

# On the Theory of Buddha-Body

(*Buddha-kāya*)

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## I

HOW TO conceive the true significance of the concept "Buddha" has been one of the most important themes discussed among Buddhist disciples and followers ever since the religion originated in India. Theories concerning the Buddha-body (*buddha-kāya*) underwent various developments during the course of a history ranging from India to Japan and from Ceylon to Mongolia. They may present interesting problems in comparison with the concept of deities in Brahmanism and Hinduism of India, or with the theological concepts in Christianity and other religions, or with the concept of god, godhead, the absolute, and so forth, in religious studies in general. Here, however, I would like to confine myself to reviewing some aspects of the theory of Buddha-body formulated in Indian Mahāyānism, viewing them from within Buddhism.

It is needless to say that the word "Buddha," which means "an awakened one" or "an enlightened one," is an epithet of respect for Gautama Śākyamuni, the founder of Buddhism. Different from a so-called deity, a transcendent being, the Buddha is, above all, none other than a way a human being should be. The attributes and virtues attached to the Buddha came to be variously readjusted in later years. Of these, wisdom (*prajñā*) and benevolence (*karuṇā*), the intellect that penetrates human life and the love for all living beings, are said to be the two principal pillars. From the name "Buddha" (an awakened one), and a word such as "*bodhi*" (enlightenment), it may be easily discerned that a greater emphasis is put on wisdom. Gautama Buddha's (the historical Buddha, Śākyamuni) breaking the bonds of transmigration and entering *nirvāṇa* signifies the perfection of this wisdom.

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\* This paper, written in Japanese, appeared originally in *Tetsugaku-kenkyū*, 521 (Vol. 45, no. 3), 1971.

All his disciples, of course, showed infinite respect for Gautama Buddha. But this was not the awe-inspiring reverence such as for a deity, but respect for a great elder and forerunner. They did not place much importance in a transcendental god, an omniscient and omnipotent god as the creator of the universe, or a god that governed and punished human beings, even though they did not necessarily repudiate such concepts. To them the Buddha was a great elder and teacher, but neither a prophet nor even an authority, such as the leader of a religious order. This can be understood from the following words of the Buddha uttered on his deathbed in answer to the Venerable Ānanda, who, overcome with grief, had asked whom he should revere as teacher when the Buddha had passed away: "Let the self be a lamp, let the self be a refuge; let the *dharmā* (truth) be a lamp, let the *dharmā* be a refuge." And also: "After I am gone the *dharmā* (teaching) and the *vinaya* (discipline) which I have expounded will be your teacher."<sup>1</sup>

But later this Buddha came to be superhumanized and divinized, until, as will be described, the theories of the twofold and threefold body of the Buddha were gradually systematized, and finally a highly theistic conception even materialized.

The theory of the twofold body of the Buddha advocates that the Buddha had two bodies, the Dharma-body (*dharmā-kāya*) and the Physical-body (*rūpa-kāya*). This theory became stabilized in various of the earlier sūtras, and in early Mahāyāna sūtras, the *Prajñāpāramitā*, the *Saddharmapundarika*, and so forth. The *rūpa-kāya* is the Buddha seen in a human body, while the *dharmā-kāya* is the Buddha's personality seen in the *dharmā* or *dharmā*-nature. The disciples, quite bewildered at the loss of their teacher, decided first of all to confirm in themselves the Buddha's teachings and then to compile them in order to transmit them to future generations. To the disciples, the sayings which the teacher had left behind—the expounded *dharmā*—were now their only lamp, just as the Buddha had instructed on his deathbed. Though the Buddha's body had perished, the *dharmā* he had left behind was imperishable. The teacher they should address their questions to lived in the *dharmā*; the *dharmā* itself was the teacher. The Buddha once said: "Those who see 'dependent origina-

<sup>1</sup> *Dīghanikāya*, xvi (*Mahāparinibbāna-sūtra*), 2. 26 (Vol. II, p. 100); 6. 1 (do. p. 154).

tion' (*pratitya-samutpāda*) will see the *dbarṃa*; those who see the *dbarṃa* will see 'dependent origination.'"<sup>2</sup> He also said: "Those who see the *dbarṃa* will see me; those who see me will see the *dbarṃa*."<sup>3</sup>

In this way the concept of *dbarṃa-kāya* was produced. The Buddha as *dbarṃa-kāya* in eternal aspect, which could not be seen with the naked eye, was conceived in addition to the Buddha's earthly form which the disciples still vividly remembered. The word *dbarṃa* has many meanings. Besides signifying the "teachings" which the Buddha expounded, it has as its original meaning the "essence" which makes a thing what it is. In this sense, it is also a "law" that lies at the basis of things, and also the "beings" that are formed by the laws and which shoulder the laws. *Dbarṃa* designates "religious rites" as well, and also "religion" itself. When the *dbarṃa-kāya* as the *dbarṃa* itself was discussed in relation to the Buddha, people seem to have understood it with these different meanings in mind. The word thus included religious and ethical as well as philosophical and metaphysical meanings.<sup>4</sup>

Later in the advanced stages of Mahāyāna Buddhism, the word *dbarṃatā* (*dbarṃa-nature*) came to be also used to represent the essence itself of this *dbarṃa*. Therefore, the *dbarṃa-kāya* is the body of the *dbarṃa-nature* as well. Again, when the universe is conceived in the dimension of such *dbarṃa*, the universe is none other than the *dbarṃa-dhātu* (*dbarṃa-realm*). Being the true way of the universe, the notion of *dbarṃa-dhātu* is further identified with that of *dbarṃatā* or *tatvatā* (suchness) or even *śūnyatā* (emptiness). The *dbarṃa-dhātu*

<sup>2</sup> *Majjhima-nikāya* (Sutta 28), Vol. I, pp. 190-1.

<sup>3</sup> *Samyutta-nikāya* (Samyutta 22, 87), Vol. III, p. 120.

<sup>4</sup> Besides the *dbarṃa-kāya* in this sense, there is one called *pañca-dbarṃakāya* of Sarvāstivāda, which says that the Buddha, or *dbarṃa-kāya*, has the five attributes of moral conditions (*śīla*), meditation (*samādhi*), wisdom (*prajñā*), emancipation (*vimukti*), and the awareness of emancipation (*vimukti-jñāna-darśana*). The same idea can be seen in such works as the *Abhidbarṃa-kōṭa-lāstra*, the *Satyasiddhi-lāstra*, *Milinda-pañha*, and *Viṃḍḍhimagga*. Nāgārjuna has also referred to this idea (N. Dutt, *Aspects of Mahāyāna Buddhism*, p. 108). However, as for the five attributes, which afford various interpretations, the general view is that they are the substantialized stages of self-cultivation. Moreover, this *dbarṃa-kāya* can be interpreted as a gathering of the *dbarṃa*; therefore, it is doubtful whether it can be regarded as identical with the *dbarṃa-kāya* as a way of the Buddha. Also confer fn. 8.

extends over the two realms of enlightenment and of deluded human beings. The Buddha is a self-manifested form (of enlightenment) of the *dharmadhatu* when it has become purified of every human delusion.

Thus, the Buddha was made to be more and more superhuman, constantly tending towards absoluteness. Such is a rough sketch of the Mahāyāna development of the doctrine of Buddha-body.

In Mahāyāna Buddhism, however, together with these metaphysical views of the universe, to which the doctrine of the Buddha's body is closely related, there is, on the other hand, a well-established concept of the bodhisattva, which may be said to constitute the core of Mahāyānism. A bodhisattva as a seeker after enlightenment, a seeker after truth, is a concept that came into existence quite early. It may be said to have developed from investigations that were made concerning Buddha(-hood), or independently and in parallel with them. The fact that Gautama realized the highest enlightenment in human flesh, that is, with the defilement of joy and sorrow, was regarded by his disciples as an extremely marvelous event, unheard of in the history of humankind. Furthermore, they found it inconceivable that this great event had been brought about through the discipline of one short lifespan. As a seeker of truth, Gautama must have accumulated from time without beginning a great stock of merit in innumerable past lives, and finally, in this life, this must have born fruit in the marvelous event of his enlightenment. Such beliefs gave rise to the many narratives of Gautama Buddha's former lives, the *Jātaka* tales. In former lives Gautama accumulated merit by performing good deeds as a rabbit, a monkey, a deer, or as a wealthy man, a minister of state, a king, and so forth. The rabbit, the monkey, and others were all Gautama himself, the seeker of truth. His long career as a seeker of truth (*bodhisattva*) finally perfected the "human Buddha."

The seeker of truth, however, is not to be limited to Gautama alone. There were and will be innumerable seekers of truth in the past and in the future, as there are also at the present time. In some sense all living beings essentially have the potentiality of becoming seekers of truth. The *dharmadhatu* may be regarded as being filled with such *bodhisattvas*.

