. This

¹² Robert E. Buswell Jr. "The Short-cut Approach of K'an-hua Meditation: The Evolution of Practical Subitism in Chinese Ch'an Buddhism," in *Sudden and Gradual Approaches to Enlightenment in Chinese Thought*, p. 342.

¹³ Park Sungbae argues that patriarchal faith's "I am already Buddha," in contrast to the doctrinal faith's "I can become Buddha," is what is the right way to get us access to enlightenment; see his *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1983); see p. 19 and also p. 133ff.

Hegelian dialectical exposition of the immediate and the mediate can illuminate the difficulty of the means and end relationship in the one-sided, exclusive, and solipsistic subitism.

Let us now elaborate the Hegelian dialectic of the immediate and the mediated in detail. Hegel advocates a form of intuitionism which, like subitism, asserts the reality of immediate knowledge. Immediate knowledge is what consists in knowing that the Infinite, the Eternal, the God which is in our Idea, really is; or, it asserts that our consciousness is immediately and inseparably bound up with this idea of the certainty of its actual being. However, Hegel says that what is immediate is likewise mediated, and that immediacy itself is essentially mediated just as there is no cause without its effect, viz., the cause is mediated by the effect.¹⁴ Hegel argues that even from a purely logical point of view, immediacy without the mediate cannot be possible, for "the Idea has truth only by means of being, and being has truth only by means of the Idea." And when these two terms are united, one term has truth only when mediated through the other. This quality of mediation is involved in the very immediacy of intuition.¹⁵

According to Hegel, pure immediate knowledge is an empty abstraction. Not only is the pure immediacy abstract, but so also is pure mediation. In other words, one must not hold the opinion that either of them is truth *in isolation*. True knowledge is what unites both of them within itself and does not exclude either.¹⁶ Hegel insists that the immediacy of knowledge by no means excludes mediation. We cannot point to anything at all that does not contain mediation within itself.

Hegel's dialectical exposition of the immediate and the mediate is further related to his concept of infinity. Since Hegel's teleology is based on his conception of infinity, I shall elaborate his distinction between bad and true infinity. Bad infinity is something external to the finite in such a way that the moment when the finite reaches the infinite as the

¹⁴ For an extensive discussion of the immediate-mediated relationship, see G. W. F. Hegel, *Logic: Being Part One of the Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences* (1830), trans. William Wallace (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1975), p. 155ff; hereafter as *Encyclopaedia*.

¹⁵ *Encyclopaedia*, section 70.

¹⁶ G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter C. Hodgson (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 155-156.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 161.

end, the infinite becomes another finite means to reach another infinite, and so on infinitely. This endless progression to infinity, which is set up as an unattainable external infinity, is negative and abstract. Hegel argues that this bad infinity must be overcome:

Something becomes an other; this other is itself somewhat; therefore it likewise becomes an other, and so on *ad infinitum*. This infinity is the wrong or negative infinity: it is only a negation of a finite: but the finite rises again the same as ever, and is never got rid of and absorbed.¹⁸

Hegel argues that the infinite in its endless progression into infinity is bad infinity and must be "sublated" into the true infinite. The true infinite is not the mere negation of the finite. It is the infinite which has realized itself and actualized itself in the concrete finite, i.e., self-related in the passage, and in the other.¹⁹ In other words, to Hegel, the second stage of differentiation through mediation is a necessary aspect of the final end. Thus, for Hegel, nondifferentiated, immediate unity, like the "night in which all cows are black," is blind, implicit unity, a mere abstraction. The Absolute Spirit has to be concretized through mediation in order to be truly absolute. Thus, as "the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk,"²⁰ so is the end achieved only after all the concrete means are practiced, not obliterated, and this understanding of the end can be true to the Buddhist sudden enlightenment in which the end and the means are immediately identical.

Like the infinity of God of the poet Hölderlin, Hegel says the true infinite is "more than a mere world beyond the finite, and that we, in order to become conscious of it, must renounce that *progressus in infinitum*."²¹ Hölderlin writes:

I heap up monstrous numbers, mountains of millions; I pile up time upon time, and world on top of world; and when

¹⁸ *Encyclopaedia*, section 94.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, section 95

²⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 13.

