

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE HISTORICAL BUDDHA SAKYAMUNI AND THE ANTICIPATORY BODHISATTVA VISISHTACARITRA (SUPREME CONDUCT)

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ABSTRACT. *The Buddha Sakyamuni and Nichiren are mediated by the anticipatory Bodhisattva who is the self-projection in negation onto the eschatological future, so-called mappo era, after 2000 years since the Buddha's passing. The relationship of them is interpreted by Jijo Ohashi (1923–2014) in terms of the triadic logic of Emptiness, appearance, and a unity of them in the direction of spiral teleo-driven soteriological self-development in history. Heidegger's view of truth as unconcealment might be relevant to the disclosure of the hidden essence of the Buddha's original eternity which is to be self-manifested in the dynamic evolutionary process. The historical person Nichiren is apprehended as identical with the original eternal Buddha in the way of cyclic return in unhiddenness or opening up of truth. The basic Neo-Aristotelian structure of the dynamic cyclic triadologic movement might be cogently in agreement with this Buddhist idea of identity and difference which is teleologically driven by the reciprocal reversal of cause and effect in the soteriologically spiral self-developing process of time.*

KEYWORDS: *The Buddha Sakyamuni, The anticipatory Bodhisattva, Nichiren, dynamic triadologic, teleo-driven causality, cyclic return, soteriological process*

What is meant by the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra, who appeared in the story of the Lotus Sutra? This is the key concept for the understanding of the relationship between the Buddha Sakyamuni and Nichiren, who appeared in the actual span of time in Japan after the Buddha's passing. Revd. Jijo Ohashi presents a unique interpretation on this matter in terms of the logic of identity and difference between the dharma (truth) in itself and its soteriological efficacy. According to him, the status of the Buddha Sakyamuni as the past fruit is converted into the status of Nichiren as the present acting subject or person through the mediation of the anticipatory Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra who is the proleptical preappearance of the eternal original Buddha. This implies the direct presence of the even distant past in the present actual entity, and in the end, Nichiren is conceived of as being self-identical with the eternal Buddha.

The Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra is not an actual body, but a foreshadowing of the eternal Buddha, who was revealed by the historical Buddha Sakyamuni, onto the future in which the eternal Buddha takes a new form. For this purpose, the hidden dharma in the depth of the Lotus Sutra is transferred to the Bodhisattva from the

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Buddha Sakyamuni, tells the story. Here it is obvious that on the one hand, the Buddha Sakyamuni is regarded as the past establishment, that is, the fruit or effect, and on the other hand, the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra is regarded as the forthcoming person or acting subject after the past fruit. However, that Bodhisattva is not yet an actual person in history, but is just indicative of a foreshadowing or emanation of the deeply hidden original Buddha at the bottom of Sakyamuni onto the real horizon of space and time. Namely, that Bodhisattva is another expression of the Buddha himself, and is expected to appear in the actual stage of historical progression. That Bodhisattva represents a new superseding Buddha, who is not different from Sakyamuni as the original Buddha in essence. Even so, however, in appearance, they have the different aims; one is to close and finish the previous soteriological working process, the other is to begin and disclose the new activity of salvation so far hidden in depth. In terms of the dharma-body or dharma in itself, the Buddha Sakyamuni and the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra are identical with each other, while they make the different efficacies upon their own aims from the perspective of history or actual field of human action. And this anticipated person is concretely none other than Nichiren. In other words, Nichiren is the present acting subject, to whom the hidden dharmas have been transferred from the Buddha Sakyamuni through the mediation of the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra. As a result, Sakyamuni is no longer the lord of the appropriate teaching in our time, but is superseded by Nichiren as the reincarnation of the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra. So, Sakyamuni, Visishtacaritra and Nichiren are the different names of one and the same reality in time-process. Thus, Ohashi's provocative interpretation of the personal identity of Sakyamuni and Nichiren, despite their historical and geometrical distances, has some implications of the direct presence of the distant past in the present or the immediate prehension of the far past by the present actuality, sharing with A.N. Whitehead's thought. In short, Nichiren is immediately apprehended as the eternal Buddha's soteriologically appropriate presence in our age.