Inquiry into the essential meaning of the one called a *bodhisattva* or seeker of truth brings forth the subject of the *bodhisattva's* vow and discipline. His vow (*pranidhāna*) is a pledge intrinsic to a *bodhisattva*, his discipline (*pratipatti*)

designates all the practices he performs to fulfill this vow. There are different vows and disciplines in accordance with the way of each individual *bodhisattva*. The vow and disciplines of Gautama, too, being restricted by historical circumstances, were accordingly various and individual. But generally speaking, the vows of a *bodhisattva*, which arise from profound love and benevolence, aim at the deliverance and emancipation of all living beings. Pure wisdom and indefatigable practice are required for the realization of this aim. An innumerable number of such *bodhisattvas* have been conceived in Mahāyāna: benevolence was especially emphasized and personified in the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara; discipline was represented by the Bodhisattva Samantabhadra; and wisdom was concretized in the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī.

It is probably in Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Avatamsaka* and, especially, the Pure Land sūtras, such as the *Sukhāvatīvyūha*, that the above-mentioned careers of *bodhisattvas* are most typically expounded. According to the *Larger Sukhāvatīvyūha*, the Bodhisattva Dharmākara made forty-eight primal vows, which he fulfilled in a long period of discipline, until he became Amida Buddha. Amida Buddha signifies both unlimited wisdom (Amitābha) and unlimited benevolence (Amitāyus).

The way such as that of Amida Buddha came to be understood by the name Reward-body (probably *sambhoga-kāya* in Sanskrit; see footnote 11) of the Buddha.<sup>5</sup> Here appeared the third concept, the Reward-body, apart from the Dharma-body and Physical-body, mentioned above. The Reward-body is the body of the Buddha in which the fulfillment of his above-described vows and disciplines has been rewarded. Therefore, the Reward-body is not limited to Amida Buddha. If it is reason and universal principle that one becomes a Buddha by fulfilling one's vows and disciplines, all Buddhas, in this sense, must be Reward Buddhas. The idea of the *bodhisattva* necessarily indicates the way of reward which follows his vows and disciplines.

It may be said that in this way all the materials (or the elements) for the later theory of the Buddha's threefold body had made their appearance: the elements of the Dharma-body and the Physical-body plus the elements of the

<sup>5</sup> Shan-tao of T'ang China clearly designated Amida-Buddha as Reward-body (or Assumed-body). Cf. his *Kuan Wu-liang-shou ching shu* (觀無量壽經疏), *chūan* I (Taisho, Vol. 37, p. 250b).

Reward-body.<sup>6</sup> Until the time of the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra* and the time of Nāgārjuna who developed the Mādhyamika philosophy based on the sūtra, only the twofold body of Dharma-body and Physical-body<sup>7</sup> was conceived as a theory of the Buddha's body. It was in the philosophy of the Yogācāra school (or the Vijñāna-vāda school) represented by Asāṅga and Vasubandhu that the two-body theory developed until it was consummated into a three-body theory. The ideas and faiths that became the materials for the three-body theory must have been established in various forms before that time. There was already a tendency toward the universalization of the concept of Buddha. It was thought that Gautama Buddha was not the only Buddha; that there had been many Buddhas in the past, and there would be many Buddhas in the future; and that actually there existed innumerable Buddhas in the innumerable Buddha-lands in the ten directions. Thus, names of Buddhas, such as Vairocana, Akṣobhya, Amitābha, Amitāyus, Bhaiṣajya-guru, and countless others had already been conceived. It was the Yogācāra-vijñāna school that organized the three-body (*tri-kāya*) theory by synthesizing these conceptions of the Buddha.

## II

In the *tri-kāya* theory of the Buddha brought to perfection by the Yogācāra-vijñāna school, the three Buddha-bodies were called successively *svābhāvika-kāya*,

<sup>6</sup> In the Chinese translations there are various names given for the three bodies. This variety is largely due to the different terms used in different texts, and the different translations given to them by different translators. Among the various systems of enumerating the three bodies, the most popular are the following two: (1) a set of Dharma-body (法身), Reward-body (報身), and Assumed-body (應身); (2) a set of Dharma-body, Assumed-body and Apparitional-body (化身). Again, in a system that appeared a little later, the following three bodies are given: Essence-body (*svābhāvika-kāya* 自性身), Enjoyment-body (*lāmbhogika-kāya* 受用身), and Transformation-body (*nairmāṇika-kāya* 變化身). They will be explained in the following section. Although some subtle differences in ideas can be seen between these groups, which probably underwent historical development, as far as the three bodies are grouped into a doctrinal system, the content is not as disparate as it first appears to be.

<sup>7</sup> *Mūlamadhyamakakārikāi*, XXII; *Ratnāvalī*, III. 13. Also cf. *Prajñāpāramitopadeśa* (大智度論), Taishō, Vol. 25, p. 121c (Lamotte, *Le traité*, p. 513), p. 278a, etc.

*sāmbhogika-kāya*, and *nairmānika-kāya*, which can be said to be more theoretic names<sup>8</sup> than those mentioned in the last chapter.

The *svābbāvika-kāya* (Essence-body), the first of the three bodies, corresponds to the *dharmā-kāya* (Dharma-body) described above.<sup>9</sup> All the three bodies came flowing out of the *dharmā-dhātu*—they can be taken as “revolvings” (*vr̥tti*) of the *dharmā-dhātu*.<sup>10</sup> (In this sense they are all Dharma-bodies.) The *svābbāvika-kāya* (Essence-body), especially, is called such perhaps because the *dharmatā*

<sup>8</sup> The *kāya* (身) of *buddha-kāya* is generally understood vaguely to designate the ‘body.’ In the Yogācāra-vijñāna school studies were made on the meaning of the word *kāya*. Namely, the *Cb’eng-wei-sib-lun* (成唯識論, *chūan* 10, Shindo ed., p. 25<sup>3</sup>), following the view of the *Buddhabhūmy-upadeśa* (佛地經論) by Bandhuprabha and others (Taishō, Vol. 26, p. 325b), says: “The meanings, ‘substance’ (體), ‘dependence’ (依), and ‘assemblage’ (聚), combine to make the word *kāya* (身).” These three meanings are further annotated to mean respectively, “essential nature” (體性), “basis” (依止, probably “foundation” for Buddha’s virtues), and “accumulation of merits” (衆德聚). Thus, we can surmise various meanings such as “body” (not only physical body but also essential body), “totality,” “collection,” “group,” etc., in the word *kāya*. With the exception of “dependence” or “basis,” most of these meanings can be traced in a dictionary. (cf. Edgerton, *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Dictionary*, pp. 177–8.)

<sup>9</sup> However, there being delicate nuance in the method of description in the śāstras, the *dharmā-kāya* is not necessarily identical with the *svābbāvika-kāya*. That is, in these śāstras the concept of the old *rūpa-kāya* (Physical-body) hardly became an issue; all Buddha-bodies were, on the one hand, emancipated bodies (*vimukti-kāya*), free from “the barrier of delusions,” and on the other hand, *dharmā-kāyas*, rid of “the barrier of the known.” In this *dharmā-kāya* can be recognized the three Buddha-bodies of *svābbāvika-kāya*, *sāmbhogika-kāya*, and the *nairmānika-kāya*. Of these, the *svābbāvika-kāya*, especially, corresponds to the *dharmā-kāya* (*dharmatā-kāya*). Books in which the word *dharmā-kāya* seems to have been used both in the broad and the narrow sense as here described are the *Mahāyānasamgraha*, *Abhisamayālaṅkāra*, *Cb’eng-wei-sib-lun*, and so forth.

<sup>10</sup> The *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* (hereafter referred to as MSA) expounds the significance of the purification of the *dharmā-dhātu* in Chapter IX (56–59), and in its last section named “The Meaning of its Revolution” (*vr̥tṣy-arthā*) it treats of the *trikāya*. Similarly, in the *Ratnagotrā-vibhāga*, various meanings of the word ‘*āśraya-parivṛtti*’ (轉依, revolving of the basis) are given (II. 1–2), and as “The Meaning of its Revolution,” the *trikāya* is explained in detail (II. 38–61). That the *dharmā-dhātu*, which is essentially immovable, starts revolving and manifests itself in some way has something in common with the concept of “the absolute in the phenomenal relativity” (眞如隨緣) in later ages.

(*dhārma*-nature) or *dhārma-dhātu* (*dhārma*-realm) or *satatā* (suchness) or *śūnyatā* (emptiness) is itself the Buddha's real essence. The word *svābhāva* (own being) which Nāgārjuna once rejected, is used here to mean the Buddha's enlightenment which is one with the absolute, free from the agony of life and death of the world of relativity. It exists all over the world with the *dhārma-dhātu* as its own being; it is an immovable wisdom, an eternal body of the Enlightened One. Being absolute, it transcends human understanding and speculation; it is incognizable, invisible, inconceivable, without color or form. Moreover, as it makes the *dhārma-dhātu* its own being, it can be the foundation and basis for the two other bodies, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* (Enjoyment-body) and the *nairmāṇika-kāya* (Transformation-body). In contrast to the fact that the *svābhāvika-kāya* is immovable, invisible, and is the basis, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* and the *nairmāṇika-kāya* are movable, changeable, visible, and are dependent on the *svābhāvika-kāya*.