²¹ *Encyclopaedia*, section 194.

from the awful height I cast a dizzy look towards Thee, all the power of number, multiplied a thousand times, is not yet one part of Thee. These I remove, and thou liest all before me.²²

As God described by Höller is present to and in us as soon as we abandon our external journey to find him, so “is there, present before us the true infinite. It is only the spurious infinite which is the beyond.”²³ This analogy made by Höller is strikingly similar to the analogy of seeking the Buddha made by the subitist Lin-chi:

When your seeking mind comes to rest, you are at ease—a noble man. If you seek him [a Buddha], he retreats farther and farther away; if you don't seek him, then he's right there before your eyes, his wondrous voice resounding in your ears.²⁴

Subitism's warning against gradualism is similar to this Hegelian warning against bad infinity. According to subitism, gradualists set up enlightenment as an *external* goal to be achieved, and once the goal of enlightenment is set up as something *external*, then there has to be an endless progress to attain it. So subitism argues that the goal of enlightenment must be realized inwardly. Because it is within us, it does not have to be sought through gradual cultivation, and thus is achieved “suddenly.” The *Platform Sutra of the Sixth Patriarch* says that the truly enlightened person does not set up anything external in order to attain enlightenment. It says:

[41] The master said: “Listen to my explanation and you will know my view. The mind-ground, not in error is the precept (*kue*) of self-nature; the mind-ground, undisturbed, is the meditation (*chung*) of self-nature; the mind-ground, not ignorant, is the wisdom (*hwe*) of self-nature.”

Master Hui-neng said: “Your precepts, meditation, and wisdom are to encourage people of shallow capacities, mine are for men of superior attainments. [Because] the awakening of self-nature [is the pivot of my teaching], *I don't even set up precepts, meditation, and wisdom.*” (italics mine)

²² Ibid., section 104.

²³ G. W. F. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1990), p. 149

²⁴ *The Record of Lin-chi* (Kyoto: Institute of Zen Studies, 1975), p. 19.

Chih-ch'eng said: "Please explain what you mean by '*not set up*'." (italics mine)

The master said: "Self-nature is without error, disturbance, and ignorance. Every thought puts forth the radiance of *prajna* wisdom, and when one is always separated from the form of things, what is there that can be set up? Self-awakening to self-nature, and sudden practice with sudden awakening—there is nothing gradual in them, so that nothing at all is set up.

But it is not fair to accuse gradualists of being externalists because the inward journey does not necessarily preclude cultivation. What is internal must be cultivated just as what is external. Therefore, identifying the necessity of cultivation with externalism is mistaken, and criticizing gradualism as a misconception is inappropriate. Just as the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, without being an external goal to be achieved, goes through the process of self-actualization within, likewise the inner goal has to go through as much cultivation as the external goal. The Hegelian ultimate enlightenment, the Absolute Spirit, presupposes its end as its beginning and becomes fully Absolute only by its process of self-actualization in concrete and determinate moments. *Seeking within* oneself to become Buddha is not the same as becoming Buddha *instantly*. In other words, seeing Buddha within does not necessarily result in immediate enlightenment. *Internal* realization and *sudden* realization are two different categories. The former is about *what* and *where*, i.e., the content of enlightenment, viz., the Buddha is within, not without; and the latter is about the *how* of enlightenment. Though we accept that Buddha is within, we still must take time and expand effort to have the knowledge of the *where-ness* and *what-ness* of Buddha, and this in turn requires gradual cultivation.