The transition from the Buddha Sakyamuni to the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra takes place in the form of extensive continuum, in which the actual events are alternately transmuted into the potential status in the order of time and afterwards a new creation of actuality occurs as a consequence of the synthesis of the potential past and the possible future at the present moment of action. Therefore, although both figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva stand in communal relativity, stressed the present action, the latter emerges in the place of playing a more fundamental role in the actual world. And this makes a sharp contrast to the intellectual contemplation, which Tanabe Hajime, the Kyoto School Philosopher of modern Japan, refuses, without a practical agency. The importance of the Bodhisattva lies in the active attitude towards a construction of history with hopes for the future. So, Ohashi mentions that the Buddha Sakyamuni and the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra constitute the dynamic unity of duality and non-duality, and more importantly, when the Buddha Sakyamuni actually existed during his life-time, the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra was just a projection onto the future, whereas after the Buddha passed away the time has come to fulfill his self-projection, as the standing position is reversed. Another pole

of the unity, i.e., duality, is present and manifest, making a tension between eternity and time in the field of human activity, in contrast to non-duality in which time is elevated into eternity. That means that the Buddha changes his status on behalf of the unredeemed people and assimilates himself to them in the form of the Bodhisattva on the subsidiary level. But this does not mean the power of salvation of the latter is inferior to that of the former, but rather, in terms of the present urgency of redemption, the latter's standing position is more important than the former's. The criterion depends on the actuality of salvatory working in the nascent situation, in which human beings are inevitably involved as a matter of fact. The emphasis is placed on the present activity rather than on the past state, in which the previous activity is stored but for the moment inactive, just functioning as the given datum from which a new activity is originated by leap. Consequently, it is turned out that time and space in which the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra is in fact at work as the subject of salvation are really fundamental, and the total reversal of the position occurs for the facing purpose of saving those who are not yet in touch with salvation at all. In other words, the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra is not simply on the level of subsidiary but also represents the full manifestation of his latent essence, which belongs to the Buddha Sakyamuni, in the sphere of actual existence of humanity on the whole.

With regard to the importance of the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra, Ohashi also points out that the eternal origin of the Buddha Sakyamuni had been concealed until the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra appeared in the mode of projection, and this signifies the latter's superiority to the former paradoxically, for the former was disclosed by virtue of the latter and this order is irreversible. To put it another way, the revelation of the eternal Buddha depends on the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra, and becomes historical reality in the concrete form of personality. The Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra is prior to the full revelation of the eternal Buddha, and the latter is projected onto the former. In actuality, the concrete form of the former is the driving force in history by virtue of which other human beings are brought about into the self-realization on their own efforts of practice. This stands for the continuity of the eternal Buddha with human beings through the mediation of the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra as the representative or archetype of all mankind except for the Buddha. However, the continuity does not imply a direct connection between the two parties, but an indirect one as a disjunction of conjunction or a unity of opposites in a dynamic movement, involving a successive development in the direction of cumulative and extensive unfolding in the future community of historical figures. In respect to the successive development referred to just above, each occasion, in the self-realization or becoming present of eternity in time and space, is only fragmental and partial as an infinitesimal region, as it were, not representing a total presence of eternity in that area.

Without integrating the discreet occasions or moments in time as a totality of duration, how is it possible to construct history? This is the point, to which Tanabe finally referred in his latest days with reference to the fulfillment of the content of emptying activity of Emptiness, which is differently expressed by Whitehead as the

epochal duration of time ordering a series of occasions in integrity. The epoch of eschatological period so-called “*mappo*” era should be viewed from this perspective, in which the concrete form of the anticipatory Bodhisattva is predestined to come out of the ground of our globe to make the whole of humanity attain their own Buddhahood. And in this occurrence, the direction of going from time to eternity is converted as a returning from eternity to time, to infinity, as far as humanity seeks for the self-realization within the framework of historical existence.