The *sāmbhogika-kāya*, the second Buddha-body, is the same as the Reward-body described above.<sup>11</sup> *Sambhoga* means "enjoyment." It is understood that one can enjoy the Pure Land and the *dhārma* as a result of the fulfillment of his vow and discipline. From this enjoyment of the Pure Land, we see that the Reward-body is closely connected with the Pure Land teaching. But to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, the enjoyment of the *dhārma* is of prime importance. The Buddha's biography tells us that after he attained his enlightenment under the bodhi-tree, the Buddha spent several weeks pondering, with appreciation, over the *dhārma* which he himself had realized. This is called "the Buddha's own enjoyment of the *dhārma*-delight" (自受用法樂). Having finally attained his enlightenment, the Buddha, standing on the top of the mountain, as it were, might have looked back, with serene delight, at the winding road of suffering he had just climbed. But this "for one's own enjoyment" (自受用)

<sup>11</sup> The original word for the Reward-body (報身) was generally understood to be the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, which will be interpreted to mean "to enjoy (*sambhoga*) the result as a reward for the vow which is its source" (因願酬報). However, as explained in the following Note 17, there is an example in which the word '*niyyanda*' (等流, lit., flowing down) has been translated as 報 (reward). Again, the word *vipāka* or *vaiṣākika* (異熟, lit., ripening, fruition) has also been considered as the original for the Reward-body. (Cf. Yamaguchi Susumu and others, 佛教學序說, *An Introduction to Buddhist Studies*, p. 216.)

later developed into “for the enjoyment of others” (他受用). This is the sharing of one’s own *dharmā*-delight with others, i.e. the preaching of the *dharmā* to others. Therefore, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is said to be the Buddha-body seen at an assembly for sermons—a gathering of people who wish to hear the Buddha’s preaching. This is none other than a Buddha-body that is visible, in the sense that human beings can understand it intellectually (and emotionally, as well).

The third Buddha-body, *nairmāṇika-kāya* (Transformation-body), is not only equally visible but is truly a physical body of a corporal human being. The Buddha Śākyamuni is its best example: he was a being born from the womb of his mother, Queen Māyā, possessing human sufferings, and conforming to the physical law of life and death. It was none other than a Buddha-body that appeared temporally as an actual historic being. The reason of its being called a Transformation-body is that the *dharmā-dhātu*, limiting itself, has transformed itself to appear in a form of physical human body. As regards the Transformation-body, there is a view to include not only the case of Gautama Buddha but also the cases of the rabbit, the monkey, and so forth, in the *Jātaka* tales, or other beings such as *nirmita* (transformed) and *upapāduka* (self-produced). In the former case of Gautama, it is clear to everyone that it is the Buddha; but in the latter cases of the rabbit and other beings, it cannot immediately be known whether it is a *bodhisattva* or a Buddha in his former lives.

Now, of the three Buddha-bodies, the *svābbhāvika-kāya* becomes the foundation of the other two Buddha-bodies, itself remaining as the nature of a principle, abstract and invisible. In contrast to this, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* and the *nairmāṇika-kāya* are concrete and visible—they are Physical-bodies belonging to the phenomenal world. Various differences, however, are found between the *sāmbhogika-kāya* and the *nairmāṇika-kāya*.

In the first place, the *nairmāṇika-kāya* was the Buddha from whom his disciples were able face to face to hear the teachings. In contrast to this, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is the Buddha-body that can be seen only by *bodhisattvas* in the Buddha-land, not by ordinary unenlightened men. The *sāmbhogika-kāya* is, above all, one that enjoys the *dharmā*; it is said to be the Buddha who preaches to the assembly of *bodhisattvas*. However, if this point is considered with radical

thoroughness, it ensues that, according to the *trikāya* theory of Mahāyāna, the true teaching of the *dharmā* may belong only to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*.<sup>12</sup>

It is well known that the Buddha-body has thirty-two physical marks characteristic of a great man. They are, to mention some of them, a fleshy protuberance on the crown of the head, a white hair between the eyebrows emitting light, webbed fingers, and so forth. Although sculptors of Buddhist images have made efforts to represent these marks, there are some among them that are conceptual and impossible to visualize, and some which are abstract and almost impossible to represent in sculpture and painting. The *trikāya* theories of later ages tell about these marks of the Buddha only in relation to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, and do not recognize them in the *nairmānika-kāya*. In view of this fact, it can be said that in the story of Asita, the seer<sup>13</sup> who shed tears when he saw the new-born Gautama and told his fortune, what he saw was not a physical body but was in reality the *sāmbhogika-kāya*.

Furthermore, as for the Buddha's acts, those of the *sāmbhogika-kāya* are said to be steady and indestructible, while those of the *nairmānika-kāya* are tem-

<sup>12</sup> It has been traditionally interpreted that the physical body of the Buddha preached to *śrāvakas* or his disciples, and the *sāmbhogika-kāya* preached to *bodhisattvas*. In the Mahāyāna sūtras, however, it is told that both *śrāvakas* and *bodhisattvas* joined the same assembly and listened to the same sermons. Gautama Buddha actually preached at Benares and then at various places for forty-five long years. But, at the same time, those sermons by Gautama (*nairmānika-kāya*) were totally annihilated in the *Prajñāpāramitā sūtras*. Was there no *bodhisattva* listening to Gautama's preaching? If both the *śrāvakas* and *bodhisattvas* were admitted to have attended the same assembly, in which capacity, the *sāmbhogika* or the *nairmānika-kāya*, did the Buddha teach? In such a case, who and where were the *śrāvakas* and *bodhisattvas*? Was Queen Vaidehī in the *Amitāyur-dhyāna Sūtra* really an ordinary sinful woman, not a *bodhisattva*? Although these questions are not easy to answer, investigations into them might offer suggestions with regard to what *true* sermons should be. In a later period, there also appeared sūtras that advocated sermons by the *dharmā-kāya*.

<sup>13</sup> The thirty-two physical marks are said to belong exclusively to either *cakravartin* (a king who has conquered the whole world) or the Buddha. As a worldly king possessed them, it is clear that they were said of the physical body. But later this idea was elevated so that the physical marks were limited to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, which, though a sort of *rūpa-kāya*, is visible only to *bodhisattvas*. All Buddha's biographies record about Asita, an ascetic, who, holding the baby Gautama in his arms, noticed the thirty-two marks and predicted that the child would become a Buddha, but who, at the same time, shed tears because he was too old to be able to hear the Buddha's sermons.

porary and unsteady.<sup>14</sup>

Putting these points together, we know that all the superhuman elements found in Gautama Buddha became the elements which constituted the *sāmbhogika-kāya*. That is to say, compared with the *nairmāṅka-kāya*, a higher universality and divine nature are attributed to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*. In this sense, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is transcendental to human beings. Again, this *sāmbhogika-kāya* is connected with the way of the Reward-body. An accumulation of innumerable virtues in the past lives of Gautama Buddha transcending the eighty years of his human life was conceived, and this concept served as a model for the idea of the Reward-body as fulfillment of a vow and discipline. This body is, therefore, the universal Buddha, transcending history and the Buddha as a human being.

But the *trikāya* theory's peculiarity can be seen in the point that such transcendency of the Reward-body cannot immediately be regarded in the same light with the *dharmakāya* or the *svābhāvika-kāya*. In contrast to the *svābhāvika-kāya*, which is entirely abstract, theoretic, and absolutely immovable, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is, above all, one that enjoys the *dharmakāya*. Although the *svābhāvika-kāya* is *dharmakāya* which has the *dharmakāya* as its essence, nothing is said here about the enjoyment of the *dharmakāya*. It is improbable that stirrings of "enjoyment" should be found in the *svābhāvika-kāya*, which is immovable. In order to enjoy the *dharmakāya*, the *svābhāvika-kāya* must become concrete and relative by descending a step from the seat of the absolute. It must come down from the seat of immutable *śūnyatā* or *dharmadhatu*, and enter into the realm of mutability—where the Buddha-land is to be established through the act of purification, or where the Reward-body will be realized as a result of the cause, the *bodhisattva*'s vow and discipline. Therefore, Sthiramati even said: "the *kāya*, abiding in which the *svābhāvika* would attain enlightenment... is the *sāmbhogika-kāya*."<sup>15</sup> That there is no such thing as the *svābhāvika-kāya* attaining enlightenment or enjoying the *dharmakāya* is probably because it was originally the enlightenment itself, the so-called "original enlightenment" (本覺). In contrast

<sup>14</sup> *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha-bhāṣya* (攝大乘論釋), Taishō, 31, 374c.