The twofold dialectic of the means and the end of Buddhist enlightenment seems imperfect because of its unilateral conception of transcendence, i.e., a total annihilation of the means. If Hegel is right, the transcendence of the Buddhist enlightenment is one that includes, preserves, and sublates the means, but does not obliterate it. If the Buddhist teleology of enlightenment is thus twofold, then the Hegelian teleology is thus threefold. The end is reached in three stages; first, the Subjective End, which is present immediately; second, the Objective End,

which is in process of being accomplished; and third, Realized End which is what is accomplished. The Subjective End is a nondifferentiated, self-identical universality, in which everything is involved, but nothing is as yet discriminated.²⁵ Like the initial enlightenment of gradualism, the Subjective End is the immediate, implicit form of the end. The Objective End, i.e., the Subjective End identical with the particularity and the content, is thrown into the object, which it appropriates as a Means.²⁶ Like the gradualist's cultivation, the Objective End is a mediated differentiation from the immediate, undifferentiated end. The purposive action, with its Means, is still directed outwards because the End is also not identical with the object.²⁷ Finally, the Realized End is the overt unity of Subjective End and the Objective End.²⁸ In the Realized End, the one-sided subjectivity and the independent objectivity confronting it are both canceled.²⁹ In the Realized End the means vanishes, for objectivity (the means) is the Subjective End's return into itself. Hegel says that the means *is* the end itself when the means vanish in the Realized End: "The realized end is also the means, and conversely the truth of the means is just this, to be itself a real end, and the first sublation of objectivity is already also the second, just as the second proved to contain the first, as well."³⁰

Thus, in light of Hegelian immanent teleology, the true end is not some *thing* that is separated from the means, but is what unfolds itself as being identical with it. The end is not some *thing* to be achieved, separated from the means, but rather is *already* achieved, or *achieving itself*, that is to say, the means to the end is the very end itself. The true end is not an endpoint which comes at the last moment after the means which makes the progress toward it. It is the whole process of activity itself, from the beginning point to the endpoint.

The subitistic immediate identity of the mind of sentient beings with that of the Buddha is likened to the Hegelian Subjective End which is only the first stage among the other two necessary stages of the Objective End and the Realized End. Subitists, however, skip the second

²⁵ *Encyclopaedia*, section 206z.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, section 208.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, section 209.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, section 210.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, section 212.

³⁰ *Science of Logic*, p. 752.

stage of the mediated, Objective End, and reach directly to the final stage, the Realized End.

Let me now expand the discussion on the immediacy of subitism in light of the Hegelian Subjective End.

As Professor Park argues in supporting the subitist's immediacy in his triple identity of faith, practice, and enlightenment, faith is not a mere preliminary to practice and enlightenment, as it is assumed to be in the theory of doctrinal faith; rather, faith is practice and practice is enlightenment.³¹ Putting it in Aristotelian terms, one becomes virtuous, not at the end of all the practices of virtue, nor as a *result* of them either; rather one becomes virtuous at the very moments of acting virtuously.

This position is akin to the first moment of the Hegelian threefold teleology, i.e., the immediate identification of the means and the end. Hegel would support this in his warning against the Kantian misconception of "not knowing before you know." Refuting the Kantian ontological suspension of human faculty of knowledge of *Ding-an-Sich*, Hegel argues that the knowledge involved in the examination of knowledge is actual knowledge and not merely preliminary to actual knowledge.³² Like the subitist's immediate identification of the end and the means, the Hegelian infinite is immediately inherent in the finite in the beginning.

Hegel, however, goes further than subitism in that the immediate presence of the infinite in the finite must go through the moments of determination and concreteness. In other words, the inherent immediacy of enlightenment must be explicitly concretized and determined. The subitist's realization that the end is in the means, a renunciation of dualism, does not necessarily imply that no process of self-determination and concreteness is needed. Hegel says that the true infinite, which in

³¹ See S. Park, *Buddhist Faith and Sudden Enlightenment*, pp. 6 and 56.