Then, why does it occur that the Buddha Sakyamuni takes the form of the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra to appear again or return in the time to come after his self-completion? This is, philosophically analyzing, the problem of the relation of time and eternity in a double way of going from time to eternity and of returning from eternity to time. Once the Buddha Sakyamuni retraced to his origin, which represents the direction of going to eternity from time, he cannot stay any longer there, but rather comes down to time again, representing the reverse direction from eternity to time. This is the converting gesture or transfiguration in return of the Buddha attained in eternity to the Bodhisattva in attainment in history. And hence, the Bodhisattva is the symbol of the converting action in return by which the eternal content of the Buddha is to be realized in the realm of human beings. In other words, eternity or the Absolute does not remain as such forever, but rather is made to disrupt and realize itself into space and time through the mediation of action of those who have already entered salvation to extend their fruits to others on the status of being unredeemed.

In this respect, Tanabe suggests a significant meaning of the Bodhisattva in general by referring to the Lotus Sutra in that the Buddha performs his salvific work in a variety of different names and forms according to the various kinds of groups or species of sentient beings he wishes to save. This means that salvation must have a specific society as its substratum and some particular culture as its medium, because the eternal Buddha as the Absolute never extends a hand directly to save less advanced people, but rather always translates himself in the form of the more advanced, so to speak, the elder brothers, in his place. This is the reason why the Absolute as such never acts on by himself or out of his own will, but does so only through the mediation of those who have already been saved or nearly saved to save others. From this, it follows cogently that the eternal Buddha never goes to work out for others immediately, but mediates himself in the mode of emanation or transfiguration as the secondary rank rather than the first or primary rank of the Buddha as such. This is due to the self-emptying activity of Emptiness itself in principle that is no other than the Absolute or eternity. By reason of this self-emptying activity, the Absolute or the eternal Buddha is converted in self-negation into the secondary form of the Bodhisattva to realize its/his own essence in the realm of actuality of human beings to be saved. And this also entails that the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra provokes other potential Bodhisattvas’ returning or converting actions in the horizontal direction of society in a repetitive manner. Hence, Visishtacaritra is not the only one Bodhisattva, who mediates between eternity and time in a returning action by which others’ potential actions are to be evoked infinitely in the future as well as in society. This is the ground that the countless Bodhisattvas are expected to

come out of the actual existence of humanity as a whole. And this also corresponds to Tanabe's denial of the "only one" Son of God in Jesus Christ, but, instead, to a positive extension of God's Sonship to the possible returning or converting actions, to be borne by innumerable people, in the boundless regions of space and time in which human beings exist.

However, Tanabe, on the other side, denies the second coming of Christ at the end of history as a liner time in terms of momentariness of time, in which eternity is continuously converted and manifested into time as "here and now" through human action. From the standpoint of momentariness, as completion is at the same time incompleteness, each present moment is constantly negated and renewed in the direction of increase and accumulation of the past. This is parallel to Whitehead's process conception, in which the antecedent actualities are superseded by the succeeding ones in succession and they make up time as perpetual perishing as well as perpetual arising. And this process is described in terms of subject and superject, the latter of which is comparable to Tanabe's concept of substratum or species, upon which the individual subject acts and then to which the subject turns and converts itself as a result of losing its subjectivity; this process of turning from subject to superject or substratum is a transformation of subjectivity into objectivity or the state of pastness. Aside from the parallelism between them, a succession of momentariness in time entails an incessant conversion from the past being to a new present becoming or subjective acting, upon which creative advance into novelty is further made.

From this viewpoint, even Jesus Christ is never conceived of as isolated from other human beings as if he were the "only one" Son of God above them, but rather, he is still in continuity with them so as to reflect his Sonship upon their Sonship and vice versa. Apart from the mutual reflective communication between Christ and human beings in general, there is no authentic Sonship of Christ, and in the end, the Sonship of Christ falls down into a superject or substratum devoid of subjectivity. To put it another way, only in so far as the Sonship of Christ is mediated to the Sonship of other human beings, only in cooperation and community with them, Jesus Christ is perceived to sustain his absoluteness of the primal source precedent to others as the prototype of mankind. This signifies that Jesus Christ is not absolute as such, but only in relation to human beings maintains he such absoluteness as the springboard or mediating point, from which the Sonship of mankind is also to be realized accordingly. From such a perspective, the second coming of Christ is untenable, and a view of liner time is rejected by Tanabe as a conservation of the past state, in which the Sonship of Christ is no longer subjectively active to convert and communicate itself to mankind. The Sonship of Christ is not a self-identical being beyond time, but is constantly communicated and transformed into the potential Sonship of mankind in turn. This is based upon a fulfillment of Emptiness as a self-conversion through negation in action, even though Tanabe's conception of momentariness is not yet enough to found a temporal duration of historical time as the integral wholeness of separate moments in history. Anyway, viewed from this standpoint, the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra is also conceived of as the relative Absolute that is extensively to be realized in human beings through their own actions in time and space, i.e., history.