<sup>15</sup> Yamaguchi, Susumu, *Sthiramati: Madhyāntarivibhāṅgikā*, p. 191<sup>11</sup>: "*svābhāviko yasmim kāye vyavasthito 'bbisambudhyate. . . sa sāmbhogikāḥ kāyaḥ*." Tib.: "no bo nāḍ kyī sku ste/sku gan la bṣags nas mñon par rdsogs par byan chub stej. . . de ni loṅs spyod rdsogs paḥi skuḥo." Japanese translation, p. 304.

to this, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is, as it were, “initial awakening” (始覺).<sup>16</sup> Human deliverance can be established in such Buddha-body as the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, not in the *svābhāvika-kāya*. The *sāmbhogika-kāya* as the concretization of the *svābhāvika-kāya* is also called the *niṣyanda-kāya* (等流身). *Niṣyanda* means outflow, that is, the outflowing of the Buddha-body from the *dharmā-dhātu*, urged by the “great compassion.”<sup>17</sup> The great compassion crystallizes itself into the preaching—a form in which the *dharmā-dhātu* manifests itself.

Thus, we know that the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is composed of a twofold character. While, on the one hand, there is the aspect of transcending the human Buddha, the *nirmāṇika-kāya*, there is, on the other hand, the concretization of the absolute, the *svābhāvika-kāya*. Therefore, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* has the two aspects of being at once transcendental and phenomenal, and at once historic and super-historic.<sup>18</sup> When the historic Buddha is contrasted with the super-historic Buddha, it is commonly done in the light of the two-body theory, signifying the Physical-body and the Dharma-body. Contrary to this, the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, while modelling itself after the historic Buddha, is a temporal and spatial presentation of the absolute *dharmā-nature*. The story of Amida

<sup>16</sup> The words, ‘original enlightenment’ (本覺) and ‘initial awakening’ (始覺), are borrowed from examples in the *Mahāyāna-trāddharpāda Śāstra* and others. The former is the enlightenment as one’s Buddha-nature found amidst defilement, while the latter is the enlightenment realized when the defilement is removed.

<sup>17</sup> The word ‘*niṣyanda-kāya*’ can be seen in the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (Taishō, 31, p. 151c<sup>26</sup>). In the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* we find the words, *niṣyanda-buddha*, *dharmatā-niṣyanda-buddha* (Nanjio, ed., *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, pp. 56–7; cf. the index), which are variously translated into Chinese as follows: 報佛, 法佛報佛, 法性所流佛. The word 報 (result or reward) in these translations may have connection with the idea of the Reward-body. The *Ratnagotrā-vibhāga* (II. 49) explains the *sāmbhogika-kāya* as “the outflow of the great compassion” (*karuṇā . . . niṣyanda*).

<sup>18</sup> A. K. Chatterjee, *The Yogācāra Idealism* (Varanasi, 1962), p. 226: “Though He (=Tathāgata) is in phenomena and is Himself but phenomenal, He yet knows that true nature of phenomena and therefore transcends it at the same time.” In connection with these two aspects, the same author quotes from the MSA, XVIII. 38. This gāthā expounds the two kinds of *sambhāra* (equipment): “The equipment of merits” promises an existence in this world like that of a god or of a *cakravartin* (Emperor as a conqueror); “the equipment of knowledge” signifies that in spite of the above, there is transcendence of it. This can be regarded as describing the two aspects of, as it were, ‘the non-abiding in *nirvāṇa*’ (不住涅槃) and ‘the non-abiding in *samsāra*’ (不住生死). See below, pp. 40–41.

Buddha as the Reward-body is not something like a myth of a stage before history; even if we might call it a myth, it was produced by the association of history with super-history. It is due to this character of the *sāmbhogika-kāya* that such things as the thirty-two physical marks of the Buddha are attributed to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*, and the Buddha-land as the Pure Land is exclusively told in connection with the *sāmbhogika-kāya*.

The same double nature of the *sāmbhogika-kāya* has also been described from the aspect of self-profit and others' profit, as follows: It is told that Gautama Buddha's acts both in his past and present lives were all altruistic. In comparison with this, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is rather egocentric in that it is a body that has been accomplished by virtue of "self-perfection," that is, by virtue of perfecting every one of the Buddha's own merits (*buddhadharma-paripāka*). On the other hand, however, the *svābhāvika-kāya* is "indifferent," transcending both ego-centeredness and altruism. Compared with this, the enjoyment or the preaching of the *dharmā* by the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is explained to be a perfectly altruistic deed.

The *sāmbhogika-kāya*, through this double character, lies between the *svābhāvika-kāya* and the *nairmāṇika-kāya*, serving as a link between the two. No, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* rather occupies the central position in the triple-body doctrine; especially, the soteriology in Buddhism is developed revolving around the axis of this double character of the *sāmbhogika-kāya*. In this sense, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* can be called the Buddha *par excellence*. However, if it is so, it might be possible to say that the one Buddha-body of *sāmbhogika-kāya* is sufficient, and neither the *svābhāvika-kāya* nor the *nairmāṇika-kāya* is necessary. In fact, such a position is possible, and it might have been supported especially from the standpoint of religious monotheistic demand. But the special characteristic of the Mahāyānic doctrine of Buddha-body lies in the persistent maintenance of the triangular position of the three Buddha-bodies. For in that respect there is something fundamentally different from either the one-body or the two-body theory.

In the simple one-body theory, Gautama was the only Buddha. But later with the discovery of the *dharmā-kāya* concept, the two-body theory was formed. The *dharmā-kāya* in this stage, however, was the *dharmā-kāya* of Gautama himself, without any universal meaning. The historic Buddha then existed with the physical-body, and his Dharma-body was something abstract,

with less reality than his corporal body. Later on, to the contrary, this abstract *dbarma-kāya* must have gained universal reality—the reality that claimed equal realness with the corporal body. At this stage, however, there was nothing that could reconcile the two realities of *dbarma-kāya* and *rūpa-kāya*. The *sāmbhogika-kāya* was discovered here as something that would fill the gap. In the *trikāya* theory, the *dbarma-kāya* alone, under the name of *svābhāvika-kāya*, is regarded really to exist, and to be the sole basis and principle of all Buddha-bodies. Therefore, here the Physical-body, which had been a reality in the sphere of historical time, became shadowy and was slighted as a transient existence under the name of *nairmānika-kāya*. Historicity came to be regarded as illusionary, so to speak. Against this, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* shouldered a temporary meaning while being a true reality, and regained its historic nature while transcending history. It can be said that with the birth of this *sāmbhogika-kāya*, the doctrine of Buddha-*kāya* reached a stage of perfection in the *trikāya* theory.

All the attributes and virtues of the Buddha were also clarified in the system of the *trikāya*. As it is impossible to describe them here one by one, I shall only give a few examples: the Buddha's wisdom was regarded as an attribute especially belonging to the *svābhāvika-kāya*; his will (*āśaya*, vow) was especially treated in the *sāmbhogika-kāya*; and his acts (*buddha-karman*) especially in the *nairmānika-kāya*. But at the same time, since the three Buddha-bodies are not independent of each other but are in the relation of a basis and a thing based on it, these virtues are also considered transferable to each other. Similarly, the elucidation of such questions as whether there is only one Buddha or other Buddhas numerous in number, or for what reason the Buddha is said to be everlasting and always abiding, and so forth, has been attempted through the system of the *trikāya*. I will not go into these problems here, but I would say that, in short, these problems would not likely be answered thoroughly without the *trikāya* theory. The theoretic perfection of the doctrine of Buddha-body lies in the triangular concept of the three Buddha-bodies;<sup>19</sup> the two-body

<sup>19</sup> As has been described in note 6, between the Reward-body and the Assumed-body, there is some conceptual indistinctness in their spheres. In order to set up a system of the three bodies and clarify the distinctions between them, some people adopted a method called 開真合應: the True body (真身) is divided (unfolded) into the Dharma-body and the Reward-body; to these two, the Assumed-body (應身) is added to form the three\*

theory would be insufficient, and the four-body and other many-body theories would be plethoric in principle.

III

It may be possible to say that the structure of the *tri-kāya*, as described in the last chapter, is akin to the concept of the Trinity in Christianity. For example, A. K. Coomaraswamy says that the *māhāvīka-kāya*, *sāmbhogika-kāya*, and *nirmānika-kāya* correspond respectively to "the Father," "the figure of Christ in Glory", and "the visible Jesus."<sup>20</sup> But the way of the Reward-body in which one's vow and discipline have been rewarded, as described above, is especially Buddhistic and seems to be quite removed from the Christian idea. We find rather something closer than Christianity in the same author's comparison using the view of deity in Hinduism. According to him, "the Dharmakāya is the Brahman, timeless and unconditioned; the Sambhogakāya is realized in the forms of Īsvara; the Nirmānakāya in every avatār." When Brahmā (the god creator) is regarded as a personification of the Brahman (the Absolute), he is the first of the triad (*trimūrti*) of Hindu gods, the other two being Īsvara (Śiva, the destroyer) and Viṣṇu (the preserver).