³² Hegel, in his *Logic*, section 40, says, "Kant undertook to examine how far the forms of thought were capable of leading to the knowledge of truth. In particular he demanded a criticism of the faculty of cognition as preliminary to its exercise. That is a fair demand, if it means that even the forms of thought must be made an object of investigation. Unfortunately there soon creeps in the misconception of already knowing before you know—the error of refusing to enter the water until you have learnt to swim. True, indeed, the forms of thought should be subjected to a scrutiny before they are used; yet what is this scrutiny but *ipso facto* a cognition?"

the beginning is present in the finite in the form of the indeterminate, must determine itself in the self-actualizing process in order to be truly infinite in the higher or perfected sense of the term. This teleological activity is one that actualizes the original identification of the end with the beginning, the consequent with the ground, the effect with the cause. Pure identity without the activity of actualization, as alleged in subitism, is only abstract, and not real.³³

III. ŚŪNYATĀ: THE NEGATIVE ULTIMATE

If we consider the subitistic ultimate, *śūnyatā*, emptiness, in light of Hegelian threefold teleology, we realize that “abstract emptiness” is an immediacy that has not gone through moments of mediation through the means. In other words, the immediate end present in the means must be the fulfilled end in which the means and mediation are preserved, not annihilated.³⁴ The pure immediacy of enlightenment, in which all concreteness, determination and cultivation are extinguished or removed by abstraction, must be sublated by mediation (the means). This, then, is the fulfilled, perfected, completed enlightenment.

I argue in line with Hegel that intelligibility in all cases—including Buddhist “enlightenment”—presupposes “determinacy” which is overlooked in subitism. And Buddhist “emptiness” (*śūnyatā*) will be merely “empty-emptiness” if it does not involve itself with the mediated, concretized moments of determinacy.

The very fact that subitism overlooks the second stage of the end, i.e., the determinate or mediated, makes it fall into the trap of the solipsistic “inward journey” into the immediate-immediate which then results in negating things in particular as “transitory” or “ephemeral.” Hegel’s main criticism of Buddhism in general is precisely this “negative ultimate,” i.e., “emptiness” to which no “determinacy” of any sort whatsoever is applicable.³⁵ Along these same lines I argue that the Buddhist’s total renunciation of anything mediated or determinate into “immediate” “emptiness” must also be “emptied.”

Hegel seems right in saying that the individual and the particular

³³ See Hegel, *Science of Logic*, pp. 148–149 and 748.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 753.

³⁵ See Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, pp. 254–257.

are emptied out for the sake of the nondifferentiated negative universal "emptiness" in Buddhism, whereas in Western religion (Judaean-Christianity in Hegel's point of view) the individual and the determinate are "worked out," not emptied out, so as to be elevated to the Absolute. Hegel says, "Just as the sun sets in the west, so it is in the West that human being descends into itself, into its own subjectivity."³⁶ It is this "immediate-immediacy" which is the reason J. N. Findlay rightly charges Buddhism with being a "negative" religion. The Buddhist Great Enlightenment of the "negative ultimate" (*Tae-hae-tal*, *Ku-kyung-mu-shim-jie*, or *śūnyatā*) Findlay believes to be a defective feature when it comes to moral philosophy in that it deals fundamentally with values, i.e., axiology. It seems to be true, as Findlay argues, that because of the ontological "emptiness" of Buddhism the axiological assessment of contingent and finite things in mundane life is "emptied out" along with the former. In consequence, the "richness" of mundane life is by and large neglected. As Findlay says, "We cannot make this life wholly void, for pulsating richness rather than emptiness is [the] suitable characterization of the absolute."³⁷

One may argue that Buddhist "emptiness" is not "empty emptiness" as is commonly and mistakenly conceived by the Western mind, but is "full emptiness."³⁸ Findlay does not disagree with this positive meaning of "emptiness." Nevertheless, he argues that the "emptiness" can be "full emptiness" only to those who have attained enlightenment. As Nāgārjuna pointed out, the danger of the misuse of this concept of "emptiness" is analogous to the detrimental danger of grasping a poisonous snake in the wrong way.³⁹ Likewise, Findlay warns against the negative result of its possible misuse. To this extent, Findlay seems to be right in saying that Buddhism is solipsistic in the same way as Wittgensteinian philosophy. Findlay says, "'Do what you like', say the later Buddhists to the truly emancipated man, even if this means meat-eating or sexual intercourse: 'say what you like', says

³⁶ Ibid., p. 260.