Tanabe's way of thinking, centered on the instant moment of time, i.e., the present, might be much influenced by Zen Buddhist thought, in contrast to the Christian tradition of the expectation of Messiah in the eschatological time as well as to another Buddhist stream of the Lotus Sutra in which the foreshadowed Bodhisattva is anticipated to appear in the future after the demise of the historical Buddha. Tanabe does not refer to Heidegger's idea of the other beginning, vis-à-vis the first beginning declined in the present age, in preparation for a new history in which the last God may appear. Heidegger's idea might also be reflective of the second coming of Christ in the biblical background. The instant momentary time of the present is the distinguishing characteristic and limitation of Tanabe's thought, without developing the historical duration, i.e., epochal time, in connection with the line and purpose towards the future.

To begin with, Buddhist philosophy, represented by Tendai (Tien Tai)'s systematic interpretation of the Lotus Sutra, displays the triadic structure of truth of the entire universe in the forms of Emptiness, appearance, and a unity of them in balance, i.e., the middle (way). This triadic structure might be comparable to Hegel's dialectic of the identity of identity and non-identity. Emptiness becomes appearance as non-identity, i.e., other, in and through self-negation, and both of them are unified on the higher level through the double negation, and so on. This triadic logic can also be relevant to the relationship between the Buddha Sakyamuni and the historical person Nichiren, born in Japan after 2000 years since the Buddha's passing, through the mediation of the anticipated Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra. The Bodhisattva in question is none other than the other form of the Buddha, who revealed his own original eternity, in and through self-negation for the purpose of saving the human beings to come in the future after the Buddha's passing. This Bodhisattva is anticipated to exist as a real person in history, and is at last identified as Nichiren, who is in a position of starting a new course of salvation again. Although the three parties, the Buddha, the Bodhisattva and Nichiren, are different in their stages of salvation, nevertheless, they are identical with each other in essence. In spite of their different appearances or multi-disguises, the original essence of the eternal Buddha revealed by the historical Buddha is invariantly one and the same through his soteriologically far long process of time. Nichiren is apprehended as the return to the original eternal Buddha upon the completion of the historical Buddha's salvation work. This signifies a cyclic return to the eternal origin from the end of historical time; after the Buddha Sakyamuni completed his saving activity, a new course of salvation is to commence again for those who have been fallen and estranged from the Buddha's salvation and hence not yet saved. The historical period after 2000 years since the Buddha's passing, in which we are now inescapably involved, is the right time for a new course of salvation, and for this purpose the Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra is anticipated to come out in the world, despite his disguised other form than the Buddha. The dialectical unification of the identity and difference is crucial for comprehension of the Buddha's soteriologically valid progress aimed at the last and ultimate redemption. The Buddha Sakyamuni as the past effect and Nichiren as the present cause are mutually mediated by the intermediate being of the

Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra as the foreshadowing or proleptic preappearance of the hidden original essence of eternity in depth. Here might be found some corresponding Neo-Aristotelian elements, e.g., the inherent changeability, immanent teleo-driven causality, bipolarity vis-à-vis triadicity, dynamic cyclicality, spiral evolutionary development, and so on. In this way, the relationship among the historical Buddha Sakyamuni, the anticipatory Bodhisattva Visishtacaritra and the historical person Nichiren, elucidated by Rev. Ohashi, might be apprehended in terms of the Neo-Aristotelian scheme proposed by Konstantin Khrouski.

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