\*bodies. Some others, conversely, adopted the method of 開應合真: first the Assumed-body (應身) is divided into the Assumed-body and the Apparitional-body (化身); to these the True body is added. (Cf. Hui-yüan, *Ta-ch'eng-i-chang* 大乘義章, *chüan* 19, Tai-shō, Vol. 44, pp. 839a-840c.) According to the former, the Reward-body is different from the Assumed-body, but according to the latter, the said Assumed-body is almost the same as the Reward-body of the former in content. But, in short, these ways of thinking only figured out the three Buddha-bodies by dividing either the True body (真身) or the Assumed-body (應身); therefore, they precisely took the position, in principle, of the two-body theory composed of the True body and the Assumed-body. For their principle was to 'unfold' (開). On the other hand, it seems that in Indian *śāstras*, the system of the triangular concept of the three Buddha-bodies has been established by instituting the *sāmbhogika-kāya*. The Chinese interpretation by 'unfolding' (開) will make ambiguous the meaning of the triangular concept, which differs in principle from the meaning of the two-body theory, which simply treats of diametric bodies. But at the same time it may be said that this ambiguity rather serves to manifest the significance and the double character of the *sāmbhogika-kāya* or the Reward-body.

<sup>20</sup> A.K. Coomaraswamy, *Buddha and the Gospel of Buddhism* (Bombay, etc., 1956), p. 239.

Chatterjee also observes that among the *trikāya*, the *sāmbhogika-kāya* represents “the concept of God *par excellence*.” But at the same time he explains important differences between the Buddha and Vedāntic *Īsvara*. Namely, unlike the Brahman as the principle, “*Īsvara*, though phenomenal, yet acts always from above.” The Buddha, on the other hand, “actually takes birth as man,” as historic human being, his training for realizing the truth being conducted from below; in him the truth was concretized and personified. The ultimate object here was the attainment of Buddhahood by all mankind as an ideal of the phenomenal world. Chatterjee further continues: “To *Īsvara* are ascribed the cosmic functions as well; He is the creator and the sustainer of the world....indeed in all Buddhism, this notion of a god is vehemently opposed....The Tathāgata is merely a spiritual preceptor. He cannot, or rather does not, interfere with other cosmic functions.”<sup>21</sup>

Chatterjee’s opinion mentioned above can be generally approved, but some supplement may be acceptable. If an expression such as “a personal God” is applied to Buddhism, the closest equivalent would be the *sāmbhogika-kāya* or the Reward-body, as Chatterjee says. In this case, the word “body” of Buddha-body may certainly correspond to “personality.” But in the ways of such as *svābhāvika-kāya* or *dharmakāya* there is no theistic personality whatever, although this may depend on how one interprets. For the *svābhāvika-kāya* is a concept which makes *dharmā* or *dharmatā* itself as the Buddha-body or Buddha’s being. Furthermore, this *dharmatā* or *dharmadhātu* is something that should be directly equated with *śūnyatā* or absolute emptiness—herein can be seen the Buddhistic peculiarity of the doctrine of Buddha-body. The Buddha, together with the *svābhāvika-kāya* and *dharmadhātu*, is not positively “existent”, but is *śūnyatā*, transcending “existent” and “non-existent”.

Mahāyāna Buddhism expounds a specific idea called “non-abiding in *nirvāna*” (side by side with “non-abiding in *samsāra*”), in addition to the usual ideas of *nirvāna*. *Nirvāna* is the ultimate aim of practitioners and *śrāvakas* (disciples). Translated as or equated with “annihilation” (*nirodha*) in Chinese, it is also related to *śūnyatā* mentioned above; it is a realm of absolute calmness and quietness on “the other shore.” But in Mahāyāna Buddhism one does not care to remain on the absolute and transcendental “other shore”, but per-

<sup>21</sup> A.K. Chatterjee, *op. cit.* p. 230 ff.

sistently puts himself in the world of transmigration, without entering *nirvāna*—this is his ideal of non-abiding in *nirvāna* (*apratisthita-nirvāna*). It may be said that the structure of the *trikāya* doctrine also follows this idea. The *svābhāvika-kāya*, because of its being wisdom, is not abiding in *samsāra*, and is equal to the “Emancipated Body” (*vimukti-kāya*), freed from every obstacle of defilement, and itself corresponding to absolute *nirvāna*. But, on the other hand, its function never ceases, insofar as “non-interruption” or “eternalness” is attributed to the *dharmakāya*; it does not remain in *nirvāna* but positively returns to this shore of the phenomenal world as *sāmbhogika-kāya* and *nairmānika-kāya* for the sake of benevolence.<sup>22</sup>

In parallel with this, there is a term called “the intentional birth” (*samcintya-bhavopapatti*), meaning that a *bodhisattva* volunteers to be born into a life of suffering.<sup>23</sup> A *bodhisattva* appears in this world of transmigration; this is, however, not an ordinary physical result of his former *karman*, but it is due to his own “delusion” which he has purposely left unextinguished with the intention of entering into samsaric existence. Such a power to be reborn “at will” may be said to originate by nature from *śūnyatā*, which is characteristic of the *svābhāvika-kāya*; but, at the same time, to take birth “in *samsāra*” is solely due to his great compassion (which is attachment, hence delusion, in a *bodhisattva*) for the living beings that are afflicted in the whirl of *samsāra*. It is understood that Jesus Christ, too, was born on the horizon of history as a child of

<sup>22</sup> Various *śāstras* can be referred to with regard to the idea of ‘non-abiding in *nirvāna*.’ Among them, however, special mention may be made to Sthiramati’s *Madhyāntarivibhāṅgīkā*, ed. Yamaguchi, p. 68<sup>12-17</sup> (in Tib.)=p. 267<sup>12-16</sup> (in Skt. restored); p. 187<sup>14-22</sup>, etc., (Japanese tr., pp. 105, 299–300, etc.), where we can clearly see ideas related with the three Buddha-bodies.

<sup>23</sup> The word ‘*samcintya-bhavopapatti*’ (literally, taking birth at will, 故意受生 or 故意受生 in Chinese) appears in various *Prajñāpāramitā-sūtras*, and is expounded in the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (XI. 30, XVIII. 44, XX-XXI. 12, etc), the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha* (Taishō, 31, p. 140b<sup>29</sup>), the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (p. 414; Taishō, 30, p. 576b), and so forth. In the *Bodhisattvabhūmi* (p. 226; Taishō, p. 532b), the *bodhisattva* is said ‘to let himself be born even among the *caṇḍāla* (outcasts), or as far down as among dogs, for the purpose of benefiting others. In the *Cb’eng-wei-ibib-lun*, the following phrases, probably conveying the same meaning, are found: 故意方行 (‘one acts just intentionally,’ Shindo ed., *cb’eng* 9, p. 29<sup>5</sup>), and 留煩障助願受生 (‘detaining the obstacles of defilement, one takes birth in accordance to his vow,’ *ibid.*, p. 31<sup>10</sup>).

man by emptying (*kenosis*) divine attributes. In Buddhism a similar idea has been universalized as a way of the *bodhisattva*, without being confined to the life of Gautama Buddha.

The *trikāya* doctrine developed as a system with a background of these Mahāyāna concepts, which in their turn became ever more firmly solidified by having recourse to the *trikāya* doctrine. Therefore, we must say that the *trikāya* doctrine is fairly different from the Trinity of Christianity or the *trimūrti* of Hinduism.

Later on the Buddha-body theory made a further development, giving rise to four-body and other theories. For example, Hui-yüan of Ching-ying ssu temple says that the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* enumerates the following four Buddhas: 如如仏 (Suchness-Buddha), 智慧仏 (Wisdom Buddha), 功德仏 (Merit Buddha), 應化仏 (Incarnation Buddha).<sup>24</sup> Again, it is well known that the *Buddha-*

<sup>24</sup> The *Ta-ch'eng i-chang* (大乗義章), *chüan* 19 (Taishō, 44, p. 841b). In mentioning these four Buddhas, Hui-yüan seems to refer to the 'Four *chüan Lankāvatāra*' (四卷楞伽), translated by Guṇabhadra of the Liu-Sung dynasty (cf. Taishō, 16, p. 481b<sup>8-9</sup> and p. 482b<sup>17-19</sup>). In this sūtra, however, the Merit Buddha, the third of the four Buddhas mentioned by Hui-yüan, does not appear; instead, the names 'Reward Buddha' (報佛) or 'Rewardingly-born Buddha' (報生佛) can be seen. Since the *sāmbhogika-kāya* is especially the source of the Buddha's merits, Hui-yüan must have called it the Merit Buddha. These passages correspond respectively to the *gāthās* II. 49 and II. 95 in the Skt. original (B. Nanjio, *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, pp. 28, 34). According to this, the Incarnation Buddha (the fourth) reads *nairmāṇika (buddha)*, and the Merit Buddha (the third) reads *vipākaja* or *vipākastha*, which exactly corresponds to the Chinese translation, 報生佛 (Buddha born as a result or as a reward). The Wisdom Buddha (the second) and the Suchness Buddha (the first), taken together, correspond to the one word *tatbatājñāna-buddha* (Suchness-wisdom Buddha), which is translated in other Chinese versions of the *Lankāvatāra* into 如智佛 or 真如智慧佛. Judging from these points, it is questionable to divide this one word into two and make the total four Buddhas; because, it might be that the sūtra originally gave only three, not four, Buddhas or Bodies, namely, the Incarnation Buddha, the Reward Buddha, and the Suchness-wisdom Buddha. This last one, the *tatbatājñāna-buddha*, is probably equal to the *dharmakāya* or *svābhāvika-kāya*, but at the same time, it reminds us of the name *jñāna-dharma-kāya* (Wisdom-dharma Body) which appears in the *Abhisamayālaṅkāraloka* (see note 26). By the way, the name *sāmbhogika-kāya* has been scarcely used in the *Lankāvatāra*. Again Hui-yüan gives here many four-body theories other than the one described above. His book was, in fact, originally devoted to the enumeration of almost all the Buddha-body theories, ranging from a theory of one body to that of ten bodies, of which, however, I shall not go into detail.