³⁷ J. N. Findlay, *Ascent to the Absolute* (New York: Allen Unwin, 1970), p. 161.

³⁸ For this, see Frederick J. Streng, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1967).

³⁹ Nāgārjuna, *Madyamikakarika*, 24.

Wittgenstein to the truly liberated speaker, even if this means talking about a metaphysician. In neither case will you do or say things as they are done or said by the unenlightened, unemancipated individual.”⁴⁰

The “immediate immediate” of the enlightenment of subitism must be *sublated* into the “mediated immediate” in the Hegelian sense if it is to avoid falling into the trap of “negativism” and “solipsism.”

CONCLUSION: FROM EMPTINESS TO RICHNESS

Given the fact that the very spirit of Sōn (Ch’an in Chinese, Zen in Japanese) lies in the renunciation of any logical or theoretical system, this paper may well be another absurd intellectual attempt to name the “unnameable.” However, by no means do I argue that what cannot be named is irrelevant to the philosophical discussion nor do I, for that reason, argue that what cannot be named, has no truth in itself. Quite the contrary I argue that there is indeed a mystical, transcendental realm which cannot be fully comprehended by our phenomenally conditioned, empirical knowledge. In that sense I agree with the earlier Ludwig Wittgenstein, that “what we cannot speak of we must pass over in silence.”⁴¹ However, I would argue that what cannot be spoken of must not be dismissed nor should we disdain what can be spoken of as a useless or valueless activity. Thus we must avoid the danger of one-sided mysticism, not because of its profundity of Transcendentality, but because of its neglect of the empirical knowledge as incomplete when, in fact, transcendental enlightenment would not make sense without it.

Thus I would argue that though we must pass over in silence what cannot be said, we must say and think clearly what can be said. Kant, knowing the limits of our empirical knowledge about the transcendental *Noumena*, does not dismiss our phenomenal knowledge as an illusion, but instead sustains and values it. The insight of Kant’s “transcendental illusion” instructs us to see phenomena as illusion, but only as a

⁴⁰ J. N. Findlay, “My Encounter of Wittgenstein,” in *Studies in the Philosophy of J. N. Findlay*, ed. Robert S. Cohen, et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), p. 67.

⁴¹ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D. F. Pears and B. F. McGuinness (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 74.

positive factor in our conditioned world. For example, Kant says that though we know that it is illusory to see the moon higher at the horizon than at the shore, because we see it through higher light rays, we cannot be prevented from seeing it that way. Nor can an astronomer prevent the moon from appearing larger at its rising, although he is not deceived by this illusion.⁴² As the Kantian "transcendental illusion" does not cease even after it has been detected,⁴³ so also even after the discovery of our illusoriness in an attempt to analyze the subitism-gradualism debate from the logical and phenomenological point of view, we must not "empty out" this "transcendental illusion" into the "emptiness" of Buddhism in a "negative" sense of the term. In order for the Buddhist "emptiness" to be "positively" empty, the empirical and intellectual discourses are to be valued as much as the "mystical" and "transcendental" aspects of enlightenment.

In conclusion I suggest that Buddhists complement the solipsistic, exclusive, and transcendentalistic subitism in light of communalistic, inclusive, and immanent philosophy of Hegel. Thus I maintain that a sound understanding of Buddhist "immediate enlightenment," whose ultimate is characterized as "emptiness" (*śūnyatā*), must not "empty out" the mediated, the mundane, contingent features of gradual cultivation. The "transcendental" *Ku-kyung-mu-shim-jie* (The Great Enlightenment) of subitism must not exclude what it transcends. As Nirvana is not something which exists separately from samsara, but *grows out* of samsara, and to that extent *is* samsara, the exclusive Transcendence, the exclusive subitism which cuts itself off from the inclusive gradualism which is the very part of itself, cannot be sustained.

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith (New York: St Martin's Press, 1965), A 297.

⁴³ *Ibid.*