*bhūmi-lāstra* and the *Cb'eng-wei-sbib-lun* expound a theory of four Buddha-bodies by dividing the Enjoyment Body into the Own-enjoyment Body and Other's-enjoyment Body.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, in the *Abhisamayālamkāraloka*, in addition to the three Buddha-bodies, the Buddha-body called *jñāna-dharma-kāya* (Wisdom-dharma Body) is given, placed in the second place among them, forming the four Buddha-bodies.<sup>26</sup> Many other theories of Buddha-bodies were formed by introducing various concepts, such as the Emancipation Body (*vimukti-kāya*), Outflowing Body (*niṣyanda-kāya*), Result-maturation Body (*vipāka-kāya*), and so forth. They may present characteristic developments both in doctrine and in spiritual history, but I shall not treat each of them here. For, as stated above, the *trikāya* theory may be regarded as a consummated theory, establishing the fundamental principle of the doctrine insofar as the ways of Buddha-body are concerned.

However, it does not mean that because of this every problem has been completely solved. It is true that by this *trikāya* theory the nature of the Buddha and all his virtues and functions has been delineated. But as for how Gautama, a human being, was able to become a Buddha possessing virtues equal to those of a divine being, almost nothing has been said in these theories. How can a leap from the relative world to the absolute world be made? Since Gautama was an exceptional person, as his disciples thought, it might have been possible for him to become a Buddha by dint of his innumerable virtuous deeds accumulated in the past. But if only that, Gautama would have only been a divine existence from the beginning, and not a human being. Moreover, that would be a unique case for Gautama alone, and would not explain anything about

<sup>25</sup> *Buddhabhūmi-lāstra* (佛地經論), *chüan* 7 (Taishō, 26, p. 326a). *Cb'eng-wei-sbib-lun* (成唯識論), *chüan* 10 (Shindo, pp. 15 ff.).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. U. Wogihara (ed.), *Abhisamayālamkāralokā-prajñāpāramitāśrīvyākhyā* (Tokyo, 1935), p. 21 (L. 17), p. 914 ff. (VIII. 1 ff.). However, both in the *gāthās* I. 17 and VIII. 1 of the *Abhisamayālamkāra*, the four-body theory is not necessarily clear. The commentator Haribhadra also states that there are different views, some advocating the threefold body and some the fourfold body. He himself seems to favor the theory of fourfold body (the *svābhāvika-kāya*, *dharma-kāya*, *sāmbhogika-kāya*, and the *nairmānika-kāya*). Among these four *kāyas*, the second one, *dharma-kāya*, is specified and called *jñāna-dharma-kāya* (Wisdom-dharma Body) in the *Hor chos bbyun* (The Buddhist History of Mongolia, written by Ayurvardhana or Jigme Rigpi-dorje). The tradition of this specification was probably created in Tibet and has been widely accepted in Tibetan Buddhism.

the existence of all the Buddhas in the ten directions. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, it is specifically told that all living beings are expected to attain Buddhahood, but then, it must be asked: In what way is it possible for a common living being to become a Buddha?

IV

The possibility of all living beings attaining Buddhahood is a problem that seems to have been answered from two sides. One is the idea that all living beings possess Buddha-nature—the idea that is mainly advocated by the *satbāgata-garbha* (*satbāgata-matrix*) theory. The other is the introduction of the concept of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* (the revolving of the basis). Let me take up the latter first.

The concept of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* is frequently used by the Yogācāra-vijñāna school that consummated the *trikāya* doctrine. *Āśraya-parāvṛtti* means, as the word indicates, the basis on which one relies revolves and turns into a different basis (or non-basis); the ground itself on which one stands overturns, revealing a new world, illuminated by a new light. There is the anxiety of one's foothold being fundamentally challenged—the anxiety that it might collapse and disappear, meaning death. But through this death, there is the possibility of the same basic structure coming to life again by being illuminated with a new light. This is not simply the renovation of the mind, which is a part of oneself, or that of the body, or simply the one's disappearance and becoming non-existent; it is the conversion and the transmutation of one's whole existence. For example, if we imagine a magnetic field flowing through man's being then the *āśraya-parāvṛtti* would be the flow of this magnetic field in the opposite direction from its usual flow. One's acts are based upon and determined by such a magnetic flow. The matter also of purification in human beings is not the removal of something filthy, but is none other than the backward flow of man's mechanism or magnetic field, with its structure unchanged. A negative film may look like a positive picture when the light shines on it from different angles; in the same way, when the light permeates into one's whole system, it receives light in a new scene, whereby the same existence which has been in darkness begins to shine brilliantly.

In the Yogācāra-vijñāna school, the idea of *ālaya-parāvṛtti* had already been prepared in the school's unique theory of the "Threefold nature" (*trisvabhāva*). This theory explains the system of the world by means of the true way of the world or by its three aspects or natures, namely: (1) the relative nature (*paratantra-svabhāva* or dependent-on-other nature), (2) the imagined nature (*parikalpita-svabhāva*), and (3) the consummated nature (*pariniṣpanna-svabhāva*). Basing upon the relative nature of the world (1), the world appears with its imagined, unreal, and polluted character (2) to the ordinary man on the one hand, and, on the other, it appears with the consummated and purified nature (3) to the saints. The magnetic field spoken of above may be conceived as related to this relative nature (1). A detailed explanation here of these three natures is not possible in the space allotted. In short, the revolving of one's own foundation means that on the field of relative nature the state of being polluted with delusions (i.e. the world of imagined nature) revolves its basis to become a state of purity, a world of consummated nature. The principle that makes this revolution possible can be found in the fact that the world is essentially of the nature of relativity or of "dependent origination" (*pratītyasamutpāda*), and this world of relative nature has been turned around into a polluted condition to form the world of imagined nature; it has been turned around, and is like a positive picture which appears on the negative itself under certain light conditions. One's foothold, hitherto believed to be firm and unshakable, is now realized to be something unreal and polluted, being covered with fundamental ignorance (*avidyā*)—with something called original sin or radical evil, in religious terms. Through this self-realization one's foothold revolves and becomes purified.

The Buddha-body is described as a result of this "revolving of the basis," which can be explained in various ways. For one thing, the eight *vijñānas* (cognition or consciousness; originally "dependent-on-other" in character), including the *ālaya-vijñāna* (store-cognition), by revolving their own foundations, become four kinds of Buddha's wisdom. "Cognition is revolved and Wisdom is acquired" (轉識得智), it is said, and this wisdom is none other than the essence of the threefold body of the Buddha.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the doctrine of *ālaya-parāvṛtti* tries to clarify that the human way of being, along with its basis, revolves itself and becomes the Buddha's way of being, or realizes the

Buddha's body, his basis. And the direction of this revolution, therefore, can be said to be ascendent.

Contrary to this, what is descendent is the concept of *tatbāgata-garbbha*, the idea that all beings have Buddha-nature. According to the *tatbāgata-garbbha* theory, it is strongly advocated that the human mind is essentially

<sup>27</sup> It seems to be quite late in history that the mutual relationship between the eight *viññānas* (*ālaya-viññāna*, *kliṣṭa-manas*, *mano-viññāna*, the five primary *viññānas*), the four wisdoms (*ādarśa-jñāna*, *samatā-jñāna*, *pratyavekṣā-jñāna*, *kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna*), and the threefold body (*dhārma-kāya*, *sāmbhogika-kāya*, *nairmāṇika-kāya*) came to be clearly recognized and consolidated, though views on it are not necessarily the same. It is Sthiramati's commentary on the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (MSA), IX. 60 (Tibetan Tripitaka, Peking reprint ed., Vol. 108, p. 261-1 to -2) that describes at a single place the relationship between the above three, which can be graphed as follows:

<i>Trikāya</i>	Four Wisdoms	Eight <i>Viññānas</i>
<i>dhārma-kāya</i>	= <i>ādarśa-jñāna</i> (mirror-wisdom)	← Revolving of the <i>ālaya-viññāna</i>
<i>sāmbhogika-kāya</i>	= { <i>samatā-jñāna</i> (equality-wisdom) <i>pratyavekṣā-jñāna</i> (wisdom of intellectual mastery)	← Revolving of the defiled <i>manas</i>  ← Revolving of the <i>mano-viññāna</i>
<i>nairmāṇika-kāya</i>	= <i>kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna</i> (wisdom of duty-fulfillment)	← Revolving of the five primary <i>viññānas</i>

Of these, as for the relationship of the eight *viññānas* and the four wisdoms, views same as the above can also be seen in the general explanation of *āśrayaparāvṛtti* in Sthiramati's commentary on MSA, IX. 12 (Peking ed., *ibid.*, p. 251-3); the same can also be seen in the commentary by Asvabhāva on the *Mahāyāna-saṃgraha*, translated by Hsüan-chuang (Taishō, 31, p. 438a). (Its Tibetan translation differs from it.) In the Chinese translation of the MSA, IV. 67-74, there exist a number of phrases which are not contained in the Sanskrit text, but refer to the relationship between the eight *viññānas*, the four wisdoms and the *trikāya*. According to them the relationship between the eight *viññānas* and the four wisdoms is the same with Sthiramati's interpretation given above, but the relationship between the four wisdoms and the *trikāya* is different: the *ādarśa-jñāna* and the *samatā-jñāna* are apportioned to the *svābhāvika-kāya*; the *pratyavekṣā-jñāna* to the *sāmbhogika-kāya*; and the *kṛtyānuṣṭhāna-jñāna* to the *nairmāṇika-kāya*. The *Cb'eng-wei-sbib-lun* has adopted this Chinese translation of the MSA as it is, relating to the eight *viññānas* and the four wisdoms (Shindo ed., 10, p. 15), and for the relationship with the *trikāya*, it gives a view close to Sthiramati's interpretation (Shindo ed., 10, p. 26). Obermiller introduces what is called Candragomin's theory, whose description, however, includes indistinct points (E. Obermiller, *The Sublime Science of the Great Vehicle to Salvation*, p. 101).

identical with the *tatbāgata*, or the *dbarma-dbātu* or the *dbarma*-body. It is true that human beings are steeped in the world of suffering, and are far removed from the world of the Buddha. But viewed from the ultimate standpoint, the essence of the human mind is transparently luminous; it has lost its light only because of its being covered with adventitious defilement (*āgantuka-kleśa*). When the adventitious defilement has been removed, the true mind or Buddha-nature becomes apparent—this is the *āśraya-parāvṛtti*. No living being can exist outside the world of the absolute called *tatbatā* or *śūnyatā*; they cannot escape from the *dbarma-dbātu*. Just as the birds fly freely in the air, all sentient beings breathe in the Buddha-nature. Just as all things are filled with air, all living beings are filled with the Buddha-nature. It is because all living beings store such Buddha-nature concealed within themselves that they are regarded as the germ which produces the Buddha. Therefore, every living being is said to be a *tatbāgata-garbbha* (*tatbāgata*-matrix). As for the term *tatbāgata-garbbha*, various interpretations appeared in later ages, but its original meaning seems to have been that it was the embryo that conceived the *tatbāgata*, nurtured it, and gave birth to it. A being is a *tatbāgata-garbbha* in essentially belonging to the Buddha's lineage (*gotra*), and possessing the Buddha's essence or Buddha-nature by birth.

It is believed that this idea of Buddha-nature or *tatbāgata-garbbha* appeared fairly early in Indian Buddhism, in parallel with the philosophy of "cognition-only" or "mind-only." Buddhism made great advancement with this discovery of Buddha-nature within the ordinary living beings. The relative importance of this concept within Buddhism gradually increased as time advanced, especially in Chinese and Japanese Buddhism, where it became the central, basic concept. As this was almost the same with Tibetan Buddhism as well, it can be inferred that this concept had probably become the core of Buddhist thought in the last stages of Indian Buddhism.

As for the problem of the possibility of attaining Buddhahood by common beings, it can be said that an answer has been tentatively given by the idea that all beings possess Buddha-nature. But at the same time, many new difficulties have arisen. For example, if common beings already possess Buddha-nature equal to the *dbarma*-body, why is it that they are still sunk in the depths of transmigration? Why is it that the essentially undefiled minds of the common beings are still roots of delusions? The declaration that all beings are

*tatbāgata-garbha* is sure to encourage them greatly, and their efforts toward enlightenment will not be fruitless. But at the same time, if they already possess the *dharmā*-body, or at least possess it in its possibility, efforts to attain it will in effect be unneeded.

The characteristic of the doctrine of *tatbāgata-garbha* lies not so much in theory as in its religious poignancy and literary beauty, which must have been products of mystical experience. In Japan this literary mystery was further enhanced, advocating that not only sentient beings but also insensible beings, such as mountains and rivers, trees and grasses, all possessed Buddha-nature and the possibility to attain Buddhahood. This religious, mystical, intuitive attitude can be seen unfolded in many sūtras. But these descriptions in sūtras can be said to derive from the standpoint of the Buddha who has already attained enlightenment; they are the descriptions of the *tatbāgata-garbha* or Buddha-nature seen from the Buddha's viewpoint and not from the viewpoint of ordinary beings. For, if something is to be declared by ordinary beings when they envisage truth, it must be always a confession of sin or of delusion and impurity, not of the possession of Buddha-nature. Therefore, it is probably only natural that Indian Buddhist philosophers were not able to fully theorize and systematize the idea of the *tatbāgata-garbha*, the substance of this religious intuition. For it was something whose nature would not apply to human logic and category. The book called *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* is almost the only treatise extant which has attempted the systematization of the theory of *tatbāgata-garbha*. It is a "śāstra" that is expected to be theoretical in nature, but rather than a theoretic, philosophical book, the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* is a literary work, revealing religious faith, and filled with beautiful expressions and figures of speech of praise to the Buddha. The theory of the threefold body of the Buddha is also adopted in this book, where more pages are devoted to it than even in the treatises belonging to the Yogācāra-vijñāna school. The theoretic structure between the three bodies, however, is not necessarily clarified. And the keynote of this book seems rather to be the idea of twofold body, not the theory of threefold body<sup>28</sup>—a fact which might signify that this book is more religious than philosophical.

<sup>28</sup> Theories on the Buddha-body, mostly following the three-body system, are expounded in the *Ratnagotra*, I. 149–152 and II. 38–41, but the limits between the three bodies are not clearly shown so far as the virtues attributed to them are concerned. Simi-\*

## ON THE THEORY OF BUDDHA-BODY

The fact that, contrary to the theories of *trikāya* and *ātraya-parāvṛtti* of the Yogācāra-vijñāna school which is ascendent, the theory of *tathāgata-garbhā* is descendent, as I have already said, can also be surmised from the tendency of this theory of *tathāgata-garbhā*. Above all, the ordinary mind of living beings is called the *tathāgata-garbhā* on the basis that the ordinary mind is presupposed to be the *dharmā*-body or *dharmā*-realm; that is, the *dharmā*-body or *dharmā*-realm is first set up, and then flowing out from the *dharmā*-body, which is regarded as the real basis, the world of ordinary beings manifests itself. In such a way, the theory of *tathāgata-garbhā* also treats of the human being and human mind, but since the mind is first grasped<sup>29</sup> as something sublime that flows out from above, the problem of the ugly minds of actual human beings cannot help being left behind, forgotten. While the mind is believed here to be pure and luminous in its original nature, the delusions (*kleśa*), which bring forth every human ugliness, are apt to be regarded simply as something accidental, foreign, and non-essential. And it seems that the delusions are believed not to be serious but rather to be easily dispelled, because of their being adventitious and non-essential.

The "Buddha's lineage" (*gotra*) mentioned above has been discussed also by the Yogācāra-vijñāna school in its *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra* and other treatises. A *bodhisattva* is a *bodhisattva* because he belongs to the Buddha's lineage and is endowed with the Buddha-nature. But at the same time *bodhisattvas* are here described as existences that are tortured with excessive delusions in spite of the lineage. Some *bodhisattva*, being a king's vassal, is forced even to commit murder, and some does the same when confronted with robbers and rascals.<sup>30</sup> To these *bodhisattvas*, the delusion, not the lineage, is their grave concern in the actual world. Reflections are further extended even to beings who are completely devoid of any "possibility of getting into *nirvāṇa*," the so-called "beings without any (Buddha) lineage" (*agotra*).<sup>31</sup> We see here the forerunner of

\*Early in II. 61 and II. 68, there is a tendency rather to pull back the concept of the three-fold body to that of the twofold body. In III. 1 and the rest, especially, discussions are carried on in the form of a mutual confrontation involving the twofold body, such as the Body of Ultimate Truth and the Body of Conventional Truth.

<sup>29</sup> In this regard the idea is somewhat closer to Hinduism. Confer note 21.

<sup>30</sup> MSA, III. 7, especially in its Sthiramati's commentary.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. III. 11.

the theory of the "five distinct *gotras*" (including *agotra*), which later met with severe criticisms from the advocates of the doctrine of *tathāgata-garbha*.

Such essentially negative aspects of inherited nature can hardly be seen in the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga*, where only beautiful words of praise to Buddha's virtues can be seen. This is so probably because the *Ratnagotra-vibhāga* discusses only the *ratnagotra* (gem-lineage) or Buddha-nature and takes no account of human nature (*gotra*) in general; but if this *ratnagotra* is the source of all beings' deliverance, it is insufficient to simply discard the faults of actual living beings as non-essential. An excellent study on this treatise has recently been introduced to the academic world.<sup>32</sup> According to it, in the theory of *tathāgata-garbha*, the idea of *āśraya-parāvṛtti* (or *-parivṛtti*) is likewise not a rotation upward from below, but is a self-manifestation of the *dharmadhātu* existing above, or its realization into the human world below. This, in truth, is exactly opposite to the *āśraya-parāvṛtti* of the Yogācāra-vijñāna school. It can be said that such unfolding from above is the basic point of view of the theory of *tathāgata-garbha*. However, because of it, the unrestricted and independent human existence, the existence which might revolt against his god and become the subject of evil, has been ignored, and what is optimistically emphasized is only the fact that the common human beings are endowed with the *tathāgata-garbha*.

In contrast to this, the *āśraya-parāvṛtti* of the Yogācāra-vijñāna school exists within *samsāra* through and through, as already described, and the whole of one's existence, whose basis is always the basis for transmigration, revolves itself and realizes the Buddha-body. As the whole of one's existence is none other than an existence of *paratantra* nature, the aforesaid revolving means the revolving of the *paratantra*; the *Mahāyānasamgraha*<sup>33</sup> expounds that the *paratantra* converts itself sometimes into the *parikalpita* and at other times into the *pariniṣpanna*. We may say, in accordance with this, that when the imagined, polluted world revolves itself into the consummated world, this revolving

<sup>32</sup> Takasaki Jikidō, *A Study on the Ratnagotra-vibhāga (Uttaratantra)*, Serie Orientale Roma XXXIII (Roma, 1966). The author has many other treatises, among which confer "*Āśrayaparivṛtti* and *Āśrayaparāvṛtti*" (*Nippon Bukkyō Gakkai Nempō*, XXV, 1960); in the above book especially the Introduction, III.

<sup>33</sup> Taishō, Vol. 31, p. 139b. E. Lamotte, *La somme du grand véhicule* (Louvain, 1938), Tome II, p. 110.

takes place on the plain of *paratantra*, the *paratantra* being the basis for everything that exists. These ways of revolving should all be sought thoroughly within the sphere of human existence, that is to say, within the structure of the human cognition, *vijñānas*. This is the reason why, in the Yogācāra-vijñāna school, the problem of the eight *vijñānas* became the focus of their extensive investigation and analysis. Thus, the logical meaning of the *āśraya-parāvṛtti* will also be sought in the structure of *vijñānas*—the way they recognize, judge, discriminate, imagine, and so on—the latter, the structure of the *vijñānas*, being reflected in the former, the *āśraya-parāvṛtti*. In this case of *āśraya-parāvṛtti*, contrary to the case of the theory of *tathāgata-garbha* described above, the Buddha-body has been understood from below. While in the theory of *tathāgata-garbha* the understanding of the Buddha-body is religious and intuitive, in the *āśraya-parāvṛtti* the understanding of its structure is more philosophical and theoretical.

A treatise belonging to the Yogācāra-vijñāna school is also aware of the name *tathāgata-garbha* and explains it;<sup>34</sup> another text interprets, with the *tathāgata-garbha* theory, that the mind is essentially pure and luminous.<sup>35</sup> In the latter case, however, the mind can be so explained because *śūnyatā* (absolute negativity) is found rightly in the discrimination (*abhūta-parikalpa*) itself, not outside it—the mind being *śūnya*, negated, and not affirmed as in the *tathāgata-garbha* theory. Now, *śūnyatā* is none other than another name for the *dharmā*-realm or *dharmā*-nature, which should be realized later in the *āśraya-parāvṛtti*, i.e. when every human *āśraya* (basis = cognitions) is negated, turned over, and revolved. It is at this moment and only at this moment that the mind can be pure and luminous.

It is a fact that the mind is essentially pure and luminous; but, contrary to this, it is also a fact that the human mind actually gives rise to evil acts. From where do human evils come? They cannot, at any rate, be products of the *dharmā-dhātu*, nor of any divine beings; it is not from above, from the pure *dharmā*-realm, that the evils flow down. Therefore, the origin of human evils should not be sought outside of human existence, but only within the structure of cognitions, through whose contradiction and self-negation the evils

<sup>34</sup> MSA, IV. 37.

<sup>35</sup> *Madhyāntavibhāga*, I. 22c.

can be elevated to the level of the *dharmā*-nature. The analysis of the cognitions thus becomes a clue to the research of the Buddha-body which is the goal of the *āśraya-parāvṛtti*.

In the discussion of the Buddha-body following the theory of *trikāya*, the *dharmā*-realm and the Essence-body are described as a "basis." But it is the "basis" for the other Buddha-bodies such as the Enjoyment-body and Transformation-body, or the "basis" from which the true and pure *dharmā*-preaching flows out; it is never the "basis" for human transmigration, *samsāra*. The fact, again, that the Essence-body is the basis for the other two Buddha-bodies can be interpreted as reflecting or corresponding to the structure of the eight *viññānas*. Among these eight *viññānas*, the *ālaya-viññāna* (store-cognition) becomes the basis for the other seven working cognitions, which include *ātma*-cogitation (*manas*), mind-consciousness (*mano-viññāna*), and five other *viññānas*. When these eight cognitions revolve, the four wisdoms of the Buddha, including the *ādarsa-jñāna* (the mirror wisdom), manifest themselves (see note 27). With this mirror-wisdom—the wisdom which reflects the reality of everything like a transparent mirror—as the basis, the other three wisdoms, including the *samatā-jñāna* (the wisdom which sees the equality of beings), arise on the mirror. The mirror-wisdom itself is called "non-differentiated wisdom" (*nirvikalpa-jñāna*), which is like a mirror that reflects everything without discrimination. With this wisdom as the basis, the Buddha is further said to have a wisdom called "the wisdom acquired succeedingly" (*prṣṭhālabdha-jñāna*), which agrees with the mundane actuality. That the mirror-wisdom (or the non-differentiated wisdom) becomes the basis for all other wisdoms is in parallel with the fact that in the Buddha-body theory the Essence-body becomes the basis for other Buddha-bodies. These facts seem to correspond, albeit conversely, to the system of the eight *viññānas*. In the mundane world, the system of the eight *viññānas*, taking the *ālaya-viññāna* as its fundamental, forms the basis for every human activity, owing to the fact that the *viññānas* are *paratantra* in nature. I said conversely corresponding, because the system of the *viññānas* can be regarded as having been brought into and reflected in the understanding of the Buddha-world, although the direction is "converse," the former being ascending, the latter descending.

We should say that, originally, questions such as the manner of the Buddha's existence are beyond human thought, beyond speech, just as *nirvāṇa* is. In this

sense, even the Yogācāra-vijñāna school which consummated the *trikāya* theory of the Buddha could not directly make it an object of theoretic consideration. They could at most only represent it in a negative or paradoxical way. In radical terms, any attributes transcending and invisible to human beings might be ascribed to the Buddha. But these attributes do not exist simply high above as transcendental and isolated existences; by the revolving of the structure of the *vijñānas*, they exist as things that conversely correspond to the earthly structure of the *vijñānas*. If the Buddha-body were not thus conceived as what had been turned over from below, the Buddha would simply be a transcendental, isolated existence, something unrelated to human beings. If it were so, the search for enlightenment by common beings or their deliverance by the Buddha would become impossible or meaningless. But if it is correct to conceive a "converse correspondence" in connection with the Buddha-body, it would seem that a passage from the relative to the absolute and from the absolute to the relative could naturally be opened.

I have merely introduced the theories of Buddha-body in India and touched on several questions relating to them. The Buddha-body theory made complicated and variegated development later on in the various Buddhist sects in China and Japan. The triad concept of the *trikāya* theory has been generally accepted, studied, and developed by most of these sects. In a case of a strong religious demand, however, the triad system, which is highly theoretic in character, might have been felt not necessarily exigent; rather, the two-body system, in which a strong contrast between the relative and the absolute is predominant, might have been thought to be sufficient. Or it seems that there also developed a tendency toward the one-body theory which solely treated of the absolute *dharmā*-body. It is impossible now to refer to each of these Buddha-body theories. Generally speaking, however, Gautama the historic Buddha has been in many cases expelled from the most important position, and the so-called celestial Buddhas or Dhyāni-buddhas have come to the fore. Furthermore, the relation between the Buddha-body theory and the concept of god or the absolute in religions other than Buddhism would present another interesting problem, one which is, however, beyond my present capacity.

Translated by Hirano Umeyo